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Mind and Mutiny By Hoa Newens Sensei

In martial arts as well as in certain esoteric circles the concept of no-mind (*mushin*, 無心) generally refers to the desirable mental state in which our consciousness is crystal clear and undisturbed by thoughts or emotions. Most forms of meditation also use this state as a goal or an intermediate stage for further practice.

On the face of it, the concept of no-mind seems to reject the utility of the mind and poses a serious contradiction to our western culture which glorifies mental achievement and put mind on some of the highest social pedestals. In this essay we examine the essence of this incongruity and explain the need for no-mind.

People regularly use the term “mind” to mean consciousness, awareness, self, mental state, or thoughts. Consider these idiomatic expressions: make up one’s mind; get something out of your mind; have something in mind; speak your mind; mind your own business.

To clarify the subject matter of this discussion, we make the following distinctions.

Consciousness is the inherent intelligence that animates a sentient being. This intelligence is of a divine source that precedes Existence. It is the aspect of a sentient being that makes it alive. In certain contexts, we also refer to consciousness as *Spirit* or *Soul*.

Awareness is a cognitive function of Consciousness that recognizes various forms of energy within Existence. Consciousness, which is pure by nature, acquires Awareness as it projects into Existence.

A human being is endowed with pure consciousness at birth, a piece of the

omnipresent divine consciousness. The human consciousness gradually recognizes various elements of Existence through awareness. Awareness builds up overtime until it begins to differentiate itself from the rest of Existence. Then a *Self* emerges as a distinct entity from the original consciousness. The Self continues the cognitive process of consciousness and builds a *Mind* of its own from the awareness that it accumulates.

As it grows, the Mind recognizes its earthly limitations since it has separated from its infinite source and realizes that its primary motive is to preserve the newly born Self. As soon as the need to preserve and protect arises, threats are perceived, and the *Emotion* of “fear” is born. As Mind continues to grow by bumping into Existence, other human emotions come to life: anger, jealousy, sadness, etc.

At one point in its growth, Mind becomes aware of the cycles of nature and registers these repetitive patterns as it creates the concept of *Time*. One cycle becomes a unit of time. Temporal awareness slowly grafts itself onto various human activities including daily routines as well as cyclical activities according to the seasons.

With time, Mind further develops the ability to compare and to measure, until the capacity that we call *Intellect* is born. The intellect is further developed and reinforced through our education process. The intellect accumulates *Knowledge* and creates its own set of rules that we call *Sciences*. One such rule dominates all others and is known as *Logic*. Another key rule that is derived from the coupling of finiteness and time is *Efficiency*. These two rules build the essential fabric for our modern society.

As it happened, in the West, the Intellect grows rapidly and dominates all other facets of the original Mind, and often usurps its powers and authority to become “the mind”.

In this way, little *mind* that was a part of big Mind wants to proclaim itself the whole Mind. Consequently, mental ability becomes the

highest faculty of human being and takes up residence in the penthouse of the body, the brain (so it thinks).

The evolution of Western society has reduced the original Mind, which is a differentiated part of cosmic consciousness, into the smaller component, the intellectual mind, sometime referred to as the thinking mind.

In our current society, mind has become a dictator who condemns anything and everything that is not its derivative. An autistic savant is a special mental health case. Faith healing, intuition, life force and telepathy are unexplained phenomena relegated to esoteric realms outside of mainstream sciences.

Little mind goes so far as creating its own offspring, labeled artificial intelligence, with the goal of replacing human mental activity, and possibly humans themselves. In other words, it is preparing a coup to take over Divine Creation and create a new form of life.

A number of science fiction writers have already visualized these scenarios and several have already been made into movies (Google artificial intelligence in movies).

Despite this dire futuristic view, fortunately, our universe has a self-correcting mechanism: when life reaches an extreme it begins the reverse flow.

