

Awase is the newsletter of the
**Aikido Institute of Davis, a dojo where you
 can learn the arts of Aikido and Tai Chi.**
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**Note from the editor: All formatting, spelling and
 grammatical errors are unintended and the sole
 responsibility of the editor—My apologies!**

Martin Dubcovsky

Duty

Hoa Newens Sensei

In recent years, amidst the wave of retirement of the baby boomers from the work force, I have come across many writings and speeches that essentially lament the gradual disappearance of the concepts of duty and honor, as if the baby boomers were their last keepers. There is an unspoken fear that “duty” is being replaced by “entitlement”. It seems that John F. Kennedy’s famous words are out of style: “Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country” and that the reverse statement may be more representative of the contemporary social sentiment.

As a keeper of a tradition that is largely based on the concept of duty, I worry that this observation might reflect a true social trend. Therefore, I have set down below my understanding of how the concept of duty constitutes the cornerstone of the traditional art of Aikido, lest new generations of Aikido students mistakenly discard it too soon.

In the Orient, the notion of duty was developed and disseminated by Confucius (551 B.C. – 479 B.C.). His teachings pervaded oriental cultures for centuries and are still prevalent today in many forms. Confucius believed that each human has a specific place and plays a specific role in society and in the universe, and that order and peace are maintained only when those roles are adhered to. Toward that purpose, he laid down rules of conduct that govern various relationships, namely, between ruler and subject, parent and child, senior and junior, husband and wife, and one and one’s friends. For example, one such rule states that a subject is disloyal if he does not obey his king’s order even at the cost of his own life.

From these teachings and rules evolved the concept of duty. Each person has a duty and must do his best to fulfill it.

I use the eastern culture for context since Aikido originated from Japan. I should note that duty is a well ingrained human trait in all established human societies and their structures, irrespective of geography and time. For example, Robert Baden Powell (1857-1941) the Founder of Scout, asserted

Aikido Surfing Haiku

Brandon Forest



SUP Aikido

On bright spring morning
I surf harmonious line
And find my power

that “[We never fail when we try to do our duty, we always fail when we neglect to do it.](#)” In line with this fundamental principle, the Boy Scouts’ oath contains this promise:

*On my honor I will do my best
To do my duty to God and my country*

Other examples of the importance of duty abound in western culture, especially among ancient philosophers of Greece (Socrates) and Rome (Cicero). Duty is also an organization principle for large groups,

such as the military, the clergy and the corporate world.

While pointing out the universality of this concept we should note that duty is not equally revered by all erudite minds. The German philosopher [Friedrich Nietzsche](#) (1844-1900) declared that higher education turns men into machines and it does that by means of the concept of duty (Twilight of the Idols). He asked “What destroys a man more quickly, than to work, think, and feel without inner necessity, without any

deep personal desire, without pleasure—as a mere automaton of “duty”?” ([The Antichrist](#)). This is a very valid question that brings to mind the character Mr. Spock from the starship Enterprise (Star Trek series).

My goal in what follows is to examine whether and how the concept and practice of duty contribute to the growth of the individual and, hence the welfare of mankind.

Duty exists in many facets of life, including civic duty, filial duty, professional duties, etc. Here we focus our discussion on duties related to the practice of martial arts.

First, it may be helpful to briefly distinguish “duty” from “responsibility”. Although in certain context the terms may be used interchangeably, “responsibility” denotes a moral obligation whereas “duty” is closer to the acts that result from the obligation. For example, an airline pilot’s responsibility includes ensuring the safety of his passengers; as a result, one of his duties is to supervise a complete evacuation and be the last to leave a distressed aircraft.

In my view, a duty is composed of three elements: (1) a sense of obligation which is often instilled at early age (the term “duty” has a Latin origin which means “debt”); (2) an expected action (or prohibition of an action), which is clearly defined; and (3) an authoritative enforcement mechanism which calls out failure and successes and disburses penalty and

reward. For brevity we will refer to these as the obligation, the action and the enforcement.

For example, a duty of every citizen in this country is to obey the laws enacted by the legislature. The “obligation” is created in the early stage of the education of a person, through the family or formal schooling - although I deplore the gradual disappearance of civic duties course from educational curricula. The “action” is often indicated by the context, e.g. when driving on public roads you must stop at a red traffic signal. The “enforcement” is carried out by a law enforcement officer, who, for example, would cite motorists for violation of the law and initiate penalty enforcement.

In the realm of martial arts, a duty of a student is to follow instructions of the teacher. The “obligation” is created and maintained through an inculcation of various rules on the student. The “action” in this case is to comply with the teacher’s instructions. The “enforcement” is usually through correction and reminder by the senior students (sempai) or the teacher.

