



BODY Dialogue

Goreisha as conductor: the “professional gesture” in action

by David Franklin

The Tao of the drunken doctor

One of the questions— we might even call it a *koan* (Jap. 公安 a philosophical Zen riddle)— that has been put into circulation in the Shintaido community is: “What are the similarities between Shintaido, Woodstock, and modern art?” If I can take some liberties to modify the question, I’m going to ask: “What are the similarities between conducting an orchestra, performing surgery, stage diving, and giving *gorei*?” Stage diving, in case you haven’t been to a rock concert lately, is the act of leaping from the stage into the crowd, and is often followed by crowd surfing, when the crowd holds the performer over their heads and passes them around. “Giving *gorei*” (号令) of course refers to counting out loud, or using one’s voice to lead a martial arts training or practice session; by extension, it can mean leading groups of people through any process.

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Visible and Invisible Worlds

by Michael Thompson

I vaguely remember, in the early days of computers, the acronym "WYSIWYG" which means "a system in which content (text and graphics) displayed onscreen during editing appears in a form closely corresponding to its appearance when printed or displayed as a finished product" according to Wikipedia.

I thought of this after talking to Margaret Guay about a lecture Aoki sensei gave many years ago when I was living in Japan. He said that at the beginning of one's Shintaido practice, technique & effect were roughly the same but as you progressed the visible technique would tend to disappear and its effectiveness would increase. I believe the image he used was that of a mountain that would shrink, but the original outline would remain.

That image has always been my main compass during my 40+ years of Shintaido practice, but I've come to realize that, for "marketing" or outreach purposes, the idea it symbolizes is largely self-defeating. I think the younger generation of Japanese Shintaidoists understood that and tried to create a more visible or dramatic public face as can be seen in some of the more colorful costumes and even board-breaking demonstrations. To some of us in the older generation, this seemed retrogressive, but from a marketing perspective, it is at least logical.

I think Aoki sensei's sword program and school fall into this category of increased visibility of movement & technique and represents an inversion of the Shintaido pyramid where in the deepest, "secret" techniques are given away at the beginning of one's practice, and various techniques and movements flow from them, rather than being stepping stones on the way to higher-level movements. In fact, he told one of his students that, at some point, his European sword students would need to study Shintaido in order to deepen their understanding.

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Quotes posted on the Vision Wall from the Theme of "Vision" at
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This is my secret. A very simple secret. It is only
with the heart that one can see rightly. What is
essential is invisible to the eye.

--from *The Little Prince* by Antoine de Saint-
Exupery

Vision is the art of seeing what is invisible to others.

Jonathan Swift

"Your vision will become clear only when you look into
your heart. Who looks outside, dreams. Who looks
inside awakens."

--Carl Jung

"Love all of God's creation, the whole and every grain
of sand of it. Love every leaf, every ray of God's light.
Love the animals, love the plants, love everything. If
you love everything, you will perceive the divine mys-
tery in things. Once you perceive it, you will begin to
comprehend it better every day. And you will come at
last to love the whole world with an all-embracing
love."

--from *The Brothers Karamazov* by Fyodor
Dostoyevsky

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Goreisha as Conductor*Continued from p.1*

Hiroyuki Aoki, the founder of Shintaido, has compared the process of giving gorei to conducting an orchestra, especially in the style of the European tradition:

“Gorei is almost the same as conducting in the symphonic style.... To give gorei means to help each individual in a group practice to express his own emotions, thoughts or philosophy, and to bring all members together in a larger construction.... Whenever I gave gorei, I felt the presence of Wilhelm Furtwängler and Bruno Walter, German orchestral conductors. For me, gorei was conducting, educating, expressing and fighting.” (Aoki, 1982, p. 26-27).

This highlights one of the features of Shintaido that sets it apart from the more traditional martial arts from which it grew: Shintaido training emphasizes developing interpersonal communication skills rather than so-called “practical” self-defense, and “fighting” in Shintaido is about facing emotional and psychological challenges rather than dominating and defeating others. The Shintaido “body language” for expressing these ideas comes largely from the ancient martial arts tradition; but the goals of Shintaido that lie beyond the martial aspects influence every technique and every aspect of the training. From this point of view, we can see why the artist’s path is as much part of the *dou* (the way, the Tao: 道) of Shintaido as are the warrior’s path or the path of the spiritual seeker.

