

## Before The Wall: Body & Being



*Snow. An old man. A stick. A little boy. Using the stick, the old man slides on the snow. The boy asks, "Can I try that?" The old man hands the stick to the boy, who begins to play with it, on his own.*

Movement and play. The chapters that follow these opening minutes try to look into what might constitute, within a larger athletic field, some basic territory: 1) basic in the sense of being perhaps "prior" to a more finely articulated (elite-oriented) athletic practice; 2) basic in the sense of being a kind

of distillation, drawn from already experienced practices, not too tied to any particular discipline, still 3) basically open to a range of possibilities, exacting as well as playfully untried.

Human movement, whatever its form, necessarily has its places of birth and ancestry, its horizon of inspiration and choices. Here,



ground (birth, ancestry) and inspiration are: various ways of the ball, taken toward some everyday settings. And one of the choices: working within an approach different from the martial (arts) tradition.

Athletics, everyday living, an in-between. Pertaining to such a territory, still

undefined, what could be a series of moves or steps, in an area between, say, playing ball and waiting for the bus?

The ensuing chapters, then, try to look into a ground both specific and open. As such, they are to be seen less as intending to be instructive (something to be followed, mimicked) than

proposing perhaps a more radical approach: exploring, re-exploring, on one's own.

### Stickworks

Aligning movement and position. A sequence of situations, counted as twelve, serves as a layout for exploring various linearities – horizontal, vertical, muscular, mental, etc. – without



losing the sense of an ultimate indivisibility.

Framed in colors (relating to the elements in Chapter 5, Fireworks), three base-forms make up the full sequence (3 x 4). In the first, body and stick together approximate the letter A (positions 1, 4, 7, 10), referring to a sense of larger Awareness, expansive, embracing, physically anchored in a wide base, being on the outer edges of one's feet, stick held with a broad grip, hands pulling outward, chest open, eyes wide, easing breath, finding steadiness, maintaining (the stick's) horizontal alignment.

With the letter I (2, 5, 8, 11) a more vertical Intensity is implied, the body narrowing its alignment, heels coming together, toes angled out slightly, a leaner tension felt in the eyes, arms pushing down on the stick, torso musculature contracting.

The H (3, 6, 9, 12) points to Hereness, an openness for what's precisely there, feet and hands about shoulder width, knees bent,

weight slightly forward, stick held loosely, still alert: a middle tension between the A and the I, breath and body lighter, an all-directional readiness, sensing the angles (of body/stick), incorporating their lines.

### Frameworks

Clarifying, re-defining. The second chapter looks into the dynamics of pressure: getting a feel for how resistance per se may be helpful in articulating a lane within a larger pattern or within a particular flow-line; then integrating such a lane or line into the still larger movement and balances of the body.

Taking such an approach (a hand or a racquet pressing against another hand, a second racquet, some playground equipment) may be helpful to delineate or further define, for instance, a range of actual strokes. The film shows a twelvefold set, three possibilities each of a serving motion (sliced, flat, kick), a volley (forehand, backhand, close to torso), backhand (sliced, flat, topspin), and forehand (cut or sliced, flat, topspin).

Likewise, giving attention to the line of action when cutting a tomato, turning over in sleep, raking leaves, opening mail.



### Footworks

Leaning, moving, stopping, starting. With the traces of the



twelve forms from Stickworks, turned into steps then speeded-up, some possibilities are spelled out as ground for investigating a variety of timings and rhythms, some planned, some less so; practiced in place, transferred to the road; different counts, a threefold, a fivefold, applied to a sequence of steps, going left and right, testing for ease, asymmetrical shakiness, etc.

Then, after a breath: inviting invention, playfulness.

### Networks

Ball meeting strings. Taking off from a concrete setting, this more theoretical chapter looks into the idea that at any given moment, in any given situation, our actions will express themselves

completely, bearing witness to the whole of our being (our physical disposition, cognitive resources, emotions, memory, imagination, etc.). At the same time, this completeness may never be fully accounted for or made accessible, given the limits of language, concepts and our constant inclination to objectify, hence dualize.

Nevertheless, the vertical and horizontal strings of a racquet, seen as a vibrant, vibrating grid, is used here to illustrate or help consider this wholeness in terms of "two sets of interweaving economies," the horizontal accounting for the more individual, even idiosyncratic, the vertical pointing towards the larger rubrics of the bio-physical, the social, the cultural, etc.

	Body Of Being Body	Body Of Gender	Body Politic	Metabolic Body	Body Of Gravity
	Vertically	Facility	Circumstance	Receptivity	Attraction
	Feeling	Relation	Viewpoint	Transforming	Anchoring
	Perception	Difference	Choice	Cyclicity	Certifying
	Patterning	Repetition	Opposition	Entropy	Inertia
	Consciousness	Momentum	Communicating	Excretion	Limit
Body Of Elements	Earth Water Fire Air Space				
Body Of Time	Horizontality Feeling Perception Patterning Consciousness				
Athletic Body	Strength Flexibility Speed Endurance Co-ordination				
Mimetic Body	Learning Imagining Memory Convening Unquestioning				
Body Of Being's Openness	Fearlessness Non-clinging Embracing Ease Non-dualising				

### Fireworks

Forming form, spacing space. A fairly elaborate movement (the motion of a serve in tennis, the sense of its rhythm and upward/forward thrust) is played through in terms of what tradition calls the five elements – Earth, Water, Fire, Air, Space – suggesting



Firm      Flowing      Intense      Ongoing      Dynamic