

SHINTAIDO: ANCIENT TEACHINGS, NEW BODY LANGUAGE

EXPLORING THE PRACTICE OF HOLISTIC MARTIAL ARTS, MEDITATION AND HEALTH

[Shintaido means "new body way"](#) from [d franklin](#) on [Vimeo](#).

06 FEBRUARY 2009

Comparing the arts

Michael De-Campo wrote: "...however I'm not sure comparing the arts is that much useful."

The reason I sometimes find it useful to make some specific comparisons among martial arts (with an attitude of respect of course) is that Shintaido does not exist in a vacuum. Sometimes it's helpful to consider where Shintaido is located in the vast landscape of martial arts, meditative disciplines, health exercise, varieties of yoga etc.

At times Shintaido feels like a complex project that arrives on our doorsteps with a message "some assembly required" (and complete instructions not always supplied). There is a specific practical problem, internal to Shintaido, that I hope we in the Shintaido community can work on together: *renki kumite*. (I believe this exercise was introduced to the international public for the first time in 2000 at the event in Haguro, Japan.)

In some ways, this partner exercise (especially *renki kumite* variations 6 and 7) appears similar to T'ai Chi push-hands. Shintaido certainly has some movement principles in common with T'ai Chi, but other principles might be quite different. I feel it would be helpful to clarify the details of this exercise, and to define what we aim to learn from it. The details were not made very explicit by Aoki-sensei when he introduced it, so there is certainly room for interpretation.

Therefore I hope Shintaido practitioners of any level of experience will take a shot at answering some of these questions. I'd like to hear your opinions.

Have you ever practiced or taught *renki kumite*? If so, just some of the variations, or the whole process (10 parts is it?)

Generally, what do you feel are some of the goals of this exercise?

Are there some specific movement skills we should aim to learn from it?

Is it better to maintain a vertical posture throughout, or is it OK to lean, or is it desirable to lean?

How much pressure should be allowed to build up at the point of contact? (I do remember Aoki-sensei saying "Don't make

it a contest of strength."

Should you sometimes try to put your partner off-balance?

How much should you accept your partner into your space? Should you to some degree deflect him/her away from your center?

Do you consider this part of the Yoki-kei (softer, nurturing *ki* exercises) aspect of the Shintaido system? Can it be done with many variations of *koshi* (hips, pelvis) positions?

POSTED BY DAVID FRANKLIN AT [23:05](#) 

1 COMMENT:

1.

Anonymous [07 February, 2009 10:36](#)

Hi David,
To clarify what I meant about 'comparing the arts' was that whatever a person practices, the experience she/he has is subjective, so the interpretation of those experiences are obviously tainted by one's biological and psychosocial background. And, like myself, having had a range of practice of different 'eastern' arts (as well as my western upbringing and influences) it seemed to me that I could only give a very subjective viewpoint on the arts that I have practiced, and for me to 'compare' other arts would thus give a certain bias based on my experiences.

To jump to what you are communicating in your response above, again in a not so direct way, I remember clearly one day when I was practicing Aikido, that I wanted to 'understand' the movements that I was practicing. I had come to know and watch Eurythmy, a Rudolph Steiner movement art, and was fascinated that every movement had a specific meaning and interpretation, whereas in Aikido all that we knew was just the Japanese name of each technique and its application. I was interested in the psychological and deeper meaning of what I was practicing. The founder Ueshiba Sensei of Aikido wrote volumes about his art, however most of what I read seemed to have religious undertones, and very little of it seemed to relate to the techniques.

What attracted me to Shintaido was the idea and practice of 'emptying' yourself, and that included taking off physical tension, mental and emotional stress, and went deep into the psyche to release all kinds of barriers with the simple aim of 'open body open mind'. That emptying process reminded me of an in-depth 5 day carers workshop led by Gerard Egan on empathy. I have practiced many years as a natural therapist and counselled many people, so being empty and having empathy are very complementary (almost the same word).

Back to David's response. Aoki Sensei has taught that we need to find the meaning of the technique ourselves, through our own practical efforts and enquiry. Each instructor will give some interpretation and sometimes that's inspiring and profound. It's a good idea to have a blog such as this to broaden each other's interpretations and add to the collective 'wisdom' (if that's a good word?). So I agree let's practice and let's share our experiences.

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ABOUT SHINTAIDO

Shintaido (新体道, literally "new body way") has been called an "avant-garde martial art." Developed in Japan in the 1960s by Hiroyuki Aoki and the Rakutenkai group, it draws on a number of traditional martial arts. However, it is also inspired by fine arts, tea ceremony, theatre, etc. Thus the purpose of Shintaido goes beyond the confines of fighting or self-defense: as a meditation in motion and a way to express our creative intelligence, Shintaido aims to be a comprehensive art of human growth and development.

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