



# BODY

# Dialogue

Journal of the American Shintaido Movement

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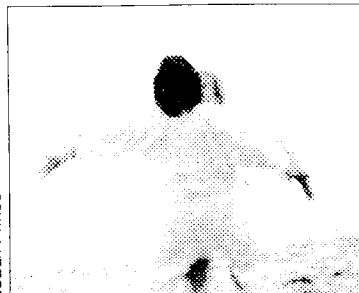
## Farmers with Guts, Warriors with Roots

by Faith Ingsulrud

Sometimes those of us practicing Shintaido question what we are trying to accomplish. Should we be committing ourselves single-mindedly to practice, ignoring the possible consequences to our bodies, or should we be using our growing body awareness to better protect and maintain ourselves? I believe this tension between the martial arts and the natural movement aspects of Shintaido is essential to our practice. The tension not only gives us a unique movement art, it also addresses unresolved conflicts we all experience in modern society. By practicing the two modes of being simultaneously as we do in Shintaido, we have an opportunity to embody and unify within ourselves an age-old division of labor and thinking.

### **Crisis vs. Sustenance**

Many traditional societies distinguish between people who specialize in crises, the warriors, and those who deal with on-going sustenance, the farmers. The need to respond effectively to life-threatening situations



Sarah Prince

## Facing Death

by Haruyoshi F. Ito

I have been asked several times to perform a ceremony for people who are about to die of AIDS. Also, I recently taught a Shintaido healing and meditation workshop for people with HIV in Boston. These experiences made me think about how we face death.

### **Handling the Corpse in Different Cultures**

In Japan, when someone dies, the family members are responsible for cleaning the body, putting cotton into the orifices, and dressing and preparing it for the funeral ceremony. Even if the person dies in a

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*Because of the misunderstanding of biblical philosophy and the way western medicine is often practiced, we have misplaced our idea of paradise.*



to respond effectively to life-threatening situations gave rise to a warrior ethic that values risk-taking, hierarchical organization, and focussed, decisive action. The need for predictable, long-term production of food resulted in a farming ethic that values self-prservation, communal organization, and sustainable activities. Our forbearers' division of labor was highly efficient but it also resulted in deep cultural differences with subsequent misunderstandings.

Akira Kurosawa, in his 1954 film, *The Seven Samurai*, gives a masterful depiction of the symbiotic but uneasy relationship between warriors and farmers. The story takes place in a rural area of 17th century Japan, a time of great social chaos. A village of peasant farmers is preyed upon by an army of well-armed bandits. In desperation the villagers resolve

*The tension in Shintaido between martial arts and natural movement not only gives us a unique movement art, it also addresses unresolved conflicts we all experience in modern society*

to defend themselves from sure destruction by seeking the help of freelance samurai. Although they only have food to offer for payment, they are able to find seven samurai who are willing, out of pity or for lack of any other work, to lead the resistance. The farmers in the film are shown as sniveling, cowardly fools. Their skill in coaxing crops from the soil season after season poorly equips them for facing the acute danger of battle and the possibility of violent death. By contrast, the samurai thrive on war. They struggle to out-do each other in bravery, clear thinking, and technique.

### **The Clown who Bridges the Gap**

One character, played by Toshiro Mifune, straddles both the warrior and farmer worlds but is part of neither. A farmer's child who was orphaned years before in a similar bandit raid, Mifune's character has grown to become a coarse, drunken, sword-carrying drifter. With neither a farmer's connection to the land nor a warrior's training and discipline, he has no identity except as a clown. Kurosawa surprisingly allows this character to become the ultimate hero of the story. At the crucial moment of the last battle, the clown sacrifices himself to decisively defeat the bandits.

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*misplaced our idea of paradise.*

hospital, the body is brought back to the home and it usually stays in the home at least overnight before it is brought to the cemetery for the funeral ceremony. Handling the body provides the family with direct contact and experience of the death and can be a spiritual and healing transition for them.

In the U.S. this would be considered unhygienic, and so this kind of work is done by professional specialists. Since the body is handled by these specialists after death, if we want to change our way of dealing with death, we will probably have to think about how we relate to the person just before they die.

### **Morality & Identity Crisis**

For instance, if the dying person is a gay man, sometimes as the time of death approaches, he may experience a kind of identity crisis because of a belief conflict with his family. His lover may have no legal right to make the funeral arrangements, which will be handled by the parents or family. If the family comes from a conventional religious background, there may be many conflicts of belief between the dying person and the family. The dying person wants to confirm what he did during his life, but when family members and priests who do not accept his way of life come to visit him on his deathbed, often he will feel that what he has done was wrong or that he must deny who he is.

Gay people are not accepted in our society, which still bases much of its morality on a judeo-christian foundation. Because of the moral and religious strictures against sexual pleasure-seeking, and the emotions of



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## LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

# Circles Around the “Parliament of the World’s Religions”

by Friedemann Schulz

What happened? Through skillful negotiations and great timing, Bob Brockob, the director of the American School of Japanese Arts, managed to have three of the arts participate in the “Parliament of the World’s Religions” in Chicago. This “Parliament,” in August of 1993, was the centennial celebration of the very first occasion when the world’s major religions got together in 1893. Bob also organized a workshop and performance weekend at the College DuPage in one of Chicago’s suburbs.

Yuriko Doi, the Kyogen teacher (Kyogen is the comic part of Japanese Noh theatre), Kaz Tanahashi, the calligrapher teacher and giant brush stroke artist, and Master Shintaido instructor H.F. Ito were invited to represent their art forms.