But how do we learn to give gorei? Surely watching, listening, learning, trying, failing, succeeding, wondering are all part of the process. Recently I heard from Pierre Quettier, a French Shintaido instructor, about a student who came to his first Shintaido workshop, having learned the basic kata (form) of Tenshingosho only from watching videos online—without an instructor. Of course there were some gaps and some corrections were needed; when doing *kumite* (partner practice), he hadn’t learned the quality of touch needed in Shintaido, because this is quite difficult to sense through YouTube (with current technology). Certainly he had achieved something tremendous, and was able to get a leg up and learn a great deal of new information much faster at the workshop by having done this preparation. But what are the limits of this kind of learning?

This brings up a question about what kinds of learning require us to be physically present in the same space with others. Universities offer online courses in a range of subjects; private foreign language tutoring is available via Skype; arts organizations teach stand-up comedy via the Internet. Yet it seems that in some fields in order to become really expert, to reach a professional level, there is some knowledge that our society expects will be transmitted in person. We haven’t (yet) seen anyone reach the level of a tennis pro and compete in Wimbledon without in-person training with a coach. Many people learn new guitar licks by watching videos *if they already know how the basics of playing the guitar*, but how many professional concert violinists

never had in-person tutoring with a live music teacher? How would you feel if you were going for surgery and just before going under the knife, you found out that your doctor had learned how to perform operations only by watching YouTube?

It seems that some aspects of the knowledge that one needs in order to attain the status of “surgeon” are transferred only in the context of an in-person learning environment. A surgeon is an example of a professional: someone who has training in a specific field, who is recognized as a professional according to standards set by his/her colleagues, and whose status is validated by a certification process that is recognized by the wider society. Like the tennis pro and the concert violinist, a surgeon is generally (as of this writing, although technological advances in robotic surgery are proceeding rapidly) someone whose skill is embedded in his/her hands. In other words, the professional skill set of a surgeon includes skills which are intimately entangled with his/her physicality, physical skills which we expect were acquired in part through the “broad-band” medium of an in-person training process under the guidance of an expert, rather than through a “narrow-band” medium such as watching an expert performing procedures in a video.

Our expectations about the physical competence of a professional become more visible when we see them being parodied. Here’s an excerpt from William S. Burroughs’ short story *Twilight’s Last Gleamings*, featuring the fantastically incompetent surgeon Dr. Benway:

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Dr. Benway, ship’s doctor, drunkenly added two inches to a four-inch incision with one stroke of his scalpel.

“Perhaps the appendix is already out doctor?” The nurse said, peering dubiously over his shoulder. “I saw a little scar.”

“The appendix already out! I’m taking the appendix out! What do you think I’m doing here?!”

“Perhaps the appendix is on the left side doctor, that happens sometimes you know!”

“Stop breathing down my neck, I’m coming to that. Don’t you think I know where an appendix is? I studied appendectomy in 1904 at Harvard.”

He lifts the abdominal wall and searches along the incision, dropping ashes from his cigarette.... The patient slides off the operating table, spilling intestines across the floor.

Dr. Benway sweeps instruments, cocaine and morphine into his satchel.

“Sew ‘er up, I can’t be expected to work under such conditions!”

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Burroughs uses slapstick— the physical comedy of

Visible/Invisible Worlds *Continued from p.1*

So, in a way, keiko embodied the Zen concept of cleaning your mirror rather than an accumulation of knowledge and Ito always liked the English saying, "practice, practice, practice." (I think there was a response to that koan to the effect that your mirror is already clean, you're just too stupid to realize it.)

At any rate, although the research into the invisible world will always be the focus of my practice, I do think it is necessary at this point in our history to design a visible keiko that will attract new practitioners. This means that we need instructors who not only have a profound understanding of Shintaido, but can demonstrate their wisdom through their movements to an audience who have no idea of what Shintaido is (not hard to find).

The essence of the invisible world I am talking about is found in the expression "Tenshin" or "cosmic truth," (see the article in Shintaido of America [Body Dialogue, April 2014, page 6](#)) and Aoki once said that the forms in Shintaido that express this ideal will certainly change with the times. But it is the work of succeeding generations to create, or discover, these forms without discarding the essence of what has come before.