A growing group of frontier scientists have realized the limitations of mind and have initiated exploration beyond the boundaries of sciences. Albert Einstein’s theory of relativity toppled the traditional Newtonian model and spawned a new trend. Einstein declares: “*Any intelligent fool can make things bigger and more complex... It takes a touch of genius – and a lot of courage to move in the opposite direction*”, and that “*Imagination is more important than knowledge. Knowledge is limited. Imagination encircles the world*”, and further “*A human being is part of a whole called by us the universe.*”

The revolution to restore mind to its former glory as Mind has begun. A new breed of frontier scientist is more readily accepting the notion that reality might also contain a non-physical dimension that includes consciousness and the human soul, and also the possibility of multiple parallel universes.

We have led the discussion thus far mainly to show that through human history mankind has not been using the Mind properly and has caused a depreciation of the Mind, mostly by focusing excessively on the thinking faculty and while ignoring largely more omnipotent faculties of consciousness.

Then what is the correct perspective on Mind?

Mind as we see it, is a post-birth transformation of a part of the divine Consciousness that animates an individual human being. Our mind is an allotment of divine consciousness that is focused on our physical world and is dedicated to help us navigate this world, including figuring out what our purpose in this life is and how we can accomplish it with the tools available to us.

If we view Mind in this manner, certain corollaries follow naturally.

The mind is provided to us as a tool to help our physical being adapt to the physical world. As such, it has four uses, which are described here in increasing complexity.

First, mind is used to direct the body, that is, to initiate and control its activities. For example, in a voluntary motion the mind sets a purpose for the body to accomplish, monitors the execution of the motion and gives the body feedback so that it can fine-tune the motion.

Second, mind helps us understand our environment so that we can adapt and thrive. During its daily activity the human being constantly bumps into its environment, and mind helps us to learn about the properties of the environment so that we can find the best way to survive and thrive. Here is where the intellectual faculty comes in most handy. For example, the mind helps the body recognize that fire is hot

and that it should not come into direct contact with it, but also that fire can be harnessed to provide warmth and to transform raw fauna and flora into human food.

Third, mind helps our consciousness process the lessons learned in daily life. Most of these lessons are learned through effort and failure during our interaction with our environment including interaction with other human beings. Here is when the capacity of mind to feel emotions plays an important role. Through the education process, mind learns to fear failure. Following a failure, Mind suffers through a temporary downshift then bounces back and searches for cause and effect connection to identify the cause of failure. It uses the results to adjust itself and the body to prepare for the next attempt.

Fourth, at the higher level of functioning, the Mind introspects and questions itself and its own existence then directs the ensuing spiritual quest of the human being. It engages in a search for a deeper meaning of its existence because it senses that it misses the presence of something larger than itself that would bring more comfort, peace and lasting joy.

To aid in furthering the understanding of the proper uses of mind, we describe below instances of inappropriate uses of mind.

Mind should not be used to alter our environment. Existence, including our universe as we know it, has been present for eternity. Human beings came into the picture recently as one small element and have no right or reason to upset the pre-existing balance. To survive and thrive, there is no need for human beings to cause massive changes to our environment, including sentient beings at all levels, from rocks to humans. We may need to move the soil a little to build shelter and grow food; we may cause some friction with other beings (animal and human) in our hunt for scarce resources; we may need to rearrange or displace certain natural groupings such as move and transport certain things and animals out of their natural habitat

due to our need to congregate; we may create mechanisms and systems to facilitate and enhance our life on earth.

But we must not go so far as to upset the balance in our ecosystem to such extent that it becomes detrimental to other life forms, and our own. When our human-manufactured plastic fills the oceans with trash and debris that kill birds and fishes, then we have gone too far. When we generate greenhouse gas and other polluting elements including an abundance of chemicals (some labeled as medicinal drugs) that destroy such essential elements to the food chain as our bio-diverse coral reef ecosystems, we have gone too far.

Similarly, when we have created so much automation that the body and the mind are in lack of work-out and their inborn potential faculties are diminished due to lack of use, we have gone too far. Witness the obesity epidemic, the lack of true artistic creation reminiscent of ages past, and the myriad of social issues arising from lack of meaningful interpersonal communication.