As one of the five Shintaidoists that were able to make it to Chicago to assist Mr. Ito, I wanted to document my impressions of days that we spent together, but I find it difficult to select a facet to write about.

So many images are lingering in my mind... Ito tossing salt during the purification ceremony for a burned-down Japanese temple that stood where the first Parliament took place over 100 years ago... the colorful robes, hats and ornaments of all the different religious costume at the conference... Henry Kaiser awaiting us, guitar in hand, at a Parliament performance room (he bailed us out at very short notice, after a Taiko drumming group had to cancel their performance with us)... listening to Hans Küng, the Swiss theologian, struggling with representatives of the Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, and Jewish faiths to find a common ground on “global ethics”... waiting for the Dalai Lama to arrive, amidst Tibetan monks and other hopefuls... seeing Kaz Tanahashi’s “Circle of the World” being hung up in the DuPage theatre... and then the quiet

towards “heaven” as we can, we are still not flying—or to paraphrase Joseph Cambell: the goal is not to become an angel.

I believe that our task as human beings lies exactly in the struggle that is born out of the dialogue of these seemingly polarized worlds: the visible and invisible, the manifested and the potential, money making and spiritual development, or for that matter, “The Parliament of the World’s Religions” and God.



The ten days in Chicago, with all the surprising moments of achievement and failure, were an example for me of weaving a thread between these different “realities”: an integration of 1) a vision/message; 2) a practice/discipline/art expression; and 3) the commitment of the participants/love in action/community, which created an experience that was at once idealistic, grounded, and meaningful (ten-chi-jin).

So then, what about the feelings of distance that some of us have towards our own organization, SoA (Shintaido of America)? Not too long ago we agreed on a vision, and we definitely have a practice, but perhaps we don’t feel as much a part of a community anymore?

This would make sense, because a while back regional organizations took over functions that were SoA business before. Also two of the founders, H.F. Ito and Michael Thompson, withdrew much of their direct influence around that time as well. And due to some of the time/energy saving concerns of the SoA Board of Directors (of which I am a member), we neglected during this transition to invite members to step into this vacuum. I think those are some of the reasons why it has become harder for us to identify with the national organization and

the World" being hung up in the DuPage theatre... and then the quiet backstage, just before the Kyogen play, the giant brush-painting, and Shintaido would create the "Brush with Japan" performance....

One of the attractions that initially drew me to Chicago, was the hope to participate in some of the Parliament's seminars and workshops. I wanted to get some new insights into personal and professional

questions—"fishing for free information" as Ito called it! It was interesting to see the hustle and bustle of the Parliament and listen in on some of the events, but I found that the most exciting discussions happened among ourselves, after a performance or during breakfast. It made me appreciate anew the resources of the "Shintaido University."

The theme that ran through these experiences and speaks to me, was the tension/conflict between the inner connection to a personal truth and the process of bringing that truth into the world. We discussed for instance, the difficulty of finding the spirit of Shintaido *keiko* (practice) in the various regional or national Shintaido organizations. I guess we were talking about what in the Christian world is called the "inner and outer church," referring to the discrepancy between the spiritual beliefs and experiences of the individual, and the behavior or dogma of the established religion. In other words, how can I stay inspired (in spirit) while the demands of the world call for compromise, use of power manipulation, or "sensible adjustment"? Is it even necessary to organize one's "message"?

Ito's comments when addressing some workshop participants about the idealistic and practical properties of *tenshingoso* (one of the basic Shintaido forms) shed some light on this issue for me. As it is pointed out in the *ten-chi-jin* (heaven-earth-human axis) concept, we are beings that strive towards the: Ideal world/God/Ten, but at the same time we: need the support of earth/to make a living/fight with traffic, etc. In *tenso* (an upward opening movement), even though we stretch as far

has become harder for us to identify with the national organization and its purpose.

I think we cannot rely solely on logical reasons and practical needs to motivate ourselves to keep SoA alive. I feel that we need to regain a strong sense of community in order to find meaning in the work that an organization demands. Otherwise, why bother?

The question of how that could be achieved obviously needs a communal answer, but it reminds me of the final meeting of the performers in Chicago, when someone said: "I feel very thankful for the opportunity to help! It gave me a chance to be a part and inside of something that is important to me." •••

Shintaido of America (SOA) was established to give practitioners access to qualified instruction. It produces educational materials on the practice and teaching of Shintaido.

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# In the Space between Life & Art

by Michael Thompson

## Shintaido as Performance

Recently, some Shintaido instructors and practitioners have become interested in "Shintaido as performance," leading to a number of staged events, most notably with the participation of Henry Kaiser and Kazu Yanagi in San Francisco. I personally participated in a performance with Henry in London in 1990.

When I was a student, I had the chance to study some theories of the theater and some of them came to mind as I was watching the performances in Cambridge and San Francisco. They also arose when I heard that some new practitioners found that some of the forms and imagery in Shintaido were too aggressive or violent, a recurring complaint throughout the years.

In response to this, I do not want to attempt to recapitulate the history of western theater here, but it might be instructive to look at three ideas that have emerged over the past two millennia. The first is Aristotle's theory that tragic drama should induce feelings of compassion or pity for the protagonist(s), leading to a catharsis or cleansing of the emotions. In order for this to occur, there has to be emotional identification with the characters.

