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Like the Still Waters

By J.B. Mazza



“Like the still waters that reflect the moon and the flying bird...,” as the saying goes. You must become empty of all thought, all action, all desire. Does this mean that you are devoid of all sensation; a vegetable? I think not. It’s more like

The process begins in childhood: Will I be able to do this or that; can I be that good; how could I ever become strong enough; fast enough; am I smart enough? To meet these demands of the *I* we begin adding a layer here, a layer there, and before

the movement share the same moment. There is no, *‘I am doing this’* it all seems to fall into place. You are no longer straining to do... it is.

One of my students, who shall remain nameless, indicated that when he

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letting go of all those daily attachments that cloud our being. Those very attachments that block the art of *Being*.

We tend to believe that attachments to things orient us; give us meaning, a place from which we extend. I am a Student; a Runner; a Dancer; a Martial Artist. But, it is those very attachments that cause us to falter. Layer upon layer, added overtime, like useless baggage that prevents our Being we become.

you know it, you are unable to move freely as you once had. You begin to sense that something is not quite what it should be.

In your search to try and understand what should be, you slowly begin to remove a layer here, a layer there. Over time more layers are removed. Not fully realizing it your movements seem to become freer. You find yourself becoming your movements, or are your movements becoming you. It no longer matters. You and

came to class after drinking, once, felt that the techniques were easier to do. It might have been that he was relaxed, and not trying as hard, or that he was so relaxed, good or bad made no difference in his mind. His mind was empty, and he allowed the techniques to flow freely. With the *I* diminished, the self becomes empty, and *Being* takes root. It is at this point that neither good nor bad are experienced. What is, is!

'Musings on training at the Aikikai Hombu Dojo.'

By W. Light

For a great while, I have been reflecting on the time that I spent training in Japan at the Aikikai Hombu Dojo. For many people, it represents the pinnacle of the Aikido world, the center of where all information and tradition flow. In fact, this is the opinion that I had when I got there. However, like any large dojo, it represents a microcosm of the aikido world, replete with all of the problems common to large organizations. But, one might ask, what did I find there in the year that I trained?

First, I found that there were many people with a wide variety of skill

on the mat. And I learned very quickly that the mats there were very thin.



As far as the individuals there, some of the instructors were excellent, some were a little bit difficult to understand, and there were a few that were downright

class, which was almost exclusively populated by men no younger than 80, with wrists about as thick around as my thigh, and with black belts that have been worn so long that they have become white. And, the showers there do not have hot water.

If I learned anything from training there, it was the following: One must, at the same time, be able to understand both the small details and the larger picture of every technique. By this, I mean that a technique is basically an exercise in Newtonian physics (i.e., large things moving relatively slow), but it also represents something more

levels. This applied to every class that I attended, even classes where there were upwards of 200 people on the mat, meaning that the potential for injury became an almost certainty. This wide disparity in skill levels also applied to language; thusly, there was very little conversation when

mean to their uke. In general, this would apply to the students on the mat as well. But, as an example of how surreal training there was, if one ever gets the chance to travel to Japan and train at the Hombu, you will see the insanity of the early morning

than dry equations and vectors. In the instant of connection with another human being, technique becomes an expression of one's whole being. One must understand oneself in order to facilitate this connection and not be consumed by it.

Emptiness

“Emptiness is logical when one thing is devoid of another because of that (Other's) absence and because of the presence of the empty thing itself.”

“Emptiness---The imagination of the unreal that is lacking in the form of being graspable or grasper.” Hence, the emptiness of the subject and object; the Middle Path.”

“The non-existence of duality is indeed the existence of non-existence; this is the definition of emptiness. It is neither different nor identical.”

“Emptiness is Asanga---The non-existence of the self, and the existence of the no-self.”

“Mind is Buddha;
Easy to explain, hard to practice.
No Mind , No Buddha;
Easy to practice, hard to explain.”

Word Play

with your President, Peter Scherf

Basho, a Japanese poet of the Edo period, writes:

“An old pond —
The sound of a frog
jumping

complicated forms,
usually contains only one
break in its flow, usually
at the end of either the
first or second line
(represented in English by

I am struck by the intense
similarities between the
underlying methods of
Haiku and Aikido—two
or three separate
movements unified into a

into water”

This is, of course, an example of the Japanese poetic mode of Haiku. The ideal Haiku, according to Basho’s examples, are set in a specific season, and begin with the goal of unifying two (or sometimes three) elements into one unified sensory impression. The Haiku, unlike other and more

a comma, semicolon, or dash) which serves to redirect its energy in a tangential direction—for example, from the general to the specific, or in the example below, from the observed to the projected:

“The first cold shower;
Even the monkey seems to want
A little coat of straw.”

single form, punctuated by a single redirection of energy. This seems a good way to describe many of the techniques we pursue in class. In any case, if you were looking for a little extra reading, the haiku is a great option for the Aikido student (or, for that matter, anyone else!).

Practice Makes Perfect

By Tom Worsnopp

As I see it, Aikido consists of two components: a mindset and a physical form. Both can be honed through practice. The physical form becomes a part of my muscle memory, and the mindset part of my way of thinking. A fundamental difference between the physical form and the mindset, however, is that while the physical form may only be dulled through a lack of practice over time, my mindset is constantly being dulled by the world in which I live. The constant awareness of my surroundings that Aikido requires is difficult to maintain in my daily life.

