

FEELING AIKIDO

**Body Awareness Training as a
Foundation for Aikido Practice**



**An E-Book by
Paul Linden**

www.being-in-movement.com

Paul Linden's book on Aikido is not about how to do specific techniques. At least, not in the usual way. He begins with the assumption that readers can already do Aikido techniques, and explains instead how to pay attention to the details of our posture and movements, as we do them, in order to improve our performance. However, even a beginner could significantly improve his or her learning experience by reading this book, alongside taking part in normal Aikido practice. It fascinated me to see that in understanding the body more, it became easier to understand and work with energy. Had I known, beginning Aikido, what I know after reading Paul Linden's book, I would not only be a better Aikidoist now, I would be better able to do everything in life that I use my body to do. And that's a lot of stuff!

Fiona Kilty, Aikido student, Orientation and Mobility Trainer of
Vision Impaired People. Dublin, Ireland

Finding words to describe the physical concepts of martial arts and body alignment is very difficult. Dr. Linden has risen to the challenge in his effectively written book *Feeling Aikido*. It is clear, coherent and easy to follow. It fits together well, with one topic leading logically into the next. For those of us who struggle with the traditional teaching style of using few words and starting in the middle, it's refreshing to find articulate verbal explanations that start at the beginning, then build by adding more concepts. Theory is lavishly illustrated by experiential exercises which are easy to follow and understand. This book will certainly expand and enrich the experience of any martial artist, from beginners to those with decades of experience. It also offers a wealth of helpful ideas and information for anyone involved in any body-oriented activity, such as dancers, yoga practitioners, athletes, body workers and therapists.

Nancy Ellis-Ordway, Taekwondo instructor, Licensed Clinical
Social Worker. Missouri, USA.

Paul Linden Sensei brings together both technical and internal concepts in *Feeling Aikido*. Using theory, picture, and example, he explains the concepts in a way that is accessible to all who train. His book should appeal to a broad spectrum of martial artists, from those who are technically oriented to those who are focused on the internal. As a teacher and student of Hakkoryu Jujutsu, I was able to enjoy and apply his concepts to my own martial art. It is my hope that many martial artists beyond Aikido practitioners will read and spend time and thought with Paul Linden Sensei's interpretations, thoughts and concepts. I believe that they will greatly benefit by them as will their practice of their art.

Dara Masi, instructor of Hakkoryu Jujitsu, Greenlawn, New York,
USA.

FEELING AIKIDO:

Body Awareness Training as a
Foundation for Aikido Practice

An E-Book by

Paul Linden, Ph.D.
Sixth Dan Aikido

A practical training manual for Aikidoists
as well as other martial artists and body educators.

First Edition 2006

CCMS Publications
Columbus, Ohio

www.being-in-movement.com

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Body Awareness Training as a Foundation for Aikido Practice

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Published by CCMS Publications

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First edition 2006

Publisher's Cataloging-in-Publication
(Provided by Quality Books, Inc.)

Linden, Paul.

Feeling aikido [electronic resource] : body awareness training as a foundation for aikido practice : an e-book / by Paul Linden. -- 1st ed.

p. cm.

System requirements: Adobe Acrobat Reader.

Mode of access: World Wide Web.

Includes index.

Title from PDF t.p.

"A practical training manual for aikidoists as well as other martial artists and body educators."

SUMMARY: Shows how to use body and movement awareness exercises to enhance the effectiveness of aikido defense techniques and deepen aikido practice as a meditative and spiritual process.

ISBN 0-9716261-2-X (electronic bk.)

1. Aikido. 2. Movement education. 3. Mind and body.
I. Title.

GV1114.35.L56 2005

796.815'4
QBI05-600155

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Miscellany

Table of Core Elements

1 – Introduction	1
------------------------	---

SECTION ONE—KNOWING YOURSELF

2 – Body Awareness	19
3 – Body Use: The Core	34
4 – Body Use: The Periphery	62
5 – Body Use: The Whole	82
6 – Power Delivery: Intentionality	101
7 – Power: Structural Use	107

SECTION TWO—KNOWING THE ATTACKER

8 – Receiving Uke	128
9 – Discerning Uke	138
10– Controlling Uke: Intentionality	149
11 – Controlling Uke: Structure & Movement	154

SECTION THREE—KNOWING AIKIDO

12– Body Presence	161
13– Movement Principles	206
14– Live Movement	238
15– Moving Uke	257

SECTION FOUR—SOME FINAL THOUGHTS

16– Background Issues	288
17– The Beginning	296

List of Techniques

Glossary & Pronunciation

Index

Biography

E-BOOK PUBLICATION

Publishing *Feeling Aikido* as an e-book makes it accessible to people everywhere. Rather than having a paper book confined to book stores in just one country, putting it on the web means it will be instantly available throughout the whole world.