Jumping ahead a thousand years or so, Bertolt Brecht (1898-1956) advocated a more cerebral approach to the theatrical experience, hoping to motivate the audience to become active politically and socially. Rather than identifying emotionally with the protagonists, he wanted the spectator to intellectually understand the underlying causes of the conditions leading to the characters' plight. To this end, he tried to eliminate theatrical illusion, trying to keep the audience anchored in what he considered to be reality.

The third philosopher of this triumvirate is Antonin Artaud (1896-1948). He remains a very influential force in modern theater, as seen in the work of Jean Genet, Jerzy Grotowski, Peter Brook, and many more. He favored a theatrical production that "infected" the audience in order to tear away what he considered to be the false veneer of civilization. He in no way sought appeal to humanity's "better nature," intellect, or nobler feelings which he felt were artificial. Much of his

(In fact, our Harvard classes never attracted more than 4 or 5 students which I took as proof that the "golden age" of the '60's was indeed long gone.)

I believe that in its early days, Shintaido was naively more theatrical, perhaps because of the roughness of *keiko* (practice, training), than it is now, when many people are taking examinations, trying to learn a complex curriculum, and when we are trying to be a viable "movement." This may be inevitable as an activity such as ours acquires a history and a hierarchy. But as far as having an effect on those around us, our heyday might well have been when we were going off to Golden Gate Park in San Francisco three or four times a week and doing intense keikos. Many people must have watched and wondered, and probably received a lasting impression from us without our knowing it over a period of four years.

Attempts to produce this effect in a more formal context usually seem to me to fall short if not flat. I think this is because we tend to confuse performance with demonstration which sometimes degenerates into a

kind of show-and-tell. And this in turn might be related to a desire to try to be all things to all people rather than adopting a more "in your face" approach where we simply do what we usually do in keiko. I think this happened in the performance we did with Henry in London and, judging by the audience reaction at the end, we did succeed in "infecting" onlookers. Watching

the video afterwards, it was clear to me that the weakest part was the *bokuto kumitachi* (two-person sword interaction) I did with Minagawa-sensei because spectacle slowed down to become demonstration, and that allowed the spectator to "take a rest" from the intensity that preceded and followed. This kind of demonstration may be technically impressive but it makes for lousy theater.

## Con Gusto

The final point I would like to make is that when you are trying to

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more theatrical*

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inspiration came from his fascination with "primitive" rituals he observed during his lifetime.

### Demonstration or Transgression?

When we place Shintaido in the context of these three philosophies (corresponding, perhaps, to the ego, superego, and id), I think it is obvious (to me, at least) that it falls into the latter mode. I remember around 10 years ago planning a demonstration to take place in the venerable Harvard Yard. I decided to just "blast out," regardless of the impression we might make, and it was very satisfying, running around and yelling at the top of our voices in this "hallowed" space. Unfortunately, or perhaps fortunately, the effect on observers was one of alienation, rather than infection, and only one person signed up afterwards — Lee Ordemann — and he wasn't even an undergraduate.

is that when you are trying to express feelings or energy from the deepest levels of your being, the techniques you use to reach these levels are often going to seem "uncivilized" to the casual or even interested observer. Add to this the fact that many of the techniques we use are derived from the martial arts, and some of what we do is definitely going to appear "violent" to an outsider or beginner. But, that's what we do and I think it is much better to do it "con gusto" than to pussyfoot around it with soothing words and evasive euphemisms. •••



## The Power of Plants: The Roots of Well-Being

(Excerpted with permission from *American Health*, May 1993, p.36).

The millions of gardeners heading back to nature this spring are also sowing the seed of good emotional health. Citing an increasing body of research, Joel Flagler, an agricultural agent at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, N.J., says that more people garden than indulge in any other leisure

activity because "it's a wonderful way to counteract stress, refresh yourself and become more productive."

Even troubled people in prisons and mental hospitals report that working with nonthreatening, nonjudgemental green things releases nurturing instincts and makes them feel useful and renewed. As Flagler puts it, "Plants touch people other human beings can't reach."

Elderly and disabled participants in gardening programs also enjoy a special feeling of liberation. "Role reversal occur when patients who require constant care become caregivers for living things," says Flagler. "They experience an increased feeling of self-worth

and a more positive outlook on life."

Just looking at plants makes all of us feel better. In an experiment, Dr. Roger Ulrich, an environmental psychologist and an associate dean at the College of Architecture at Texas A&M University, showed subjects a stressful film about accidents in the workplace; next, some viewed a video of landscapes and others a tape of urban scenes. Measurements of blood pressure, heart rate and muscle tension taken before and after the films showed that the volunteers who looked at the natural scenery recovered from the stressful experience much faster. Says Ulrich, "It appears that nature has a measurable restorative effect with respect to stress."

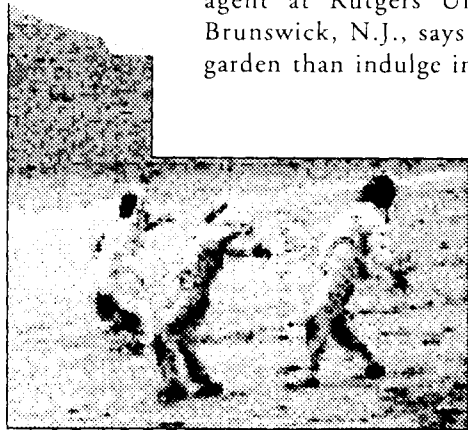


photo: Sarah Prince

## PRACTITIONER'S CORNER

# Return of the Wanderer

by Annelie Wilde

It was an *eiko* day on an *eiko* field yet I was feeling fragmented (*eiko*: one of the basic forms of Shintaido).

