

残心

Zan Shin

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Patience in Training

by Paul Chang

As a newcomer to Aikido, my initial experience with the training has been positive so far. Mazza Sensei and the senior students have been patient with my slower learning pace, which has made trainings accessible to an uncoordinated and forgetful person such as myself.

Towards the tail end of the quarter, however, I found myself questioning the real-life applicability of the techniques we are learning. Some of the basic techniques just seemed to me like they would not work in a fight. I began to wonder if I truly wanted to continue my training in Aikido.

PATIENCE continued on page 4

Contributors this issue:

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Aikido in Cape Town, Pt. 2

by Grace Huang

I wasn't sure what aikido training would be like in South Africa, the quarter I went there for my journalism residency. Would the dojo be really formal or relaxed, and how intense would everyone be there? Would their kind of aikido be vastly different? Or would there be something else entirely that I hadn't even considered?

Practice took place in a spare room on church grounds undergoing renovation. It was great getting to walk to prac-

AFRICA continued on page 3

The Community we call Zanshinkan

by John Mazza-Sensei

We have passed through yet another session of the Zanshinkan Group. This has caused me to reflect on the dynamics that has moved through our Club over the years. My initial involvement was in the late 70's; I believe Masa Hagihara was the instructor at the time. My teacher, Toyoda Sensei had asked that I go to the NU Aikido Club to support some event. Actually, I was there as a "Wind Dummy." A term that I affectionately use

COMMUNITY continued on page 1

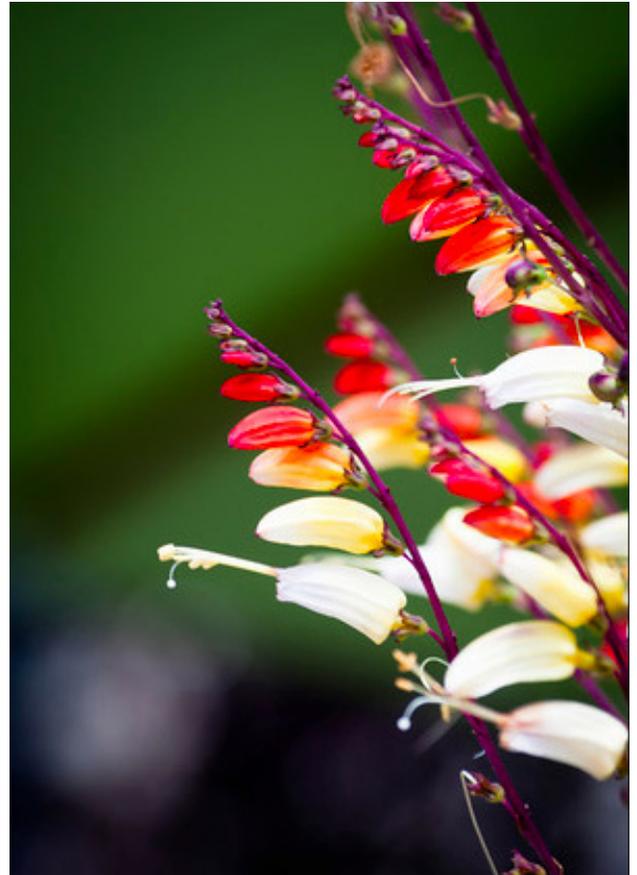
Transitions

by Alexander Adler

It is somewhat of a more recent teaching method to demonstrate Aikido technique by breaking it into steps. Indeed, there are a few essentials to a technique (my left foot should be Here, then my right foot should go Here). This mode of thinking is comfortable to many people as we tend to break larger projects or tasks into steps (check lists, recipes, or even calendars). To some, there is no better feeling than checking the “completed” box next to an item on a list. But in life, sometimes the next steps are unclear. Even if we can perceive our next ‘state’ (“I want to have enough money for a car” or “I want to be married with two kids and a dog”) the specific steppingstones can be unclear and we can lose focus and mental balance.