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The e-book has been formatted so that you can print out a copy on standard paper and have it bound. The margins have been set so that you can print it either single or double sided, and it will still bind correctly.

Selection from CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This book is primarily for Aikido practitioners who wish to increase their awareness of and sensitivity to how the mind and body function in Aikido practice. However, the book will also be comprehensible and useful to non-Aikidoists who wish to incorporate principles of mindbody¹ functioning into their own activities.

The focus will be on fundamental principles of mindbody functioning that underlie Aikido practice. Feeling and understanding how these principles operate in Aikido will deepen your practice and make your Aikido *waza*² (self-defense techniques) more efficient and effective.

Practitioners of other martial arts, practitioners of non-martial movement disciplines, people who wish to improve their daily-life functioning, and somatic educators and body workers will also find that the material in this book will be of interest to them.

Section One of the book will focus on how your own mindbody functions. Section Two will explore *nage's* (the defender's) relationship with *uke* (the attacker). Section Three will examine principles of movement functioning which are specific to Aikido *waza*.

The book will begin with detailed exercises involving basic mindbody elements such as breathing, postural alignment, intentionality, and movement flow. Building on this material, exercises will be described in such areas as refining awareness of the attacker, controlling the flow of the attack, and using Aikido combat techniques as practices of harmony.

Since Aikido is a concrete, practical process rather than abstract philosophy, I won't define mindbody principles as philosophical abstractions. I will define them by embodying them in movement experiments. In order to show what this means, and to show what I mean by principles of mindbody functioning, let's begin with three body awareness experiments.

THREE EXAMPLES

It is a clear principle in Aikido that we don't resist power but instead go along with the attack. However, that idea isn't as simple as it might seem. What is an

¹ "Mindbody" is a term used in somatic education disciplines to refer to the whole person without any implication that "mind" is separate from "body."

² Not all Aikido practitioners use the same Japanese technical terms, and some readers may not be familiar with the terms at all, so the first time I use a term (other than the name of a defense technique), I will define it in parentheses. In addition, I have included a glossary of terms at the end of the book.

attack? What do we go along with? How do we detect it? And once we do identify it, how do we go along with it?

SHIHONAGE & CHEST USE: EXPERIMENT 1.1



Have uke attack with a shomenuchi (a straight down strike to the top of the head), and you as nage can try a shihonage defense technique.

How does your uke deliver the shomenuchi? How does he use his shoulder, his back, hips, and legs in the movement?

A rose by any other name would still be a rose, but not all shomenuchis are the same. Let's try a particular shomenuchi.

Have your uke collapse his chest and internally rotate his arms. (Internal rotation of the right arm would mean

turning it in a counterclockwise direction.) Standing with the arms down by the side and internally rotating them, the palms will face backward and the posture will be hunched forward and ape-like. Have your uke maintain this collapsed posture while striking you.

Your job is to perform a shihonage omote. What happens? As a general rule, people find it difficult or clumsy to do shihonage on this attack. Why should that be?

By the way, let me emphasize that this exercise is *not* a practice of shomenuchi shihonage. It is a practice of body sensing. The usual mindset with which we ordinarily practice an attack-defense combination does not apply here. The goal is not (directly) to improve the shomenuchi or the shihonage. The goal is to study some implicit and rarely identified elements of Aikido practice. The goal is to look at the fine details of posture and movement and discover how they affect the practice.