It had been months since I had practiced Shintaido. The warmups had been casual. We were all long-time practitioners and were expected to get ourselves limbered up without detailed instructions. Jokes and chit chat ricocheted around the circle of bodies. Even though many of these people had attended my wedding, I felt completely apart from the group, a stranger. My attention wandered to the surroundings. A bird was singing, three descending notes of molten gold. A midsummer bird. You don't hear that particular call in spring. I don't know its name yet. There was the dull background drone of suburban traffic. The shouts of kids playing in the neighborhood. Two overweight joggers circled the field giving us a wide berth. One of the men had his knee in a brace. I wondered why he chose jogging for exercise when he was clearly in pain. The sky was that particular shade of warm brilliant blue that only occurs when the trees are in full and mature leaf. There was a warm wind blowing creating ripples in the grass. Since it was too early in the afternoon for the backyard barbecues the air smelled good.

Yup it was an *eiko* day alright. The wind positively beckoned me. Come on, come on - run with me, it teased, leave it all behind - your earth bound body, your silly insecurities, your petty responsibilities. My earthbound body ignored the wind. FEAR spoke. The fear that is always within me. It shifted in my gut and expanded. "Forget about it kid, won't work, not today, not any day, your glory days are over. There is no escape."

Meanwhile we were sumo wrestling. Dive into your partner's gut, and push with everything you've got. Usually I like sumo. It gives me an outlet for all my civilization constrained emotions. This was a new variation on sumo though. Today the receiver



down and carried on. This is nothing new. I've been here before. It doesn't make sense and yet it's one of the reasons I study Shintaido. I survived Michelle.

We were given a chance to sit down while Michael, our instructor for that day, worked out the combinations for the next exercise. Since we are an odd number I volunteered for the sidelines. Unfortunately for me Michael taught school for many years so he is familiar with the student who sits in the back of the class hoping to be invisible. He

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*I could let go and cry, leave the dojo,  
and go meditate, or I could hang in  
there. I decided to hang. I've been here  
before. It doesn't make sense and yet it's  
one of the reasons I study Shintaido*

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shook his head and made me part of a trio. Unwillingly I looked into the eyes of my husband. Although he is a kind man and a skillful Shintaido practitioner he is not one of my favorite partners. He probably knows more about me than anyone else on earth. Mean-spirited

creature that I am I won't permit any one human being to know all. We know each other too intimately off the field so I hold back from him in Shintaido. He sees that I am not in a particularly sunny state but after ten years he is used to my dark mutterings and grumbings and probably doesn't realize how close to the edge I am. And if he did realize there wouldn't be much he could do about it anyway.

The third member of this trio is Bill. Despite his

though. Today the receiver was supposed to step to one side allowing the attacker's momentum to carry him into the ground in a graceful forward roll. Well I roll about as well as a box and my panic made me fight gravity. So as my partner stepped out of my forward momentum I lurched forward arms flailing like a drunkard while remaining stubbornly upright. We changed partners and I got Joe Z. Joe has been my teacher for many years now. I am confident he can take all I give and I trust him to get me to the ground without killing me in the process. So I gave him my all. It didn't take long. Within seconds I was eating dust. It is always a relief when I finally touch the earth and discover anew how much I like its smell.



"Eiko" means "glory"

We moved on to *boh* practice (large wooden staff). The fear that had woken up during warmups had metamorphosed into panic during sumo. While still under tight control I could feel its spiky projections extending throughout my body. Soon I would be consumed. Holding onto my boh I turned and faced—Michelle. Shit! Of all the people to have to confront now. Although she is a generous partner, big and bright in her movements, she is also very demanding. She gives no quarter, takes no prisoners. I can't run and I can't hide from Michelle. The animal inside me was beginning to roar "Get us outta here!"

I screwed up my face as I felt myself about to disintegrate into a million tiny fragments. "Are you OK?" she asked. I wasn't. I could very easily be hysterical. I considered the options for a nanosecond. I could let go and cry, leave the *dojo* (practice field), and go meditate or do a few easy laps with the fat joggers and all this would go away, or I could hang in there. I decided to hang. I sucked in some oxygen, told the demon inside me to go lie



photo: Bill Burtis

The third member of this trio is Bill. Despite his social easiness and charismatic charm his episodes of moodiness betray him as more of a loner than I am. Nevertheless I know that he will be kind and tolerate my ineptitude. The practice starts. The guys work on their boh technique and I, using my two standard defense moves, concentrate on survival.

Nothing is right with the world. I feel awkward, ungainly and unlovable. Despair takes over and I throw down my boh. I glance towards my fellow students for understanding and start to run. I look up through the infinite blue and hold out my arms in supplication and run... and run... and run.... Gradually the healing begins, I feel lighter, I can run faster, my legs are now pumping out of my control and an eiko scream begins in my stomach, wells up through my diaphragm escaping at last as a screamyellmoangroanhowl. Released at last from the cage of my own fears I can slow down, stop running and rejoin my class.

