



The Aiki Dojo

道の為、世の為、人の為、合気道

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Food for Thought



THIS ROAD! by David Ito Aikido Chief Instructor

*kono michi ya
yuku hito nashi ni
aki no kure*

*This road!
With no one going —
Autumn evening*

Furuya Sensei loved *jidaigeki* or “samurai period dramas” and he had a whole library of old vhs and DVD movies. Snooping around in them I found a copy of the original 1963 version of 13 Assassins or *Jusan-nin no Shisaku* directed by Eiichi Kudo. Comparing the Eiichi Kudo 1963 version to my Takeshi Miike 2011 version was interesting. The newer film followed the older version almost scene by scene quite closely even down to the dialogue. However, there are two main differences between the Kudo version and the one directed by Miike. Quite pointedly, there is a lot, and I mean a lot, less blood and gore in the original version. The other difference and probably the main difference is in how the samurai were portrayed. In the newer version, the samurai were more resolved and brash with a sense of bravado, planning an unthinkable breach of protocol to assassinate a lord who is terrorizing people, but who also happens to be the Shogun’s half brother. In the early version, the samurai seem more human, more like normal human beings, who are put into a difficult situation that neither can shy away from. There is a great scene in both versions where the main antagonist Hanbei Onigashira goes to confront the main protagonist Shimada Shinzae-

mon at his home unannounced as he is plotting the demise of the lord. Both men were students at one time at the same sword school so they know each other. In the newer version Hanbei is incensed and full of anger and goes to Shimada’s home to confront him and Shimada meets him at the door and calmly listens while the rest of the 13 assassins hide. Hanbei angrily rebukes Shimada and throws around a bunch of threats. In the earlier version it is nothing like that. Hanbei actually surprises Shimada and walks into his house unannounced while they are planning the attack. Shimada plays it very calmly and dismisses the rest of the assassins and sits with his back turned partially away from Hanbei and asks him, “you came to kill me?” After a brief stare down, Hanbei calls it, “an ill twist of fate” and starts reminiscing about the days when they were students and how much he used to envy Shimada. As Hanbei sulks, Shimada comforts him for a brief moment as he says, “perhaps you and I had no other way to live. Being samurai is a helpless job.” Then in a moment of weakness he shares that he really wanted to kill himself in protest to his lord’s action, but that he couldn’t as a samurai because the retired Shogun asked him personally to guard his depraved lord. Shimada changes tone and says, “whatever will ensue between us from now on, I hope we’ll both act manly as samurai.” When Shimada says that, Hanbei sits up straighter, as if Shimada’s words brought him back to life, and then Shimada says as if it’s a matter of



fact, “see you again” and Hanbei says sternly, “of course.” They resume their roles as adversaries and Hanbei leaves. Saying, “see you again” is Shimada telling Hanbei that he’s coming and Hanbei’s “of course” is him telling Shimada he’ll be a samurai and will be ready.

As warriors in battle, the easier path is to have an adversarial mentality about the person facing us which demonizes them and makes it easier for us to carry out our duty upon them. After all, aren’t they trying to dispatch us, so then they must be our foe? This enemy mentality isn’t wrong because it comes from a deep dark place of fear. A true warrior who has reached the highest echelons of Aikido sees things much more clearly and is illuminated past the surface of what the situation appears to be.

In Aikido training, in addition to the martial techniques we are learning, we are also physically learning a different and distinctive philosophy about confrontation and non-violence. Aikido is about peace and training is the path towards inner peace. We develop ourselves because to practice inner peace and give compassion requires precision. This is probably the most distinct difference between Aikido and other martial arts where the physical is emphasized and inner peace is learned last, if at all.

As we train and develop, we gain a clarity about the futility of the side of *budo* which is about death and destruction and at the same time we

come to realize that the real opponent is not the person facing us but the person who is inside us.

Understanding this idea that the true opponent is ourselves and that the true nature of human beings is kindness and compassion, we come to revere our opponent almost as much as we love and revere ourselves. This may seem like a ridiculous idea that the person confronting us is as human as us, but the more we train, the more we see that the person is not unlike us. We both have dedicated our lives to something and the person facing us is just as loyal, hard working, diligent and sincere as we are, but happens to find themselves on the other side of the same coin. This humanizes our adversary and they cease to be “them” or whatever label we give them to take away their humanity.