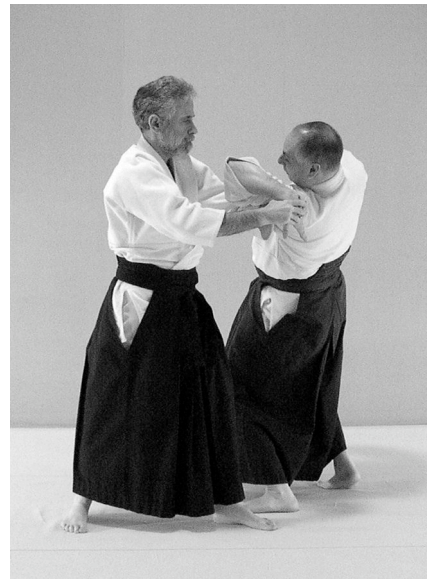
Now have your uke stand and externally rotate his arms and elevate (puff up) his chest. When he strikes from this posture, what happens to the shihonage? Most people find it much easier to do. Why?





Shihonage by its very nature demands that uke's arm be externally rotated and his torso be arched backwards. Think about the moment after the pickup of the arm, when you have gripped uke's wrist and are beginning to do the pivot which draws uke's arm over your head. In that moment, you are applying a powerful twist to uke's wrist/arm, and that twist is an external rotation. Then, at the point at which you have uke's arm bent back and locked and you are getting ready to throw him, his torso is arched back. In fact, the twist you apply to rotate uke's arm externally is part of what creates the arching back, but it can do so only if uke isn't committed to internal rotation of the arm and bending forward of the torso.

When uke internally rotates his arms and collapses his chest, that moves the arm in the wrong direction for shihonage. It also bends uke forwards. Doing shihonage against that posture is swimming against the current. Shihonage is a better match when uke has his arm externally rotated and chest puffed up.



Kaitennage, which bends uke forward, is a better match when uke's body structure is internally rotated/collapsed forward. Try that and see how it feels.



What you have experienced here is that the subtleties of posture and movement make a difference. It is far better to choose a defense technique that goes along with uke's postural movement in addition to going along with the attacking movement. "Going along with the power of the attack" does not mean simply moving in the same general direction as the punch or kick or grab. It means refining your view of the meaning of the nature of an attack to include the details of uke's particular style of using her or his body.

The point is that *shomenuchi* is not an attack. Or perhaps it would be more accurate to say that the amount of information provided by the simple word "shomenuchi" is not sufficient to precisely specify the nature of the attack. And that being so, the simple word "shomenuchi" does not contain enough information to indicate which technique is suitable for the defense. *Shihonage* is not done simply on a strike to the head. It is most easily done on a strike to the head as executed by a person with who has tension in the low back and shoulders which predisposes to external rotation of the arm and arching of the low back.

This detailed level of analysis of structural body use is one element that this book will focus on.

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OVERVIEW

Just as a beach is composed of a whole lot of grains of sand, so Aikido is made up of many many details embodied in all the different throws and pins. No one can practice all the details all at once, but by diligent practice of one detail at a time, the knowledge soaks into your body and coalesces to form a whole. In the same way, this book has numerous exercises and concepts to be practiced and absorbed. By doing one exercise at a time and letting your body digest and absorb each experience, you will find yourself putting things together into a coherent whole.

However, even though there are lots of details, the contents of this book can be summarized under some basic headings. Speaking most simply, this book focuses on knowing yourself, knowing uke, and knowing Aikido techniques. Speaking with a bit more detail, there are eight interconnected elements that this book will focus on.

KNOWING YOURSELF:

1. **Improving your body use:** By improving your body mechanics, your movements will become more efficient and effective.
2. **Perceiving the body as an intention process:** By understanding the ways in which intention is the foundation for body states and actions, you can improve your focus and coordination.
3. **Developing calmness and harmony:** Learning to make your movements more intentionally and structurally balanced and efficient is a concrete method of working towards a practical and useful spirit of peace.

KNOWING UKE:

4. **Discerning uke:** Learning to see and feel movement with more precision and depth will give you a better understanding of uke and uke's attack movements. In particular, the spirit of peace will sharpen your perception of uke.
5. **Connecting with uke:** Seeing and feeling uke more clearly, you will be better able to join with him/her, which after all is the basis of all Aikido.
6. **Disrupting uke:** By joining with uke, you will be able to dominate and disrupt his/her movements, which is after all the practical goal of all Aikido self-defense techniques.