Mind should not be allowed free rein. Mind is a special power granted to us by the Divine for the purpose of navigating the physical realm and making sense of our stay on earth. For this purpose, Mind can function as the intellect and create sciences to accumulate knowledge. However, mind must not be allowed to build multiples layers and structures to sustain itself, aggrandize and perpetuate, to such extent that it usurps the position of its originator, Mind. As explained earlier, humans tend to let Mind degrade into mind, specifically the intellect, when they focus narrowly on their physical activities on earth. Allowing the intellect to rule our life without constraint is like allowing a child to govern a nation; lacking the breadth of an adult perspective, the juvenile ruler will surely focus on its immediate needs at the exclusion of all other beings'. Was it proper scientific application to create nuclear bombs that eliminated two hundred thousand human

lives? As philosophers Francois Montaigne and Rene Descartes have pointed out, *science without conscience is but the ruin of the soul.* Science has its limited utility and it must be kept under leash by Mind, which in this context, represents Spirit.

Presently, little mind is taking humans deep into a world that it created with our blessing, called the digital world. Our youth spends untold hours living with digital friends, communicating through digital media, and toggling back and forth between this digital world and the physical world without distinction. Should we let this trend ride unchecked into the future, we can foresee the atrophy of the physical body and the thinking mind, and the eventual disappearance of our physical world.

Mind must not be allowed to denigrate or disavow big Mind. As we pointed out earlier, little mind is a constituent of Awareness, which itself comes from the Consciousness that is allotted to each of us at birth. Little mind is the tiny tip of the Mind iceberg in the ocean of Consciousness. The huge part of consciousness that is submerged and often ignored and referred to as sub-conscious is the part that carries our divine heritage and links us to the ocean. This submerged part contains our true human potential and stays submerged so that we can float in the ocean of life. Were it not for the submerged part, the tip would not float. To navigate to its true destination, little mind should constantly dig deep into the submerged Mind to find guidance. The way to do that is to go deep, that is, to dive into meditation, and not to build more towers on the tiny surface above water.

When mind does not reach inward to its roots for support, and instead permanently point outward it will run out of motherly sustenance and head toward self-annihilation, with the eventual demise of the individual.

Mind should not be fed incessantly. By its nature, mind needs constant stimulation. Mind is a form of subtle energy, and energy constantly flows. Therefore, mind is always in need of

objects that it can hook on to propel itself and will grab any stimuli that is recognized by our senses: a sight, a sound, an odor, a taste, a tactile sensation. Especially in our digital age, there is no lack of stimulation, thanks to texting, Facebook, e-books, podcast, electronic games, 24/7 radio and TV broadcast, and the ubiquitous smart phone. If we do not consciously exercise restraint, the mind beast will avail itself to this massive feeding, and consequently gobble up all sorts of useless data which are absorbed into our mental make-up and covertly affect all of our decisions.

Photos and videos on Facebook and YouTube captivate our consciousness and drain our energy. In its early years, the Internet might have proven to be a useful invention, but nowadays it is beginning to become the scourge of mankind and the black hole of consciousness. Only information that serves our goals becomes useful knowledge to the mind. Information that exists to be devoured by the mind just to satisfy itself is clutter. An overly active mind will squander its energy into useless spins which will cause such ailments as attention deficit disorder, nervousness and anxiety. When mind cannot find an anchor and is not actively forming thoughts or feelings, its energy is dissolved and re-absorbed into the next more refined level, which in this case is awareness. When the mind is stilled, its energy is recycled into consciousness.

Now more than ever, there is an urgent need to shake free of the shackles of mind and find the true meaning of life by turning inward and listening to that little inner voice that has undoubtedly sounded the alarm of our mental excesses. If going inward proves too difficult, we should at least slow down and watch and listen to Nature and realize the changes that are taking place as a consequence of our misdirected mental activity.

For those of us involved in the practice of Aikido, we should make it a part of our practice to still the body, the breath and the mind. Only

when the mind is still, will the layers of mundane dust that it has acquired drop off to gradually reveal our true Mind. Then we discover the real meaning of Aikido. This is the direction that we should take, rather than projecting outward and entertaining ourselves with new forms or make comparisons to form useless opinions.