A true warrior is one who, like Shimada or Hanbei, finds themselves in an insurmountable situation but who have resigned themselves to their loyalty and their code to be honorable and see their situation to its end regardless of what that conclusion ends up being.

Aikidoists are not barbarians, they are sophisticated highly developed warriors of *budo*. They know that when thrust into an untenable situation they as human beings will fall to the lowest level of their self-development and that is why constant training, reflection and development is necessary. One just hopes that that lowest point of their development isn’t in a dark place where they will resort to the cruelty and indifference of an animal and not a human being.

That one moment when both Hanbei and Shimada discuss their situations is for me one of the most poignant. It showed that two high level warriors were still human inside but simultaneously resigned to their fates. It teaches us that humanity is necessary for mastery.

Training develops us for that one moment when it all counts and we fall to the level of our lowest development and wherever that station is, we hope we can still be steadfastly human beings and deliver kindness, compassion and forgiveness even in the face of our own certain death. •

ALL FOR ONE, ONE FOR ALL.



by **Ken Watanabe** laido Chief Instructor

Harmony—in Aikido we hear a lot about harmony. We talk about harmonizing with our partners and blending our own ki with their ki. We hear about Aikido, its philosophy of “non-fighting,” and how we harmonize and blend with our opponent’s attack to subdue them. The founder of Aikido even equated the word *ai* in Aikido, the Japanese word for “harmony,” with *ai*, the Japanese word for “love.”

In class we practice aikido techniques, harmonizing and blending with our practice partner. We know it’s important to practice how to harmonize with our opponent’s attack, but at the same time we must remember to practice how to bring harmony within ourselves.

When we hear about being in harmony, we might think of a balding sage stroking his long white beard, as he sits atop a snow-capped summit, drawing sustenance from the universe. However, as our partner attacks us, that is probably the furthest thing from our minds. In martial arts we speak of uniting the body, mind, and spirit, but this doesn’t happen suddenly like getting a great idea for an invention. The key to achieving this is practice, yet where do we begin? The best place to begin is with our bodies.

In Aikido, we hear about *tai-sabaki* (body movement), *te-sabaki* (handwork), and *ashi-sabaki* (footwork). They seem to be separate concepts; our feet move, our hands move, and our body moves—it’s a no brainer. As beginners we are supposed to emphasize the movement over emphasizing strength, yet, when we begin practice, everything seems disjointed and difficult. Yet after class we are able to change into our street clothes, and walk out the dojo very easily.

Usually, we don’t feel awkward when we walk after practice. Usually we don’t wonder what to do with our hands as we take step after step. Usually we’re not fighting to keep our balance. This is our body in harmony. Everything—arms, legs, hips—working together. Whether or not we realize it, when we walk down the street, our body performs this complex, sophisticated miracle of balance and coordination. We move naturally, harmoniously, balanced, yet on the mat, all this goes out the window, usually replaced with a mentality brought on by our egos.

Harmony implies a relationship. It is a relationship between how our feet, our center, and our hands move in concert together with the proper concentration and energy. When we move our hands, they



aren't moving separately from the rest of our body; when we move our hands they move coordinated with and supported by our footwork, our center, and our body movement. When we can truly understand this, then we can begin to move harmoniously. From here we can blend with our opponent's attack and neutralize their energy.

We practice how to align our stance and movement with our opponent but we must also practice how to bring our own body into alignment. Are we faced in one direction while our feet are pointed in another direction and our hands are focused in yet another? When everything is in order and we are properly focused towards our opponent, then it is easy to see when something is out of place. From this framework, our energy can flow unimpeded. This is real training; not trying to beat our enemies, becoming undefeatable, or fluffing up our sense of selves.

When everything in our body is connected, then our concentration can fill our posture; when our concentration fills our posture, then we can use our whole body instead of relying on physical strength in one small part. This is why we emphasize the movement in practice, both when we throw and when it is our turn to be thrown.

