

— sprinkle throughout

— Leslie Goldberg.

WHAT IS SHINTAIDO?

From workshop with H.F. Ito, March 30, 1991

Note taken by David Franklin

Shintaido is not simply a fighting art, although it has roots in the fighting arts.

- Personal Witness —
— psychology of personal experience.
- Emotional Risks.
- Not so much the truth (Europeans)
as the truth experienced by one person.
- Too much intellect + theory makes for a
steel man — not human folds.

In "Fighting arts", the only criteria is winning, using whatever techniques are most effective. There is no need for philosophy or morality as long as you win.

Iron + Silk

If you add morality to the criteria of winning, you come up with the concept of "self-defense." For example, some one acting "in self-defense" tries, if possible, only to defend himself without killing the other person. Although this philosophy contains the idea that some kinds of behavior are more morally acceptable than other kinds, it still does not really require a person to examine their motives and thus begin a process of spiritual development.

However, a crucial difference between "martial arts" and "fighting arts" is that the martial arts make use of two basic principles concerning the use of energy. The fighting arts are not particularly concerned with the way energy is used as long as the result is winning. The martial arts on the otherhand require that we learn:

- A) How to get the most effective result using the least energy
- B) How to transform negative and destructive energy into positive and constructive energy.

These two principles are examples of what I turn "scientific" aspect of the martial arts. Using them, we can gauge fighting techniques to see if their method of using energy is refined enough to classify them as "martial art" and not just brute force.

The martial arts also contain a spiritual philosophy of "life exchange," a concept which transcends the usual notion of self-preservation or self-protection. For example, if someone comes to attack us with a sword and we cringe and hide or try to escape and protect ourselves, we are almost certain to be cut down. But if we give up the idea of protecting ourselves and enter directly into the situation, in a sense offering the other person

U.S. -- spirituality more
fundamentalist --
less holistic *
(not like Native American culture)

more of a chance to kill us while also trying our best to kill him, in fact we have a better chance of surviving. * many puritans

Out of this simple survival situation emerges a philosophy of "life exchange." If we try to save ourselves, we end up dying in a selfish act of self-preservation. But if we recognize that the other person is trying their best, giving it their all with the pure intention of attacking, how could we be so selfish not to do the same? If we likewise generously offer up our lives to them, we not only have a better chance of saving ourselves; we also know that if we die anyway, we will not die thinking of our petty little self.

This is why the samurai considered it so dishonorable to die while running away like a coward: it was considered selfish in relation to one's opponent. To fight till the end, even if it was completely a lost cause, was considered noble. Knowing that the other person was willing to give their life in the attack, you were also willing to give your life in receiving the attack; that was the "life exchange."

The two principles of energy use plus this philosophy of life exchange are the main characteristics that set the martial arts apart from the fighting arts and give the martial arts a level of spiritual dignity. But in order to engage the process of spiritual development, there is one more issue that needs to be addressed, which is the issue of timing.

At the Pacific '90 Gasshuku in July of 1990, Aoki-sensei introduced the concept of A-point, B-point, and C-point timing. The A-point, for example, refers to the moment when a wild-west gunslinger's hand starts to move toward his holster. B-point is when he draws his gun, and C-point is when he pulls the trigger. Or in the case of a samurai, A-point is when he makes the decision to attack. B-point is when he draws his sword, and C-point is when he raises it overhead to begin the actual attack. Obviously, this image of the sequence of events can be used to think about many everyday situations.

Many martial arts claim to include an aspect of spiritual development as part of their program. However, their techniques are based on a reaction that occurs somewhere between B-point and C-point timing. Usually they start from studying C-point timing, and after a long period of study such as ten or twenty years, they may reach B-point timing.

By the time a situation has escalated to the stage of B-point, it is very difficult to negotiate, and by the time it reaches C-point, it is probably too late to diffuse the conflict without violence. If guns have already been drawn, all we can really hope to do is beat the other person in pulling the trigger. Therefore, no matter how lofty our original intentions were, if our technique is based on B-point or C-point timing, we are reduced to acting according to a "survival of the fittest" philosophy.

But Shintaido is based on A-point and B-point timing. In Shintaido's *yaki-kei* (soft movement) curriculum especially, students **begin** by studying how to respond with A-point timing and then develop B-point and C-point timing responses.

If I can enter my partner's universe at the point of B-timing, I can stop the momentum of his attack without having to resort to an overwhelming technique. All martial arts aim for this. But if I enter at the point of A-timing, I am already existing side-by-side in my partner's universe before his attack even begins.

This represents a world-view in which we can negotiate "from the same side of the table." We can have a chance to see things from the same point of view before a conflict develops. Of course it does not completely eliminate the potential for conflict. But it does help to make negotiation more of a realistic alternative.

In this way, Shintaido body movement can demonstrate a concrete examples of realistic ways to resolve conflict without violence and provide an alternative to conflict with peaceful co-existence. But in order to put this into practice, we must abandon our outmoded ideas of self-preservation. We must sensitize ourselves to the intentions of others, and act on our sensitivity by jumping into the future with both feet.

Evolution