

COSMOS - Dôjôchô Endô Seishirô Shihan Talks

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Dôjôchô Talks > No. 6

Evolving throughout my life
Endô Seishirô, Aikidô Saku Dôjôchô

I would appreciate that this Saku Aikidô News - Cosmos, which was launched three years ago looking forward to the day Aikidô Saku Dôjô come true, has accomplished successfully its initial role with the previous issue reporting the Dôjô's inauguration ceremony on April 30, 1995. I hope that Cosmos will now take the second step according to the Dôjô's founding ideas, by carrying more useful information and interesting topics. That is, to promote full use of Saku Dôjô and to serve Aikidô development from a global point of view.

"Once you are past forty, you have the face you deserve."

"Mind asks for a form and the form enhances the mind."



Thoughts and knowledge will go beyond the stage of only logical arguments, and gradually grow to intuitive ones, which enable them to be in realities. What we have thought and how we have learnt are all written in our faces, not in literature. It is to be desired that thoughts and knowledge will appear in every move we make. If one's look and nature, words and behavior, and thoughts and knowledge are separated with each other, then he had come yet only the halfway. Kong Futsi (Confucius) has described his process of perfection in personality as he grew older; "I aspired to be a scholar when I was fifteen, established myself at thirty, and had no doubts at forty. I realized my vocation at the age of fifty and could listen to anybody at sixty. At seventy, having my own way, I have never gone too far." Also in Huainan Tsi, a book of old China, we find expressions; "to know the faults for 49 years at the age of 50," and "make the sixtieth change of yourself at sixty." Getting as much old as sixty, we tend to stick to where we are, to become rigid physically, psychologically, and in

personality as a whole. The book said those who learn the Tao should make progress in themselves as their ages do. I have always been practicing Aikidô as a way to establish and to realize myself. The way seems too far, so I think I need another strong and continuing effort more than ever. (January, 1996)

Dôjôchô Talks > No. 7

What Embu expresses
Endô Seishirô, Aikidô Saku Dôjôchô

All Japan Aikidô Embu-Taikai (Demonstration) had taken place at Nippon Budôkan on 18th of May. Over 4,000 people mainly came from Kantô area, but also from all over Japan, participated in it. It is a pleasure for Aikidô world that the number of participants of this event has been increasing for these several years. It can be said that the Aikidô leaders made good efforts towards the expansion of Aikidô and the public has appreciated its quality. At the same time, I feel that we should not satisfy the Embu itself and aim at higher level, although it depends on the purpose of this event.

Among the leaders, over age 40 having more than 20-year Aikidô career are called Shihan. Young and old are among them. Both who have shorter career or longer career are repeating "trial and error" and practicing and guiding with their own thoughts (philosophy). I picked up the words "Mind asks for form and form enhances the mind" on the last Cosmos. Thinking about the Embu-kai with these words, I can express that "Embukai is the place where people performs what they think about Aikidô everyday." Young with full of energy might perform as they are, and it is all right. On the other hand, elderly whose power are already past its peaks should perform Embu with their tempered "thoughts" which came from their longer life and longer career of Aikidô, rather than showing their powers only.

I happened to recognize that I practiced sometimes smiling when I was at my mid-thirties. I thought that I did well because I could smile while practicing, and reflected upon me at those times. And I found out that I was not bound by anything, did not have recourse to physical strength, and soft, not strained and just faced the partner by concentrating "ki". After some years with this kind of practice, my feeling of throwing, pressing, and hurting the partner had been disappeared and my heart became very light, and my body is also light to be able to move smoothly.

Since then, I grasped the Aikidô practice to be tempering(nerikomu in Japanese) waza with the mind of facing the reality, not losing myself, and having respect a high regard for the others. By doing these, I believe that we can build up ourselves firmly. Embukai can give a great impact upon the viewers even indirectly, I will try my best to express my "thoughts" precisely everytime I join the opportunity of Embukai. (July, 1996)

Dôjôchô Talks > No. 8

Put Aikidô Experience Into Your Life
Endô Seishirô, Aikidô Saku Dôjôchô

Translated by Arita Reiko

From September, 1996, I had visited France, Liechtenstein, Austria, and Spain, and I am now relieved that I returned to Japan. It was the first time for me to visit Spain, though I went to the other countries many times and had many acquaintances there. Since I have only one seminar a year in each of these country, I always look forward to seeing them after one year.

All the participants of my seminar are very enthusiastic and eager to learn and practice Aikidô. Not only the people in Shodan class but also those in Sandan or Yodan class watches me very carefully not to miss every movement I do. Why are they so eager about Aikidô? I ask my question to the people no matter where in seminar I am what it means that one becomes stronger in Aikidô and how one should practice Aikidô in order to aim at being a man who is truly strong. And I also ask them to make good use of what they gained from Aikidô in the places of non-Dôjô, daily lives, and in their own life. Fortunately, the number of participants overseas has been increased year by year, both the hosts and myself are very happy about it.

The founder of Aikidô said to the trainee, "Watch carefully the state of thing in this world, and listen to what the others say, accept the good points, and based on them one should open the gates of one's heart. For example, observe the true picture of heaven and earth and be spiritually awakened by this true picture by yourself. When awakened, act soon. When acted, reflect upon yourself soon, and I wish that you improve yourself gradually".

I believe that the universe consists of the harmony and living together that is making the best use of each other. Only human being forget about it and act arrogantly. The founder said that the heart of universe was the same as the heart of Aikido, and the heart of universe is "love", and wished to master the heart of universe by learning Aikidô. That

little selfishness becomes strong does not mean that you become strong in Aikidô. I sincerely wish to aim at practice of truly well-balanced and making the best use of each other, with opening one's mind to anybody, maintaining oneself with dignity, and respecting the others. (December, 1996)

Dôjôchô Talks > No. 9



Practice Basics; Be As Free As Nature
Endô Seishirô, Aikidô Saku Dôjôchô

Translated by Arita Reiko

Aikidô began to spread about 50 years ago in Japan, and for the past 35 years it has expanded across the world. The popularity of Aikidô today is quite remarkable; Aikidô organizations have already been authorized by the Hombu Dôjô in more than 70 countries, and although not yet authorized, Aikidô is becoming popular in many other countries. As Aikidô continues to spread, and the number of students with at least 20-30 years of practice increases further, I sometimes think about the kind of practice that we should strive for.