The group enfolds me as if I had never left. I can smile now. I feel whole again. I live my life within my head and so I have to keep returning to Shintaido over and over and over again to find the rest of me. Shintaido teaches "the body is the message of the universe." We end as we always do kneeling in a circle for a final brief meditation to acknowledge and thank the group, the instructor and the surroundings for our experiences. •••

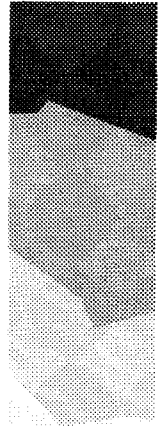


photo: Sarah Prince



*Farmers & Warriors, continued from page 1*

The final scene in the film shows the villagers celebrating their victory in the rice paddies, singing and planting rice in unison. Their dignity has been restored with the peace. The three remaining samurai observe the festivities from a distance, four graves looming on a hillock behind them. The samurai are no longer heroes but homeless, heartsick men in search of work. They turn to leave the village remarking, "It is the farmers who won."

**Is the Warrior Ethic Obsolete?**

In spite of his obvious preference for the warrior way, it is not strange that Kurosawa would conclude with such an observation. At the time the film was made, Japan was recovering from the devastation of World War II. Two momentary flashes in the clear winter skies over Hiroshima and Nagasaki had incinerated, for a generation of Japanese, any desire for war. All sectors of the population were working single-mindedly to forge the nation's swords into the plowshares that would

*As much as Kurosawa admired the warrior ethic, he seemed unable to imagine a future for samurai in the modern world. Shintaido attempts to translate the essence of the highly developed warrior ethic found in the Japanese martial arts into a modern, universal medium.*

break ground for a new, world-class economy. The film's glorification of the samurai spirit is tinged with a deep sadness over its passing. As much as Kurosawa admired the warrior ethic, he seemed unable to imagine a future for samurai in the modern world.

Shintaido was also born out of the ashes of World War II, and like Kurosawa, acknowledges that a way of life based on warring makes no sense in the nuclear age. But Shintaido refuses to send the samurai off into the sunset. It recognizes the vital and continuing importance of the warrior ethic in all human culture. Shintaido attempts to translate the essence of the highly developed warrior ethic found in the Japanese martial arts into a modern, universal medium.

occasions, often in the crucial moments in our lives, when we need the clear thinking and decisive action of the warrior. These moments may come to a community responding to a natural disaster, or to an individual facing a spiritual turning-point. Either situation may require the warrior's courage; a willingness to put your life on the line.

Few in our society are actually trained as warriors for such moments. Instead of training, we consume crisis situations vicariously every day through books and films, mesmerized by the stories of those who live close to death. Emergency-room doctors, detectives, and gangsters are the bread and butter of night-time television. As much as we may long for a calm, idyllic life to escape the constant, low-level tension of modern life, we still hunger for the excitement of a crisis, whether in a courtroom or a boxing ring. Second-hand experiences of crises provide the adrenaline rush but are unlikely to teach anyone the skills and attitudes needed for real situations. We are also duped into believing that fulfillment in life can only be found in a constant state of arousal.

**Building Society & the Individual**

Training to think and act sustainably, in the long-term interests of ourselves and others, has obviously been lacking in industrial societies. Fortunately many people in recent years have become aware of our addiction to the quick-fix and are slowly beginning to re-learn the farmer ethic. There are now increasing opportunities to study and practice holistic disciplines such as natural-pathic medicine and organic gardening. New and old movement arts have also become

popular in recent years, stressing nurturing and sensitive care of one's body. "Sustainability" has become the favorite buzzword of environmentalists. These are clearly steps in the right direction.



But sustainability alone will not build vibrant individuals or societies. In Shintaido practice I experience this fact through my body. I practice the *yoki-kei* ("nurturing life-force") movement program daily and benefit from it greatly. However, if I do only *yoki-kei* practice for a long time, I find my focus becoming fuzzy and the force of gravity hard to resist. Caring too much for my body can eventually make me a prisoner of my

martial arts into a modern, universal medium.

## Shintaido Grows toward Sustainability

In the beginning, the warrior ethic dominated Shintaido. The young martial artists who participated in its inception, did so by committing themselves to an unbelievably rigorous practice. After working at various jobs all day, they would meet to practice for hours in the middle of the night, living on very little sleep. They would even fast at times to further stretch the limits of their physical and psychological boundaries. But once the goal had been reached, the intensity of the practice could not be sustained. As more people joined, including those who were elderly or out-of-shape, Shintaido has increasingly adopted a "softer" approach, cultivating long-term health and body awareness. Through the *kenko-taiso* (health exercise) program, the farmer ethic has become an integral part of Shintaido practice. Thus the farmer and the warrior meet again, this time in Shintaido.

The value of combining the two modes of being in one art should not be underestimated. Like the Mifune character in the film, people today are confused about their identities. Socio-technological circumstances no longer require the majority of people to live within the disciplines of either the farmer or warrior. Most people wander through their relationships, work, and spiritual journeys, neither responding effectively to short-term crises nor able to sustain productive results over the long term.

Our industrial society provides ample evidence of the warrior ethic inappropriately applied. Linear, short-term approaches are regularly used to treat chronic conditions in all sectors of our society from health care to business. Ironically, even farmers today apply a warped, warrior approach to growing crops. Potent chemical fertilizers are used to pump-up the fertility of the soil for one season's harvest, destroying the vital soil organisms that assure the long-term health of the land. Poisons are then applied to "nuke" one-time weeds and pests; the residues inexorably move through food chains and water tables. The crisis approach to life successfully eliminated many of the acute diseases that shortened lives in the past and gave industrialized nations a material prosperity unequalled in history. But trying to sustain this short-term approach over the decades is inflicting systemic damage on our bodies, psyches, and the environment. Perpetual warfare fails as a way of life.