When Sensei shows a technique and emphasizes certain body positioning, this is often where the specifics end. When honing our technique, Sensei will remind us of the same concepts we should (and usually do) have ingrained into our mind but can forget when making the series of rapid transitions that comprise a technique. Who hasn’t heard “keep your elbows in (to be less vulnerable to counter attack)” or “straighten your back (to keep balance)?” These transitions are as important if not more important than the finite steps themselves.

These simple mantras we should use in every mo(ve)ment of Aikido are our greatest foundations. We are often so preoccupied with being stable or set at each point that it is no small wonder that we open ourselves up to poor balance in the transition between each point. The same mantras of balance and harmonizing movement aid us not only in finding The One and Only Approved Transition if such a thing exists but in the art of transitioning itself. When faced with an obstacle in technique (the opponent is resisting, a weapon is present, or something similar is blocking the path), falling back to our basic concepts of balance and harmonizing movement can get us through most difficulties in executing techniques



to move from Point A to Point B. Furthermore, a clear mind can even show us that perhaps Point B is not the best destination, but perhaps we have to choose a new path directly applied to the situation. It is in this way that we move from our learned technique (step 1, transition, step 2, transition, step 3 ... step 7, complete) to the masterful technique of Simply Step One: one extended transition on the foundation of our training basics (Balance, Mindfulness, and Harmony).

In life, just as in Aikido, our current state is connected to the state before it and the one following it and life is really one giant transition rather than a series of finite transitions. Always. Even though the next step in life is sometimes blocked or even unclear, if we fall back to the same basic concepts we apply in Aikido (Balance, Mindfulness, and Harmony) in all we do, we can be confident in our transitions.

AFRICA continued from page 1

tice with a mountain and amazing blue sky in the background. Almost everyone towered above me and probably could have snapped me in half with a pinky finger – they were learning martial arts to better control or utilize their own natural strength.

But the core of my experience with aikido there wasn't particularly different. For example, the biggest challenges I faced were the same ones I had back in the U.S. Instead of trying to balance other aspects of university life and practice, I then had to balance work and practice instead – and work could be just as fatiguing as university is. The way they practiced a particular technique may have been slightly different from how I did it, but the difficulties I already had with certain movements or techniques and was still trying to work through still challenged me the most.

In the end, aikido fits into all of our lives in different ways and means different things to all of us. Simply relocating or transitioning to the workplace won't change the essence of that meaning, for better or for worse.

Aikido and Technology

by Ted Yeh

In the world of material science, one of the forefronts of research focuses on the future of display technology. New materials are being discovered every day that could revolutionize how we interact with the world through LCD screens, touch-sensitive displays, and flexible electronics. Many of these materials have complex chemistries and hierarchical structures, but are made up of a few compounds which are the basis for all display technologies. These basis oxides (indium, tin, zinc, cadmium, and gallium oxides) can be combined in novel and interesting ways to be specifically tailored to particular functions or applications. For example, the most widely-used material for LCD panels is indium-tin-oxide because it is conductive like a metal, but transparent like glass. Similarly, for passive windows in

TECHNOLOGY continued on page 4

Geometry

by Ian Le

The study of aikido promotes many virtues – attention, discipline, harmony, responsiveness – yet at the same time, it is also an art of great beauty. The lines of motion and action create a spare geometry that is almost dance-like.

For me, the most thrilling part of aikido is when one achieves that perfect “blending” of energies, when you are able to feel the attacker's energy and join it to your own. For a moment it's not two bodies, but one body in motion. This is part of what makes aikido so difficult to learn: this blending and harmony of energy can only be achieved by a combination of correct technique and timing. You must be grounded and your energy must travel along certain axes. If your angles are slightly off, the technique becomes less effective.

When everything clicks, when there is that balance of line, force, action and movement, the technique becomes simple, natural, almost effortless. There is a striking economy, where nothing is out of place, nothing is unnecessary, and no extra energy is spent. When, after a lot of practice, this finally happens, it can be exhilarating.