I think we practice to achieve dynamic movement and a freedom that lies within that movement. However, I actually find that the students who have been practicing for a longer time tend to be stiffer and are very stereotyped in their movement. How does one perceive one's practice? What significance can we find in the continual repetition of the same waza practices?

I recall a story about Pablo Casals, a great cellist who both played and prayed for world peace at the time of the world wars. At the age of thirteen, he found Bach's Unaccompanied Cello Suites that no one was interested at the time, and began to play these suites every day. As Bach's suites consist of six movements, he played one a day and so each movement at least once a week. He continued this practice daily until he died at 96. "It is a kind of prayer at home," he said. I guess he may have purified his mind first by playing one of Bach's suites, and thus refreshed he was able to give his excellent performances. I believe that the creative performances of a genius like Casals are the result of a "liberation of mind and body" that he was able to reach through his earnest pursuit of basic practice. In spite of the difference between music and Aikidô, I have been truly inspired by his story, and feel that there is something important in it for me as I pursue the practice of Aikidô throughout my life.

Ueshiba Morihei, the Founder of Aikidô, in his later days would sometimes appear at the Hombu Dôjô and ask the Shihan in charge of the practice at that time, "What are you teaching now?" The Shihan would answer that he was demonstrating shihô-nage, to which the Founder would reply, "What is shihô-nage?" In his practice the Founder demonstrated his waza freely often doing the same technique in many different ways, saying "Now, do it this way" and "This time, like this". He used to say that Aikidô is the way of *Kamnagara*. My understanding of the way of *kamnagara* is being and acting in a natural manner. I believe that the Founder was always natural in behaving against the opponent's attack and producing his waza to it. Only the liberation of mind and body can enable you to fully utilize your body, free from a mental bias dictating that the waza be done in a specific way.

Keeping the basics, being creative and behaving naturally, that is the liberation of mind and body that Casals and Morihei both reached. Shall we follow their lead? (July 1997)

Dôjôchô Talks > No.10

Reconsider One's Sense Of Value
Endô Seishirô, Aikidô Saku Dôjôchô

Translated by Arita Reiko

In the previous issue of Cosmos, I suggested that we may find guidelines for our practice of Aikido in the future in "freedom of mind and body" which both Pablo Casals and Ueshiba Morihei actually realised. To this, I received the question; how may one obtain freedom of mind and body. I am still on the way of learning in Aikido, and am not confident that I can answer this well, but I would like to relate my experience and what I have felt and learnt for your reference.



In Japan, "relaxing of the shoulders" has been emphasized since ancient times in various physical and cultural activities. Reflecting upon my own experience, this phrase was told to me when I was achieving the opposite to that which I wanted, despite my hard, conscientious, and although I found my Aikido practice strong and good. While we all may wish to perform well, to become strong, to improve ourselves (which is a good thing), this kind of awareness brings about a state of "straining oneself", disturbing one's improvement, and resulting in an opposite effect to that which one originally wanted. If so, we need to consider the relationship between maintaining one's awareness of a need to improve the movements and behaviour that lead to that improvement.

We have been educated as a member of society from childhood, and enter adulthood filled with various established senses of values that reflect our society. However, concepts such as good or evil, strength, and beauty are changeable just as culture or age changes, even though they seem to be universally true. What we hold right now is the sense of values which we possess in common with the community where we live. On the basis of such a sense of value, we try hard to adjust ourselves to it, and sometimes we restrict our mind and body in doing so. In such a case, the phrase that "you have too much force into the shoulders" might be said to us.

In order to reach the state of "freedom of mind and body", we need to change the consciousness which is based on the sense of values in our community. In other words, we need to question ourselves again what is "becoming good", in Aikido practice, and need to take a step forward from the sense of values in the community which is "what should be" and "what must be".

"Harmony of spirit, skill and body" means that one must try to accord the spiritual and body movements in training. But in practice, even if we think we want to do this, our body rarely follows. "Body" seems to resist "mind" movement; indeed it seems to even confront it. The time I felt this confrontation between "body" and "mind" most strongly was when I moved my body in the consciously thinking of "what I should do" or "what I should be". Therefore, I came to the conclusion that to overcome the confrontation, I must change my approach. In practice, I try not to pursue strength or good performance, and concentrate on the moment, while releasing the force as much as possible. Watching my own mind movement, feeling my balance, and knowing the direction of my next movement from the partner's movement (reaction), I try to set my body in that direction. It is said that the body memory is the strongest. In the beginning, you try this consciously, and continue until you can do it without consciousness. When you can move unconsciously, you can be aware of the movement that arises from "harmony of spirit, skill and body" which has no opposition between "mind" and "body". And you will find that nothing restricts your movement. (December, 1997)

Dôjôchô Talks > No.11

How To Seek The "Do"
Endô Seishirô, Aikidô Saku Dôjôchô

Translated by Arita Reiko



Japanese like to talk about the specific concept of "do", which they believe can be found in almost every human activity. It further transforms any chosen activity into a spiritual search for the ultimate goal.

It is very difficult to capture and define the concept of "do". It cannot be determined conceptually, but instead through physical experience. Lao-tzu and Chuang-tzu pursued the origins of all things in the universe and the principle of unity. That is "Tao", or "do" in Japanese.

This idea of "do" indicates the unification of things in opposition and the integration of variety. It stresses the importance of unity in all things, while things unified, universal, and absolute have priority over everything.

To unify things in opposition it is necessary to release ourselves from a way of thinking based on dichotomy and antagonism on which our daily life is based on. For example, we must stop discriminating between beauty and ugliness, large and

small, strong and weak, and try instead to seek the essentials.

