

Aikidosphere

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Aikido - Etiquette and Transmission - Chapter 6 & 7

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Chapter 6 - Relations with other Martial Arts

Aiki (as distinct from Aikido) is the origin of all martial arts. This is what the Founder of Aikido wished to express when he named his art takemusuai.

However, it is important to note that the primordial nature of Aiki doesn't imply that Aikido is the best martial art, but only that it is one way towards aiki. Being able to develop the multiple facets of Aikido requires one to integrate the principle of Aiki.

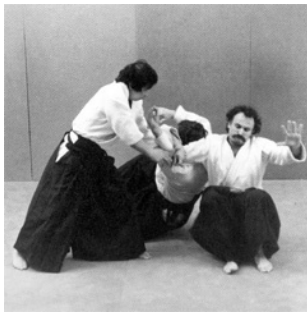
Aiki consists in uniting oneself with the ki of the heavens and the earth. Aiki is not exclusive to budo but is part of all human activity. Applying the principle of Aikido to events will help us understand them better; acting in accord with this principle will make our actions easier.

This principle applies to daily life, to social relations and to modern science.

Bujutsu and Budo were created by men who lived on the edge of life and death. Driven by an unshakable will, such men built up layers of experience, invoked the gods and prayed beneath waterfalls.

Bujutsu and Budo are not merely techniques. Their value comes from using asceticism to go beyond technique. The techniques originated from the specific circumstances of their creator's life: the place, the era, the human situation. Thus if you are given a chance, widen your horizons and practice or watch techniques anytime an occasion presents itself.

Compare and see what you can integrate in your own practice of Aikido. But beware; the idea is not to copy the other arts nor to mix them together!



Chapter 7 - Cleaning

Knowing what to move when cleaning, and knowing how to put things back in their places is a simple act which educates our awareness. Deciding what to keep and what to throw away develops decision-making skills.

Mopping the floor is an excellent leg and hip exercise. Even if a spot appears clean, simply wiping it with a damp cloth will convince us that it isn't. Changing the water, cleaning the rags and cleaning the floor makes us feel like we're refreshing our own mind and spirit. To be able to dip one's hands in cold water on winter mornings requires courage: overcoming slovenliness is an integral part of training.

When bokutos, jos, sandals, etc. are in their proper place, things have a pleasant appearance and are easy to use. This isn't only for the sake of "aesthetics"; it is also a natural education which develops an awareness of the importance of preparation.

The time one spends training is limited. The moments preceding and following it are brief.

It is therefore important to determine the best way to use this time in order to clean up. This enables us to train our organizational and planning skills. Deciding where to start, how to continue and where to finish trains our judgment and ability to make decisions.

Cleaning is not only aimed at purifying the exterior. Another purpose is the purification of our own being. This purpose helps us understand why it is necessary to clean over and over again even places that appear to be clean.

Notwithstanding his relatively greater knowledge, the teacher must not only leave cleaning entirely to his students; it is necessary that he encourage people to do things by being an example.

I would like you to ponder this idea of O-Sensei: "Aikido is the cleansing of the body. Dust and dirt must be eliminated from the body and the soul."

When you enter a clean and polished dojo, your heart immediately feels at ease. I believe it is good for the daily training should include of exercising body and mind through such activities. To do this correctly, each person should clean the dojo of his or her own free will. Cleaning allows one to put things in their place, to classify them and to tidy them up. What's more, cleaning up is a good mental as well as a physical practice.

When I was an uchi deshi, we and the other students together would clean not only the dojo but also the entrance, the corridors, the bathrooms, the dressing rooms, the uchi deshi sleeping area and the street in front of the dojo.

Cleaning teaches us a great deal. To take a simple example, when using a broom, one must hold it lightly and, using it with strength, lightness and agility, send ki all the way to the tip of the bristles. The same principle applies to the sword or the stick. It is an exercise which, by sweeping every remote corner, teaches one to see the hidden side of things.