

Aikidosphere

Mitsunari Kanai

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Remembering Kanai Sensei

Editor's Note: Kanai Sensei passed away in 2004. Kanai Sensei had an immense impact on everyone who knew him. He was a truly unique man, a giant of Aikido and Iaido, a superb artist and craftsman, a family man, and a magnificent human being. Everyone who knew him feels a huge sense of loss.

Preparing this section memorializing Kanai Sensei has been difficult, however, we hope this small collection of articles and images will not seem too inadequate.

The section begins with an excerpt from Kanai Sensei's Technical Aikido.

The first part of the text is the Preface -- the opening statement -- to Technical Aikido. Following that is the text's Conclusion. These words were chosen to be spoken by students of Kanai Sensei at his Memorial on April 10, 2004. Below this you will find links to an informative article reprinted from a Kanai Sensei's home town newspaper, two remembrances by his students and an account of Kanai Sensei's life reprinted from the Boston Globe.



Technical Aikido

by Mitsunari Kanai, 8th dan

Preface

Aikido is...

At the core of the practice of Aikido, more than anything else, is a continuous hard training and disciplining of one's body and mind in order to develop wisdom. In the event of a confrontation, beast-like behavior aimed solely at protecting oneself and injuring the opponent must be avoided at all costs. To develop the determination to resolve a confrontational situation with omniscience and omnipotence (that is, using not merely technique but applying the entirety of one's abilities and wisdom) is BUGOKORO (Budo's spirit/mind). One must realize that Aikido is neither more or less than the expression and embodiment of this Bugokoro.

YAMATOGOKORO is what Aikido Advocates

Because Aikido includes the elements of BUGI (combat techniques), it is inevitable that, at times, the Aikido practitioner must face the possibility and the reality of confrontational circumstances. If one seriously and continuously probes into the reality of coming face-to-face with an opponent in a show-down situation where one's very existence is at stake, that is, where one's survival means the opponent's defeat or vice versa, and if one were to fully and openly recognize the inter-relation between oneself and the opponent, it would lead one to discover the most logical and efficient fighting techniques.

It is nonetheless true, however paradoxical it may seem, that in



pursuing the perfection of this principle, one will eventually arrive at a harmonious state, born from the insight that no matter how strong one is, one cannot continue to exist if one tries to fight against all existence. This is the "Way" (or process) to reach harmony as advocated by Aikido.

One should bear in mind, however, while trying to understand or attain the principle of harmony, that without going through the internal transformational process that begins in the state of confrontation and only after working through a critical process eventually arrives at the state of non-confrontation, there can be no Budo.

Under normal conditions, living things live in groups, not alone. A basic feature of social existence is the development of relative descriptions or comparisons, for example, strong versus weak. Each being tries to use its individual qualities to best advantage in light of its relative strengths and weaknesses. The process that eventually led to Budo began with efforts to compensate for weakness by developing specific qualities (for example speed, or strength, or size, or facility in using weapons). Therefore, under normal conditions, living in the world leads at times to confrontational situations, and developing increasingly effective techniques for facing such confrontations eventually leads to the realization that there is always someone or something bigger or stronger than oneself. Ultimately one realizes that the most effective defense is to merge with and become part of the opponent. This is how the principle of confrontation evolves into the principle of non-confrontation.

Yamatogokoro is the idea that the reason for developing martial arts is to protect those who are unable to protect themselves from aggressors. The proponent of this philosophy devotes himself to developing Budo in order to protect the security of peaceful people from the victory of cruelty and violence. This idea is at the heart of Aikido.

It should be understood that Aikido includes a philosophy and ideas that go beyond martial arts defined as the practice of combat techniques. Therefore, martial arts is included within Aikido, but Aikido goes beyond martial arts. Aikido stands for the idea that Budo, the principle of confrontation, and the principle of non-confrontation can be synthesized without compromising any of their fundamental essences. However, it is sad to note that much of what is called practice has compromised these elements. What follows is a technical description of the physical principles which must guide true Aikido practice if it is to achieve total, rather than partial, realizations of this art.

Conclusion: Develop Eyes to Differentiate False and Truth

I surely think it is worthwhile to admire, appreciate and praise the beauty of Aikido's movement and the beautiful, harmonized stability produced by its advanced techniques and highly trained skills. Because it looks beautiful to the eyes of spectators and has an artistic side through which a person can display his own philosophy, Aikido has gained widespread recognition and has spread broadly in society.

Because of Aikido's unique factor, which is that Aikido's techniques avoid confrontation and create unity and harmony, Aikido has been accepted by the world and praised by many people as the beautiful Budo of Wa (the martial art of harmony). Also, there are people who, as if responding to a social demand, go so far as to think of and seek Aikido based on a view that the technical beauty of Aikido is the essence of Aikido.

Although the movement of Aikido looks very beautiful to the eyes, one must not lose sight of its true essence. We tend to be caught up with its beauty. But because we are too attached to this beauty, we tend to lose the essence of Aikido and the direction its practice should take. I wish people to know that Aikido's beauty as a form, which surfaces externally, is only a by-product of its practical effectiveness in coping with the fighting relationships of attack and defense that arise inevitably in our current social system.

The reason why I seek practicality rather than beauty in Aikido is that I want to observe the essence of its fundamental substance correctly even when manifested in how beautiful it is. I have spent my entire life and an enormous amount of energy so that I will not fail to recognize the Way of

Aikido. I have been doing it only for this.

If one can look hard and purely at the essence of Budo, one would recognize without fail that Aikido is not a fancy kind of sport. I wish that people would not forget that to look hard at Aikido through the eyes of Budo, which is based on the principle that the rational and practical substance of a thing is its most beautiful aspect, is of critical importance in learning Aikido, and comprises the greatest part of its practices.

Additional Articles

Lexington Loses Mitsunari Kanai Shihan Renowned Aikido Teacher
[Reprinted from Lexington's Colonial Times Magazine, May/June, 2004.]

Mitsunari Kanai Shihan: A Devoted Life
By Mary C. Fuller (New England Aikikai)

Remembering Kanai Sensei
By George Mokray (New England Aikikai)

Mitsunari Kanai, 64, leading teacher of Aikido martial art.
[from the Boston Globe, Wednesday, May 5, 2004.] By Gloria Negri, Globe Staff