

Accepting Deformed Distancing

In training our techniques, we train to perfect techniques that are taught as already perfected. If everything could go as expected in self-defense, the ideal technique would look like the *waza* we practice (the one required for exam). We realize that in a real situation, nothing may go as planned. That's why we also practice modifications and we set up drills to challenge our ability to respond with something that would be effective (and may be even look like a familiar technique, occasionally).

With our varied training and an awareness of the shortcomings of our traditional art (as well as its many and varied strengths), we are well on our way to being able to respond to Duke Dirty Dirk D'Astardly and his Demons when they descend upon us. There is one area, however, that we often ignore. [Traditional Asian martial arts such as karate, kempo, TKD, Tang Soo Do, and Aikido, even at their self-defense best, often ignore applications from a distance that has gone awry. To be clear, it is not that the art lacks techniques that can be applied at those distances, but that in our desire to develop the myriad techniques needed to handle a variety of situations, we opt for the *ideal* distance appropriate to each technique.](#) Sometimes we even see our art as a long-, medium-, or short-distance martial art. This is not exactly incorrect. Most arts have a *preferred distance* even if you can modify their techniques to work at other distances. My advice? Go ahead and modify.

I know, I know. It is hard enough to perform the requirements of our chosen art in order to pass an exam without spending our entire workweek and three weekends per month training at the dojo. And I know I have, in other essays, offered a few advanced approaches that may have challenged your art's main thrust, your school's main emphasis, your teacher's preferences, and your own ability to integrate it all. Sorry. Full training in martial arts is, in my opinion, is only approachable, not realizable. In that spirit, consider one more approach.

Let's say we are trying to apply a technique like Aikido's Ikkyo. The partner seizes our lapel and extends his arm. We are told that the technique should not be attempted if he curls his grip and pulls us to him. It is a valid caveat. Just as you cannot kick to the head if he has seized you from behind (unless you are a female kung-fu cinema star with a greater than 180 degree split), similarly turning his arm over in Ikkyo is pretty darn difficult when he is too close and pulling himself closer. Obviously, the thing to do is to bale out of Ikkyo and perform some other technique. You'll get no argument from me. However, consider what we would learn about the human body if we *had* to discover a method by which we could perform something like Ikkyo from that deformed distance.

We would move in ways unfamiliar to us, apply methods that are unorthodox, and discover principles that might have remained undiscovered if we had kept practicing only the idealized technique. By seeing the “flaws” in our habitual training, we discover new ways of training, new insights into concepts, and we discover why styles developed in the first place.

More importantly, in my opinion, is that by challenging ourselves, we can more fully understand how the body works and how one body can affect another. Isn't that the real aim of *budo*?

Next time: Aborting the Movement