Shintaido Moves the Jewish Community in Brooklyn

By Jennifer S. Wilkov

Last year in October, my boyfriend Andy Akers and I enjoyed the Torah service at the Shintaido Farm so much that we took an interest in bringing Shintaido to our temple in Brooklyn and our Saturday morning services.



Our temple doesn't have regular formal Saturday morning services. We attend something referred to as Chavurah – or what is really a Torah study group. It's similar to a book club where we discuss the "big book" and the Torah portion each week.

Andy and I tinkered with how to integrate Shintaido into our morning prayers before we studied; but we weren't really sure how to do it.

The temple suggested that we have one group for our special Saturday morning service with us and told us to leave those who attend Chavurah alone and let them do what we would ordinarily be doing: praying and then studying.

While this seemed a bit disconnected, Shintaido in its own beautiful way worked its white magic to somehow bring everyone together.



When we arrived on Saturday for the morning's "separate special service", Andy went in to talk with the rabbi who was leading the Torah study session. We all agreed that we could do our morning prayers together, with Shintaido integrated into the mix, and then all study Torah together – blending the experience into one cohesive group.

Andy and I led the morning prayers in a collaborative fashion with the rabbi, who was quite interested in what we were doing and the wonderful way Shintaido weaved its gentle way into the service.

Because some of the Torah study participants are older, we all agreed that everyone didn't have to stand up to do the Shintaido exercises as they were introduced. Everyone got to choose whether they wanted to sit or stand, so everyone could be comfortable.

Stephen and Bela came in from the Shintaido Farm to join us. So did Joe and Deb Zawielski. Stephen and Bela led Aozora-Taiso ("blue sky exercise;" the "Ah" and "Oh" movements from Tenshingoso), plus all of Tenshingoso, and Ten Position Meditation, at various points during the service as we prayed.

The rabbi really got it and enjoyed the meditative part of Shintaido – and embraced it.

Many of the participants commented that they enjoyed the body movement and felt it added to their prayer experience that day. They even took copies of the Tenshingoso and Ten Position Meditation illustrations that Stephen had brought with him from the Shintaido Farm.

Andy and I felt grateful that we could share the joy we experience with Shintaido with our fellow congregants at our temple that lovely Saturday morning in August.

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We found this blend of two experiential activities we love to be even more fun since we could share them with the communities we enjoy in our lives.

While it may not be possible for most to combine politics and religion, it is plausible to bring the peaceful, loving nature of Shintaido to the Jewish experience of Saturday morning services.

What a lovely way to start the day!

Goreisha as Conductor *Continued from p.3*

Benway's incompetence— and contrasts it with his assertion of his professional credentials. He may have studied at Harvard, but that does little to reassure us when we imagine the scalpel in Benway's far-from-steady hand. A form of competence embedded in his/her physicality is what we hope to see in a surgeon.

So we can define a special form of knowledge:

- (1) it is part of the professional knowledge in a certain field;
- (2) it is an aspect of the physicality of the knowledge-bearer; and
- (3) transfer of this type of knowledge requires in-person interactions.

This concept of a specific type of professional knowledge embedded in physicality is applicable to many fields, and I call it the professional gesture. Because of its connection with one's physicality, the professional gesture may be especially relevant in fields where high-stakes decisions must be made almost in an instant such as soldiers, pilots, surgeons, athletes, astronauts, firefighters, divers, emergency rescue workers, etc.— and of course martial artists. If we can understand more about the professional gesture and the kind of knowledge that is encoded within it, it may be of great relevance and value to society at large. Dealing with this kind of physically-embedded knowledge, recognizing it, transferring it, helping others to develop it, is part of the expertise of the Shintaido goreisha (号令者), the person who gives gorei.

The professional gesture of an orchestral conductor: Leonard Bernstein

The work of an orchestral conductor is an example par excellence of the professional gesture. The conductor literally gestures for a living. During a performance, the orchestral conductor and the musicians in the orchestra will carry on communication about a vast array of information. This will include information concerning technical aspects of the performance such as tempo, rhythm, dynamics, which section is playing, etc.; as well as "information" of quite different (and perhaps very subjective) types such as emphasis, emo-

tion, visions of the divine, healing, or communion with the source of all being.



