



BODY Dialogue

Letting Go

By Annelie Wilde

It was the last keiko (class) of what had been, so far, a cold, wet and uncomfortable gasshuku (retreat/workshop). Fortunately, the sun had at last come out and the blue New England Fall sky was an inspiration for aozora taiso (blue sky exercise; the "Ah" and "Oh" movements from Tenshingoso). The group's energy brightened. The large grassy dojo was surrounded by tall pines, an inspiration for Eiko (Glory, one of the core movements of Shintaido, a running prayer). After eiko practice we moved into kumite (partner) practice, deceptively simple. Open in "A," find your partner's center and cut into it; lower your koshi (center of gravity, the middle of your body) and your partner will go to ground. The added fillip had the leader move the "sword" hand in a zigzag motion. It could be kaishoken (open hand) or musoken (soft hand) or a combination of both. It could reach back to the past, probe the future, or explore the present. The effect was, to quote Michael, "like meat tenderizer". It was powerful.

My partner was open and receptive and I was being lazy until the sensei caught me and observed that I was driving my partner into the ground. "Finish in "O," look towards the horizon," he corrected me. I changed my movement and the feeling was better. I described this movement in particular because I think it is emblematic of how

Continued on p.3

INSIDE

Shintaido One-Liners and Contest	2
A Brief Encounter with the Boh	4
The Year in Pictures	4

Kumite: An Email Exchange

By Senior Instructor David Franklin, Peter Nussbaumer, and Patrick Bouchaud

[Editor's Note: The following is an edited version of an email exchange about Shintaido kumite or partner practice, specifically the nature and timing of attacking/receiving.]

Dear Patrick and Peter,

From the follower's point of view in Shintaido, we often study how to follow completely and totally, with all of our faculties, and without any preconceptions or thoughts about what will happen, what is happening, or what should happen. As a spiritual exercise, this gives us a concrete way or method to aim towards becoming empty.

On the practical side, it means that through the medium of touch, we become more and more sensitive to the intentions of the leader. We train ourselves to feel his/her intentions more precisely, and to respond more quickly, more naturally, with our whole body, and with fewer and fewer obstructions. Obviously, sensing and responding to the intentions of the other person has practical relevance for martial arts. Often as we continue in this direction, the physical touch become less and less necessary, as the connection is more direct.

As we continue this kind of following exercise, we struggle to break through the boundary that separates "sensing" and "responding" and let them be completely unified. Likewise we try to break through the boundary between the follower and the leader. I guess this is the meaning of the Shintaido saying:

In kumite, 1 + 1 = 1.

So it seems that from this relatively concrete martial arts goal (sensing the other's intention) we are lead to a philosophical realm. As for what kind of intention the leader should express in kumite, I'll leave that for your nimble minds to work out.

Best, David

Continued on p.5

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Eighteen Shintaido One-Liners From the SNE Fall Gasshuku

Shintaido: "Quit Drinking"

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Shintaido: "Never Be Bored"

Shintaido: "People Will Stop Badgering You"

Shintaido: "Learn to Dodge Things with Your Eyes Closed"

Shintaido: "Travel and See the World"

Shintaido: "There's Something About It"

Shintaido: "Escape Your Family"

Shintaido: "Look People in the Eyes"

Shintaido: "Change Your Character"

Shintaido: "Stop Trying to be the Best"

Shintaido: "Even if Your Head Doesn't Want it, Your Body Goes"

Shintaido: "Once You Start Opening, You Can't Stop"

"Shintaido: "Makes Tough Guys Cry"

Shintaido: "It Hurts but It's Necessary"

Shintaido: "Desperation"

Shintaido: "Saved"

CONTEST: If you were marketing Shintaido, how would you define Shintaido in one line? Send in your best effort. The winning entry will be printed in the next *Body Dialogue*, and there is a prize for the winner. Send entries to the *Body Dialogue* editor at the address below.

DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSIONS

The next issue of *Body Dialogue* will be in July, 2007.

Please submit articles, poems, pictures to the editor at:

newsletter@shintaido.org. Deadline for submissions is May 15, 2007.

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Letting Go

continued from p. 1

Shintaido incorporates both physical and psychological components of life.

The previous evening at the gasshuku we had spent some time in discussion, ostensibly to discuss Michael Thompson's sketch of what Shintaido can be, what its influences are, and some of the practices that it encompasses. He had been motivated to do this because a Yoga teacher had said that in that discipline teachers were encouraged to spend some time discussing Yoga's history and putting it into context for their students. Inevitably, we drifted into the usual discussion of what is Shintaido and how do we present it in such a way that we can attract new practitioners and grow?

The usual list of benefits was listed: health promotion, spirituality, meditation, artistic outlet. A suggestion was made, perhaps in jest, that Shintaido could be advertised as prolonging youthfulness, and, another, that Shintaido is emotionally healing, in fact, a form of therapy. For reasons that I couldn't articulate clearly at the time, this idea made me nervous. Initially I thought that this was because there are people who have experienced such severe traumas that only strongly entrenched defense mechanisms enable them to function. To bring them into Shintaido and lead them into eiko or indeed any kind of bring-you-to-your-knees kind of keiko that dissolves these defense mechanisms is foolish at best and dangerous at worst.