When an obligation is fulfilled there is no expectation of reward; one is paying a debt that is owed. We can see that pleasure and personal satisfaction have no bearing in this type of action. We can imagine how in the long run such dutiful behavior would reduce a person to the status of an automaton. Worse, carrying out one’s duty against one’s own will could repress

Ode to Undaunted Travelers of the Path

Hoa Newens Sensei

He gives it all on the mat
A knee fails, he has it operated on
He goes on training

She gives her heart to the training
A kidney fails, she finds a replacement
She goes on training

He gives his soul to Aikido
His wife and Aikido partner passes on
He goes on training

They are undaunted by obstacles on the path
They endure and go on
Such examples shower me with new vigor

The path is noble
Hardship propels us
Endurance takes us home



*Naomi Hayashi demonstrates shihonage during her 5th Kyu Exam with uke Jan Ng.
Picture Courtesy of Guy Michelier.*

free will and eventually lead to rebellion or other forms of aggression.

Despite this possible negative outcome of dutiful behavior, the existence of certain conditions under which the duty is instilled in the person can lead to a different outcome. There are two key factors that influence these conditions.

The first factor pertains to the person making the assignment (hereafter referred to as the authority) and the way in which he does it. When the duty is assigned with no regard to the personal make-up of the subject, as probably in large organizations such as the military, there is a greater chance for negative result. When the assignment is made after careful consideration of the needs of the subject, such as when a parent lovingly introduces the notion of duty to a child, then positive result is more likely. What causes the difference? In the latter case the authority takes pain to understand the needs and aspirations of the subject. Such understanding enables the authority to enlist the help of an improbable partner, the

subject's ego. The authority's task is to convince the ego that there is value in performing the duty. In other words, the authority dangles a potential reward in front of the subject. This is where the distinction of good versus bad comes in handy. When a parent explains to her child that good children always pick up after themselves and this message is strategically repeated with tender loving care, there comes a time when the child would willingly perform the chore in anticipation of being accepted as a good child.

Similarly, when a country is under threat and its leadership portrays the willingness to die for its sake as patriotism (being a "good" citizen) then many citizens would indeed answer this call for duty and sacrifice themselves.

The second factor that can critically influence the outcome of a dutiful behavior pertains to the mental make-up of the subject. When a person is ardently pursuing a goal his ego is open to any suggestion that furthers the goal. In this case, the person's ego is already convinced of the benefit of carrying out certain dutiful tasks, without external intervention. A fervent student of martial arts who has found the right teacher would be willing to perform any amount of menial tasks such as washing the floor or making meals daily in anticipation of receiving knowledge from the teacher. For such persons, carrying out the assigned duty is a step closer to obtaining what they desire.

The combined effect of the two factors described above – the way in which the assignment of duty is made and the state of mind of the subject – determines the rate of integration of the duty into the subject's way of life.

Under the right conditions as described above, a metamorphosis of the three elements of duty can be observed. The obligation becomes second nature and gradually disappears; the action takes place naturally; and the enforcement is internalized. How does this happen?

The obligation remains an obligation only when there is a gap between the individual desire and the required action. For example, a student feels obligated to sweep the mat because a sempai (senior) ordered her to take up the broom. That is something that she

would not normally do; she had to go out of her normal way to follow the sempai's instruction. However, as discussed above, if the sempai manages through explanation or otherwise to introduce the duty as an activity of value to the student, the feeling of obligation is decreased. Furthermore, to the extent that the student is sincere and is receptive to instructions, the obligation gap is further reduced. Therefore, initially the student feels obligated to take up the duty, but in the long-run she does it because that is what she wants to do, and what was an obligatory activity has now evolved into a desired activity.

As the obligation dissolves, the enforcement is internalized. In the beginning, a sempai may enforce this duty by taking a broom and putting in the student's hands. Gradually over time, when the student misses the opportunity to grab the broom after class, she has the gnawing feeling that her training for the day was incomplete.



Toru Saito completes Men Uchi Ushiro Tsuki during his 5th Kyu exam.

Picture courtesy of Guy Michelier.

Thus, what begins as a duty, with sustained repetition in a supportive and carefully monitored environment, eventually integrates with the individual and becomes a natural act, a habit. In this way, the individual has absorbed the duty into himself. Inasmuch as the duty stemmed from a need for safety and order in the

community, the individual has contributed to this safety and order.

Nietzsche was partially right. When an individual is first assigned a duty, there is no personal desire, no pleasure that motivates her to commit to action. However, as we have seen, diligent fulfillment of duty under the right conditions eventually brings about the fulfillment of the individual.

As part of our Aikido practice, I see three basic duties of every student that follow this sequence:

1. Follow the leaders of the path
2. Support those on the path
3. Preserve and disseminate the teaching

The first duty is to essentially follow the instructions of your sempai (seniors). This entails knowing who your sempai are; the hierarchy which goes all the way from the beginning student to the Founder is useful for this purpose. Following instructions often also means suspending judgment and refraining from challenging the sempai in a rash or whimsical manner; any egocentric impulse must be restrained. The sempai are those who have tread the path before us and have amassed knowledge and experience which, when shared, will make our journey more fruitful and rewarding.

The second duty is essentially reciprocity of the first duty. Since we are receiving help from our sempai, we owe a reciprocal duty toward our kohai (juniors). It is with this sense of duty that we show the ropes to the beginners, help other junior students through difficult practices, and coach them in their training and growth. This duty eventually extends beyond the dojo and is performed for the benefit of the larger Aikido community.