In summary, each of us is a soul born out of universal consciousness. A physical body and a mind are given to the soul so that it can adapt to living environment on earth and learn lessons. We should always remember that the body is controlled and animated by the mind, and that the mind serves, and is guided by, the soul. Lessons are harder to learn when this order is not respected and we allow the part to separate from, and control, the whole.

Full Circle

By Paul Williams

“Sometimes life brings you full circle to a place you’ve been before just to show you how much you have grown.” - Unknown

One week before the recent Gasshuku was the two-year mark since Susie, myself, and our fur children had moved to Davis, Ca. Like the quote states above, a landmark event such as that brings the inevitable analysis of what and how your life has changed. Apart from the obvious change in geographic location, there have been many changes. I will of course stick to the aikido related changes given the present audience.

One change that certainly stuck out the most was the relief of chronic low back pain. For years, I’ve suffered from recurring bouts of disability from lower lumbar and sacral pain. Even on the journey to the golden coast I threw out my back in Georgia lifting one of the dogs into the car. Honestly, I had doubts while moving here if I could even continue practicing aikido.

As of today, I can say that the reoccurrence of debilitating lower back pain is relatively nonexistent. Thanks to modern medicine, tai chi, Sensei's aikido, and physical therapy I no longer have the fear of retiring from the art that I have loved for so long.

At this Gasshuku I trained in almost every class without back pain. In fact, the only time I stopped was due to feeling light headed from the altitude and the soreness in my knees. This was a welcomed change. Other than that, I had no problems minus a little gi burn across the neck. Ok, it was a lot of gi burn.

One of the other highlights and reasons for the feeling of a full circle was that I was able to train with and talk to my old friend from Orlando, Ian Phillips. Ian stated that in training with me he noticed that I was much more relaxed yet more powerful. This of course would be contributed to the practice of tai chi over the last few years. For the first time in my aikido life I pay attention to releasing unnecessary tension in my body (specifically in my lower back), allowing the hips to do the work, and maintaining proper posture.

It was great to reminisce on how it was at his dojo that I first met Hoa Newens Sensei. We exchanged stories. Especially the one where Sensei reversed morote dori kokyuhō into a kokyunage. I love telling this story. After a high fall, I was left on the ground looking up at him not really knowing how I got there. Soon after meeting Sensei, both my path and Ian's path physically separated but evidently ran parallel to each other. He too has been working on very similar principles of power, posture, and relaxation. His inspiration as he told it was the time spent with Henry Kono Sensei. Ian had an encounter with Kono Sensei that seemed to defy any previous experience or feeling he had in aikido. To be thrown with such ease and power but not really knowing how it happened. I left him realizing how much I truly missed him and the people at the Orlando dojo. I look forward to

the next time I find myself in Orlando for yet another full circle experience.

As I see it, the feeling of full circle is an indicator of confirmation. This could be negative or positive. Either way, the experience of this existential feeling is unavoidable and unmistakable. It is, of course, reliant on time and setting. Typically, the concept of full circle is an encounter had some time ago in a given place that is sooner or later returned to. There is always a lesson to be learned in reflection and contemplation. For me, it was a confirmation that all the sacrifice and hardship of moving out here was not only worth the cost but it is returning dividends for the future.

Ubuntu – Aikido

By Toby Hargreaves

I don't think we examine why we do Aikido very often. We just train and it feels right. But it is good to reexamine what this art is we practice and why we do it.

I recently heard about a philosophy from the Zulu culture of South Africa called "Ubuntu." It is sometimes translated as "I am because you are." Or, "a person is a person through other people".

To quote Desmond Tutu on Ubuntu: "We think of ourselves far too frequently as just individuals, separated from one another, whereas you are connected and what you do affects the whole world. When you do well, it spreads out; it is for the whole of humanity."

Recently, Sensei has talked about our purpose in Aikido as not to train ourselves for fighting, but rather to find out who we are, where our center is and where we come from. It is a practice of self-discovery. I think the more we walk the path of Aikido, the more we will discover that the answer resembles the message of Ubuntu. Not only are the connections important between all of us, not only should we value and respect those

relationships and learn from them, but **we are** those relationships—they define us. If you were to write a list of what makes you you, would it not be a list of relationships and connections? Even our personal achievements were only made possible by opportunities from others.

