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愛氣塾通信

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誠 (*Makoto*): Sincerity

Truthfulness in all matters

Neil Segal

Makoto is being true to oneself and to others. An attitude of sincerity requires being present in the moment. This state allows clear vision of the true nature of things. In order to attain such a state, we need to develop correct intention emanating from a pure heart. A pure heart provides the ability to clearly view the universe around us.

When we are truthful and sincere, we have no desire to attempt to control others. *Makoto* requires subduing the ego to rid ourselves of the filters which cloud our perception. For *nage* (投げ), the one leading, to connect with *uke* (受け), the one being led, it is necessary to have the clear spirit and honest purpose of *makoto*. This sensitive connection is disrupted if *nage* attempts to force his ego upon *uke*. Thus, to maintain the intimate relationship between *uke* and *nage*, ego must be contained.

Defense and offence both convey a spirit of competitive or violent intent derived from inner conflict. Aikido training is intended to help us to achieve victory over ourselves. Victory over the self is true victory in that the result is inner peace and tranquility, the absence of conflict. From this base, it is possible to perceive the world as it is and convey an honest sense of peace.

Makoto, remaining true to oneself, through victory over the ego, results in the ability to unite and match with the energy of the universe around us to restore harmony out of conflict. Although this is a challenging task, following the path to subdue the ego will naturally result in clear perception, truthfulness towards oneself and others, and the ability to connect and blend for the resolution of conflict and restoration of harmony.



ひな祭: *Hinamatsuri*

The Dolls' Festival

The Dolls' Festival is celebrated on the third of March. This occasion signifies the wish for girls to grow up in good health. Dolls are displayed on a red tiered stand. In homes, the Emperor and Empress dolls are displayed on the top tier. On the second level are three court ladies and on the third sit five musician dolls. Department stores display *Hina* dolls on up to seven and even eight tiers. The tiered stand of dolls may be displayed early but as soon as March 3rd has passed, it is quickly put away. There is superstition that if the *Hina* dolls are displayed for too long, one's marriage may be delayed.

The Doll's Festival originally came to Japan from China. It was described in the Tale of Genji (源氏物語) in the 11th century as a festival to protect people from evil. However, it was not until the late Edo Period (1603-1868) that people began displaying *Hina* dolls more commonly.

From the third to the fourth of March, Japanese people used to practice *Nagashibina* (流しびな), Paper dolls with one's name on them are laid in a straw boat with peach blossoms and set adrift on rivers or at sea, in hopes that they will carry evil away. Tottori Prefecture is especially well-known for this custom.



The World in Black & White

Reflections on the Path of the Brush

Kae Hino

「弘法は筆を選ばず」

“Kobo wa fude wo erabazu”

Kobo Daishi (a.k.a. "Kukai") was one of the most talented calligraphers in Japanese history. The above proverb is a testament to his fame. The proverb expresses that "Kobo did not choose the brush." In other words, a true master is so skilled that no matter what brush he wields, he can create a masterpiece. This is a useful proverb, but misleading in that it sounds as if *Kukai* was not selective about brushes. However, his history demonstrates that he cultivated his appreciation for a variety of brushes. In the Heian period (794-1185), *Kukai* traveled to China to deepen his study of Buddhism. While a monk, he also studied calligraphy and how to make various kinds of brushes. His years of study of brush composition resulted in the creation of one, which he dedicated to the Saga-emperor after he returned from China. His passion not only to master the skill, but also to improve the process of Brush making are manifest by the list of brushes which he dedicated to the emperor, which is still preserved today. *Kukai* was a master calligrapher as well as an expert at selecting brushes. He knew with which kind of brushes he could best express himself. Certainly, one of the characteristics which made him a master calligrapher, respected for so many centuries, was his knowledge of brushes. It was therefore his depth of knowledge of brushes that allowed him to create a masterpiece regardless of which brush he used — hence he did not need to choose.

In *Shodo*, as one develops more skill, selecting the brush appropriate for creation of a particular work contributes to the allure of the art. Usually, a brush with goat hair creates gentle, elegant, and soft strokes, suitable for writing *Hiragana*, softer characters which were created by women for women in Heian period. Alternatively, a brush made with horsetail makes strokes appear powerful, hard, and rough, which is commonly preferred for *Kanji*, more complex Chinese characters. Another option is to choose one with mixed goat and horse hair, which is used widely from beginner to master.