The third duty comes a little later in our Aikido journey and requires us to build and preserve what has been valuable to us for purpose of sharing with the rest of the world. It involves activities such as helping to instruct classes, maintaining the dojo, teaching classes, performing demonstrations, and sharing Aikido with others in various ways.

There is a risk that the duty has never been properly introduced to the individual. An example occurs when the individual has not been sufficient grounded in the sempai-kohai relationship; things may go smoothly

until a certain day the student feels righteous about a situation and decides to challenge the sempai. In another example, despite decades of training, a student has never integrated the duty of preserving and sharing Aikido; such person sees no benefits in laboring to maintain a dojo unless financial benefits or recognition through rank promotion are ascertained. Such individuals suffer from arrested growth, though none of their fault. They were not taught properly. Unfortunately, these fallen students number too many in the Aikido world.

The three basic duties of a student form the cornerstone of the traditional art of Aikido and ensure its healthy propagation through the ages for the benefit of humankind.

Given the deplorable value of the notion of duty in our contemporary society, it is with a sense of urgency that I recommend all students to find out more about their duties in Aikido training and do their utmost to fulfill them. They will personally benefit, others will and the rest of the world will.

The Shape of a Circle

Christine Palmer

The shape of a circle?
 “Why it’s round!” you might say,
 Like the wheels on a cart or a rolled bale of hay.
 Moving so smoothly, a clean flowing round,
 No bumps or rough patches
 When it moves ‘cross the ground.
 And I guess I might say, “I suppose that it’s true.
 A circle is round, when it’s made up of you.
 Sempai or Sensei, you are truly a sight,
 When you make a circle, it’s round, you are right!”
 So again I might ask, “What shape will it be?”
 For a circle is square, when it’s made up of me.
 Fundamental to blending, a must for an uke
 Please let my circle be a circle today!

Suburi On The Rocks

Kent Standley

The mats we train on at the dojo are optimized for basic training. They forgive us mistakes we make in ukemi and we can use the cardinal lines of the mats to aid our alignment of stance.

But these mats that help us so much to get started in Aikido aid us little in bringing our practice outside the dojo. They provide an artificial surface not found in the real world. To advance our suburi practice we must use a natural surface: Suburi On The Rocks.

Practicing suburi in the mountains has benefits for your stance and balance as well as feedback for improvement. Hiking boots, shoes or toe-covering sandals are recommended. Bare feet are for the hard-core aikidoka.

As we become aware of our central axis in our training we become accustomed to it being orthogonal with the mat surface. Orthogonal means perpendicular in three dimensions. The term perpendicular refers to plane geometry and not a three-dimensional space. On a slope the axis must always be aligned with gravity and when we are still it comes naturally. But moving and turning on a slope is much more difficult.

The smooth surface of the mat allows your feet to drag as you move forward. However, on a rocky surface toes quickly make contact with loose rocks or the uneven surface preventing forward motion and stubbing your toes as well. You’ll be able to drag your feet backward because your heel is raised to pass over obstacles but not forward.

Your legs are the suspension system for the body. The mat allows our legs to be straight but keeping your legs bent allows the legs to absorb the uneven ground as you move over it. This also helps when the surface is not level. Ankle joints get exercised as well. Mountain practice helps you to become more aware of your center of gravity since on a tilted surface it your ankles must flex to keep your center over your feet.

There are two joints in each ankle. On top is the true ankle joint where the tibia and fibula bone of the lower leg meet the talus bone of the upper foot. Below the talus is the subtalar joint where the talus meets the calcaneus, the heel bone. These joints allow



Picture courtesy of Kent Standley.

the foot to move in relation to the lower leg.

Ken Suburi

Simple Ken Suburi isn't so simple on uneven terrain in the mountains. Keeping your balance on uneven terrain is harder. The difficulty stems from primarily two things: a tilted, uneven surface and obstacles. To compensate for this we must lower the hips and center of gravity must remain under the feet. Keeping the center of gravity under the feet is accomplished on a macro level by modifying the t-stance and on a micro level by flexing about the ankle joints.

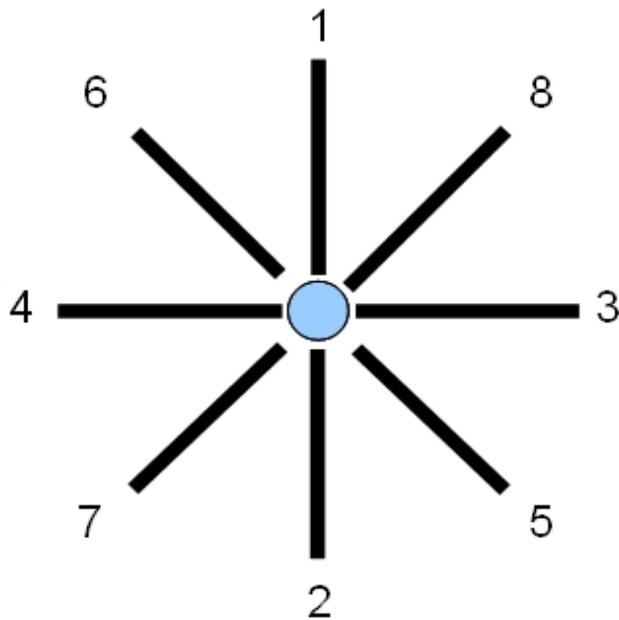
Happo Giri

Performing Happo Giri [eight-direction cutting], in the mountains accentuates the top-heavy habits we start with as a beginner. Happo Giri consists on two bokken strikes in opposite directions, 270-degree turn

