

Aikidosphere

Nobuyoshi Tamura

8th Dan, Shihan

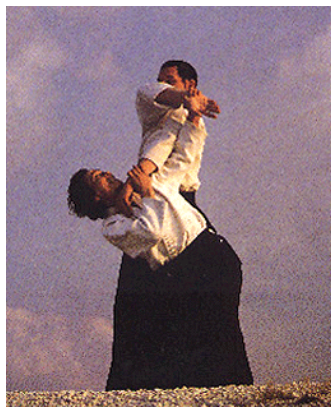
Head of Federation Francais d'Aikido et de Budo

Aikido - Etiquette and Transmission

by Nobuyoshi Tamura, 8th Dan

Translation by J.R. David, Aikido de la Montagne

Editor's Note: We are happy to present the second installment of Tamura Sensei's book Aikido - Etiquette and Transmission. This work, which has been available only in French is here presented first time in English. We are grateful to Tamura Sensei for his permission to produce this version. Many thanks also go to Stephane Benedetti, 5th Dan, Chief Instructor of Mutokukai Europe Dojo Mirabeau, and student of Tamura Sensei, who translated (from Japanese), edited and published the original version, which was published by Les Editions du Soleil Levant in 1991. Photos courtesy of N. Tamura from Tamura Aikido.



Chapter 2: The Purpose of Teaching

Aikido is an ascetic way that shows the direction of human accomplishment through ki-iku, toku-iku and tai-iku (the formation and development of the essence: ki, of wisdom and virtue: toku and of the body: tai.) Through this education, which includes and unites the body and the mind, we go beyond the notions of race and boundary to form a true man.

Development of the Body

The movements of Aikido are flexible like those of Nature because they are full of kokyū-ryoku. They increase physical power and improve the health and beauty of the body. Also, flexibility, resistance to effort, reflexes, speed, etc. are developed and sharpened.

The Lessons of Bujutsu

By becoming imbued in the methods of "life preservation", we acquire self-confidence and tranquility and we reach peace of mind. At the same time, the will to undertake things, perseverance and organizational skills are developed.

Mental Aspect

We must overcome the greatest enemies of Budo: anger, fear, dread, doubt, hesitation, contempt, vanity and develop a great firmness of the mind and great courage. We must be filled by the necessity of victory over ourselves. It is through the repetition of daily practice that we can overcome tiredness, weariness and develop a taste for effort, the importance of perseverance and the joy of overcoming difficulty.

Etiquette

In a society that easily gives importance to technique, strength and power, rules of etiquette allow us to feel that there are superior values which are important to respect without any effort. They are the sine qua non condition to the survival of society. (See Etiquette chapter) The Principle of Aikido and its Application in Daily Life. The principle of Aikido is applied through irimi-tenkan, ki, kokyū, the Me-



Opponent duality and one against many practice. It teaches a sense of unity, harmony, love and peace.

Aikido expresses, with the body, the order of the universe. If the order of the universe is correctly applied to the body, technique and health blossom naturally. If the order of the universe is correctly applied to daily life, education, work and personality blossom naturally. If the order of the universe is correctly applied to society, the relation between oneself and others blossoms naturally. Humanity, like one family, will then work to restore the world, whose harmony is currently troubled.

Chapter 3: Teaching Method

In order to achieve the goals stated above, we will develop an explanation of the teaching method and divide it in two branches: the mental aspect and the technical aspect, even though Aikido is a way to mind-body unity. The intensive practice of techniques favors spiritual elevation. Spiritual progress favors technical progress. For the clarity of explanations, the technical and spiritual aspects have been split. No subordination of one to the other nor a state of dualist separation should be inferred.

Teaching: Technical Aspect - The Teacher's Attitude

It is certain that the direct relation from the master to the disciple, which is the traditional relation identical in essence to the relation of parents to their children, is the best one. In the modern world, such a relation has unfortunately become impossible. We will thus speak of the current situation in existing dojos. Let us not forget that the true way to hand down the tradition is through a direct relation. Let us try not to break this link but to keep its spirit. In the case of large classes, one teacher (or at best a small number of teachers) has to deal with a large number of students. And since one has to teach just one time to these students and time is limited, it is impossible to spend with each person all the time they would need. It is thus very important to focus on the following points:

Demonstration

Explanation

Imitation

Analysis

Correction

Observation

Hygiene

Demonstration

The demonstration should be as clear and precise as possible. It should emphasize the fundamental directions for the students and make them want to practice the technique.

Explanation

The explanation should give the meaning and the method of practice. It should emphasize the points that need special attention.

Imitation

Every study goes through an imitation phase. One should try, at first, to make students reproduce the technique as closely as possible to the way it was demonstrated by the instructor, without questioning it.

Repetition

Repetition allows the assimilation of explanations. Progressively, one can develop speed, power and sharpness.

Analysis

When a technique is difficult, it is preferable to break it down in many simple movements.

Correction

It is not enough to correct the appearance of a technique. We should try to understand and cut the root of the incomprehension and of the error. Depending on the technique, we have to be careful of the use of breathing, the footwork, the movement and use of the hands, the change of hip

level, the use of ki.

Observation

It is important to observe well the techniques of the instructors, the senior students and the beginners. We must help students understand this. We must bring them to compare their technique to others'. This will help them to improve. If an injury or tiredness forces us to rest for a while, we can use this time well. These moments of observation are no different than physical practice. We maintain a focussed attitude and keep a sense of effort.

Hygiene

It is important not to forget that intensive work requires quality rest time. It is important to sleep enough and eat reasonably, in quantity as well as in quality. Athletes tend to abuse alcohol. This should be avoided. It is good to eat lightly an hour before training and to wait at least half an hour after. Drinking cold while the body is hot should be avoided. One should wear a clean keikogi so as not to upset training partners. Hands and feet should be clean and nails cut short. Practitioners should be devoid of any jewelry, watch, etc. The dojo must be carefully cleaned and a well ventilated space is preferable.

The Mental and Spiritual Aspect of Teaching -

Improving together

Some people train assiduously but refuse to practice with beginners or people they deem "bad." Even if they improve technically, their technique will remain a technique prisoner of technique. Let us not forget that aikido is not only the way of mind-body unity but mostly the way of unity. If the spirit is stopped in its progression, then everything stops. A spirit who rejects others, a spirit who doesn't know how to accept others, a spirit to whom it is enough that only it progresses, a spirit who brings everything to the narrow realm of the ego cannot open itself to a state of unity with the universe.

Aite (uke) exists, thus practice is possible. Practice exists, thus progress is possible. When there is aite, each partner improves and shares his joy through mutual emulation

To have a thankful heart

To help a less advanced practitioner requires much patience and love. To understand the causes hindering this less advanced practitioner, it is necessary to constantly push our own research forward. We must not rely on strength. In the world of bujutsu where we often focus on the efficiency and power of the technique, more important is the strength allowing to go beyond this stage. The practice of aikido cannot be narrowed to wanting to become strong in the sense of injuring the partner or refusing to lose. In aikido, power is a consequence of applying the principle of the universe. As strong as he might be, the man who steers away from this principle cannot win. Aikido is a method for studying the action of the principle of the universe. One must not pursue everything that one encounters in the course of this study.

Victory over oneself

One must vanquish in himself the spirit of anger, laziness, fear, etc. The greatest danger is excessive pride! Don't forget that as soon as the idea that your technique is good appears, all progress stops. In the constant flow of the world, to stop but one instant means being forever behind.