## Training for Crisis

Although the vestiges of a warrior ethic wreak havoc in our world today, we cannot assume that the warrior way is unnecessary. There are



*Toshiro Mifune in The Seven Samurai*

resist. Caring too much for my body can eventually make me a prisoner of my physical limitations. It can be a great relief to switch to the sharp movements and concentration of the martial arts. Shintaido's martial movements provide an especially potent antidote to any sense of self-confinement. By extending the knee, the fist, the sword, the voice, and the

consciousness as far as they will go beyond all boundaries, I can experience previously unimagined possibilities.

Shintaido not only teaches sustainability and the martial arts side by side, it also helps us learn when to apply each mode of being. A good instructor knows when to rally the students to fiercely challenge their limits and when to slow down for stretching, laughing, or meditating.

*continued on page 7*

## EVENTS

## CALENDAR

July 1-4, 1994: Next Wave, the Shintaido of America National Gasshuku (retreat) in western Massachusetts.

Contact Kathleen Mulica (508) 393-3575 or David Franklin (617) 783-9424.

August 27-28, 1994: Pacific Shintaido Meditation Workshop in the Bay Area.

Contact Connie Borden-Sheets (415) 584-0815

January 14-16, 1995 (tentative): Pacific Shintaido kangeiko (winter retreat) in the Bay Area).

Contact Sandra Bengtsson (415) 885-5098

February, 1995 (tentative): Shintaido Northeast kangeiko (winter retreat) in New England.

Contact Matthew Shorten (508) 355-6840

*Facing Death, continued from page 1*

jealously and possessiveness, sexual diseases such as venereal disease were driven underground. Those having these diseases were stigmatized as having broken the taboos. They were judged from a moralistic standpoint and shunned by the rest of society.

A gay person may feel he is being judged from a biblical point of view. Also, if he is without a commonly accepted belief system about what happens after death, he may have many doubts and questions: Where will I go after I die? Will I go to heaven or hell? If I confess to the “sin” of being gay, will my family and the priest say I will go to heaven?

Before the actual transition of death, the traditional values of the family and religion sometimes destroy a gay person’s determination to live on in the face of death. If their choice is either to maintain their identity and risk isolation from their family and maybe eternal damnation, or at the last minute before death deny the life they have led, it is very confusing. Some people, arriving at this crossroads, may give up—they may lose their will to live and their determination to die with dignity. For them, it is natural to be the way they are, so it is not fair to judge them from a biblical point of view.

**Beyond a Technical Fix**

Because of the misunderstanding of biblical philosophy and the way western medicine is often practiced, we have misplaced our idea of paradise. We have put it all into the material container of the “American Dream.” We postpone facing death as much as possible. The time has come for our whole society to recognize and accept that death is a part of life. Dying of AIDS is not a death sentence. Being infected with HIV is not a personal failure. We have to change our sense of judgment.

thinking about it. People with HIV have developed a strong support system. The sense of sharing and community is more advanced than that of society in general. Because of their situation, their determination of how to live is based on facing death.

If you have some common medical problem such as food poisoning, you would go to the doctor right away, which makes it more likely that you will be cured. But if you have a disease which carries a moral stigma, a disease which has been driven underground, you will tend to postpone admitting the problem and seeking treatment. Of course, if the disease is communicable, the longer people wait before seeking help, the more the disease will spread. So in some sense, we can say that the spread of diseases such as gonorrhea, syphilis, or AIDS are partly caused by a judgmental social climate—they are caused by a combination of extreme pleasure seeking, jealousy, and religious or moral judgement.

This makes me think that even if we find a technical solution to the problem of AIDS, if we don’t change our mentality, another similar problem will occur soon. But beyond that, even if we learn to control almost any disease, I believe that death is part of our fate and part of our life.

**The Body of the Buddha**

In the East, death is thought of as a type of buddhahood; in fact, the corpse is somewhat affectionately known by the nickname “the body of Buddha.” But aside from a judeo-christian idea of judgement or the materialistic point of view that after death we completely cease to exist, there are not many alternative ways of thinking about death in

of the AIDS epidemic is often a spontaneous re-discovery of this philosophy. Jesus said that “The stone that the mason throws away can become the foundation of a new temple.” I wonder if the people that society has tried to push aside and ignore have ended up re-inventing a philosophy which our whole society desperately needs to heal itself.

Maybe Communism is not finished after all. Maybe a new kind of “communism,” not based on Marxism, but on hope, faith, and love, is beginning.

Consider the question of whether the cup is half empty or half full: a man dying of AIDS doesn’t want to lose his chance to keep enjoying life, he wants to have the same happiness that others had a chance to have. But perhaps he should consider what he can do with the rest of his life, rather than dwelling on how much he has to lose. What exists in this life is opportunity: opportunity to share, to love, to learn. In this sense, the situation of the dying person is no different from any of us.