with a strike and an additional strike opposite from the immediately previous strike. This creates a cross of strikes 90 degrees apart from each other. This set of four strikes is repeated rotating the coordinate system by 45 degrees making a total of eight strikes in eight directions 45-degrees apart.

The diagram shows the direction in the order the strikes are executed starting with number one in the 12 o'clock position. There are two primary ways to execute Happo Giri in the mountains. Starting with the first strike directly downhill or starting downhill and off to one side at a 45-degree angle. Starting directly uphill is almost the same because of the directional symmetry of Happo Giri. When starting directly downhill, the tendency is to overextend your knee since more weight is distributed to the downhill foot. The first turn to point uphill is more effort and is a function of the steepness of the slope. The second turn is one of the extreme angles of 270 degrees. The first step of this turn points your left foot directly

downhill. When the right foot is raised to complete the turn the tendency is to lose balance and step too far downhill when the foot should be pointed along the slope at the same height. The body has the tendency to continue turning and proceeding downhill. A higher center-of-gravity exacerbates this making Happo Giri much more difficult. The next move reverses direction along the slope and is not as severe as the earlier move and the tendency is to topple downhill to your right.



The second half of Happo Giri on a slope mixes the vertical motion and extra torsion induced by the slope. Stepping slightly downhill at a 45-degree angle and turning the left foot 45-degrees down the other direction (90-degrees from the direction the body is pointing).

Continued practice strongly encourages low center of gravity.

Jo Suburi

Kaeshi Tsuki: I noticed when the jo is in the vertical position and too close to the big toe of the foot, the hallux, the first movement would bring the bottom of the jo off to the left side as I brought the top of the jo to my hip. I realized this because the jo kept hitting a rock to the left side of my stance. By placing the jo farther away I was able to bring the jo through a more vertical plane to my hip in order to avoid the rock.

Hidari Nagare Gaeshi Uchi/Migi Nagare Gaeshi Tsuki: This suburi practice of combining these two suburi in to a single short kata works well in the mountains like Happo Giri. The change of direction during these suburi intimates that your hara is to be kept low.

These are just some of my observations practicing suburi in the “real world.” So the next time you are on the mat, think about how artificial and unnatural the surface is. And the next time you are planning a trip to the mountains bring a stick.

Attending my First Seminar

Naomi Hayashi

I attended my first seminar last Saturday on March 15 2014, and it was taught by a guest instructor, Luis Jumonville Sensei, from Hikari Dojo in Martinez.

While warming up on the mat before the seminar, I noticed that everyone wore hakama except me, and most of them were from other dojo. (Many people were from Hikari Dojo, and some were coming from Reno and Santa Cruz.) Sempai from Davis Dojo said to me that “Great! You are here! You are brave!”. I started worrying that “maybe, I made a big mistake coming here today”. Then, Elias sempai and Mitch sempai came; we had three white belts with 20+ black belts, and the seminar started.

After it started, my fear slowly disappeared, and I was excited to learn. When I was practicing *tai no henko ki no nagare* with Newens Sensei (yes, Sensei was in the seminar, so we had an opportunity to practice with him, too!), Jumonville Sensei came and instructed me to change my breathing pattern. I was originally doing as inhale; then, exhale and go grab Sensei’s arm simultaneously. This way, my partner can tell when I would come to grab. So, I should start exhaling, and go grab while exhaling. Throughout the seminar, Jumonville sensei gave me instructions to correct me.

Also, every sempai (including sempai from other dojo) in the seminar was kind and gave me advice, too. They also corrected me when I did the wrong

tai-sabaki and strikes. I was often reminded to look up and stand up straight, and relax my shoulders. When I initiated attack, my eyes were often focused on the area where I was supposed to hit or grab, and my head and body moved forward. Then, my partner could easily strike me back. I needed to keep my head up to see the whole partner while attacking. I had learned a lot, and three hours passed very quickly.

I was originally hesitant to attend seminar as a beginner, but it turned out to be a great experience for me. One of sempai from Hikari dojo told me that “don’t be afraid to come to seminar as a white belt because being a white belt is the best time to learn.” Attending the seminar, I am even more motivated to learn and practice Aikido.

Tai No Henko and the Point of Conflict

Elise Bauer

Aikido is described as an art of conflict resolution. Let's take a look at where this conflict is.