[All of this information of different types will be communicated through the medium of movements of the human body (at least during the live performance— rehearsals are another matter), including facial expression; "He [Leonard Bernstein] looks like some kind of hawk staring out from under his eyebrows at the musicians. I've seen him conduct with those eyebrows," quips photographer Steve J. Sherman, author of *Leonard Bernstein at Work: His Final Years, 1984–1990* (Sherman, 2013). Since the early nineteenth century, the conductor has been increasingly freed from the encumbrance of simultaneously playing a musical instrument while conducting, and therefore could be entirely dedicated to the gesture. The multiple channels of communication with the orchestra are compressed into a single medium of transmission (the gesture), a kind of mind-body or somatic medium.

The professional gesture of the orchestral conductor is formed by the musical tradition within which s/he functions and in that sense is a microcosm of the culture. Each of the conductor's gestures is a message; none of the specifics of the conductor's physical movements would exist or have meaning without the whole history of the musical tradition standing behind it. To paraphrase anthropologist Tim Ingold (2013), people are raised in overlapping fields of relationships as the community "grows" individuals by providing the conditions for growth and maturation of body, of ideas, and of imagination— all of which are full-body experiences. The conductor's skill is really a social skill: it is grown in the context of tradition and culture, and it is encoded into the somatic medium of the gesture.

We might say the same about the tennis pro, but there are important differences. One point which shows how the conductor's gesture is different from "mere" athletic ability is its resilience to the aging process. Tennis pros and winners of the Tour de France do not continue competing into their senior years (they may coach others, but that's different from being an active participant). Orchestral conductors continue

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working productively into their later years and remain world-class leaders in their profession. Sir Neville Marriner conducted at the BBC Proms this year (2014) at age 90. This is of special relevance to the East Asian martial arts, where there is living tradition of older masters whose expertise is recognized and respected through their still-demonstrable skills. The resilience of the conductor's skill in the face of the aging process demonstrates that the "gesture" is social, interpersonal, and communicative.

So what are these vague "social" and "interpersonal communication" skills? Here are some examples:

- Integrating movements: both the *goreisha* and the conductor must have communication skills that will result in groups of people doing coordinated physical movements. They must have a deep mastery of the cues and codes that bring the result that, when called on to do so, the violin section should all move their bows in the same direction at the same time;



groups of martial arts practitioners often need to move in a similarly synchronized fashion.

Integrating patterns of behavior: both the *goreisha* and the conductor work with group dynamics and learn how to elicit higher levels performance from people consistently. This "higher level of performance" includes technical details, but also at times a kind of emotional/psychic "opening" to peak experiences or states of flow. The expert *goreisha*, for example, knows how to "ride" and direct the group energy when the group enters a state where the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Anthropologist Victor Turner referred to this as *communitas*, and said that it can occur when the group passes into the state of "liminality," an in-between state of being where rules, boundaries, and norms are temporarily dissolved and new ones have not yet emerged.

- The *goreisha* or conductor "orchestrates" the physical gestures of the group of players to result in a performance that "simulates" some other process, taking on a larger significance. For example, music may function as a simulation that provokes emotional responses such as joy, longing, fear, compassion or anger. It may model mathematical principles or structures in its melody or rhythm such as symmetry, ratios, etc. Martial arts practice may simulate battles; it may model abilities such as finding a deeply peaceful feeling in the "eye of the storm," as Aoki describes:

A *kata* is a series of formal attack and defense movements.... Not only in karate, but also in traditional Japanese martial

arts, there are, in addition to fighting techniques, special hidden methods of concentration, willpower and *heijoshin*— "the ability to retain ordinary or everyday mind in the face of danger."

The professional gesture of a rock diva: Amanda Palmer



Now we turn to the example of a rock star, specifically Amanda Palmer, whose style of music, originally dubbed "Brechtian punk cabaret," ranges from solo ukulele to alternative rock. Like the orchestral conductor, the professional gesture of a rock star also consists of a cluster of social skills that manifest during live performance. For example, a rock star should be able work the mood of a crowd; specifically, to improvise responses that charm the audience, that convey a sense of authenticity, and that allow every audience member (Palmer regularly performs in venues with capacities over 1000) to imagine that the performer is addressing them personally. These aspects of the professional gesture are oriented toward the theatricality of the rock star's work, and apply to any situation involving public performances (ranging from acting to academic or business presentations).