There is a very primal part of each of us that looks out for our own good. That instinct goes back millions of years. There is a more recent, but still ancient instinct that looks out for the good of one's family, of one's tribe. Then there is a development of consciousness that makes us value the whole: value our own clan, but also other clans; value our own species, but also other species. It is a consciousness that sees that retaliation doesn't solve anything. It is a consciousness that sees that happiness arises from sharing, not hoarding. Call it what you will--Ubuntu, Aikido, any of the world's great religions—but perhaps we should credit it for that fact that we still have a livable world right now.

There are times when I'm in the lumberyard parking lot, trying to load up a heavy or awkward load of materials. More often than not, a stranger will come up and offer to help me. And I'll do the same for another fellow if I get the chance. To help someone gives us a purpose, gives us energy.

It is easy to be kind and generous in times of peace and prosperity. However, in South Africa, after the end of apartheid, there was a dramatic expression of Ubuntu. Despite decades of oppression and violence, there was a peaceful transfer of power back to black South Africans, and rather than vengeance against the oppressors, there was reconciliation and redemption.

I'll sum up with words from President Barack Obama: "There is a word in South Africa – Ubuntu – a word that captures [Nelson] Mandela's greatest gift: his recognition that we are all bound together in ways that are invisible to the eye; that there is a oneness to humanity;

that we achieve ourselves by sharing ourselves with others and caring for those around us."

Let's all keep training.

2018 Gasshuku

By Zachary Lounsberry

The 2018 Tahoe Gasshuku was an incredible experience. Not only was it helpful in improving my aikido techniques, but I'd imagine what I learned about the culture of aiki practitioners will be helpful for me as I continue my training. As a 4th kyu at the time of attending, I wanted to write up some of my impressions in hopes of encouraging other practitioners with white belts to make it in the coming years. As such, I'd like to offer a point of unsolicited advice and my overall impressions.

The main piece of advice I have is to train with everyone you can. Is that person enormous? Good. You'll learn something from that. Tiny? Good, something else. A sensei?? Absolutely. They are there to train with you too. I found myself gravitating towards the same people (from outside our Davis dojo) by the third day of training, as I felt I got a lot of out of training with them. But there was a breadth of experience there to take advantage of, and I did my best to train with new faces every chance I had. And on the topic of training with sensei, train with your sensei! It's a rare opportunity for one-on-one time, so be prepared to jump to the front of what would become an extremely long line and bow as soon as the instructor invites you to train that technique! ... (I might advise, from experience, to save training nikyo with sensei until you've had a bit more experience receiving it, lest you discover what nikyo is properly supposed to feel like...) Anyway, don't be shy! You're there to learn, and many of these people love to teach.

Advice aside, the experiences are what will stay with me, personally. I had senpai "give me the ol' Iwama grip" such that I couldn't perform techniques. I had senpai do a technique once or

twice to test my ukemi and proceed to get their hips under and toss me into high falls. During the last class I had a senpai tell me that I should find someone more experienced than him to train weapons with (admittedly, that one was a bit weird). I had all 5 feet of Ginny Breeland Sensei come down through my center like she was twice my size. And just about every person that found out I train in Davis went on and on about how fortunate I was. I think that last bit was my most impactful experience (except maybe, as I mentioned, that nikyo from sensei...).

I'm still thinking about the event weeks later. Thinking about how excited I am for next year's Gasshuku, for upcoming seminars, and for more time on the mat. Whether it's what you take away from training with such a large, diverse group or the energy you put into a grab or throw, always remember that you get out what you put in. It can be tough, but it's only three days. So give it your all, and you will walk away greater than the sum of your individual experiences!