When we only push and pull our opponent, all we can feel is pushing and pulling. When we emphasize the correct movement, we are trying to feel how our hands are connected with our footwork; how our center is connected to our hands; how our center is connected to our feet, and how our stance is lined up with our opponent. We are practicing body awareness.

Anyone can work out and become strong. We might have "arm days," "leg days" or whatever, but Aikido doesn't break us apart like that; proper Aikido training develops our whole selves in a balanced way. Aikido doesn't stop at making us strong. It teaches how to bring it all together—harmonizing—into one focused entity.

Aikido harmonizes our energy with our opponent as much as it harmonizes the energy within ourselves. Once our physical posture is focused properly, then it is possible to begin feeling and blending with this energy.

If we practice Aikido with only one part of our body instead of developing ourselves, then we begin fighting, both against the other person and more importantly, against ourselves. Now, where's the harmony in that? •



2018 Toyota Raffle Tickets Are Now Available!

For every raffle ticket sold by the dojo, we will receive a \$4.00 donation. Email Gary Illiano at illiano.gary@gmail.com or email the dojo if you want to purchase a ticket or if you want to sell them for us.

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Drawing of the winning ticket will be held on Monday, November 5, 2018 at Baldoria Restaurant in Little Tokyo, 243 S San Pedro Street, Los Angeles at 7 p.m. Winner need not be present.



Our Neighborhood, Our Food

Manuela—a Little Bit of
Country, a Little Bit of Artsy.

by **Maria Murakawa** Aikido 3rd Dan

Is there anything more L.A. these days than eating in a restaurant housed in an art gallery which opens up to a spacious courtyard, a chicken coop and vegetable garden, in what used to be an old flour mill in the downtown L.A.'s Arts District?

These days L.A. is not just synonymous with beaches and Hollywood. We've seen gentrification filtering through our neighborhood in the outskirts of Chinatown, yet the Arts District, located just a mile and half south from the dojo, is seeing a major conversion of its various warehouses into high-end eateries, hidden shoe stores, coffee shops, secret bars and breweries.

Manuela is another restaurant which adds to the juxtaposition of old and new—offering California cuisine which is Southern at its core and utilizing local farmer's market ingredients, in a space that is both refined and industrial at the same time.

To start with, get country with the deviled eggs, soft and creamy with the yoke filling infused with buttermilk. Tender and flakey cream biscuits slathered with honey butter alongside aged country ham are the perfect balance of sweet and salty.

Market fresh produce shines in a salad of Siberian kale, avocado,

radish, sheep's cheese, lemon, and anchovy breadcrumbs—a welcome refreshment on a warm summer evening.

Plates are an ode to the chef's Southern sensibility with the venison burger and deer loin being popular dishes. The duck breast though, is tender and meaty, topped with hazelnuts and paired with brown butter and warm plums. Snag a side of fried potatoes, topped with sauce gribiche—a mayonnaise-style egg topping, surprisingly light and airy in texture.

For dessert, it doesn't get any homier than brown butter chocolate chip cookies. With chocolate ice cream plastered with bits of toffee, you'll almost forget about the milk. Beignets are pillows of fried dough, topped generously with powdered sugar, and they round out the slightly Southern experience in an indulgent way.

Walk off the meal by poking into a gallery or two at Hauser & Wirth, and pay a visit to the chicken coop out back. For a small moment you'll be removed from the hustle and bustle and transported to a bit of tranquility in the Arts District. •

Manuela 907 E. 3rd St., Los Angeles (323) 849-0480 Manuela-la.com

See the Oneness

by Reverend Kensho Furuya



In practice, it is good advice to try to see or make sense of the whole technique, not just our own individual part in the technique. What this means is if we are the tori or *nage*, which means “the one who throws,” we should also try to sense what our partner is doing within the technique, not just our own movement and how we are throwing them. In the same respect, the uke or the one who is “receiving the technique” or “being thrown” should sense the movement and power of the *nage* while they are performing the technique and not simply focus only on taking the *ukemi*. This is not easy at first because we are usually concentrated on ourselves, but if we keep applying ourselves, we will begin to sense what the other person is doing, too. With this focus, our skill will greatly improve as we develop a sense of the whole technique involving all parties, on both sides, or within all aspects of this interaction.

