

“Statement of Philosophy”
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When I first began my study of Hapkido, I was amazed at how my instructors could perform techniques with such fluidity and grace. Even when the technique did not go the way they initially intended, they quickly adjusted to the change and flowed seamlessly to another technique. I was in awe—I wondered how this was possible, and I questioned whether I could ever come close to doing such things with my own techniques. Would I ever be able to respond and act that quickly? How does one even attain that level of fluidity?

The first time I ever experienced fluidity in my technique was when I was practicing pushing attacks with a fellow classmate. We were working on the Head Sweep, something that I routinely had problems with as a single-hand technique. Part of my problem when performing this technique from a single-hand attack was that I kept worrying about where my body had to go. Where do my feet go? Am I moving the wrong hand? Did I turn the wrong way? I felt it necessary to break the technique down into bite sized pieces, but as it turned out, this approach was only making it more difficult for me. Once I tried the Head Sweep from a pushing attack, I began to think of it as one whole technique...I no longer had time to consider where to place my feet and hands as I threw my partner. All I had time to think about was where I wanted my partner to end up. With the help of the principle of non-resistance, I did not fight the energy from my partner's push, I moved out of the way, and guided him to the ground using a technique that *felt* like a Head Sweep. In that one moment, I not only perceived the principle of non-resistance for the first time, I also realized that I was capable of achieving fluid motion in a technique.

When applied to techniques in Hapkido, I believe that fluid and seamless motion translates into three things: 1) It makes what you are trying to achieve easier to accomplish; 2) It results in a more efficient use of your energy; and 3) It results in a more powerful technique. The three basic principles of Hapkido (circular motion, non-resistance, and the water principle) each contribute to fluid motion as well. A circle itself is seamless, and this seamless construction contributes to an accumulation of focused energy. By using an attacker's power against him as non-resistance, his energy is redirected and then combined with the energy accumulated through circular motion. Then, by flowing around the attacker, like water, this energy is used in the most efficient way: it is aimed at the weaknesses of the attacker.

Fluidity also manifests itself outside of Hapkido as well. When I began practicing Hapkido, I was at the beginning of a degree program in music theory. As part of this program, I was hired as a teaching assistant and was responsible for teaching one of the music theory skills classes. This was entirely new to me, as I had taught before but did not have the experience of teaching my own class on a regular basis. Now, I had to develop lesson plans and think of learning objectives for my own class. I was no longer the student...I was the teacher. Just as I would break down techniques in Hapkido, I would plan out the daily activities in my own classroom. I knew exactly what exercises I wanted to focus on and what words I would use to relay concepts to my students. I had it all planned out...what could go wrong? I quickly came to realize that nothing ever goes exactly according to the plan. As a new teacher, I had to learn to react to the students and change my actions according to the needs of that specific class. Just as in Hapkido, I had

to flow seamlessly between activities, even if the activities were not those I had originally outlined in my plan.

As I continue my practice of Hapkido, I feel that my techniques are becoming more and more fluid. If I focus on the core techniques learned as a white belt, I notice that I no longer have to think of a technique as a collection of different body movements. I find that I am beginning to think of the technique as one fluid motion, and when I execute a technique in this manner, it becomes easier, more powerful, and more efficient. Also, since I am not occupied with worrying about foot placement or arm position, there is more room for focusing on how I can off-balance my attacker and how I can use my Ki energy to help me defend myself against a person who is larger than me. Of course, there are still moments when my techniques are not so seamless, and, as a matter of fact, these moments probably outnumber my moments of fluidity. However, I look forward to developing what I have only just begun to recognize, and I hope to use what I have learned in my own practice and well as with my teaching of others.