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*If we understand that we come from nothingness and return to nothingness, then it’s much easier to help and love each other along the way*

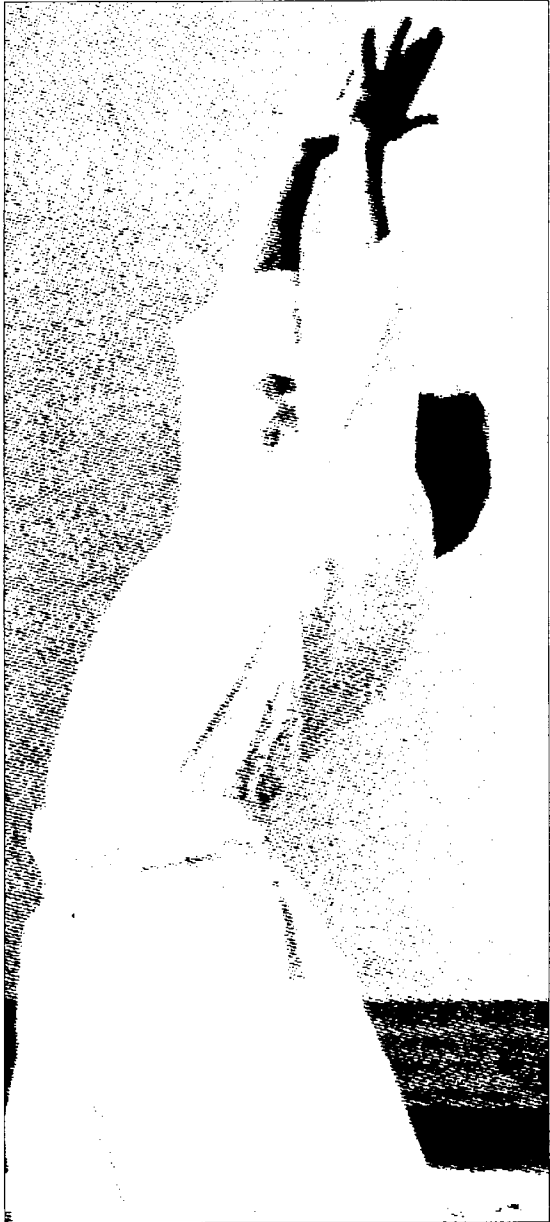
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**Changing our Sense of Values**

How does all this relate to Shintaido? Remember the Japanese expression that has been adopted by Shintaido: ‘One life, one chance.’ This does not mean that we have only one life, and one chance to get everything right. It means, ‘one chance in this life.’ It means we should approach every

personal failure. We have to change our sense of judgment.

If we study what is happening within the HIV-positive community, we can learn a lot about what our whole society should be doing. The HIV-positive community is facing death, while most other people avoid

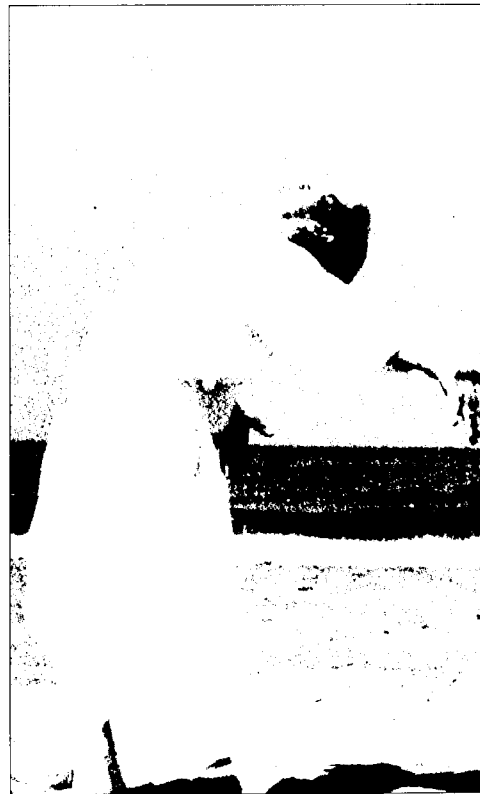


completely cease to exist, there are not many alternative ways of thinking about death in western culture.

To briefly review the course of a human life, when we are born, we come from nothing. When we die, we can't take what we accomplish in this life with us. If our sense of value is focused on our present existence in this world, we will always want more—our worldly desire has no limits. But in the East, there is an implicit understanding that our life is given to us as an opportunity to train ourselves to discover the true meaning of our existence.

### Back to Nothingness

If we understand that we come from *mu* (nothingness) and return to *mu*, then it's much easier to help, support, and love each other along the way. It seems that what is happening in the gay community as a result



of being gay might be making, and making in this life." It means we should approach every situation as though this were our only chance to do the right thing, this one time, because we may die before we get another chance. We finish each *keiko* (practice session) with a bow. Our next *keiko* actually begins right then, not when we enter the *dojo* (practice space) and bow at the beginning of the next *keiko*, but at the end of the last *keiko*, with our final bow.

Sogyal Rinpoche said in *The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying*: "Our state of mind at death is all-important. If we die in a positive frame of mind, we can improve our next birth, despite our negative karma. The last thought and emotion that we have before we die has an extremely powerful determining effect on our immediate future."

In the future, I hope that we will change our sense of values so that we will be judged by our answer to these questions:

How much did I share?

How much did I support others?

How well did I take care of the world? •••



*Farmers & Warriors, continued from page 5*

This skill has practical applications in everyday life. Any group of people, from a family to a large corporation, should be able to thrive on a cyclical, on-going basis, as well as to occasionally mobilize for short, intense, special tasks. Stagnation requires an infusion of the warrior. Burn-out indicates that more of the farmer's slow, steady improvements are needed.

### Living with Complexity

Like oil and water, we need both the farmer and the warrior in our lives, but as the story of the "Seven Samurai" depicts, the two modes don't mix easily. Shintaido optimistically embraces both within the practice of one art form. We know from experience that this approach works, but we

should be prepared for inevitable conflicts that arise from the dual goals. Sometimes it is difficult to know the difference between nurturing and indulgence, or to clearly distinguish between challenging and destructive behavior. Learning to make such distinctions is part of our study and an essential part of life.

