



The Aiki Dojo

道の為、世の為、人の為、合気道

2

Kindness

by David Ito

Ito Sensei explains how kindness is mightier than a sword.

4

Static vs. Dynamic

by Ken Watanabe

Watanabe Sensei discusses how static and dynamic work.

6

2022

by Santiago Garcia Almaraz

Almaraz Sensei looks back on 2022 and forward into 2023.



Dojo-cho Mitsuteru Ueshiba visiting Madrid in November 2022

HAPPY HOLIDAYS!



Long ago, I heard this Japanese proverb that at the time made no sense: *Nasake ni hamukau yaiba nashi* (情けに向かう刃なし) or that “There is no sword which can oppose kindness.” At the time, I thought that this was a ridiculous statement, and I envisioned some meek priest praying as they were being threatened with a sword. Recently, I finally realized how kindness can overcome a sword.

A few weeks ago, I was in Madrid attending Dojo-cho Mitsuteru Ueshiba’s seminar commemorating the 40th anniversary of the AETAIKI Aikido group in Spain. This seminar was Dojo-cho’s first international seminar since the beginning of the pandemic. We were told that over 300 Aikidoists attended the seminar. I enjoyed myself very much and had a great time practicing Aikido and watching Dojo-cho demonstrate beautiful Aikido. The atmosphere of this seminar was filled with joy and everyone I interacted with was very friendly. I just thought that everyone was happy to be on the mat after being sequestered for so many years. I was struck by how friendly everyone was even though I couldn’t speak Spanish. Almaraz Sensei said that the Spanish people are naturally friendly and outgoing.

On the way home, a couple of things happened to me which taught me the value of kindness. When I arrived at the bus station it was pouring rain and it was 5:45 am. I hadn’t gotten much sleep the night before and was tired and stressed as I had never taken the bus to the airport and I couldn’t speak any Spanish. As we got to the station, I noticed a woman getting out of cab who had a lot of luggage and that the driver wasn’t helping her with it. Almaraz Sensei and I just passed her by and got on the elevator. This would be a different story if I didn’t notice her, but I did. As we waited for the bus to arrive, people were just milling

around and there wasn’t much of a line, but this same lady just lined up behind me. She asked Almaraz Sensei in Spanish if this was the bus to the airport. When the bus arrived, we loaded up my luggage and I noticed that this lady struggled loading her luggage but I didn’t think anything of it. We said our goodbyes

and I got on the bus. Serendipitously, I ended up sitting right next to this same lady. Two hours later the bus pulled into an underground station and people started to get off. Just as I rose up, the

lady pulled on my sleeve and said in broken English, “You airport?” and made a hand gesture like a plane taking off. I said, “yes.” She said, “no here” and made a hand gesture indicating the next one. A little while later, at the next stop she looked at me and shook her head and said, “no” to indicate that this was not the right stop either. When we finally arrived at the airport, she said, “here” and pointed to the ground. I said, “thank you” and we parted ways. If she didn’t show me a little bit of kindness, which I did not show her, I would have gotten off the bus and gotten lost in Madrid somewhere.

Kindness



by David Ito
Aikido Chief Instructor

At the airport, the lines were huge and backed up. I waited an hour in the same spot. A guy behind me asked me if this was the line for Los Angeles. I said, “yes” and didn’t think anything of it. At some point he slipped out of the line and asked someone about checking in because it was getting very late. He ran back and ran right to me and said, “we have to change lines, or we will miss the plane” and pointed to another counter. We ran to another counter, and we ended up getting to the boarding gate just as they were starting to board.



As I settled into my seat, I was struck by the kindness that both of these people showed me even though I was a complete stranger. If they were like me and minded their own business, I would have missed my flight home. In that moment, it didn't matter how strong of an Aikidoist I was, I needed someone else's kindness to succeed.

As I reflect back on this year, I am reminded over and over again how much people and their kindness matter over physical prowess or other external traits.

In class, students need partners to take their ukemi. Therefore, the kindness that others show us by giving us their bodies enable us to grow as not only Aikidoists but as human beings. Likewise, teachers also need students. Without students, a teacher cannot teach. If a person is kind enough to show up to class that enables us to be teachers.

This year in October, a group of us traveled to Spain to celebrate Kodokai Dojo's 24th anniversary. Traveling successfully means that we have to work together as a team and support each other. Attending the seminar enables us to support our friends in celebrating their anniversary. More than the Aikido, it is the people that made the difference in making this anniversary successful.