In integrating variety, it is necessary to recognize common elements within diversity. Taoism aims to unify diversity, and stresses awareness of mutual relations within the universe.

Lao-tzu said "Studying accumulates daily. Performing Tao reduces daily. This continuing reduction at last reaches doing nothing, and all things are done." He draws attention not to the acquisition of ostensible knowledge, but to becoming aware of the root of things.

We have already been bound by such dichotomy in our thinking when we started studying Aikido. We are all conscious of opposing elements, such as oneself and others, uke and tori, strong and weak, etc. Our view of practice is mostly focused on our own self, tori, and strength. We also tend to be satisfied when we master many techniques. In the beginning, the student pursues each individual technique by reasoning, analyzing, abstracting, and seeking to accomplish an end. However, when practicing for a long time, we must rid ourselves of this conscious dichotomy or opposition, and make efforts to practice more naturally, concretely and intuitively. To pursue this kind of effort, I believe will lead to seek Aikido as "do". (June, 1998)

Dôjôchô Talks > No.12

"Shu-Ha-Ri"

Endô Seishirô, Aikidô Saku Dôjôchô

Translated by Arita Reiko

Those who learn Aikidô must master some of the basic movements before Aikidô practice can be realized. To this end, basic movements are repeated over and over the basic movements by almost all of the Aikidô Dôjô.

Let me quote from "Kata (Forms)*" by Minamoto Ryô-en and see the process by which we master the "forms".

There is a concept of "Shu (remain), Ha (break), Ri (free)", which describes how an individual is involved in "forms" as one training develops. "Shu" is the process in which we follow the forms faithfully and try to master the basics of the art. It is the so-called stage of learning.

Since excellent predecessors who made every effort and fumbled around for a long time have built up the forms, it is natural to follow them. It is inevitable that we put ourselves into the finished forms, and we train within them.

Even if "the forms" are wonderful, it cannot be helped that there is something everyone does not feel suits them, because each form has been born from different persons who have different qualities, bodies, and basic experiences in life from oneself.

When deepening the learning of forms, naturally difficulties arise. At this point, we may have the desire to break "the forms", destroying the forms we have mastered. This is the stage of "Ha". However, "Ha" is not a long-standing situation, because this action is not supported by the creative spirit. The more the forms break, more we feel emptiness. We find ourselves caught up by "the forms", while we are breaking "the forms". And we want to free ourselves from such captivity, and wish to perform with a truly free mind. When this is achieved, we reach the stage of "Ri".

Ri is the stage of creating new forms when "the time is ripe". There, the trainee has already forgotten the forms, and performs that which is not in the forms.

The number of those who learn Aikidô has been increasing year by year. Also, those who continue practicing Aikidô are increasing in number. While beginners are clearly at the stage of "Shu", what about those who practice for a long time? Where do they put themselves? At "Shu", which is too faithful, you tend to fall into a mere name. At "Ha", which is easygoing, it might cause confusion. And at "Ri", which is imprudent, you cannot get rid of anxiety. (November, 1998)



Dôjôchô Talks > No.13

Integration of the Incompatibles
Endô Seishirô, Aikidô Saku Dôjôchô

Translated by Arita Reiko

The founder of Aikido, Ueshiba Morihei, said: "The innermost secret of Aikido is to wipe away one's own evil spirit, to harmonize oneself with the work of the cosmos, and to bring oneself into unison with the cosmos. The heart of the cosmos is the great "love" which is everywhere. Any Budo (martial art) which cannot be harmonized with the cosmos is destructive, and is not the true Budo. The true Budo means the way of love. Its aim is not to fight and kill, but to preserve and nurture life. That is the way of love; to create and nurture."

We practice Aikido everyday, thinking that Budo is the way to achieve the strong self, the absolute self, through the means of fighting to deny others. However, the founder asks us to learn to harmonize with the heart of the cosmos, and to know the way of symbiosis between others and oneself. The destructive Budo of denying others, and the mutualistic Budo of symbiosis. How can we integrate these two contrasting images of Budo?

I practiced my Aikido waza with all my power for the first ten years after I started Aikido. However, I became to doubt the benefit of such practice, and began to practice very softly, removing strength from the upper part of my body when I reached the age of thirty. I realized that removing strength from the upper part of the body was important to facilitate soft practice. That is, I threw away my selfish approach, in which I was too conscious of my strength, and I tried to concentrate all my ki on my partner.

A short time after I had changed my way of practice, I realized that waza exists in the relationship between my partner and myself. While concentrating entirely on the relationship with my partner, I came to experience a state of something very nice, though only for a moment. In this state all consciousness vanished, and it was as if I was riding on a big wave. When in that state, I could unconsciously see my partner's movements very well, and could move very naturally in accordance with their movements. I also discovered myself always being positive, optimistic, and doing my very best. I could feel the full energy that was always throbbing within my partner. By not concentrating on myself, on the contrary trying to concentrate my awareness on my partner, I came to experience the feeling that my partner and I moved together as one.

The founder showed one of the ways of Aikido practice when he said the following: "What I would like the Aikido ascetic to do is to watch the real state of the universe, and to awaken oneself by doing so. Once awakened, then act quickly. After action, reflect on oneself quickly. By doing this, I would like you to improve yourself day by day. Looking at the current of a mountain stream, you can learn the ever-changing conditions of your body from the water flowing between rocks, and from the trees and bamboo bending in the wind." This may lead you to question and review your own way of doing things. And by trying not to be too conscious of yourself, you watch the relationship with your partner. In this way, by learning the word's of the founder and his predecessors, I try to deny my thoughts as much as possible, and make an effort to move softly and feel the partner's ki and harmonize with that ki. And I believe that I will be able to practice so-called "mutualistic" Aikido someday as the founder described. (June, 1999)



Dôjôchô Talks > No.14

The Choice Of Your Teacher
Endô Seishirô, Aikidô Saku Dôjôchô

Translated by Arita Reiko



I have just finished practising Aikidô with about 2,000 people in Western Europe over a period of four weeks. Enthusiastic people got together at each training hall, and we were able to make each practice a very enjoyable and meaningful one. The number of participants in these seminars has been increasing

every year. When I look at the good atmosphere of these practices, I believe that most of the participants shared my feelings. Above all, I was very much impressed by the words someone spoke to me in their locker room; that Endo sensei was an ambassador of peace.