Shintaido would be much easier to publicize and more likely to attract practitioners if it concentrated on teaching either martial arts or health exercise. But it would then lose its unique power. In this day and age, the approaches of the farmer or warrior alone are insufficient to meet the awesome challenges we face. The world needs farmers with guts, and warriors with roots. •••

## THANKS and OTHER NOTES

from the editor

### Thanks to Those Before

I would like to take the chance to correct an oversight from our previous issue, which is to thank two people who made *Body Dialogue* in its current format possible: Tomi Nagai-Rothe and Nurit Arbel. They put an enormous amount of work into transforming the humble SoA newsletter into the magazine format you are reading. I would also like to thank all the contributors and copy editors for the current issue, and I hope to hear more from you in the future. Which leads to my next note ...

### Request for Articles

*Body Dialogue* would like to hear from you, whether you are an experienced practitioner or a rank beginner. Articles should be on topics related to Shintaido but of general interest. The best format is a Macintosh floppy disk (ASCII text) accompanied by a print out. Typed, double spaced is also ok. Send it to:

Body Dialogue, c/o Shintaido of America  
PO Box 381672  
Cambridge, MA 02238

You can also send it by e-mail to:

Shintaido@aol.com

For questions or information, call David at  
(617) 783-9424

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**NEW** *Inside Shintaido—an October Gathering* (\$20)  
 Shot on Cape Cod, Massachusetts, this half-hour documentary takes the viewer inside a Shintaido retreat. In this temporary community, beginning and advanced students practice together and discuss their thoughts and feelings about Shintaido. This video is especially useful for instructors or others who need an audio-visual aid to help present Shintaido at lectures, demonstrations, or conferences

**NEW** *Life Burn* (\$20)  
 If you missed the live painting / shintaido / music performance collaborations at the Theater Yugen in San Francisco in August 1992, it's not too late to see them. Featuring painting by Kazu Yanagi; music by Henry Kaiser and others; and Shintaido movement led by H.F. Ito, this one-hour video includes footage from all four nights of exciting improvisational performances.

**NEW** *Kenko Taiso Instruction Video* (\$20)  
 Produced by On-Site Enterprises, this 50-minute video presents the classic Shintaido *kenko-taiso* warm-up sequence with detailed explanation. The 15-minute warm-up sequence, done in a standing position, is an easy-to-follow stretching and strengthening routine that is excellent for those who are relatively new to body movement. Makes an excellent gift to introduce friends to Shintaido.

***Kata and Kumite* (\$70)**

H.F. Ito gives instruction for *kaiho-kei* (opening and challenging) exercises with Michael Thompson and Robert Bréant. Includes: *kaiho-kei* group practice, *bojutsu kata* (*hi no kata*, *kaze no kata*, *sho-dan*, *nidan*), *jojutsu kata* (*taishi*, *hojo*), *karate kata* (*sanchin*, *tensho*), *kumibo* (*bo vs. bo*) arrangements, *kumitachi* (*sword vs. sword*) nos. 1 -9. 120 minutes.

***Kenko Taiso and Meditation* (\$35)**

H.F. Ito and Michelle Grenier demonstrate Shintaido morning *kenko taiso* (health exercise), *wakame taiso* (seaweed partner exercise), and the ten-position standing and walking meditation forms. 45 minutes.

***Shintaido: the Body is a Message of the Universe***

by Hiroyuki Aoki (\$20 / \$15\*)

First published as *Shintaido: a New Art of Movement and Life Expression*, for ten years this textbook has served as a gateway and guidebook to the practice of Shintaido. Includes sections on the history and philosophy as well as detailed explanations of technique. 120 pages, illustrated with photos. This second printing features more information about the ten Shintaido meditation positions.

*The following five booklets are available individually or as a set for \$25 (postpaid):*

***Tenshingosho and Eiko***  
 by Hiroyuki Aoki (\$10)

This booklet is for Shintaido practitioners what the Diamond Sutra is for Buddhists: a concise yet thorough description of the basis of practice. *Tenshingosho* and *eiko* are two of the fundamental movements of Shintaido, which embody philosophies and prescriptions for human growth. Contains practical advice for all levels plus "Advice for Instructors."

***The Zero Point of Consciousness and the World of Ki* (\$5)**

In this interview Mr. Aoki describes his experience of reaching the "space of *mu*" (nothingness). He also discusses the unique understanding of *ki* energy (life force) that he came to in synthesizing Shintaido body movement.

***Origins, a History of Shintaido***  
 by Shiko Hokari (\$7)

One of the founding members of Shintaido relates the stories of *Rakutenkai* (the group that developed Shintaido), and the conditions of society and consciousness in the late 1960s in Japan. Contains insights into the continuing evolution of Shintaido forms from their earliest manifestations.

***Improvisation and the Body* (\$3.50)**

Japanese jazz musician Toshinori Kondo discusses Shintaido, performance, and music in an interview with French composer Gilbert Dalmasso. Illustrates how one artist benefitted from Shintaido by going beyond his limits.

***Student Handbook***  
 by Faith Ingulsrud (\$3)

Written by an American Shintaidoist who grew up in Japan, this handbook helps ease the culture shock sometimes experienced by Americans encountering Japanese customs and terminology in Shintaido. Includes a glossary and description of the basic structure of a Shintaido practice.

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