I first noticed the difference in my awareness when I traveled abroad. I am much more aware of my surroundings



traveling in unfamiliar places. I tend to watch everything in a way that I don’t when I am at home. Part of this is an intense interest in seeing new people and places, and understanding what motivates other people. Another part of this awareness is an inherent wariness I have when traveling somewhere new. Usually this wariness is the product of stories I’ve heard or read about unwary travelers being robbed.

This heightened awareness abroad makes sense, of

very solid understanding of the patterns I expect to see in people’s behavior. In Thailand, however, the patterns are different. Essentially, I become complacent when I am at home in Chicago. I certainly have some peripheral awareness, like when I’m sitting in an empty train car on the “L” and someone sits a little too close to me. For the most part, though, my familiarity with the patterns I see on a daily basis lulls me into a state of unawareness. This daily dulling is in constant opposition to the mindset I am trying to hone when I practice Aikido. And while a trip to a foreign country is a refreshing way to pique my awareness and let me see my surrounding in a new light, the only way I can hope to win this battle is

when I am

course. In Chicago, I have
a

keep fighting it.

The Top 10 Reasons to join Aikido

By Stefan Jensen



10. Impress others with your knowledge of *ikkyo*, *kotogaishi*, and *nage-waza*.
9. You can train either at Northwestern or in the Chicago dojo.
8. You would be joining a group that has practiced at Northwestern for over 30 years.
7. Stretch and
6. Break-fall and save yourself from black ice. (winter quarter only, of course)
5. Learn to harmonize an opponent's energy with your own. (read: beat them with their own technique)
4. Learn to use the staff, sword, and knife, and to defend against them while
3. With small classes you get personal attention from the instructors.
2. Learning how to put someone 50 pounds heavier than you on his back is priceless.
1. **The first two weeks are free.**

strengthen your unarmed.
whole body.

Moving Meditation

By Jason Songer

I am a Mechanical Engineering student. This being so, I spend long hours doing complicated mind stuff and many more hours in the sunless computer labs. My mind is constantly racing to keep up with the sheer amount of information it must process. Many nights I can't even sleep because my mind refuses to stop thinking. I find that Aikido is a great way to relax my mind. I am able to clear my mind of the worries and complications of the day,

giving it a break that won't even come with sleep. It is good exercise, tiring the body, which serves much better than any sleeping medication. Previously, I had to force myself to go to the gym to perform boring weightlifting or go running over the monotonous sidewalks of the North Chicago suburbs. Aikido is something that fascinates me and is something to look forward to throughout the day. I also often worry that

this college lifestyle is far too easy on the body. I have grown up with the firm belief that you have to abuse your body at least a little in order to really appreciate the comforts of life and keep your mind sharp. There is nothing like being thrown repeatedly on the floor to give you the bruises that keep you awake and alert the next day. I often find that I can think more clearly after an Aikido session.

Sensei's Corner

Attainment

By J.B. Mazza

"Before a person can accomplish anything of an enduring nature in the world he must first of all acquire some measure of success in the management of his own mind. If a person cannot govern the forces within himself, he cannot hold a firm hand upon the outer activities that form his visible life."

From: The Mastery of Destiny, By James Allen

It is within each person's grasp to achieve a desired goal. If you put a little effort into your commitment, your success is all but guaranteed. But, it must come from within. No outside force, no matter how great, will enable your success, unless first, you yourself are willing to put in the effort.

People, for the most part, are willing to let go of their goals.



Surely we all have had enough reasons to venture off the course. We can find a number of excuses why we cannot follow through with our commitments. But, these are self imposed constraints.

At some point we must take

action and follow through on our commitments; strive to achieve that goal. Time will not wait for you to decide, you need to act.

Time will pass, and each of you will follow your destiny,

as all do. But, when you look back on this time, and this place, what will be remembered? Will you recall with fondest the experiences you had, or will there be regret for the opportunity lost...

This day is called the feast of Crispian:
 He that outlives this day, and comes safe home,
 Will stand a tip-toe when the day is named,
 And rouse him at the name of Crispian.
 He that shall live this day, and see old age,
 Will yearly on the vigil feast his neighbours,
 And say 'To-morrow is Saint Crispian:'
 Then will he strip his sleeve and show his scars.
 And say 'These wounds I had on Crispin's day.'
 Old men forget: yet all shall be forgot,
 But he'll remember with advantages
 What feats he did that day: then shall our names
 Familiar in his mouth as household words
 Harry the king, Bedford and Exeter,
 Warwick and Talbot, Salisbury and Gloucester,
 Be in their flowing cups freshly remember'd.
 This story shall the good man teach his son;
 And Crispin Crispian shall ne'er go by,

From this day to the ending of the world,
But we in it shall be remember'd;
We few, we happy few, we band of brothers;
For he to-day that sheds his blood with me
Shall be my brother; be he ne'er so vile,
This day shall gentle his condition:
And gentlemen in England now a-bed
Shall think themselves accursed they were not here,
And hold their manhoods cheap whiles any speaks
That fought with us upon Saint Crispin's day.

From: Henry V, By William Shakespeare

Training in Pictures









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