This time, however, I encountered a group of people who had never practiced with me. I really worked hard during the two and a half hours to lead them to the relaxed atmosphere that I try to create in all my practices, but my efforts were in vain. I don't think that it was simply that my way of practice was not good for them. It seemed to me that they steadfastly followed what they had learned from their own teachers. The longer they had practiced Aikidô, the harder and slower they appeared, and their practice was merely becoming routine; practice in name only. I asked them for a more flexible and self-developing practice, however, at this request they were all the more at a loss.

In Japan, we have the adage "Sparrows never forget their dance, even at 100 years of age." I understand this proverb this way: What we learn for the first time becomes easily fixed within our body, and has a very big influence that we cannot easily forget. There is also another expression: "Spend at least three years looking for your teacher." I heard that this came from Zen Buddhism. A monk practicing asceticism in Zen Buddhism is called Un-sui (itinerant Buddhist Monk). This is based on the word "Kohun-ryuusui", which came from the story of a monk who visited many Zen temples, just like the drifting clouds and running water, and took the time to look for the mentor who could truly guide his practice of asceticism. This kind of idea has been forgotten these days. When people start learning something now, they tend to find the teacher who is closest to them. They just start learning without thinking what kind of teacher he/she is.

Many of the Japanese Aikidô-ka practice Aikidô only at their Dôjô or practice hall. They seldom have a chance to go to other place or to learn from others teacher. In contrast, Aikidô-ka overseas attend Aikidô seminars from near and far, to see different teachers. The former, who have a lot of information available to them, think "I understand this", and never consider things more deeply. The latter knows a large number of superficial techniques and are satisfied with this. There are problems of differences in traditional ways of thinking and other differences, however, both need to reconsider. That is, when we first start practicing, we must try hard to look for a good teacher. And for people who have already started, they should learn from as many teachers as possible, and try to practice with as many people as they can. And for the Aikidô-ka who continue to practice for more than 15 years, please try to find a good teacher based on your experience and judgement. Teachers do not necessarily tell you everything from A to Z. However, the true practice will begin when you select your teacher for yourself, and start seriously thinking about every move of your teacher, and of every explanation, even if it only be one word. (November, 1999)

Dôjôchô Talks > No.15

New Experiences
Endô Seishirô, Aikidô Saku Dôjôchô

Translated by Daniel Nishina

In June this year I visited Mexico and Cuba for the first time, where I participated in a demonstration and practice as part of a delegation sent by the Nippon Budôkan.

The demonstration in Mexico was held in the sports hall of Puebla University. The audience was very enthusiastic. They didn't hold back any applause, not only for the well-known arts of karate and judo, but also for the demonstrations of Japanese kobudô, which were completely unknown in Mexico. We went sightseeing to Teotihuacan. At the top of the tallest pyramid, where there is said to be focused the most energy in the world, I practiced the kikoh(qigong) my wife taught me.

In Cuba, there was one demonstration and two practice sessions. More than 7,000 spectators packed themselves into the demonstration hall, the capacity of which was 5,000, showing their great appreciation for Japanese budô. The second practice was in humid heat, with the temperature passing 35 degrees. After 30 minutes, it was hard to even stay standing, but we made it through the one and a half hours taking breaks and rehydrating ourselves.



The city of Havana was divided into the new and the old. The old city districts, which were built in the days of Spanish rule and now designated as a Unesco World Heritage site, were practically in ruins but are starting to be

reconstructed. I'm sure it will be a spectacular town once restored. The budo envoy stopped and spent one night in the resort city of Cancun on the return trip. We rested in the blue waters and white sand of the Caribbean.

Two days after returning to Japan, I was suddenly hit by a fever of 38 degrees and severe diarrhea. Before departing Japan, I received various cautions and we were all practically neurotic about drinking water in particular, but... I would take food or water, but it would leave my body in no time. Even when I didn't take anything, water continued to pass through my body. I went to the hospital and received treatment. Three days later my fever finally went down, and the number of times I had to go to the bathroom decreased. Weighing myself, I found that I was 66 kg, the same weight I was at 40 years of age, and I felt faint. My body was shaky. But since I no longer had a fever, I decided to take on the challenge of practice. With some anxiety, I practiced shōmen-uchi ikkyō, and found I could do it. Not being able to do it by force, the feeling was better than before. As always, I went to every person in the class. Sweat flowing, I could feel my concentration heighten. Next, shōmen-uchi iriminage. Good!

About 25 years ago, I started to strive for soft and flexible practice that leaves out strength. Since then, I've tried to concentrate my feeling, keeping my composure, and wished the same for my students. Regardless, I felt guilty for having fallen into such a grave psychological state as to use the word "challenge" because of that sudden physical change. However, because the result of that "challenge" remained as a good feeling, I hold renewed conviction of what I have done and said until now. (July 2000)

Dōjōchō Talks > No.16

Aikidō and Self-Inquiry
Endō Seishirō, Aikidō Saku Dōjōchō

Translated by Daniel Nishina

Rapid advances in science and technology have made life for humans convenient and efficient. It is becoming an age in which computers are treated like omnipotent gods, and human beings are handing over the driver's seat to science. To be a bit extreme, human beings are starting to be divided into those who utilize computers and those who are managed by them. Humans are starting to have no choice but to concede to the whims of machines, even enduring rejection by them.

Science and technology will continue to advance. Extreme competition and other negative consequences for humans resulting from such advances may become topics of debate, but it is not likely that such debates will lead to actual suppression of progress. The main reason for this would most likely be the rationale that it is economically impossible or unfeasible for anything with the power of suppression to exist. Already we are paying the price, such as increased stress, increases in medical conditions that cannot be easily treated by modern medicine, and degeneration of bodily functions due to toxic environmental pollutants like endocrine disrupters. Knowing this, is it not possible for humanity to get off this track of "progress" that we have started on?