In tai no henko, uke grabs nage's wrist. It looks like the wrist is the focal point of the conflict. The minute we are grabbed on the wrist, we experience it as an intrusion into our space, something we must resist, something from which we must escape. Our minds naturally focus on the wrist as the point of conflict.

But here's the rub. When we focus our attention on the wrist, on what we naturally perceive is the point of conflict, we take our focus off of where the true conflict lies, and that is in the heart and mind of ourselves and our uke. The "battle" at the wrist is only a physical expression of the state of the minds of both participants.

The more you focus on the point of contact, the point of apparent conflict, the more power you give it.



*Clelia Clark and Kent Standley enjoying direct instruction from Louis Jumonville Sensei.
Picture courtesy of Guy Michelier.*

When you focus on the physical point of conflict, you increase the struggle, you escalate the fight.

Mechanically, the way we deal with the conflict point in tai no henko is, rather than making the contact at the wrist the pivot point, we bring our center to the wrist and turn, making our center the turning axis of the technique. Energetically, we connect our belly with that of our uke's. The wrist grab is just the gateway to the uke's hara.

But that's still all on a physical level. Tai no henko is a blending technique, an opportunity to connect with our partner, to recognize the flow of energy, and to blend with it, becoming one with our partner. It is the "ai", the harmony, in Ai-ki-do. When we start, there is an apparent conflict at the wrist, and we are facing off. At the end of the technique, we are connected to our partner, now facing the world from the same direction.

It's important to note that we do not force our uke to turn around us in this technique. The nage moves to position herself to see the world from the same perspective as her uke. It's the aikido version of "walk a mile in his shoes".

Meeting resistance with resistance is one way to deal with conflict; it's the game of dominance/submission. Whoever has the biggest stick (or wrist or forearm) wins. But this is not skillful means (as they say in Buddhist practice). True resolution of conflict feels like steam dissipating into the air. It arises from connecting with your partner at a heart level, expanding your consciousness to include him, and then turning yourself to see the world from your partner's perspective.

Rumi, the great Sufi mystic, wrote,

*Out beyond ideas of wrongdoing
and rightdoing there is a field.
I'll meet you there.
When the soul lies down in that grass
the world is too full to talk about.*

Once we've mastered the physical mechanics of tai no henko, the opportunity for deepening our training in this technique comes from expanding our consciousness. We practice tai no henko so that we find that "field" beyond right and wrong, beyond any perceived point of conflict, when we connect with our partner.



Hsinli Yen applies nikyo on Jan Ng during her 4th Kyu Exam. Picture courtesy of Guy Michelier.

Being Wrong

How I learned to stop worrying and love the dame *Martin Dubcovsky*

On the mat we receive corrections all the time. Quick, sharp reminders from our sempai and instructors of our constant need to take notice, and work harder to improve. Often these external instructions come on top of heaps of self corrections, when you are preoccupied with doing your best. You may already have identified a difficulty, be in the midst of trying to resolve it, and still you hear "dame".

This can be understandably frustrating. You may feel overwhelmed by the corrections. You may feel as though you are incapable of properly performing technique. You may even begin to take it personally, that an instructor is being mean to you. Or if the correction comes from your training partner, that they are not allowing you practice as you'd like.

You may be tempted to protest. You may be tempted to question the corrections. Maybe you want to point out that you are only following the instructions of another sempai. Maybe you want to point out possible weak points in the technique.

Any feelings of frustration, any objections to the corrections you receive stem from conceiving of a correction as something negative done to you. This understanding of what it means to be corrected is understandable. Often we think of the world in black and white, right and wrong. So if you are being corrected then clearly you must be wrong. Or worse, you are actually right, and then anyone who corrects must therefore be wrong.

This is a very unproductive mentality to bring onto the mat, and will only serve to hinder your growth. You may develop a feeling of incompetence and become disheartened. You may develop rancor towards sempai who give you seemingly contradictory corrections. These feeling only serve to take time and energy away from your training, and may even drive you out of the dojo entirely.

The response which we train on the mat is much more pragmatic. We thank the instructor.

Each time we receive a correction, it is followed by a particular ritual of etiquette. We turn to face the instructor fully first to acknowledge the correction. Then we bow fully to show our appreciation for the correction. With this small act we are establishing a new habit and training within us a feeling of gratitude.

And we have much to be thankful for.

There may be billions of people who do not even know I exist, but this sempai made the time to help me. This person cares enough about me that he will take time away from his own training to reach out to me. I have a teacher who pours his love into the dojo, so that I may train.

As you raise up from your bow, you should feel full with the renewed feeling of support and love. It should rekindle your burning desire to train, and work hard. This is a completely different emotional response from treating corrections as personal attacks.