In fall 2013 as part of my research on the professional gesture, I went on tour in Europe with Amanda Palmer and the Grand Theft Orchestra. Palmer and Grand Theft Orchestra band members Jherik Bischoff and Chad Raines mentioned several aspects of the professional gesture of a rock star— examples which reveal the link between the physicality of the professional gesture and the social or communicative abilities that they embody. Here's some of what they said in response to the question "How do you recognize if a rock musician is a professional?"

- Good timing regarding all aspects of the performance: entrance into the public space, interaction with the audience, interaction with other musicians
- Decisiveness, lack of hesitation
- Mindfulness, especially when dealing with mistakes
- Familiarity with the equipment, the tools of the trade, the work environment, and the roles or jobs people with whom you will interact

Goreisha as Conductor

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Goreisha as Conductor *Continued from p.6*

- Understanding of and ability to deliver what the audience paid for (an exciting performance or even something approaching a transcendent experience)
- The ability to bring order to chaos; maintaining self-control while taking risks and challenging limits; having, or appearing to have, the situation only barely under control
- The ability to project confidence, even when not feeling confident oneself; this public face of the professional was described as a blast of “confidence serum,” a mask which is needed so that people around will allow the musician “mental space” to do his/her job
- Attentiveness to the “theatricality” of the moment when one enters the stage especially when starting to interact with one’s instrument. Grand Theft Orchestra band member Chad Raines said that he could immediately recognize if musicians he had never met before would be at a professional level just by the way they opened their instrument cases.
- An ability to work with the audience’s pre-existing familiarity with the performers’ repertoire; knowledge that the audience often can fill in missing bits in their minds (e.g. lyrics or musical riffs); using this familiarity as part of the exchange with the audience
- The ability to make the theatricality of one’s gestures and expressions “read” from a distance or “occupy” the space of the venue.

“Fake it till you make it”

I expect that many readers, already familiar with Shintaido practice, will recognize some of these professional gestures and their application to the art of gorei. The last one, “fake it till you make it,” may need some further explanation. “Fake it till you make it” means that sometimes your expertise consists of the social gesture of assuming the identity of a professional, even while you have doubts about your technical expertise. In other words, we might call it a “meta-gesture” that directly addresses the question of social identity (the identity that we assume when others expect that we are professionals and treat us as such).

Experimental psychologists Hajo Adam and Adam D. Galinsky have researched what they call “encloded cognition,” demonstrating that the associations of the clothes one wears effect performance of cognitive tasks. Subjects wearing a white coat referred to as a “doctor’s coat” had improved ability in attention-related tasks compared to subjects wearing the same coat when it was described as a “painter’s coat” (or compared to subject not wearing any special clothing). The encloded cognition effect, according to their findings, “depends on both the symbolic meaning and the physical experience of wearing the clothes” (Adam & Galinsky, 2012, p. 1). Wearing a “doctor’s coat” is associated with the status of a profession where attentiveness to detail is expected. Their research shows that just wearing the coat— when it is called a “doctor’s coat” and not something else— measurably improves people’s ability to pay attention to details.

This example of “fake it till you make it” gives us new insight into the white *keiko gi* (martial arts uniform) typically worn in Shintaido, and into many other customs and rituals as well. Of course it’s not a substitute for competence, and Dr. Benway’s poor patient’s intestines still get spilled on the floor, white coat or no. But the principle of “fake it till you make it” speaks to the power of clothing, rituals, and other symbols to augment our performance and attain a higher level of competence. When a conductor puts on the tuxedo and tails, when the *goreisha* puts on the *hakama* (skirt-like baggy pants), when the doctor put on the white coat: these are rituals that have real efficacy, and become part of the professional gesture.

Photo credits:

- 1) Leonard Bernstein conducting the Chicago Symphony Orchestra in the Shostakovich No. 7, June 24, 1988. Photo © Steve J. Sherman. Source http://www.huffingtonpost.com/allan-m-jalon/arts-lust-photographing-l_b_823647.html
- 2) Aoki-Sensei leading keiko, form Shintaido Photo Gallery Archives
- 3) Amanda Palmer, from Wiki Commons: http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/5/59/Amanda_Palmer%2C_Auckland%2C_4.jpg

Shintaido in 1984

Points to anyone who can identify the two people in this picture from the past:



Or most of the people in this pile-up!



BODY *Dialogue*



One picture from Shintaido Northeast Fall Gasshuku

Photo by Stephen Billias



One picture from Pacific Shintaido Summer Workshop with Ito-Sensei

Photo by Jim Sterling

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.