Although human beings have brought about an unprecedented culture thanks to the advances of science and technology, humans themselves are approaching a crisis of degenerative collapse. Regarding such a situation, Alexis Carrel writes in his "Man, the Unknown,"

"... the slow progress of the human beings, as compared with the splendid ascension of physics, astronomy, chemistry, and mechanics, is due to our ancestors' lack of leisure, to the complexity of the subject, and to the structure of our mind. Those obstacles are fundamental. There is no hope of eliminating them. They will always have to be overcome at the cost of strenuous effort. (The knowledge of ourselves will never attain the elegant simplicity, the abstractness, and the beauty of physics. The factors that have retarded its development are not likely to vanish.) We must realize clearly that the science of man is the most difficult of all sciences."



The well-known Greek proverb, "Know thyself" are the words of one of the Seven Sages of Athens, Solon. The meaning of this proverb used to be, "Don't neglect your identity," that is, "Know your place." It came to be interpreted as, "Search for your own spirit," after Socrates and his research of the self. It is said that this proverb became his motto from the principle, "The beginning of knowing for a person is to know that he does not know." Thales, who Socrates credited as the "father of philosophy," also advocated "Know thyself," saying, "To know oneself is the most difficult thing."

It is nearing 40 years since I started Aikidô. I originally didn't even know the word "Aikidô" and only went to learn as my seniors in school told me to. By the time ten years had passed, I had come to question the practice methods and ways of thinking I had learned up to that point. I had even thought to end my Aikidô practice altogether. While I was in this state, I struggled to find a new way of practice. This new way was to concentrate (my ki) as much as possible, relax my upper body, and move flexibly. Several years after practicing this way, within this type of movement, I began to ceaselessly examine and confirm my state of mind: myself when it went well, myself when it went poorly, myself when I was trying to defeat my partner, myself when I was feeling fear, myself when I was feeling insecure, etc. From these confirmations, I learned the importance of ceaselessly keeping my mind calm.

While practicing in this state, I realized that techniques consisted of the relationship between my partner and myself. While executing techniques focusing my consciousness on my relationship with my partner, just for an instant, I was able to experience a state beyond words. All of my consciousness disappeared and it was as if I was riding upon some immense flow. In that state, although I had no consciousness, I could see my partner's movements well and my body moved naturally and accordingly. I also noticed that I had become positive, optimistic, and diligent all the time. I could feel an all-pervading energy that was always pulsing within my partner. I went through many trials of trying to negate any selfish or self-centered consciousness, and instead focusing on my partner. This led to being able to experience the sensation of moving naturally and without any distinction between my partner and myself. From these experiences, I became convinced that I had discovered the direction of seeking the Tao.

The founder of Aikidô Ueshiba Morihei said, "Mastery of Aikidô consists of ridding yourself of evil, harmonizing the workings of the universe and yourself, and unifying yourself with the universe itself. The heart of the universe is love, so great that it can be found in every far corner. The Budô of those who cannot harmonize with the universe is not true Budô, but Budô of destruction. True Budô is the working of love. It is not killing, but working to create and nurture everything."

Normally we practice Aikidô trying to achieve an absolute and strong self, by a process of defeating others through fighting to deny others. This is seeking Aikidô as 'jutsu' (technique) and not as 'dô' (way). The concept of 'dô' signifies a diverse unification - unification of all opposing things in the universe, including in human society. This means to emphasize the singularity of every thing, and to give priority and attempt to understand things that are unified and absolute. Those who wish to realize the Aikidô of the founder must not just seek Aikidô as 'jutsu', but as 'dô'. If we truly seek Aikidô as dô, not only will there be recovery of humanity suffering from advances in science, it will be possible to achieve the highest wisdom. However this ideal can be said to be the opposite of the ideal of competition. It is necessary to acknowledge that if we are naive and lackadaisical, we will fail against the reality of competition before long. If one is to seek a truly strong self in the ways described above, it is necessary to have strength that will hold up against competition and can continually embrace paradox. (December 2000)

Dôjôchô Talks > No.17

Thinking About "Dan" From "Dô(Tao)"
Endô Seishirô, Aikidô Saku Dôjôchô

Translated by Daniel Nishina

On January 14th this year(2001) I was promoted to 8th dan at Hombu Dôjô's Kagami-biraki ceremony. On June 3rd, a party was held to celebrate this promotion.

I would like to express my gratitude to all who helped prepare for the celebration as well as everyone who attended. My thanks also for all the congratulations and gifts.

The current grading system is based on regulations implemented on April 1, 1989 by Aikikai Hombu Dôjô: "There will be 8 grades, from Shodan to 8th dan, given by the Aikidô Dôshu based on overall capacity in Aikidô as well as achievements and contributions. The grades may be obtained through examination or recommendation". In addition, the qualifications of the persons giving and taking an examination, or giving and receiving a recommendation, as well as the procedures for each, are specified.

However, with aikidô currently having spread to over 80 countries, it is a terribly difficult proposition to ensure that every single group correctly understands and carries out the grading system. Leaving aside my impressions of having attained the highest grade under this new system, I would like to offer some of my thoughts on grades that I have had from my practice.



Until now, I have repeatedly stated that I pursue aikidô as "Tao" (path). To seek the Tao is to seek deeply, and what I have come to know through practicing aikidô is that the Tao is to single-mindedly keep going. Even so, there is no limit to the depths to be reached. Someone may point to something that seems like a goal, but as the route will be different for each person, it may not be a true goal for everyone. That said, is it even possible to assume that there is a final destination?

Grading is a means of objectively evaluating one's capacity and progress by one set of standards. However, I believe that such a viewpoint has no relevance to seeking the Tao. For how far and how deep one has gone are internal questions that only the practitioner can answer. I have come to believe that it is impossible to measure each person's depth in their pursuit using a fixed standard.