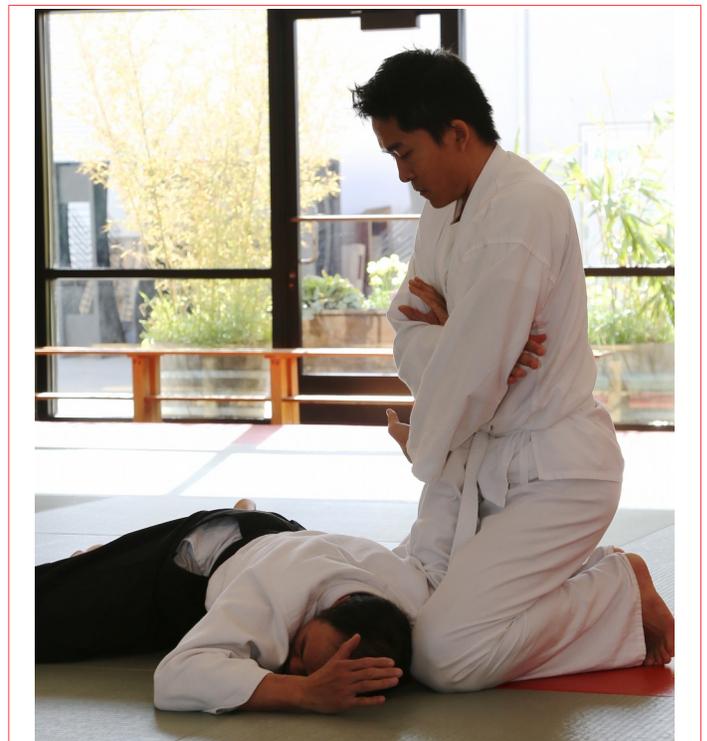
Over time the number of sempai you have on the mat will decrease. The number of corrections you receive will decrease. And the number of opportunities to train your emotional response will decrease. By the time that happens though, you should have a firmly established the habit of thanking people for their corrections, and have a deeply ingrained sense of gratitude.

A New Art

Kim Sullivan

I came to Aikido after training in Tang Soo Do for over 5 years. Tang Soo Do is an eclectic art that emphasizes both the hard Okinawan styles and the soft Chinese styles. Additionally, Tang Soo Do promotes grappling, grabs, and escapes. I thought that with my past martial arts experience would lend to an easy transition to Aikido. It might have been easier for me than for most; however, I still felt challenged. The two arts are different enough that there did not seem to be a direct transfer of skills from one to the other. The hardest part was coordinating my feet and negotiating when to step and when to slide. In Tang Soo Do, we do both, but mostly the feet live under the body and you do what is necessary to maintain balance and effectiveness. However, in true martial arts form, I came to the training with an “empty cup” and was open and receptive to new ideas.

The structure of the classes was vastly different. Tang Soo Do is intense and physically demanding. Strength and flexibility are emphasized as well as



Yuhsin Tsai pins Donny Shiu during his 5th Kyu Exam. Picture courtesy of Guy Michelier

technique. The curriculum in Tang Soo Do is vast, and each class is different. In fact, the only things that can be predicted are bowing in at the beginning and bowing out at the end. Tang Soo Do is often overwhelming as there is so much curriculum and so many variations of each combination. Aikido classes were refreshingly predictable and the non-threatening, which promoted comfort and safety. When I was asked to describe Aikido, the words that initially came to mind were "slow" and "gentle". I appreciated the structured nature of the class of gradually building on previous elements and providing ample opportunity to practice techniques. This methodical approach promoted confidence and relaxation. While I plan to continue my training in Tang Soo Do, I see the value of Aikido and I see how the art complements Tang Soo Do.

I am currently reading, "Living the Martial Way" by Forrest Morgan. One key concept of the book is that each martial art has strengths and weaknesses. The author recommends picking an art that encompasses the values and needs of the practitioner. He then

recommends that after achieving a black belt level, the practitioner pursue an art that fills the gaps of the first art—and then achieve a black belt in the second art. I can see how Aikido complements Tang Soo Do and fills the gaps of an art that is historically a kicking art (although it has been adapted to be more well-rounded in recent years). Additionally, Tang Soo Do is a weaponless "empty hand" art – at least in our organization since other organizations do train with weapons – and Aikido further offers a counter-balance to the "empty-hand" art through use of weapons such as the bokken and the jo.

The culture of the Aikido Davis dojo is warm and welcoming. Other students were friendly, helpful and encouraging. I have to say that I had a positive experience in my first 8 weeks of Aikido. This is an art that I would like to continue. While it does not fit into the schedule currently, I expect that circumstances will change soon so that I can train at least a couple days a week.



From left: Toru Saito, Naomi Hayashi, Hsinli Yen, Yuhsin Tsai. Picture courtesy of Guy Michelier.

My Current Thoughts on Aikido

Naomi Hayashi

My husband and I have been coming to the dojo for 5 months now, and enjoying Aikido practice. The reason why I came to join the beginner's class was curiosity. When we visited our family in Japan last September, my husband brought back couple books about improving sports performance by using body movement of Japanese old Budo (Kobujutsu). Then, I found that there is an Aikido Dojo in Davis, and its website said "beginner's class starts Oct 1st". It was September 29th. Since Aikido is a Japanese Budo, we decided to take the class instead of learning from books.