KNOWING AIKIDO:

7. **Understanding principles underlying Aikido techniques:** Identifying and practicing fundamental, broadly applicable patterns of awareness and movement will improve the efficiency of Aikido practice and defense techniques.

BACKGROUND CONCEPTS:

8. **Some elements of pedagogy and ethics:** Examining some concepts underlying Aikido teaching and practice will make practicing more effective.

The earlier parts of the book will focus more on body and movement awareness exercises, with only the occasional Aikido defense technique thrown in to show how the awareness exercises apply in ordinary Aikido practice. The later parts of the book will focus specifically on Aikido waza and the movement principles underlying them.

I didn't write the book to be read—that is, read the way a novel is read. This is a workbook. It is meant to be used, not just read. And the way to use a workbook is to go through it in manageable chunks.

I am a pointillist. Think about that style of painting, in which dots of paint on the canvas add up to visual objects. Imagine what it is like to see things as vast, complex constellations of points rather than as simple, unitary objects. That is the way I practice and experience Aikido. So, naturally, that is the way I teach and write.

I realize that not everyone shares that detail-oriented style of thinking. Perhaps some people may find the complexity in this book difficult. That isn't so different from regular Aikido practice. Many beginners feel overwhelmed by Aikido practice. It seems so complex and intricate. But if people just do one exercise at a time, one class at a time, eventually they master Aikido. Likewise, if you read this book by practicing just one exercise at a time, that will transform the book into a manageable process.

SOME IDEAS UNDERLYING THIS BOOK

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I think it is productive to look at Aikido practice as having two primary elements. The first stage is learning the physical movements of the defense techniques. Your foot goes here for a shihonage, not there. Your hand must grasp uke's hand just so for an effective ikkyo. The first element of learning is to develop an alphabet of Aikido movements that can be combined in various ways to enable you to respond to the great variety of possible attacks.

If the first element is thought of as studying the "what," then the second stage goes more into the "how." It isn't enough to put your foot in the right place; you have to put it in the right place the right way. It has to be relaxed, firmly planted on the ground, with the weight even, and placed lightly enough that it can move easily. The second element goes into learning to sense your self/body/breath/ki in the midst of action. The second element focuses on learning how to pay attention to yourself and how to develop calmness, alertness, and balance. The essence of this study of the self/body is learning how to move and exert force with soft muscles, soft breathing, and no stiffening or efforting.

The second element also includes learning to pay attention to and sense the mind/body functioning of your attacker. It isn't enough to observe and grasp the mere outside of your attacker. You have to know him/her deeply, sense his mind

flowing in the action of the attack. This is necessary for knowing how to blend with the attacker and her attack. It is also necessary for knowing how to take over uke's mind/body and disrupt his balance and his movement preparatory to throwing or pinning him.

The first element of practice is what occupies raw beginners. However, later on, the first two elements of practice blend together.

This book focuses on the second element of Aikido practice. There won't be much description of the basic structure of techniques. There are enough books of that sort available. This book will focus on helping people grasp the nature of Aikido awareness practice. At least, it will focus on what I have experienced of the second stage. I'm sure there are myriad different approaches out there, and each teaching approach captures something unique.

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I think I'll tell you about two seminal moments in my Aikido practice. Thirty-four years ago, I was practicing in the Aikido club at the University of California at Berkeley. It was summer time, and we were practicing on a red wrestling mat. I was a new blue belt, and I remember looking at my partner and saying: "I know that I'm supposed to go along with you when you attack, but I don't know what to go along *with*." That became my koan. For the next six years or so, I focused my efforts in my practice on detecting what uke was actually doing as s/he attacked.

I started with relatively gross observations. Uke was shoving forward with one hand. He was pulling back with both hands while turning his body counter-clockwise. She was moving her right arm in an arc from high to low to strike me in the head with a yokomenuchi. I tried to detect the trajectory of the attack and make my defense movements follow the same trajectory.

Whatever I observed, I tried to blend into and move along with, like a butterfly riding on the shoulder of an ox. I spent a lot of time puzzling over how Aikido defense techniques can be logical extensions or developments of uke's movements (as differentiated from self-defense techniques designed to oppose or stop uke's movements).