It has been 40 years since I started aikidô. Looking back at my experiences, throughout this period, I have met many teachers, starting with Ô-sensei, been taught many things, read many books, and learned much. When I started aikidô, I practiced thinking only about becoming stronger. At the time, to become strong meant to learn techniques and strengthen my body. However, I gradually came to question this way of thinking and practicing. In order to resolve these reservations I began to read books about Zen and Budô.

Among these is an ancient Chinese text on martial tactics, "Liutao". From a section called "Hujuan" ("Chapter of the Tiger") is the following:

- If it comes, simply meet it; if it leaves, simply send it on its way;
- If it opposes, simply settle it.
- 5 and 5 are 10.
- 2 and 8 are 10.
- 1 and 9 are 10.
- Like these equations, harmonize.
- See matters deeply and sense what is hidden,
- The large is everywhere, the small is infinitely minute.
- Life and death lie in opportunity,
- Change depends on the moment.
- Never be perturbed.

I understood this text in this way: Blend all encounters of opposition into harmony. If this can be done, it will be the most powerful thing. For this, know what is manifest and what is latent (yin and yang), and think of what is large as limitlessly large, and what is small as limitlessly small. Killing and keeping alive, moving forward and turning, all are instantaneous. Even when facing everything directly, it is necessary to maintain a steady and unmoving (quiet) heart/mind (kokoro).

At the time, I was already practicing softly, but in order to understand and realize those words in action, I began to try to focus my attention on the "now", on each moment, and to accurately capture the encounter (de-ai) with my partner, responding while feeling my partner's power and ki. As I practiced this way, when I saw inside myself (at first it was only occasional), I noticed that I was moving with my partner limitlessly, not forcibly but naturally, with no conscious thought or awareness, as I had never before experienced.



While practicing this way, I also revisited my previous ways of thinking and what (I thought) I knew. I came to the conclusion that, by not depending on physical power, throwing away ego, and moving softly and flexibly, one could directly, concretely, and intuitively respond in the moment - "now" - and blend (harmonize) with their partner.

In Cosmos 11, I wrote, "the idea of Tao(Dô) indicates the unification of things in opposition and the integration of variety. It stresses the importance of unity in all things, while things unified, universal, and absolute have priority over everything. Since pursuing aikidô from this viewpoint of Tao, my thoughts expanded from humans to society, from society to the Earth, and from the Earth to the universe.

Disorder and confusion will most likely never cease to exist in this society. But humans attempt to escape from such a society, deepening their isolation, learning insecurity. Thus, we may seek power in one form or another and depend on it. However, everything around us resides in "as it is" and occurs "as it goes naturally." This is not the result of some special power making it so.

What we see as opposing, what is big or small, what is diverse - all equally and mutually nurture each other.

To not use force, to put the opposing and diverse in order, but to grasp and understand everything as it is, unified - this is the idea of Tao. Accordingly, to seek the Tao is to separate oneself from all kinds of power, to discover by oneself only, and just go. Power and rankings are unnecessary for this endeavor. A person who practices aikidô as Tao should not see their grade as carrying a power to depend upon, but only as an indication of their position within the circle of aikidô and just another confirmation of the previous footsteps of their experience. (July 2001)

Dôjôchô Talks > No.18

It's Not Too Late

The Founder's Idea for Aikido was to Seek Peace Among Humanity

Endô Seishirô, Aikidô Saku Dôjôchô

Translated by Daniel Nishina

When I first saw the TV news of the terrorist attacks on America (9.11.01), I thought it was just a fire. Then came information that airplanes had struck some buildings and speculation that they were terrorist acts. Next were the images of the plane striking the second building. I was glued to the TV and the repeating images of the moment of impact. I believed that a terrible thing had happened.

Several days after the incident, I glanced at an article in a Japanese sports newspaper. Several lines of comment by a famous American baseball player caught my attention. He said, "We play baseball here in America, pleasing many fans, and are seen as heroes. But in this tragedy, what can we do? Absolutely nothing."

This comment made me stop and think about myself. What have we been doing, and what are we trying to do?

Violence, terrorism, war - this is not an age that has gotten past all of these things. At this very moment there are many people in the world who are caught up in such crisis. Those vivid images of the destruction of the World Trade Center and the instantaneous loss of thousands of lives, from America, which could be called the symbol of modern civilization - they made us, the peoples of the world, see that it was a problem of our very own reality.

In 1932, there was a correspondence between Einstein and Freud. Einstein, on proposal by the League of Nations (the Paris-based organization for intellectual cooperation), wrote to Freud on whether humanity could free itself from the yoke of war. He posed such questions as, "Why are humans driven to war so easily?", "Is there something faulty with the human mind?", "Are there desires that lie in human instinct?", and "Is there a desire, driven by hate to annihilate one's enemies?"



From his psychoanalytic theory on impulse, Freud replied,

"In human impulse, there is an impulse to preserve and unify (eros) and an impulse to destroy and kill, the latter with two facets: an instinct to attack and an instinct to destroy. These impulses are necessary in every person; they feed each other and oppose each other, thereby resulting in the many manifestations of life. If humans engage in war because of the destructive impulse, then we must summon the opposite impulse, eros. All that which promotes the bonds between people's emotions and minds is that which hinders war.

There are two kinds of emotional bonds. One is the bond with that which is loved and the other arises from a sense of togetherness and belonging. If there is significant similarity and commonality between people, there can be connection at the emotional level. Such connection is a powerful support of human society."

Because of the advance of culture, there have been significant and many changes for the human mind. Freud wrote on the role of the intellect as well.

"One of the more remarkable phenomena born of human culture is the heightening of the intellect. A strong intellect controls the impulses. Rejection of war is not simply rejection on the level of intellect alone, nor only on the level of emotion. Pacifism is rejection that comes from deep within the body and mind. I don't know how long it will take for all of humanity to be pacifist. However, the mind that can be born from the development of culture and wariness of future crises of war - these give me hope that humanity will move toward a future without war soon. I don't know what kind nor which route we will take on this journey, but I hope I can say just this - if the development of culture is encouraged, we will be able to see the end of war!"