I am glad that we had a courage to walk into the first class. Learning with a group of fun and enthusiastic fellow beginners in the class, we were motivated not to miss any classes. My favorite part of Aikido is "training with other people". It is like having peaceful communication. When uke initiates the move, tori (or nage) blends with the energy; then, tori uses the energy to reply to uke with respected manner. There is no competitiveness nor intention to harm others. After every Aikido practice, I feel cheerful and satisfied.

I hope I can practice Aikido as long as I can. Thank you very much for training with me.



*Daniel Leyson trains with Martin Dubcovsky.
Picture courtesy of Guy Michelier.*

Not for Everyone

Donny Shiu

Aikido is not for everyone. For that matter, martial arts (MA) is not for everyone. One may have other interests and pursuits. Lack of time due to one's obligations and priorities such as family, school, and work are realities of life. But if you have the interest, desire, and time, MA and Aikido may absolutely be for you. Seek and you shall find.

Many beginners often fail to realize that to acquire any MA knowledge and skill requires work and can be challenging. The dropout rate in martial arts is high regardless of style. Seeing MA in movies and television can be very different from doing. Although there are McDojo's, but MA is not like fast food. It's not for everybody. No one forces you to train.

A dose of reality often clears up misconceptions by active participation. Well said by Mike Tyson, "Everyone has a plan until they get hit in the mouth." How do you deal with challenges? Furthermore, for those that want to learn how to hit someone in the mouth or fight, they should go learn how to fight. Aikido is not for you. Fortunately, Aikido is non-confrontational so you can train as hard as you want and there will be no hitting in the mouth. Yet, it's not for everybody.

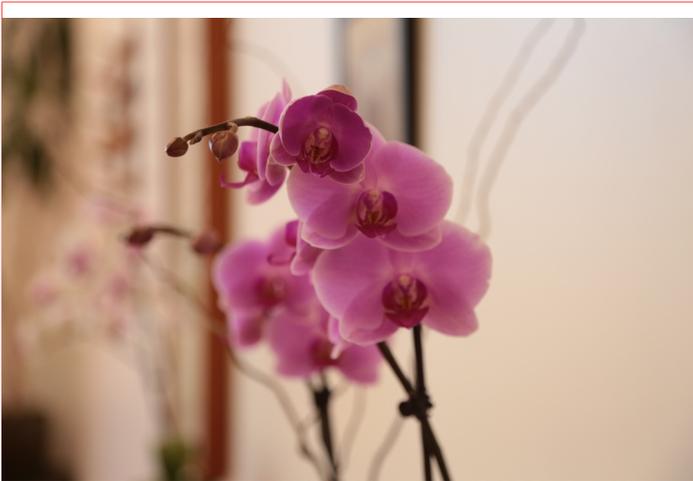
There are many other flavors of martial arts. Which one is the best?

In my opinion, it is the one you live and DO. That's the WAY. Styles are just "different paths to the mountain top." The reasons why people become interested in the study of MA are varied and personal. The reasons people do not or unable to train are also varied and should be respected. From my experience, the longer students stay, study, and practice any MA, the more similar their motivations become. They become true students of MA. They see the WAY.

Being resistant and cautious of ideas that are unfamiliar is understandable. Interestingly by keeping an open mind, you may get to explore the unique perspective that Aikido offers. It is a non-violent, gentle art that can be practiced by all ages and gender. It may not be for everybody, but it could be a perfect fit for you. I do encourage those interested to give

Aikido a try.

Do not mistake gentleness for weakness; only the strong are secure enough to be gentle.



Picture by of Guy Michelier.

How Aikido Has Saved Me From Rhinoplasty. Twice.

Clelia Clark

The topic for this essay came to me in the middle of class one day. It was a pretty ordinary day in the dojo (people rolling around on the ground, wooden swords clanking, etc.) and it occurred to me that the skills and reflexes that I've picked up in my training have really come in handy over the years in a few concrete instances. Specifically, it's almost certain that without these afore mentioned skills, I probably would have had to undergo nasal reconstructive surgery...twice.

My first memory takes me all the way back to seventh grade, P.E. class. It was a pretty quixotic time in my life. About thirty kids awkwardly sprinting around a gymnasium, trying in vain to make the elephant gray T-shirts and terrible, terrible Smurf-blue cloth shorts our school called a "uniform" look stylish. Sleeves and shorts were rolled in every possible conceivable combination, socks being really the only mechanism for self-expression during this dark time. Young men were a bit slow on the uptake in realizing that the time had come when deodorant was no longer optional, and as a result a distinct gym-y scent lingered through the

building.

In any case, today's activity was kick ball. Inside. I'm not sure who came up with that brilliant idea ("Let's have a bunch of uncoordinated children kick a ball as hard as they can indoors!") but that was our task of the day. We were divided into groups, and while two teams battled it out on the gym floor, the rest of us would sit in the bleachers and pretend to pay attention to the athletic marvel unfolding before us. I distinctly remember sitting and talking to my friend to my right, immersed in the conversation at hand, and suddenly... my fist, more or less on its own accord, went up in front of my face.