Shintaido is powerful, and sometimes we who practice it do not understand what forces we unleash. For example during the same keiko I had another partner who was so sensitive that he responded before I felt that I had even begun to cut him. My first thought was that he was doing a kind of *hitori keiko* (self practice) and did not need me. He was off in his own world responding to some internal stimuli. To test my theory I consciously and deliberately damped down my cutting technique and my feeling, and lo and behold, his response modulated too.

It is only on reflection that I can explain why I think it not helpful to advertise Shintaido as therapy or even as emotionally healing. While I was at the gasshuku a friend told me a story about dealing with a dearly loved family member. He had given love and support (physical, emotional, and financial) over and over again. The more he gave, the bigger the requirements became. Seeing that the needs and wants were never going to end my friend realized that his constant giving had been a way of holding on. He had to let go, to allow the individual to grow.

Isn't that exactly what we do in kumite? We cut into our partner's world and then let go. If our practice is good we finish in "O" and send them out into the world with a good feeling. In kumite as in life, it is necessary to detach with love.

When I came to Shintaido, 20 years ago, my world was small and my defense mechanisms huge. I hadn't had a particularly traumatic life, just the ordinary slings and arrows that everyone experiences by the time they reach 30. Then Shintaido broke down my armor and left me vulnerable, and I hated that feeling. I did not want to be vulnerable. I wanted to be safe and impervious to pain. I spent a lot of time angry, questioning and doubtful, promising myself that I would quit. Looking back I can see that I was angry because Shintaido didn't "fix me" and I wanted an easy fix. I wanted something outside of myself to make me feel better.

Well, that's not the way to grow up. Shintaido prepared me to open up to other opportunities that allowed me to grow and mature. I'm not "fixed" in the way I wanted to be but my world is no longer small. It has expanded along with my Shintaido practice. Shintaido made it possible for me to let go of my old ideas and be able to change.

Michael Thompson once defined a cult as an organization that holds onto its members without letting go. By this definition Shintaido is not a cult although it may feel that way to a newcomer. This is even reflected in the movement. In kumite the leader offers his wrists for the receiver to hold onto. At any time the receiver can let go. Likewise, Shintaido instructors do not present themselves as gurus. The instructor is a leader, an example, a guide, or a director, but never a savior. This is an important distinction and it behooves us well to keep it in mind.

August 2003 annelie



Annelie at SNE Kangeiko 2006

A Brief Encounter With the Boh

By Linda Foss

This is what I've experienced in two classes using the boh, or stick. The stick is an extension of one's body, not only in the sense that your range of contact is increased, or that you can do or act through the boh, but also that you can sense or receive through it. You can feel the ferocity, the complexity of your partner's emotion. There is one beginner exercise where the two partners stand face-to-face, bohs crossed. They maintain a contact point between the sticks as they slowly bring them from side to side. There is a "communion of light" at the contact point between the sticks.

I am no warrior, but my experience in these classes makes me wonder about the intimacy between combatants. I am also learning the formality/etiquette of combat, that if observed and respected might, paradoxically, be a door to ending combat, to healing injury. The respect for the form leads to respect for your partner/opponent.

Thank you, Connie!

Thank you, Naomi!

SOME EXAMPLES OF BOH



Joe and Rob in Nerei



Jennifer and Gianni in Nerei

SHINTAIDO 2006: THE YEAR IN PICTURES



Ito at Pac Shin Kangeiko 2007



Tenso with bokuto



Cutting in Bellingham

Continued on following page

Kumite Exchange

Continued from p. 1

Dear David:

You wrote: "As for what kind of intention the leader should express in kumite, I'll leave that for your nimble minds to work out. When I asked my Aikido teacher if there should be intention (e.g. radiation of "good" energy) or not (state of mushin when guiding people through techniques), he answered: try it out yourself. As I doubt that I can do either one on a high level, I don't have an answer yet.

As for your ideas about following, I think I get your point and can appreciate the thoughts. It makes sense in an exercise like hikari, but what about the type of kumite we did at the workshop where the roles are much clearer in the beginning? When does the attacker switch into the receiving state, after the first attack is defended against? Am I as an attacker only "allowed" to attack by the leader, and would therefore be following from the very start? A little clarification would be appreciated.

Best, Peter

Dear Peter,

I think the attacker should not try to switch into a receiving state too easily. If they do, the receiver can be deprived of an important opportunity to grow beyond their imagined or self-imposed limitations. In that situation, the receiver doesn't really need to do the technique well, and the kumite can easily become phony -- some kind of superficial cooperation. The dynamic of kumite should be that the attacker attacks sincerely, and the receiver is subject to the requirements of martial arts in general -- to handle or manage the attack successfully -- and also the specific requirement of most Shintaido kumite, namely "affirming self and affirming the other."