Kim's First Tahoe Gasshuku Experience

By Kimberly Lounsberry

When I decided to attend the Gasshuku, I was very excited to have the opportunity to train with a lot of different people. Since this was my first time, I wasn't sure what to do on the first day and got a bit nervous. I observed fellow kouhai and senpai entering the gym and bowing at the door. I couldn't see the shomen, but I did exactly what they did and finally saw it on the far right side when I entered in. So, our dojo etiquette applies at the Gasshuku and I will definitely remember that from now on. During the first class, I felt the effects of the elevation. It felt like I was running a marathon because I was very short of breath after a while. For those who haven't been to the Gasshuku before, breaks and water are very important because of the high

elevation. I was cautious on the first day and took a lot of breaks. Getting up was the hardest and also made me think more about my ukemi.

I enjoyed every minute of training and wished that my body didn't get so tired. My body adjusted more during the second day and I took less breaks. By the last day I had an enormous burst of energy, springing from my tiny sleeping bench ready to take on the final day with vigor. From each sensei, senpai and kouhai I trained with, I took away very valuable lessons. I got a better idea of what I needed to work on. I learned how to better my techniques by body positioning and alignment. Sometimes in the moment of facing someone I don't take the time to align my body first. I also learned to follow the line of energy and go straight through with the technique as well as use my hips more. These are only a few things that I've taken away from the Gasshuku. I wish I got to train with everyone because each person had something different to teach me. I learned a lot, much of it I will probably forget but with regular training will resurface. I had a lot of fun, grateful and honored to have attended. I made a lot of friends and am looking forward to next year!



Group Picture, Tahoe Gasshuku 2018

Some Musings About Tai Chi, Aikido, Music, Ki No Musubi, Gardens, Painting, & Retirement

(in no particular order)

By Bruce Donehower

In this short essay I want to draw attention to a concept that Sensei sometimes talks about in class and which I consider essential to the practice of Aikido: “Ki No Musubi.”

Here’s a definition of the term that I found on the Aiki Web website:

KI NO MUSUBI = Literally "knotting/tying-up KI". The act/process of matching one's partner's movement/intention at its inception and maintaining a connection to one's partner throughout the application of an aikido technique. Proper KI MUSUBI requires a mind that is clear, flexible, and attentive. (see SETSUZOKU)

Here’s another explanation taken from the book *The Hidden Roots of Aikido* by Shiro Omiya.

“In the very beginning of the *Kojiki*, the two deities of creation, Takami-musubi (representing the yang principle) and Kami-musubi (representing the yin principle) employed the marvelous power of musubi (creative energy) to bring the world into being. Likewise, the functioning of musubi can be seen in the techniques of aiki, in which one blends one’s ki with that of a partner or attempts to link one’s individual ki with universal ki. In Shinto, Ki No Musubi is the source of all life; in aiki martial arts, it is the origin of myriad techniques.”

And, if you’ve been at the dojo for a while, you’re probably familiar with “Ki Musubi No Tachi,” a boken kata that we practice with a partner in which we try to develop this feeling of “matching energy” and attentive sympathy for an energetic situation.

My attention was drawn to “Ki No Musubi” because over the past few years, as some of you may have noticed, I have not been at the dojo as frequently as I once attended. Gone are the days when I ducked out of work at lunchtime twice a week to dash to a dojo to meet up for practice, or when I dashed from teaching a late afternoon class at UCD over to the dojo to teach or take a class, or when I twice a week ducked out of work downtown at 4 pm to drive to Fair Oaks to pick up Marion and then speed with her to Davis to teach a beginner class and then follow that with another class taught or joined in practice.

That just won’t happen anymore. Partly because I am getting older and am not charged with responsibility to teach or run a dojo, but partly because my attention has shifted and I find myself devoting more time to contemplative pursuits and the practice of various arts.

Although I certainly intend to get back to regular Aikido practice, sometimes in the morning when I do Tai Chi in the garden I can’t help but wonder: “Hmm, I know how I used to relate to Aikido, but what does Aikido mean to me *now*?”

Recently an answer came back to me from an unexpected source: music.