Gradually, I began to discern subtler and subtler movement patterns as I watched various ukes. One uke would attack with his chin held high, and that extra-deep curve in the back of his neck would reduce his balance, making him less stable toward the rear. Another uke might execute *ryokatatori* (a grab for both of the defender's shoulders) with one of his shoulders lower than the other, and he could more easily be thrown to the down-shoulder side.

As I noticed the various and multitudinous asymmetries of posture and movement shown by different ukes, I began to realize that I too moved in lopsided and strained ways. And I began to pay attention to my own balance in movement.

A key element for me began to be the vertical line through the body. I began to realize that it was around this line that the balanced skeleton was organized and that maintaining this line of balance during action was the key to efficient, graceful

movement. (Later on in my practice, I also realized that the vertical line is the meditative line in Aikido. Leaning off the vertical usually signals some psychological over-involvement.) I also began to realize that disrupting uke's vertical line was a key to an efficient throw.

The second seminal moment occurred one day while I was teaching a class as a new black belt. I noticed that when people were grabbed by the wrist, they often lost balance toward the grab. That was pretty simple, I thought. They looked down at the grab, tipping their heads toward the grab, and it was the displacement of the weight of the head which caused the loss of balance. (An adult's head weighs about sixteen pounds, about seven kilograms. You can think of the head as a basketball made of bone and filled with oatmeal. It's heavy.)

So I told the students not to tip their heads, and I was mystified to find that even though their heads did not tip, the students still lost balance in the same manner. Watching and puzzling, I noticed that they looked down, and I thought perhaps the movement of the eyes was the cause of the imbalance.

So I told the students not to roll their eyes to look downward at the grab, and again I was mystified to find that they still lost balance. After thinking it through, I realized that there was a whole dimension of movement that I had simply not noticed before.

The students were *thinking* downward, and it was the deflection of their awareness/attention toward the attack that was the root cause of their physical imbalance. I spent the next ten years devising experiments for myself to develop my awareness of *attention* and its effects on movement. For example, I practiced walking forward while sending my attention leftward or rightward, and I could feel the differences each projection made in my balance and my gait. I soon also discovered that movement itself also has effects on attention. I realized that posture is the concrete manifestation of the shape of the spirit and the key to a very concrete and practical process of meditation. (It was out of this realization that my approach to body work arose.)

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There was one other thing that was significant in my development of my style of practice and teaching, and that was the fact that I was certainly not a talented athlete. Just the opposite. I was very uncoordinated and before Aikido had never participated in sports. I have often observed that people with talent can master an activity easily but find it hard to comprehend how the same activity can be difficult for others. Talented movers become teachers, but they teach best other talented movers, and they do not teach effectively people who are very unlike themselves.

When I started Aikido, I was taught by and practiced with talented martial artists. They performed their techniques and taught them in an intuitive, non-cognitive fashion. They couldn't understand why I couldn't reproduce what they demonstrated. Since they perceived and comprehended Aikido movements as wholes, it never occurred to them that it would be helpful to me for them to break

down Aikido movements into parts. I needed what they did not—detailed step-by-step instructions. It didn't help that the Japanese style of instruction was resolutely non-verbal and non-analytical.

The upshot was that I was left to devise my own ways of teaching myself Aikido, and what I came up with was an experimental, analytic process for jumpstarting my movement abilities. In effect, I came up with a linear, reductionistic, mechanical method of developing the capacity for intuitive, holistic, spontaneous action. I have since found in my teaching that there are many people who benefit greatly by having the detail-oriented teaching that I devised to help myself.

Though I never intended to become a body practitioner, I started applying the exercises I had developed in my Aikido practice outside Aikido. I eventually developed a system of body work which I call Being In Movement® mindbody training³, and that has been the focus of my professional work for the last twenty years. Though Aikido is my movement home and my laboratory, my professional work involves the application of body awareness training in such seemingly disparate fields of teaching as computer ergonomics and sexual abuse recovery.

In this book, I'm bringing back home what I have developed in two decades of body work practice. Though my Aikido teaching in my own dojo is based on the somatic processes I have developed, this book is an attempt to share these processes with the wider world of Aikido, and I hope that other Aikidoka will find this practice method helpful.