The Founder Ueshiba Morihei stated, on the idea of aikido, "The innermost secret of Aikido is to wipe away one's own evil spirit, to harmonize oneself with the work of the cosmos, and to bring oneself into unison with the cosmos. The heart of the cosmos is the great "love" which is everywhere. Any Budo (martial art) which cannot be harmonized with the cosmos is destructive, and is not the true Budo. The true Budo means the way of love. It's aim is not to fight and kill, but to preserve and nurture life. That is the way of love; to create and nurture."



Half a century has passed and aikido has spread to over 80 countries. However, are there people practicing who are actually trying to realize the founder's idea? I believe there are few. Previously in Cosmos I wrote that I'd been called a "messenger of peace." I still have far to go to reach the founder's ideal, but as I've written in Cosmos before, I have been practicing and explaining, from my own understanding, the founder's conception and the mind of "dō."

Nothing would make me happier than to have been able to give a sense of togetherness through my practice and to nurture a peaceful atmosphere.

It can be said that human history has been the repetition of fighting. Even so, I want to believe in the wisdom of humanity. Freud said that if we heighten our intellect and if there is similarity and commonality between people, we will achieve connection on the level of emotion, and thereby support human society. If all aikidōka adopt the founder's conception of aikidō and engage in practice with that in common, we will be able to join hands and head in a direction that is without war. It's not too late. (December 2002)

Dôjôchô Talks > No.19-(1)

Practice and Training to Knead the Heart/Mind
Endô Seishirô, Aikidô Saku Dôjôchô

Translated by Daniel Nishina

The spread of aikidô has been remarkable. In the short span of half a century, it has come to be practiced in over 80 countries. In countries that aikidô reached early on, there are already practitioners who have attained 7th dan, with more and more people attaining 5th and 6th dan with each coming year. Those who started practicing aikidô when they were young are now in their 40s and 50s.

When aikidô began to spread, every dôjô's instructor was young and inexperienced. It was a time when one could head an aikido club or dôjô with only shodan or 2-dan level of experience. Especially abroad, if someone became a "blackbelt", they were respected as a person with complete experience; there was no resistance to such a person teaching or to learning from such a person. However, the fact that a person of shodan or 2-dan level of experience has only just memorized the forms and is thus finally ready to learn, this was the same back then as it is now. The reality is that most of what they taught was stagnant repetition of the elementary forms, with minor individual differences. Their authority as instructors largely consisted of the greater amount of experience they had over their students who had simply started practicing at a later time.

In the present, where there are many experienced students, I have come to notice that it is not sufficiently appealing for instructors as well as students to simply mechanically repeat the forms, relying on physical strength.

When teaching overseas, in addition to leading seminars on the weekend which anyone from beginner to advanced level can attend, in some countries I have used 3 weekdays for seminars that were only for yudansha (blackbelt holders). In these yûdansha practices, there have been limits to the number of participants allowed, but the number of people who wish to attend grows each year. In the beginning, what the participants were interested in and sought were the soft movements and use of the body as I practice them. Recently, it seems that interest is deepening toward something more fundamental - the kind of mind and way of thinking that one must have in order to move and use the body in that way.



In Japan, when it comes to learning a traditional art, there are forms that have been transmitted since the days of old, by which a person learns the art. Aikidô is the same as other arts in that practice also takes place in forms. Forms are filled with important principles. By repetitively practicing forms we naturally come to acquire, or know, those principles. Forms consist of clear provisions, so that even when accounting for individual differences in sensibilities and ideas, the end result is constant and certain. Not only for those learning but for those who teach as well, even if a person's skill or senses are not superior to everyone else, forms allow a certain standard of instruction. On the other hand, practicing by forms also means practicing based upon an agreement; the moment to moment dynamics of the movement do not fall outside a certain pre-decided range. Because of this, there is a danger of the practitioners' senses becoming dull.

The way of learning by the repetitive practice of ancient transmitted forms is called "keiko". "Kei" of "keiko" denotes "to think", and "ko" means "old." Therefore, "keiko" means "to learn by thinking about the old." Among traditional arts, with respect to the martial arts there is also an emphasis on "tanren" ("training" or "discipline"). "Tan" refers to the strengthening of steel by heating and striking it, while "ren" means to make something that is hard soft and sticky.

Miyamoto Musashi said, "Let one thousand days of keiko be 'tan' and ten thousand days of keiko be 'ren.'" This meant that to "neru" (or to do "ren," or "knead" as in the title of this article), is more difficult, takes more time, and is more important.

I, too, spent my first ten years in aikidô practicing the forms by physical strength. But after that, I recalled the practice and words of the Founder and my seniors and revisited them while also reading literature by predecessors,

thus beginning to make my way toward a keiko that didn't rely on physical strength; I continue to this day, 30 years later. What I have paid attention to in particular during practice is to weaken the power of my body and arms, memorize the forms with my body enough that I could do them unconsciously, gaze at the movement of my heart/mind, calculate the space between myself and my partner, sense the degree and direction of strength (ki) of my partner, improve the timing of my hands and feet, and to continually seek the optimal direction for each and every movement. In such practice, I realized that the mind and body affected each other. A good example is when one's body becomes tense and cannot move freely when fear or anxiety cross the mind for even an instant.



There is an expression, "Shin. Gi. Tai." It is difficult to grasp the relevance of these three elements within movement if they are viewed as distinct dimensions.

In practicing, we think of how to use "gi" (or "waza") well and we move our "tai" (or "body") as much as we want; we tend to inadvertently think that doing these is "keiko" and "tanren". However, state of mind, which changes from moment to moment along with the movement of "tai", has a significant effect on the body itself. It is necessary to know that the movement of the body has a subtle relationship with the state of the mind. It has been said that the mind that is in the state of "no-mind" (or "mushin") is a "mind like a mirror." A mirror reflects all that comes before it, exactly as it is. If something is no longer in front of the mirror, then everything disappears and nothing is

reflected, as if the mind was not there. I believe that to "knead" (or "neru") the mind is to reflect with the mind exactly what is, feel exactly what is felt, not to be attached, not to be disturbed, to ride the flow.