Since my full retirement four years ago, I have devoted many hours daily to the classical guitar (a former love of my life and at one time a considered profession), and I have reconnected with a community of classical guitarists and musicians that I left behind a few decades ago for Aikido. In fact, much of the obsessive energy I used to direct to Aikido now goes into practicing music. But unlike my previous involvement with classical music and the guitar, this time around my experience is enriched by my knowledge of Aikido. I have begun to appreciate Osensei’s teaching from another point of view – conversely: I have begun to appreciate another discipline from Osensei’s point of view, maybe.

Which brings me to Ki No Musubi.

It is interesting to me to watch beginner and intermediate guitarists (as well as me) struggle with technique. Most people who study a classical instrument butt their head against technique issues all the time. There are technical challenges on the guitar, for example, that can only be surmounted by diligent steady practice, for sure – but what I and others have noticed is that a daily diet of focusing only on technique leaves a student deprived. Mal nourished. That is to say: there's more to music than technique. There's something, well, musical ... that can only be developed by being ... well, *musical* – or imitating someone who is musical, and not busting your fingers doing scales, for example, or arpeggios all day long.

So how does one achieve this musical skill?

I submit, it is an internal process, like poetry, like Tai Chi, like meditation. You have to open yourself to the art, and listen, and learn to be sensitive to the complete context of what is going on, and not obsess on what your individual fingers are doing, or not doing, with technique. And be patiently sensitive. And willing to experiment. And fail. And start again.

Let's take gardening as a metaphor. If you want to enjoy a splendid garden landscape (I'm not talking about a simple vegetable or flower garden, but something more like a garden with water, trees, and landscaped views – a Taoist garden, or English garden in the romantic sense), you of course have to understand some basic technical facts about plants, soil, weather, seasons, climate, etc. Having assimilated these technical details, you then make some decisions about plants. You start your garden. But then you have to turn the process over to time, nature, and happenstance and sleep. There's no way you can force a garden to flourish. You might assist the process, by technical means, but the flourishing occurs because you allow time to pass and basically get out of the way – maybe giving things a helpful watering here and there, some artful pruning, some compost – but still, time and time and more time is required – and

patience and faith and optimism that what goes on is bigger than yourself and that you are there to assist the process, not to impose upon it.

Shift the metaphor back to music. On the way home from Florida recently, as I whiled away the hours in the plane, I listened to various recordings of classical guitarists. These days there are many technically excellent recordings of the repertoire, but strangely, I found myself pleased and oddly attracted to old recordings made by guitarists who, by technical standards today, would be judged subpar. But to me, these old masters had a spirit in their art that was uniquely interesting and undeniable.

What does this mean for Aikido?

I'm not sure, entirely, but I think that for me it means that Aikido is more than what bodies are doing on the mat. It means that Osensei saw something in the practice of Aikido that should lead us to something greater than technical reps. It means for me that the musical meaning of Aikido, if we care to worry about it (and maybe we should *not*), lies in grasping the meaning of Ki No Musubi.

And perhaps, like getting the phrasing right in a piece of music or appreciating the growth of a tree lovingly imagined for years, it happens somewhat mysteriously and in its own good time. Or maybe not. . .

The important thing: love to practice. And keep a sense of humor and big view.

In closing, I'd like to share a quote by the Japanese painter Hokusai (*36 Views of Mt. Fuji*) that I found in the front section of Henry Miller's book: *Big Sur and the Oranges of Hieronymus Bosch* (highly recommended, by the way).

"I have been in love with painting ever since I became conscious of it at the age of six. I drew some pictures I thought fairly good when I was fifty, but really nothing I did before the age of seventy was of any value at all. At seventy-three I have at last caught every aspect of nature—birds, fish, animals, insects, trees, grasses, all.

When I am eighty I shall have developed still further, and I will really master the secrets of art at ninety. When I reach a hundred my work will be truly sublime, and my final goal will be attained around the age of one hundred and ten, when every line and dot I draw will be imbued with life.”

Reading the Book

Aikido – Keiko to Kokoro

by Naomi Hayashi

Doshu published a book in March 2018, and I would like to share what I have learned from the book in this article. It was written in fairly easy Japanese, so people who study Japanese may be able to read as well. I am going to leave the book in our Dojo Library. Reading this book made me want to train more, so you may feel the same.