Reflecting back on my experience in Madrid and the events over the year, I am struck by a quote by O'Sensei: "Aiki is not a technique to fight with or defeat an enemy. It is the way to reconcile the world and make human beings one family." How do we as martial artists make sense of O'Sensei's quote? As martial artists, it is only natural that we value strength, speed, or physical prowess over compassion or kindness. However, O'Sensei's quote warns us against using our ability to destroy. O'Sensei implies that we bring the world together not by force but with kindness and that kindness is more powerful than a sword. Thus, there is no sword that oppose kindness. No matter my physical prowess, I would have suffered greatly if those two people hadn't shown me a little bit of kindness. Every day, people around us are showing us kindness, from the person who makes our food to the person opens the door. The world truly only exists because we are one family and the kindness we show to one another. 2022 and the pandemic have shown us that the true value lies in people and that the only real currency is kindness.

Have a safe and wonderful holiday. Please be kind to each other in 2023. •



As we close out 2022, I wanted to look ahead and discuss dynamic vs. static movement.

Aikido is a dynamic martial art. We use both timing and spacing to neutralize the attack, break our attacker's center, bring our attacker into our own movement, and establish a good position from where we can apply a technique to throw or pin our opponent. When we can accomplish this, the techniques appear flowing and full of movement.

Although Aikido is dynamic and powerful, we always start practicing from a static attack. There are many reasons we start training from a static attack. From a static attack, it's much easier to see how to move into a protected position and how we align with the opponent. Practicing techniques from static attack rather than a dynamic one is useful for refining and checking our movement and positioning. Static training makes it easier to see what makes the technique effective. Another important part of static training is how both *uke* and *nage* - attacker and defender - practice and develop their connection between each other.

When we practice developing this Aikido connection, it's more than staying close to our opponent. Staying close to our opponent is an important part of the technique and its effectiveness, but it's using the point of contact - usually our opponent's grip during a grabbing attack - to keep the connection. We use this connection to read our opponent's energy as well as to break the

power in our opponent's center.

From this grip, we aren't trying to break the grip or escape from it. From this grip, we are developing our connection in tandem with our *kokyu* movement. From this *kokyu* movement, we practice how to align with our opponent's power, neutralize it, and unbalance them. As we advance in our training, we practice using this connection to create movement in our opponent.

Static vs. Dynamic



by Ken Watanabe
Technical Director

In both our training and when we teach, it's important to switch back and forth between static and dynamic attacks. At first glance, they seem the opposite of each other; one is still and the other moves. However, it's an important part of our training to see how they are similar to each other as well as different.

The static spacing is such that the arms of both the attacker and the defender are extended. This is how we create space and learn spacing. It is from this physical distance that the technique's movements begin, no farther and no closer. Starting too far apart means establishing connection with stability and power is not possible. During a dynamic attack, we start the technique earlier which means that timing as well as spacing is important. During a static attack, starting too close together makes the footwork easier but the attacker's power can become too overwhelming. During a dynamic attack, starting too close together means that we could start the technique too late.



We also practice our footwork with the understand of static and dynamic movement. From the correct static spacing, we practice how to cross the gap between ourselves and our opponent. Static trains us to stretch our legs when we *irimi* to move forward, *tenkan* to turn, or *tenshin* to fade back. From these understandings, we take our footwork to dynamic movement. There is a saying, “what can’t be done slow, can’t be done fast” and thus, if we can’t do it from static, we won’t be able to do dynamic.

This static distance, and the ability to recognize it, directly affects our timing and spacing when the practice gets stronger and faster.

As we practice these techniques from static, we have to see how our body positioning and connection protect us, unbalances our attacker, aligns with and neutralizes their energy, and generates movement. When we can see how to do all of this from static, then we can see how it works when the attacks become dynamic and stronger.

When we start practicing the techniques from dynamic attacks, it’s easy to begin thinking in terms of avoiding the attack or keeping away from the attacker’s grip, but it’s from this idea from static training that we refine the connection as we add timing and spacing, and we begin leading our attacker’s movement and bring it into our own movement. We do this while maintaining the connection we practiced and learned during static attack training.

From static training we practice how to see the technique and experience it so that when the practice gets stronger and faster, we go from seeing the technique to feeling the technique. This goes for the one being thrown as well. For *uke*, the one being thrown or pinned, they are also using this static training to develop their connection and their sense of the technique. From this connection, they are trying to learn how to follow the technique’s movement. From static, it’s relatively easy to practice following the technique. When we can follow the movement, we can begin to see how to read our partner’s energy.