Selection from CHAPTER 5

BODY USE: THE WHOLE

Having started with the core and having moved on to the periphery, let's widen our circle by considering both the structure and feeling of the body as a whole. We will do that by considering standing movement and then intentional projection.

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³ You can get more information about BIM from my website, www.being-in-movement.com.

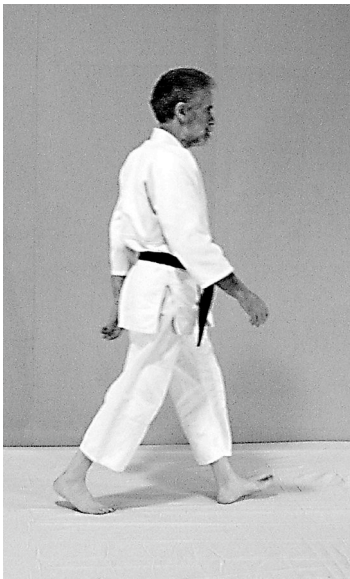
FEET WALKING: PRACTICE 5.3

Walking is part of almost every Aikido technique. What is your image of walking? How do your legs and feet make your body move forward across the floor? Try walking, and notice how you walk. (Do this barefoot so you can feel your feet without the interference and restriction of shoes.)

How do you carry your body's weight? Do you lean forward, hang behind yourself, or balance yourself in the middle of your stride? Focus on one foot as you walk. How does your foot touch the floor? Do you bang your heel into the ground or land softly? How does the weight move from your heel to your toes? How and when during your stride does your foot exert force on the floor to move you forward? Now try walking with your attention on your other foot. Is it different?

Many people observe that they swing a leg forward, and the weight of the leg drags their body forward. Some people notice that they put a foot on the floor out in front of them and then pull themselves forward with it. Some people feel that when their foot is behind them, they shove themselves forward with it. These differences are not just about how the foot is used but about the way the whole body functions.

What is the most efficient way of walking? Walk around. Imagine that you are out walking shortly after a rain, and try leaping over some imaginary puddles. You will have to use a long, low jump. How do you do that? Which is your preferred forward foot in the jump? Jump with your left foot forward, and notice the moment just before your right foot leaves the floor. Where is your weight, and what does your right foot do? To jump well, your weight must be forward. If you lean back, you won't get any distance in your jump. Your right leg is out behind



you, your toes are bent, the ball of your foot is touching the floor. At that moment you are applying a distinct rearward shove to the floor with the ball of your foot. Your left foot is up in the air in front of you, coming down toward the ground. The rearward shove is what moves you forward.

Leaping over puddles is a somewhat exaggerated movement, but you can use the same backward push in a smaller way in ordinary walking. Try it. Keep your weight balanced between your legs—even when one is up in the air. Push to the rear with each foot when it is behind you. This action is an efficient, coordinated way of using the pelvis and legs to put power into a rearward thrust which will create a forward movement.

Remember your basic physics. Every action creates an equal and opposite reaction. In order to push straight backward, you would need a leg sticking out

straight behind, and it could push only on walls and trees and so on. In reality, when your leg is behind you, it is on a slant, so its thrust is on a slant. You push off from the ball of your rear foot, pushing in a back/down direction. Try walking while paying attention to this process. With each step, press down and back with the ball of your back foot. Feel how the back/down energy of the foot reflects off the floor into a forward/up movement of the body. This is the most efficient way of delivering power to the ground to move you forward in a walking gait. (Of course, your movements will vary on different terrains, but this manner of walking is a foundation.)

People generally experience that when they walk with this awareness of the down/back thrust of the feet, they have a ground to stand on and a foundation for themselves. The upward energy opens their posture upward. Their walk becomes more erect, clearer and more energetic. The forward energy makes them walk forward more quickly, lightly, and gracefully. When people conceive of walking as falling down onto their forward foot rather than rising off their back foot, they sag and fall down as they walk. When they pull themselves forward with the front foot, they compress and shrink. Feeling the back/down thrust leads to a way of moving that is mechanically more efficient and powerful, and it is also much more psychologically confident and alert.

We practice Aikido barefoot on a flat, smooth, padded floor. It is interesting to pay attention to how we walk in daily life. It is especially important that your shoes fit comfortably. High heel shoes or shoes that cram your toes into a stylish point will not allow you to stand and move comfortably. Shoes should be relatively flat and should allow the bones of your feet to spread out in their natural way. Walking in cities, with their flat, hard surfaces of tile, concrete and so on is very different from walking on natural terrain, with its variations in hardness and contour.

CHIN THROW: TECHNIQUE 5.4

From a *gyakukatetori* (*gyaku hanmi*), place your hand under uke's chin, take a step forward, and throw. Use the step forward to power the throw. Many people power the throw from their waists or shoulders, but ideally the power comes from the back foot thrusting your whole body forward. Of course, that will happen only if you maintain a vertical posture.



Selection from CHAPTER 13

MOVEMENT PRINCIPLES

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AXIS OF ROTATION

There is an Aikido movement pattern that shows up over and over again in many techniques, but I have never heard it described explicitly. It was only after about fifteen years of practice that I began to get an inkling of its nature. And it and it took another fifteen years before I saw how simple the movement pattern is and how widespread in Aikido it is.

The pattern has to do with the axis of rotation in turning movements. Very frequently, at the beginning of a technique the vertical axis will be a line through one shoulder and later in the technique it will be a line through the other shoulder. Sometimes the axis of rotation will shift again so that the first shoulder again becomes the axis at the end of the movement.

AXIS OF ROTATION: EXPERIMENT 13.5

Let's start with a simple exercise to define what I mean by axis of rotation. You'll need a partner for this. Stand up, and have your partner hold a jo vertically by your left shoulder. Walk forward, keeping your shoulder touching the stick. You will turn in a counterclockwise circle around the jo. Your left foot will stay pretty much in place in the center of the circle, and your right foot will move forward along the circumference of the circle. The jo is the axis of rotation in this movement.



Imagine that the jo could be inserted vertically down through the center of your body so that it touched the floor between your feet. It would be like the spindle on the old record players, and the axis of rotation would be in the center of your body. As you turned counterclockwise again, both feet would move on the circumference of the circle. Your left foot would move backwards and your right foot forwards.

Now have your partner hold the jo by your right shoulder. Turn your body counterclockwise around the jo. This time your right foot will be the center around which you move, and your left foot will move backwards along the circumference of the circle.

Notice that in all three instances, the direction of rotation is counterclockwise, but the movement of your body through space is very different. In the first instance, you moved forward. In the second instance, you rotated but stayed in the same spot. And in the third instance, you moved backward.

Of course, you could vary the placement of the axis of rotation in infinitesimal increments from your right to left shoulder and track the resulting changes in your movement through space, but these three axes are the basic ones to consider.

This process shows itself in many Aikido techniques. When people turn, they often make mistakes in the placement of the axis of rotation. For example, beginners often turn moving rearwards when they should be moving forwards. One way to help yourself notice this is to turn by sliding both your feet along the floor without losing contact with the ground. Feel your feet moving. And notice what direction the slide goes. You could move both feet forward, one foot forward and one backward, or both feet backward. Feeling the friction on the floor will tell you what direction you are actually moving.

TAI NO HENKO: EXPERIMENT 13.6

A simple application of the axis of rotation principle has to do with power delivery in the tenkan movement, which is the core of the tai no henko exercise. However, let's pay attention to how the back foot powers the forward hip.

Start in right hanmi with uke standing in left hanmi and grasping your right hand. Slide in a bit, turn counterclockwise and sweep your left leg back and around behind you. As you *begin* the counterclockwise turn around uke, where is the axis of rotation? It should be in your right hip/leg.

As you *end* the counterclockwise turn around uke, where is the axis of rotation? If you keep it in your right leg, your body will turn gently around uke and come to rest beside her. Certainly, that is a fine way to do the movement.

However, another way to do the exercise is to finish by pulling uke forward right at the end. How do you generate the power to pull uke forward? By shifting the axis of rotation to your left hip half way through the movement. If you do that,

at the end of the movement your right hip/arm unit travels forward and exerts a forward pull on uke.



This illustrates why the axis of rotation principle is so fundamental in Aikido. If you don't change your axis of rotation at the right moment, you cannot generate power to move uke. The chances are that if you're trying to move uke, you'll overuse your arm and shoulder to generate the power that your hip should be generating.