However, some of the above is dependent on the specific context: who is the *senpai* (senior student) and who is the *kohai* (junior student)? A *kohai* attacking *senpai* should absolutely not compromise, and ideally the *senpai* will lead them into a "space" or situation where they must follow and become receptive. Here is a concrete example: I attack a sensei with all my power, and they throw me with some *nagewaza* (technique). At that moment, I become receptive, or we can say I follow, because I must.

On the other side, if a *senpai* is attacking a *kohai*, the *senpai* might allow themselves to go into a receiving state a little more easily, because the goal should be an educational process, rather than to dominate the other person. By this, the *kohai* is learning what effect their receiving is having, and comparing it to the effect they should be aiming for. Then the *senpai*, ideally, should gradually make it more and more difficult..

Does that help?

Best, Davd

Shintaido 2006: The Year in Pictures

Continued from p. 4

Some Examples of Kumite



Good following!



Hikari



Mary Cutting Rob K.

*SHINTAIDO 2006:
The Year in Pictures
continued from p. 5*



Kirioroshi



Master Instructor Michael Thompson



August Boh Workshop with Ito Sensei



Warmups Pac Shin Kankeiko 2006



Stretching



Tomi and Bellingham Group

VIDEOS

Kenko Taiso II & III: (\$20)

Demonstrates a series of more advanced health exercises and stretches that two people can do together, and introduction to group warm-up movements. Also includes sections on self-massage and *seiza* meditation with the diamond mudra. Excellent for instructors or group leaders who are leading group warm-up exercises.

Golf-Do (\$20)

Master Shintaido Instructor H.F. Ito teaches the Way of Golf, exercises designed to help golfers: (1) stretch and limber up; (2) relax; (3) focus and concentrate; and (4) enjoy. Using a golf club instead of the traditional six-foot oak staff, Ito demonstrates how to stretch, relax the body, and prepare the mind for a pleasurable round of golf. Golf-Do provides insights into the unification of mind and body that produces the best of golf.

Life Burn (\$20)

Document of the live painting / Shintaido / music performance collaborations at the Theater Yugen in San Francisco in August 1992. Featuring painting by Kazu Yanagi; music by Henry Kaiser and others; and Shintaido movement led by H.F. Ito.

Roots of Shintaido (\$20)

Footage from the 2001 West Coast winter retreat in Juarez Springs New Mexico. Two lectures by Master Instructor H. F. Ito on the history, lineage, and philosophy of Shintaido in relation to Japanese karate and sword traditions, footage showing the relation of fundamental open-hand techniques to closed-fist techniques, and bokuto movements 1-9.

Set of all 4 videos above: \$70

DVDS

Kata and Kumite (\$15)

H.F. Ito gives instruction for kaiho-kei (opening and challenging) exercises with Michael Thompson and Robert Breant. 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).

Kenko Taiso Instruction (\$20)

Produced by On-Site Enterprises, presents the classic Shintaido *kenko-taiso* warm-up sequence with detailed explanation. The 15-minute warm-up sequence is an easy-to-follow routine that is excellent for those who are relatively new to body movement.

Taimyo/Tenshingoso (15)

Master Instructor Masashi Minagawa performs Taimyo Kata, then leads a group of students through Tenshingoso. This beautiful DVD, set in an English park, provides a step by step illustration of the Taimyo Kata form, as well as basic Tenshingoso technique."

Self Care Program for Hospice Caregivers (\$15)

Master Instructor H.F. Ito leads hospice caregivers in a Shintaido program designed to relieve the stress of their emotionally demanding jobs. Master Ito uses the Shintaido techniques of Kenko Taiso, Wakame, and Tenshingoso to teach caregivers how to relax and meditate.

BOOKS

Cutting the Blue Sky

various authors (\$20)

An anthology of the best articles from the Shintaido of America newsletter over the past 25 years. There are 32 articles by students and instructors, 33 photos, 162 pages, grouped by topics: the roots of Shintaido, cultural clashes, spiritual development, using Shintaido in the world, and musings on timing, facing death, the invisible world of the 4th dimension, and passive resistance.

Untying Knots: a Shintaido Chronicle

by Michael Thompson (\$20 / 15*)

This autobiographical memoir by one of the co-founders of Shintaido of America tells of the author's cross-cultural adventures in France, Japan, and California in the course of his 25-year Shintaido career.

Shintaido: the Body is a Message of the Universe

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

For 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.

MINI-BOOKS

Tenshingoso 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. *Tenshingoso* and *Eiko* are two of the fundamental movements of Shintaido, which embody philosophies and prescriptions for human growth.

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 his unique understanding of *ki* energy (life force).

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 of Aoki-sensei's early days.

Improvisation and the Body (\$3.50)

Japanese jazz musician Toshinori Kondo discusses Shintaido, performance, and music. 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. Includes a glossary and description of the basic structure of a Shintaido practice.

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BODY

Dialogue

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新
体
道

“Shintaido” means “new body way.” It is an art form, a health exercise and meditation through movement developed in Japan in the 1960s. Shintaido grows out of the roots of ancient martial arts and meditation traditions, but the aim is to help modern people rediscover the original wisdom known by the body and realized through movement.

www.shintaido.org