First section of the book describes Aikido history. It talks about O-sensei such as how and who influenced O-sensei to establish Aikido, and I think that these are well-known stories. The book also describes Kisshomaru Doshu's (the second Doshu) contributions such as he saved and protected Hombu Dojo during the war and spreading Aikido to others after the war. The second Doshu held a regular job, so that he could support his family and Hombu dojo financially, and continued teaching morning class despite only a few students were practicing after the war. O-sensei apparently wanted to keep Aikido to stay in very closed circle (noble family, police, etc.) as many traditional Japanese Budo-ka do. However, the second Doshu wanted to open its door to anyone who wants to practice. He persuaded O-sensei to be more open, and they succeeded to display first public Embu in 1955, and start expanding to annual public Embu, to send instructors to all over the world.

Second part of the book talks about “Keiko” (training) and “Kokoro” (spirit/mind). It starts explaining six principles of Aikido practice by

O-sensei. He introduces the second Doshu's interpretation of these principles, and his own interpretation. O-sensei's six principles are following (I do my best to translate literally):

1. Because Aikido techniques are dangerous, you need to follow teacher's instructions always and not to compete with others.
2. Because Aikido is one against many, you need to pay attention to your surrounding (4 and 8 directions) at all times,
3. Practice should be always fun,
4. You can only learn a little in the class; do your own practice continuously to gain for yourself.
5. Every practice should start from “Tai-no-Henka” and gradually escalate to harder training; train within your physical level to prevent injury, so that any old person can train continuously without injury.
6. Purpose of our training is to improve our body and spirit to be a better person. Because Aikido techniques are secret, do not show off your techniques to others. We need to prevent others to misuse Aikido.

He describes details of these points, but most important part is that we cannot gain anything without “Keiko”. He emphasized the importance of basic techniques and explains basic foot and body movement such as stance, ma-ai, tai sabaki (irimi, tenkan, etc.) and other basic techniques in details with many pictures. He also advocates to practice “Katai” (hard) practice before you move to “Yawarakai” or “Ki no nagare”. He explains that “Katai” keiko implies holding tightly with appropriate resistance while relaxing your joints and not using whole power to resist or go against. In addition, Nage needs to be able to do basic tai-sabaki correctly and slowly to complete the whole technique; both Uke and Nage should be sincere, honest and caring for each other's practice. These are nothing new because our Sensei and Senpai had taught me the same

during our daily training, yet it was nice to be reminded by Doshu those principles.

The last section talks about Ueshiba Family. He talks about O-sensei as a grandparent and the second Doshu as a father, and how he grew up with Aikido. Most interesting story in this section was that O-sensei told his family that “at least once a day, someone from Ueshiba family will teach class at Hombu dojo”. That is why 6:30am class has been taught by Doshu or Waka-sensei every morning at Hombu Dojo, and he said that he will continue doing as long as he could.

From reading this book, I had learned more about Aikido history, and about Ueshiba family. Regarding Aikido training, many points described in this book were often mentioned by our Sensei. The book reminded me that Aikido training is endless, and I like to train more to be a stronger person physically and mentally. Even though there are different style of Aikido, I understand that most important things are same, and we need to take care each other and continue training.

KYU Promotions

February 2018

Luca Del Bene-Kyhos	5K
Matsue Del Bene-Kyhos	6K
Taye Byun	8K

June 2018

Hannah Miller	2K
Zachary Lounsberry	3K
Kimberly Lounsberry	3K
Adam Zimbardo	5K

A note about the newsletter: The AWASE newsletter is currently published twice a year, at the beginning of winter and at the beginning of summer. All submissions are welcome! Very little editing is done. Authors should take care to edit, copyedit, proofread, and make their own stylistic corrections prior to submission; however, formatting mistakes are generally the unfortunate goofs of your editor, who may be confused from

time to time. If I have made any mistakes in the presentation of your submission, I greatly apologize! Thank you for submitting to AWASE. – Bruce Sempai

Dues are due at the beginning of the month. Please pay on time or use automatic payments from your bank. Thanks!



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