I often see students practicing, throwing, but totally unaware of what the other person is doing or how the uke is responding to the movement. At the same time, I often see people taking *ukemi* in practice but completely disconnected to what the other person is doing. Both sides should try to sense and be more aware of the other side and see the movement in its wholeness, or, we can say, oneness.

In another respect, we should not look at the technique in a superficial view of attack and defense or active and passive, but see how both sides of the interaction are playing essential parts in creating this “unity” within the execution of the technique.

I knew a student many years ago who was a very fine student and tried very hard. He always took everything quite literally, exactly to the letter, and as a result, he never understood what anybody was saying. There was another very good student who always tried to read between the lines and interpret exactly what the other person wanted and he never understood what was going on either because he was too focused on his own personal

view of everything. There was another excellent student who would only hear the first words of what the other person was saying and immediately went into action but he never understood anything either because everything he did was too half-cocked. All three misunderstood because they were too focused on themselves and not on what the other person was actually saying.

In everything we do, we should approach it clearly and naturally and focused not only on ourselves but on the other person as well.

In many cases, simply to become clear and natural may be the most difficult challenge of all in our practice.

What this means is that as clear as our hearing might be, as keen as your eyes might be, as much talent as we have in our hands and feet and as much brains as we have in our head, everything, I mean everything, must be done with the proper spirit and heart.

I have been thinking that one of the greatest problems with our ego is that it doesn't recognize the full worth of ourselves. It is because of this focus that it causes us to be so self-centered, greedy and small minded. Our greater selves bring us to a higher level of consciousness of our connection with our surroundings but it doesn't really recognize that little bundle of stuff we call ourselves. I suppose that it must be a matter of choice in which path we take. Is this the will of God? Is this destiny? Or is this simply where we are on the evolutionary scale? It will always be a matter of choice to choose the path of our smaller egos or the greater path of a higher will. It has been decided for us long ago that we should always seek the higher goodness. And maybe this is our true destiny after all. Please keep this in mind in your training. •

Editor's note: *Furuya Sensei posted this article, in a slightly different form, to his Daily Message on June 11, 2002.*

UPCOMING EVENTS

行事

September 3

Special Holiday Practice
Joint locks from Traditional to Unorthodox

September 29 Intensive Seminar

October 13-14th

Aikido Kodokai Dojo's 20th Anniversary Salamanca, Spain
Details to be announced.

October 27 Intensive Seminar

October 28 Children's class
Halloween Party

November 22

Dojo Closed for Thanksgiving

November 23

Special Black Friday class

Aikido Training Schedule

合気道 時間割

Saturdays*

8:00-9:00 AM Iaido
9:30-10:30 AM Advanced class
10:45-11:45 AM Weapons class

Sundays

7:45-8:45 AM Iaido
9:00-10:00 AM Children's class
10:15-11:15 AM Regular class
11:30 AM-12:30 PM Fundamentals
12:45-1:45 PM Open practice

Mondays

6:30-7:30 AM Morning class
6:30-7:30 PM Regular class

Tuesdays

6:30-7:30 PM Advanced class
7:45-8:45 PM Weapons class

Wednesdays

6:30-7:30 AM Morning class
5:15-6:15 PM Fundamentals class
6:30-7:30 PM Regular class

Thursdays

6:30-7:30 PM Regular class
7:45-8:45 PM Open practice

Fridays

6:30-7:30 AM Morning class
6:30-7:30 PM Fundamentals class

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

**Last Saturday of the month is Intensive Seminar. By Invitation only.*

Iaido Training Schedule

居合道 時間割

Saturdays

8:00-9:00 AM

Sundays

7:45-8:45 AM



The Aiki 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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17-18 Wakamatsu-cho, Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo, JAPAN

We are committed to the study and practice of the teachings of the Founder of Aikido, Morihei Ueshiba and his legitimate successors, Kisshomaru Ueshiba and the present Doshu Moriteru Ueshiba.

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羅府合気道学院 古屋道場

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Kodokai Salamaca
Artes Marciales



Aikido Salamanca Aikikai
Kodokai Dojo



Aikido Gomera Aikikai
Kodokai Dojo