Static training is a very important part of learning Aikido and is crucial when we are developing our technique. The lessons and skills we practice in static training are applied when we start incorporating timing, spacing, and the flow of energy in our practice. As we advance in our own training, try to see the dynamic aspects in static practice, the static aspects in dynamic practice, and how they are both connected to each other.

As we move into 2023, we will be focusing the month of January on grabs from the *gyaku hanmi* stance. We will go from static attacks to dynamic attacks so that students can build a solid foundation in their movements.

I wish to thank everyone for their hard work in 2022 and hope that everyone has a great holiday season. I look forward to working with you all to make the dojo the best it can be in 2023. •



It is difficult to start an article for the month of December and not look back to see what has happened these last 11 months of the year and thus appreciate all that has happened to us, good and not so good. Over the year, we have met new people, and perhaps, some of our friends and family have left our lives. Life has its ups and downs. Some people leave our lives because they have to take their own paths. Some things change, become difficult or don't turn out as we expected. When things don't happen the way we think they will, it is easy for us to become bitter or disappointed. Ultimately, whatever happens is how life is supposed to be. Perhaps, that is why Miyamoto Musashi listed "Accept things as they are" as his number one tenet in the Dokkodo or "The Way to Go Forth Alone." As we look at life and see it as a whole - the good or the bad, the laughter or the tears, the joys or the disappointments - in the end they are all parts of the same thing.

So, to continue with the tradition, I will make a little reflection on this somewhat special year for everyone. In general, we have lived the year in the shadow of the uncertainty of how these years of pandemic would affect not only the dojo, but Aikido too. It took a tremendous amount of effort and trust as we continued working to resume our regular schedules and start to practice little by little, being prudent and overcoming any setback.

Looking back, I have to say that in particular it has been an intense year of returning back to normality after the pandemic and resuming regular schedules and classes. For the most part, it has been motivating but at the same time it has been more stressful than the past years due to the uncertainty of how students would return to the classes. However, thanks to everyone's efforts, the return was easy and now that the year is over

we can say that we have a normality of almost 100%.

With that being said, it seems like as we close in on the end of this year, it is becoming very intense. Especially in recent months, October and November, we celebrated our dojo's 24th anniversary and we were able to enjoy the visit of our friends and colleagues from Los Angeles. It was great to see everyone again after 4 years! Seeing everyone made me feel very proud of how everyone has continued to work to support the dojos within our group and to keep Aikido alive. On a certain level, it is like everything continued the same as it was before this pandemic forced us to stop.

2022



by Santiago Garcia Almaraz
Chief Instructor, Aikido Kodokai

With our friends visiting from Los Angeles, it filled the dojo with so much energy, joy and camaraderie that it seemed just like the old days. I think we all had a good few days of training and enjoyed each other's company as we visited different cities and places around Spain.

I believe that being able to return after four years and seeing each other again is part of the spirit of Aikido and is part of the work and daily discipline that has helped us to this result. I wanted to thank everyone with all my heart especially

Gary, Victor, Maria, Andrew, Kay and their companions for coming back and for all the new people I met like Ayuri and Alexandre Hillaret Sensei. I really appreciated their company over these two weeks. I also had the opportunity to spend more time with Ito Sensei for our annual seminar and anniversary. We all enjoyed his teaching and his camaraderie. Ito Sensei also returned to Spain a few weeks later to attend Dojo-cho's seminar commemorating the 40th anniversary of AETAIKI Spain in Madrid.



The experience of participating in the seminar and enjoying six hours of practice and teaching by Dojo-cho was an unforgettable experience. Ito Sensei and I enjoyed the training and taking Dojo-cho's classes. Dojo-cho emphasized basic *kihon-waza* and gave a complete technical review for everyone so that we all could be sure that we are practicing the fundamentals correctly. Dojo-cho's technique is very sharp and precise and easy to follow along with.

Another great aspect of the seminar was being able to reconnect with so many Aikido friends that I had not seen in many years. I also was able to meet and practice with new friends and this was also something that was very positive and that I enjoyed it a lot. Dojo-cho created a very positive feeling on the mat which I think was absorbed by the students. Everyone was training hard but in a friendly manner. The feeling during the practice was very positive since most of the techniques were those that we practice everyday in the dojo. At the seminar party, I had a chance to spend time with a lot of different Aikidoists. I think that Dojo-cho's presence really brought out the best in everyone and I hope that it created a good sense of unity among the Aikido community.

