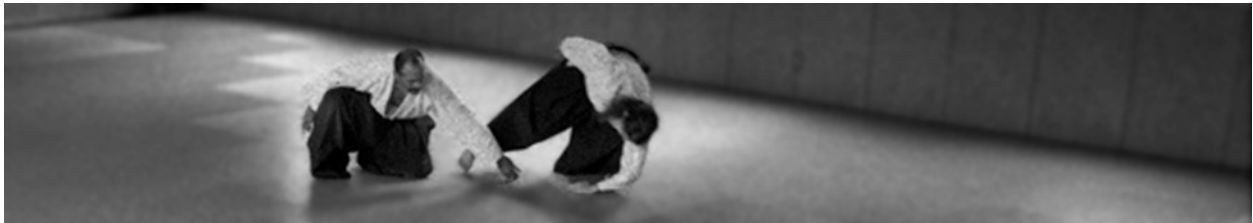


Integral Mind-Body Unification



“Mind moves body.” “Body reflects our mind.” “Mind moves first.” Curtis Sensei spoke eloquently of mind influencing body during the Scottsdale seminar. As the weekend unfolded, he demonstrated this principle many times. He would call up an advanced student, ki-test their mind-body state (pass), followed by an acknowledgment, then retest them (no pass) and ask, “Why the change!?” “I don’t know Sensei. I was distracted...” Mind flickers away on something (*I did it!*) and one-point is gone. Consider also the healing power of humor or a positive outlook, as well as the athletic use of internal visualization. Yes, mind does indeed move body.

Ken Wilber’s Integral framework reveals further depth in this mind-body relationship. Integral suggests that everything expresses in all four quadrants simultaneously (fig. 1). You cannot have an insight without measurable neurological activity, a cultural context and an embedded ecological system. All four mutually arising perspectives (I, we, it, its) influence each other and are influenced by each other.

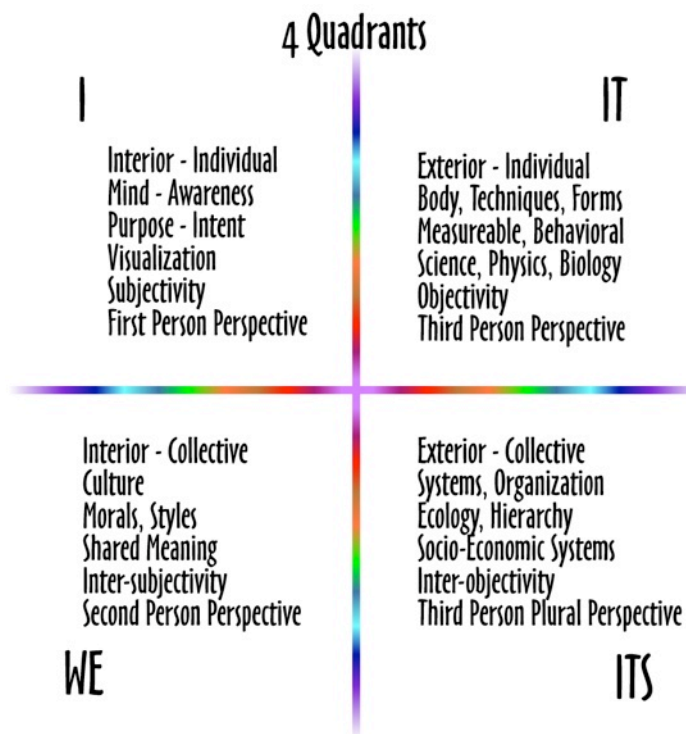


fig. 1

When we consider “mind moves body” we are pointing to the influence that the upper left “I” (subjective) quadrant has on the upper right “IT” (objective) quadrant. Change something in the mind or awareness, and there will be a concomitant change in the body. “Still the mind and calm the body.” We also understand the impact of somatic-body practices that can result in mood or mental changes. Nearly everyone experiences the increase in mental vitality and sharpness after a good round of *giuwaza*, or *randori*.

So, body influences mind; mind moves body... And unification of mind and body can be approached from both perspectives. Just working on mind, perhaps just meditating with no physical practice, will only be so effective; similarly, just performing rote physical practices, like aikido techniques, with no attention to mind is also limited. Ki-aikido takes a twin-perspective approach, working overtly with body and mind simultaneously. We not only double our developmental effectiveness, we also increase the mind-body connection every time we practice this way.

Stepping even further afield from Curtis Sensei’s remarks, if we consider the other two mutually arising perspectives, culture and social-systems, it is plain to see that we already use them, perhaps inadvertently, in our practice. Culturally, we create shared meaning when we use Japanese words, dress in gi and hakama, and hang shodo calligraphy in the dojo (fig. 2). All this supports our intent. Likewise, we belong to an organization, are located in a hierarchy, and have an appropriate role to play in the overall system, within which we are embedded. Both of these quadrants, the cultural and the social-systems, were clearly present in the seminar as Sensei led *misogi*, presented aspects of *Ki Barai* and spoke of the promotional hierarchy and tradition.



fig. 2

I contend that by bringing these two additional perspectives (We and Its), consciously into our practice we can further accelerate development. Skillfully using culture and systems, as well as mind and body, gives us even more leverage. Each incremental micro-expansion, from disciplines in all quadrants, creates a cascade of development in mind (more stillness), in culture (more sophisticated shared meaning), in the ecology of

the group (designing systems to assist in a more supportive and nimble organization) and in body (more relaxed, extended and graceful). To be truly unified with the Kosmos is to be tetra-unified.

As I look back the the weekend in Scottsdale with Curtis Sensei, I appreciated the understated multi-perspectival approach he expressed, while staying true to the heritage and tradition within ki-aikido. This is an honoring of the proven disciplines from the East, handed down from masters, and the gifts of integral sophistication from the West, all blended without diluting the power of what works. As I sit every morning at dawn, ki-breathing, I remember Sensei's haku breath and the amazing extension he exhibited, without effort. Such a skillful gesture, in that moment, blending the relative and the infinite, transformed my aikido forever.

Steve Self

Durango, April 2006