A millisecond later I felt the ball slam into my fist, bouncing back into the center of the gym. I dropped my hand back down instantly. Everyone in the room turned and looked at me in shock. My teacher immediately ran over. "Are you hurt? Is your face OK?" Apparently while I had been deep in conversation, one of my classmates had kicked the ball into the bleachers, sending it hurtling directly for my face. I had blocked the ball so quickly that only the kid kicking the ball had even seen me block it. The rest of them seemingly thought I had a face of steel and marveled at my lack of shattered nose. I honestly had no idea the ball was even coming towards me until after I had deflected it, and I know that the only reason my reflexes worked so quickly was because of my years of Aikido training.

The second memorable time took place in a more recent and picturesque location. I'm in the Andes Mountains, Peru, June 2013. It's about seven in the morning local time, and I'm exploring the hills with a bunch of college students before we start setting up our local mobile clinic for the day. Children are playing. Villagers are farming. Alpacas are...well, doing whatever alpacas do all day. Inevitably, our Clinic Director Jorge calls us in to circle up and discuss our plans for the day.

We all begin to slowly migrate back towards the clinic building. "Come on, hurry up, guys!" Jorge yells at us stragglers. We break into a run. As is the curse of my generation, I struggle to take one final selfie of my friend and myself as we jog purposefully across the jagged hillside. No sooner had I pressed down on the camera shutter than I felt my toe snag on one of my

many rocks of the majestic Andes Mountains, the momentum of my run ever so gracefully being diverted into a trajectory leading straight for a face plant into the alpaca poo ridden ground. Time slowed. Children paused in their playing to watch the American girl fall on her face, and I heard a collective gasp from my clinic mates as they saw me trip and begin to fall. And then, much to the dismay of the Peruvian children...my body (again on its own accord) curled up in to a perfect circle. I launched into a forward roll, popped up, and continued jogging back into the circle as though nothing had happened.



The photo I took moments before my fall. Note the intelligent, although clearly less dedicated, people behind me who are not running.

Peruvian children resumed their play with disappointment, and my classmates looked at me with a wary look you might give someone who has recently been demonically possessed. “What are you, a stunt double on the side?” asked Jorge in disbelief. “Err...I do martial arts,” I mumbled. He looked at me suspiciously, and then resumed his talk on our daily clinical duties. Once again, my nose and I had escaped a sticky situation unscathed, all thanks to Aikido.

Mine are merely a drop in the bucket of the Aikido stories you’ll find out there. Many a practitioner has Aikido to thank for keeping his or her medical bills in check. My nose and I are a prime example of how

Aikido can truly change the course of your personal history. Where would I have been without my training? I may have undergone reconstructive facial surgery in seventh grade, and at such a tender and self-conscious age! Or perhaps I would have been ill fated to receive medical attention in the rural mountains of Peru, my face and pride permanently disfigured as a result of my unfortunate fall. I shudder to think of the alternatives that could have ensued.

Thank you, Aikido!

Promotions

Congratulations to the following students for their recent promotions:

Hsinli Yen	4 th Kyu
Naomi Hayashi	5 th Kyu
Toru Saito	5 th Kyu
Yuhsin Tsai	5 th Kyu
Brandon Forest	6 th Kyu
Daniel Leyson	6 th Kyu
Kim Sullivan	6 th Kyu
Aidan Murray	7 th Kyu
Fiala Janata	7 th Kyu
Lucas Peters	7 th Kyu
Finn Boire	8 th Kyu
Jaxon Kamisky	8 th Kyu
Tim Erwin	8 th Kyu

Events & Announcements

Kori and Toby Train in the Dojo: for the month of April Toby and Kori will be back in Davis.

Advanced Class – April 6th: Special Sunday class 10-11:30 am for 2nd Kyu and above.

Beginner's Course – April 8th: the Beginner's Course starts Tuesday April 8th. The class meets every Tuesday and Thursday 6:00-6:50pm for 8 weeks. This course is only \$100, and is designed as an introduction to aikido for anyone regardless of age or gender. To get the most out of the course, uninterrupted attendance is recommended. Visit our website for more information.

Spring Cleaning - April 12th: Please make the time to help out in making sure the dojo is in good shape. And remember, maintaining the dojo is an important part of training.

Tai Sai – April 26th: To commemorate the anniversary of the death of O'Sensei, Hoa Newens Sensei will lead a special class on Saturday April 26, 10:30am-11:30am.

Tahoe Gasshuku - May 23-25. To commemorate the 25th anniversary of this wonderful (almost) yearly event, Inagaki Sensei from Iwama has been invited as the special guest instructor. Make sure you register well in advance as the event is quickly filling up.

Scarsdale Aikido Seminar – June 21st. Kent Sempai will be traveling to White Plains, New York to teach.

Orlando Aikido Seminar – June 28th. Hoa Newens Sensei will be traveling to Orlando, Florida to teach.

TAA Fukushido Course – July/August. Details to be announced



Picture by Guy Michelier.