2022 showed me that with the proper training, we can weather any storm or pandemic. After the seminar, I was left with a sense of security knowing that the future of Aikido is in Dojo-cho's hands. I also feel that Kodokai Dojo and the Aikido Center of Los Angeles are in good hands because of the effort, per-

severance, and hard work that all of Sensei's students are putting in. This year's seminar was even more special because Ito Sensei and I spent one more week together here in Spain. During these weeks, we were able to share many experiences and ideas. It made me really feel less alone especially after the craziness of the pandemic. We made many plans for projects for 2023. I hope 2023 goes as well as 2022.

As I reflect, it is difficult to say to what extent our successes in 2022 we can attribute to Furuya Sensei's teachings. I like to think that he is very much responsible because I believe that his inspiration and teachings are what gave us the strength and showed the path to survive the pandemic. In life and Aikido, there will always be some obstacles to overcome. How we overcome is based on the fundamentals of what we are taught. Dojo-cho's seminar really illustrated that for me and his teachings inspire me. This year, I really appreciate all that Furuya Sensei had taught me and every day it feels like he is still guiding me and keeping me safe. I only hope that for next year, we can all continue to work hard and maintain the vigor as martial artists. My wish is that we all have the strength and perseverance to have another great year and to continue one more step on this path together.

Merry Christmas everyone and a Happy New Year 2023. •

UPCOMING EVENTS

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Dojo Coronavirus update:

Currently, the City of Los Angeles and the County of Los Angeles has lifted the face mask mandate for all persons vaccinated or not. Anyone who still wants to wear a face covering in class is welcome to do so. There is also no vaccination requirement to attend classes.

IMPORTANT DATES

- December 3 (Saturday):** Dojo Christmas party at **6:30 PM**
- December 17 (Saturday):** Osoji - Year end clean up at **8:00 AM**
- December 18 (Sunday):** Mochitsuki at Zenshuji at **6:30 AM**
- December 23-26 (Friday-Monday):** Dojo Closed Christmas
- December 30 (Friday):** Osame keiko - Last practice of the year at **6:30 PM**
- December 30 (Friday):** Bonenkai party - Forget the year party at **8:00 PM**

The Furuya Foundation and the Aikido Center of Los Angeles (ACLA) admit students of any race, color, and national or ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school. The Furuya Foundation and the Aikido Center of Los Angeles do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, gender identification, national or ethnic origin or sexual orientation in administration of their educational policies, admissions policies, scholarship and loan programs, and athletic and other school-administered programs.

Aikido Training Schedule

合気道 時間割

Saturdays		Wednesdays	
10:15-11:15 AM	Advanced	6:30-7:30 PM	Regular
11:30 AM-12:30 PM	Theory	8:30-9:30 PM	Fundamentals @Budokan
Sundays		Thursdays	
9:00-10:00 AM	Children's Class	6:30-7:30 PM	Open
10:15-11:15 AM	Regular		
11:30 AM-12:30 PM	Fundamentals		
Mondays		Fridays	
6:30-7:30 PM	Regular	6:30-7:30 PM	Regular Class
Tuesdays			
6:30-7:30 PM	Weapons		

NOTE: Visitors are welcome to observe our Fundamentals, or Regular Classes.

Iaido Training Schedule

居合道 時間割

Saturdays	
8:00-9:00 AM	Regular Class
Tuesdays	
7:45-8:45 PM	Regular class
Thursdays	
7:45-8:45 PM	Regular class



The Aiki Dojo

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The Aikido Center of Los Angeles

has been awarded Official *Konin* recognition by the Aikikai Foundation, Aikido World Headquarters.

Our dojos are committed to the study and practice of the teachings of the Founder of Aikido, Morihei Ueshiba and his legitimate successors, Nidai Doshu, Kisshomaru Ueshiba, the present Doshu, Moriteru Ueshiba and Hombu Dojo-Cho, Mitsuteru Ueshiba.

Affiliated Dojos of the Aikido Center of Los Angeles



Aikido La Gomera Aikikai
Kodokai Dojo



Aikido
Salamanca Aikikai
Kodokai Dojo



Aikido Valladolid Aikikai
Kodokai Dojo



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We are a not-for-profit, traditional Aikido dojo dedicated to preserving the honored values and traditions of the arts of Aikido and Iaido. With your continued understanding and support, we hope that you will also dedicate yourself to your training and enjoy all the benefits that Aikido and Iaido have to offer.

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