One way to "knead" the mind is through meditation. Generally people know the meditation method of sitting in a quiet place, with correct posture, breathing deeply, and making the mind like a mirror, or "mushin." Hakuin zenji said, "Improvement in motion is worth a million times more than improvement in silence." He meant that meditation in the activity of daily life or bujutsu practice was more effective than meditation in a quiet place. After learning those words, I have tried to maintain a quiet mind and have been mindful of making a practice that can be done in "mushin." (August 2002)

Dôjôchô Talks > No. 20

Value both practice and demonstration
Endô Seishirô, Aikidô Saku Dôjôchô

Translated by Daniel Nishina

The 9th International Aikido Federation (IAF) Congress and Seminar was held at the Olympic Center in Yoyogi, Tokyo, September 7 – 12. This event included seminars and demonstrations. The seminars enjoyed their good reputation from the previous time and saw a greater number of participants of over 600. The demonstrations were held for the first time and consisted of representatives from IAF member nations, making for a large-scale event. Although I knew little of most of the featured representatives and their practice histories and skill levels, I viewed all of the demonstrations from start to finish. While I was unfortunately not left with the impression that all of the demonstrations were good, there were two or three that were sound.

Since before, whenever I view demonstrations I endeavor to observe everything from how the participants enter the arena, to the way in which they walk, sit, stand, and bow. As a result, I have noticed that there is a significant relationship between such behaviors and the demonstration itself. Those who give a good demonstration, from the time they enter and face their partners after bowing, already exhibit the attitude that they are in a serious situation. They are composed with collected feeling, their upper bodies are relaxed, and their overall activity is settled.

We practice budô in the format of attack and defense with a partner. Accordingly, we tend to become preoccupied with how to defeat the partner, develop bad habits and overuse strength. In practices such as kenjutsu, in which weapons are used, there is a basic awareness that even a touch will cut. Without correct posture and distance, the weapon cannot be used effectively. Furthermore, as using the weapon poorly poses a danger for the practitioner him/herself, practice is conducted with seriousness and attentiveness.

Although there is a demand for seriousness and attentiveness in body arts practices as well, the distance is closer and there is direct contact with the partner, which can result in both the body and feeling instinctively becoming rigid. When one tries to defeat the partner, it becomes necessary to inflict considerable damage, which may cause one's posture to suffer and one to overuse strength and develop bad habits. Consequently, seriousness and attentiveness are lost and movement becomes indolent and reckless.

In order to avoid such developments, it is necessary to be wary of becoming preoccupied with whether or not techniques are effective, and first simply repeat the forms, both uke and tori, correctly. It is simultaneously crucial to carefully observe the use of one's body and the state of one's heart/mind, and the relationship between the two, during each technique. One should be mindful of taking the time to absorb into one's body everything from techniques involving small movements of the arms and legs to larger and simpler movements, in such a way that strength is not overused.

Based on the preceding, if we are to consider demonstrations as a venue of seriousness, that which we cultivate during daily practice, from techniques to the state of our heart/minds, can be expected to manifest during such events. It is especially on such occasions that one must not be conscious of one's partners or techniques, and perceive a self that is humble and with an empty mind. (November 2004)

Dôjôchô Talks > "Dô" Interview

An Interview with Endô Seishirô Shihan by Aiki News

This interview was published in Japanese on Dou, No. 144 (2005) by Aiki News, Japan and translated into English by Daniel Nishina and Akiya Hideo for Cosmos Online. We would like to thank Stanley Pranin, Aiki News, for his kind permission for the translation and issuing it here.

We previously inquired about sensei's aikidô training about ten years ago (issue 106). This time we would like to ask about sensei's changes in his thoughts about aikidô since then, from the viewpoint of "dô" or Tao.

Japanese people have a tendency to attach "-dô" to everything. This can be seen not only with budô but also with sadô (or chadô, the art of tea ceremony) and kadô (the art of flower arrangement), for instance. We even hear of sumô-dô, salaryman-dô, keiei-dô (the way of business). People attach "-dô" to various aspects and activities of our lives in order to give them special meaning or to distinguish them as areas of mastery. Yet, I don't think many people, including myself, really know what "dô" is. At some point I began to wonder why there were to ways to say one thing e.g. budô/bujutsu, kendô/kenjutsu, jûdô/jûjutsu, aikidô/aikijutsu, and thus started to explore the difference in meaning.

I feel I more or less have a grasp of the meaning of "jutsu," but when it comes to "dô," I feel it means something immense, deep, wide, and unclear. In my desire to somehow make it clearer, I sought books relating to Taoism, Lao-tzu (Lao-zi) and Chuang-tzu (Zhuang-zi). Tao can also be found in Confucianism and its virtues: Jin (仁, humanity), Gi (義, righteousness), Rei (礼, propriety), Chi (智, wisdom), Shin (信, faithfulness). It is said that Tao is to seek and realize, and thereby equip the self with, these virtues. We might say that this is "Tao for the people."

According to Taoism these virtues comprise a Tao as conceived by humans, and true Tao is that which has existed before this artificial Tao ever came into being. Lao-tzu expressed as follows: "The path that can be regarded as The Path is not the great eternal Path. The name that can be named is not the enduring and unchanging name¹." This means that Tao is a fundamental, universal principle that has always existed before any artificial Tao came into being.

In Chuang-tzu's book of "Chi-hoku-yû" (莊子 知北遊篇)², it is written, "There is nowhere that Tao is not. It is everywhere." The entire universe is Tao, and it is ki that gives birth and life to all the phenomena in the universe. It is also said that in order to know that ki and the flow of ki, one must know Tao. It appears that this is the origin of the words, "Seeking Tao," and "Mastering Tao." Lao-tzu referred to one who has mastered Tao as "mu-i-shi-zen" (無為自然, natural and unaffected). