

AIKIDO for the **INNOCENT**, the **EAGER**, and the **DOOMED**



LA, THE VINE

"The wise man defends himself by never being attacked." I read this sentence in a novel once and it stayed with me. How does one achieve this lofty ideal?

"Aikido is the principle of nonresistance."

~~~Morihei Ueshiba

Aikido, in Aikido and the Dynamic Sphere, is the "method or way (*do*) for the Coordination or Harmony (*ai*) of Mental Energy or Spirit (*ki*)." (17) Aikido, the way to mind, body, spirit coordination, is a complex art with a simple way of relating to form and energy, with thought and action at the center, and an extension of mental energy, or *ki*.

"From ancient times,  
Deep learning and valor  
Have been the two pillars of the Path:  
Through the virtue of training,  
Enlighten both body- and soul."

~~~Morihei Ueshiba

Bruce Klickstein wrote in Living Aikido, "At the beginning, you simply have to come to the dojo and train. In a short while, your understanding of Aikido will become increasingly complex, with a deep understanding of its myriad relationships and implications. Your training will reflect this. You will know hundreds of techniques and thousands of variations. Later, as your understanding of the art deepens, you will become

as a beginner again, realizing that growth in Aikido is a matter of simply showing up in the dojo and training." (23)

At the beginning of this journey I thought it would be like a dance class, have some fun, great exercise, meet interesting people. Reality check - it was hard! It was frustrating. It was tiring. There was no music! The really "what am I doing here" intense fun was **THE TEST**, done with shaking hands and clogged up ears. However, I did meet interesting people.

Ah, the good old days. At first it was six techniques. Now it is many relationships among techniques, attacks, and variations of all kinds. Mind boggling.

"Remember, wherever you go - there you are."
~~~Buckaroo Banzai

"The trick is to be at peace - wherever you are."  
~~~Greg O'Connor

Okay, I will have to go to the dojo and train. Training: to make proficient by instruction and practice, over and over and over.

To train to relax, the hardest thing to do, and not always remembered.

To train to breathe correctly, with the body, not the brain.

To train to align my body, to stand up straight; maintain balance; distribute weight evenly.

To train to raise my awareness of grounding and centering; to connect to center to ground and back to the attacker.

To train to seek connections with an opponent that can help me feel his direction; connections that flow through my body, out to the ground and back again.

To train with wonderful people, willing to share their experiences and training.

"To train in the basics (*omote*)
Is to practice the very secrets of the art."
~~~~Morihei Ueshiba

Training means to discipline the mind. Centeredness is where you place your attention when performing physical skills. I will have to train and educate my mind to focus my awareness and centeredness. Will I ever be able to understand the mysteries of *ki*? The power, or strength, of Aikido appears to be in the *ki*. *Ki* radiates from the center, or *hara*. Apparently everyone has this, but only some people consciously try to develop it. This center, or *hara is* approximately two inches below the navel, the point of stability and balance. All energy comes from here.

Set spokes in a wheel  
It is the spaces within that make them useful.  
Be the space at the center  
Be nothing  
And you will have everything to give to others.  
~~~from KUNG FU - TV series

Is it possible to train long enough to achieve nothingness, to understand the mysteries of *ki*? Zen wisdom tells of the master whose black belt, through wear, eventually becomes white again. He arrives at the ultimate wisdom, the beginner's mind.

Morihei Ueshiba was born in Japan on December 14, 1883, and died on April 26, 1969. Training with the Mast gives us a picture of his life. "While Morihei's body was weakened by cancer, his *ki* power remained amazingly powerful - he could down an opponent without touching him," ... "Morihei continued training until the very end; he told his students: 'Aikido is a life long path - continually refine and improve yourselves.' " (xxi)

"Hear counsel, and receive instruction,
that thou mayest be wise in thy latter end."
~~~Proverbs 19.20

How long was the wise man's journey? I don't know. Morihei Ueshiba's Journey was a long and beneficial one. One of the greatest martial artists, he was a man of peace. How long will my journey be? I don't know that either. But while traveling this path I can envision unclouded *ki*, seeking nothingness, striving to improve myself, reaching towards the beginner's mind, and simply showing up at the dojo to train.

"To fight and conquer in one hundred battles is not the highest skill.  
To subdue the enemy with no fight at all, that's the highest skill."  
~~~Sun Tzu

WORKS CITED

Westbrook, A. and Ratti, O. Aikido and the Dynamic Sphere. Japan: Charles E. Tuttle Co., Inc., 1996

Klickstein, Bruce. Living Aikido. Berkeley, CA: North Atlantic Books, 1987

Stevens, John and Krenner, Walther. Training with the Master. Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1999