Selection from CHAPTER 14

LIVE MOVEMENT

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DOING THE TECHNIQUE INTENTIONALLY

This is hard to express or explain, but when I do an Aikido throw, I'm not just doing the throw. There is an echo, but it happens before the movement not after it.

And there is so little time lag that the echo and the movement take place at the same moment.

I've read that some blues singers, to make their recorded voices richer, will record the same song twice, laying down a second track of sound right on the first one. It's something like that.

When I do a physical Aikido movement, I pre-do the movement in intention, in body sensing. Just moving muscles and bones is dull movement. Adding the dimension of deliberate will to a technique enlivens it with feeling. That makes the movement flow better. Beyond that, the clarity of will on my part communicates to the attacker and lures him into wishing the movements that I'm choosing. Aikido requires taking over not only the attacker's movements but also his will to move.

As you do any movement, you can pre-do it with willed projection. That creates a deeper movement practice. However, moving with a goal-oriented intention can make you effortful and un-spontaneous, so this "pre-willing" must be balanced with ease of flow and spontaneity. In addition, focusing too intently on a pre-doing can make you narrow in your awareness, so pre-doing must be balanced by wideness of your field of perception and intention.

The exercises in this section will be very similar to those in Chapter 10, but the process of intentional execution of defense techniques is worth more practice.

RAILS: EXPERIMENT 14.2

The process of filling an Aikido movement with intention is more than just an image or an idea. In this exercise, you will use the physical form of an Aikido knife defense to practice filling technique with intention.

Have your partner stand in front of you holding a wooden knife in her left hand. The knife should touch your chest. Your job is to do a circular movement and swat her arm away with your right hand. (If you are a lefty, change the directions to suit your handedness.) Your partner's job is to poke you in the chest as soon as she notices your movement.

If, as you begin your block, you tense up, or get ready to begin moving, or pull your arm back as a preparation for moving forward, your partner will see that and poke you. So you need to be relaxed and smooth, beginning your movement with no anticipatory preparation.

More than that, in doing the movement, your mind and body have to be fully integrated, so to speak. Of course, since mind and body are one and the same, they cannot be other than fully integrated, but what we could mean by that phrase is that your intentions and your movements must be focused and efficient so that you are neither intending nor moving in ways that detract from the smoothest possible trajectory for the swat.

There is a way of practicing that. Slowly move your hand from your side up through the arc which culminates in the block against your partner's arm. Do that a

number of times, feeling it clearly and distinctly as you move. Do the move slowly and mindfully.



Now, let your physical arm stay down by your side, and move your feeling arm up through the arc to touch your partner's arm. That is to say, sense the sensation of the intentional projection to move your arm in the particular arc you had just practiced. This is the same as the Willing a Trajectory exercise (10.3).

Once that is clear, then do the physical and intentional movements simultaneously. As you do that, you will probably feel that your arm moves more lightly and more easily, as though on a frictionless rail in the air.

Then go back to performing the full block.

The point of this experiment is to convey the experience of focusing intention within movement. Most people, when they move, just move. They move in a dull way because the brightness that comes from focused intention is absent. By moving in two ways simultaneously, you can brighten and strengthen your movements.



BIOGRAPHY

PAUL LINDEN, Ph.D., is martial artist and a somatic educator. He received his B.A. in Philosophy from Reed College in 1968, his M.A. in Physical Education from San Jose State University in 1976, and his Ph.D. in Physical Education from Ohio State University in 1983. He is an instructor of the Feldenkrais Method® of body awareness training, holds a first degree black belt in Isshin Ryu Karate, and holds a sixth degree black belt in Aikido, which he has been practicing since 1969.

Paul is the developer of Being In Movement® mindbody training, and he is the chief instructor at Aikido of Columbus and the Columbus Center for Movement Studies in Columbus, Ohio.

He invented and patented SpineLine bicycle handlebars. He has had extensive experience teaching people such as musicians, athletes, pregnant women, adult survivors of child abuse, children with attention disorders, and business persons. He is also the author of *Comfort at Your Computer: Body Awareness Training for Pain-Free Computer Use* and *Winning is Healing: Body Awareness and Empowerment for Abuse Survivors*.

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