After embarking on the path of *Shodo*, you will find the most suitable brush for yourself. It varies by person and the possible brush selections are almost endless. Once you start feeling the appeal of the brush, you will find deeper attraction through appreciation of different brushes, and the joy of finding just the right one for yourself after years of training!



Teachings of Aikido

Advice from the Masters

“Come join hands with this old grandpa to unite the world. We have no enemies in Aikido, none of us are strangers. Every day, let’s train to make the world a little more peaceful.”

~ Ueshiba Morihei O-Sensei



“Aikido is medicine for a sick world. We want to cure the world of the sickness of violence, malcontent, and discord — this is the path of *aiki*. There is evil and disorder in the world because that all things emanate from one source and leave behind all selfish desires, and anger.”



~ Ueshiba Morihei O-Sensei

“As soon as you see the “good” and “bad” of your fellows, you create an opening in your heart for maliciousness to enter. Testing, competing with, and criticizing others weakens and defeats you.”

~ Ueshiba Morihei O-Sensei



“We do not need to deal with his body at all if we can redirect his mind and the flow of his ki. This is the secret: lead his mind and ki away from you and his body will naturally follow.”

~ Yamamoto Yukiso Sensei



“If you attack with compassion, you will win. If you defend with compassion, you will stand firm.”

~ Tao Te Ching



“Shiki soku ze ku, ku soku ze shiki”
(from form comes emptiness, from emptiness comes form)

~ Hannya Shingyo sutra



The Journey Begins

Perceptions of a new aikidoka

Connie Bruce

This article was born out of my inability to think of something to write about. After missing a couple of deadlines, I said to myself, "Okay, let's go make this happen." I sat down with pen and paper and started to write. Then I stopped. Then I started. Then I stopped. Then I started. For those who have worked with me in practice, I know you are thinking, "Mmmhh, that's the same way she does her techniques." Think, start, think, stop, think, start, think, start again. Borrowing a line from The Tao of Pooh, I think, therefore I am confused. The more I think about it, the harder I try to make something happen, the less likely it will work.

Long before I ever heard of Aikido, I realized that things happen everyday, all day long. I have the choice to accept them or not. Obviously, there is considerably more harmony in my life if I accept them. As is the case in practice, we accept our partner's energy and we help them continue along the natural flow of that energy. If we think about how to make it happen and try to make it happen, the result will be confusion. Confusion opposes harmony.

Experiment – think about each step you take as you walk. Think about each muscle which moves to make your foot and leg take each step. Let me know what you discover. I will be interested to hear.

If we don't think about it, don't try to make it happen, and remain open to the natural flow of energy around us, we will be better able to accept the energy directed at us. Through maintaining harmony with the natural flow, we will maintain ourselves as though we were never in its path.

Thank you, everyone in Aikido, for training with me and for sharing your energy with me so that maybe someday I can apply the above to the techniques instead of thinking about them and trying to make them happen.



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SUBSCRIPTIONS TO AIKIJUKU TSUSHIN

\$30 for 1 year for non-members

Free to members who are enrolled in courses for Japanese language, Calligraphy, Aikido training, or other cultural arts.

COURSES

AIKIDO: THE PATH OF HARMONIOUS SPIRIT

Aikido is a path of discipline aimed at perfection of the spirit, through flowing with the natural energy of the universe. The art and path of Aikido was discovered and taught by Morihei Ueshiba, known as O'Sensei. Through practicing circular movements for the restoration of harmony out of conflict, the aikidoist develops sensitivity for flowing with universal energy. Classes are ongoing with group and private lessons available.

SHODO: THE JAPANESE ART OF CALLIGRAPHY

Through focus on the basics, students will learn the joy of expressing one's ki through ink brush to paper. Lessons will be held 1-2 times per week and will begin with the fundamentals of holding a brush, forming basic strokes, and hiragana. Classes are ongoing with group and private lessons available.

NIHONGO: JAPANESE LANGUAGE

Two courses will be offered this term. One will focus more on introducing terms used in Japanese arts, such as Aikido and *shodo* and will enable students to develop a deeper understanding of common concepts in Japanese culture through understanding of the language. The other will be a more formal course aimed at developing proficiency in reading, writing and speaking Japanese. As language and culture are linked, students will find greater satisfaction in their other studies with a basic knowledge of language. The next term will begin in March 20, 2002.