PATIENCE continued from page 1

In the end, I decided to continue after I started to understand that Aikido is more than just a list of set techniques. During classes, Mazza Sensei constantly emphasizes the importance of not becoming locked into the techniques. That is, rather than thinking, “which technique should I use when an attacker grabs my wrist?” I should instead be reactionary and do what comes out, whatever it may be. For Aikido, this means practicing the basics to the point where they become natural responses, and admittedly, I often find myself completely at a loss when attempting this.

Furthermore, by not getting locked into the techniques, one naturally begins to focus on a fundamental principle of Aikido: harmony with the attacker in order to redirect his energy. Understanding this is what makes Aikido techniques possible in real life. Part of the reason why I was

so doubtful is that I still find myself too focused on getting the specific motions and steps correct. Granted, I am still a beginner and so I do need to get the basics down first and foremost, but more and more, I am learning that the philosophy behind Aikido is as important as the art itself.

The biggest lesson for me from this experience is to be patient in my training, which certainly rings true for many other aspects of my life. For example, as an economics major, I started off by learning about supply and demand in perfect competition, which is the ideal scenario. Only after did I learn about supply and demand in alternative scenarios, such as monopoly markets, for instance. Overall, it is clear that I need to have an open mind and work hard in order to see results down the road, both in Aikido as well as in my other endeavors.

TECHNOLOGY continued from page 3

skyscrapers, tin oxide is used as a coating to help block out ultraviolet and infrared radiation in order to help regulate interior temperatures. However, when combining these basis materials, it is not merely enough to throw them together in a mixing pot. Certain reactions occur that dictate the final material, which is unique and has its own set of properties.

In Aikido, a similar analogy can be drawn between the basis, or core, techniques, and the numerous possible techniques made by combining them. We can think of a typical technique as comprising of an attack, an initial body movement, and a finishing component, such as a throw or pin. In our daily training, we can practice a variety of techniques that counter one particular attack. Or, we can practice one technique from a variety of attacks and body movements. This modular nature of Aikido gives it a great deal of versatility, since real-world applications are never the precise, choreographed movements that we learn in class. We can choose, therefore, whether to subdue an attacker by applying a joint lock and

pin, or to deflect and cast his energy aside so we can escape. Or, if we are in a particularly nasty mood, Aikido also gives us the tools to break limbs, gouge eyes, or attack sensitive pressure points to injure or disable an opponent. Again, however, we do not merely join together a body movement to a technique in a disjointed manner – the movements must be combined into one movement that is smooth and unique to the specific attack.

While at first glance there may not be much in common between a Japanese martial art and cutting-edge display technology, closer inspection reveals that the same basic principles underline both. The ability to create unique combinations from basic materials or body movements allows for the innovation of new techniques and technologies. And when we do combine them, there is a melding of the different components which may be slightly modified in order to create the most robust, efficient, and effective technique or material possible.

COMMUNITY *continued from page 1*

to describe a person who's only purpose is to be thrown through the air for the joy and delight of the spectators.

As our history notes the NU Aikido Club was started in 1974 by Mr. Toyoda, and has progressed through time and space creating a long chain of individuals to that moment. It is this same lineage that I have been a part of and that you are now a part, a hand full of individuals functioning as a microcosmic Community; a chain that leads to, and connects each of us to, that larger community we refer to as Aikido.

Every year there are a few individuals that share their time and energy for the sake of this Community, passing their knowledge, understanding, and, sometimes, sympathy to those who follow. What enables the Club to survive is a sense of something larger than one's self. I believe

there is a certain dynamic energy that develops through the ritual training; an energy that bonds one to the other. Individuals becoming a community with shared interests, enjoying the connection, and only thinking of the moment.

This bond is achieved through daily training. As we interact with one another we begin to understand the dynamics that is connecting us, and begin to realize a closeness that develops. For some it has become a way of life, others long lasting friendships, and yet others the choosing of a life partner.

I believe it is more than just training; it is who we are and what we do. Any expression of self needs a mirror to be reflected, otherwise there is only emptiness. That mirror can be found in many places; hopefully you have found some expression in the Community we call Zanshikan.

"Shared laughter creates a bond of friendships. When people laugh together, they cease to be young and old, teacher and pupils, worker and boss. They become a single group of human beings."

—W. Lee Grant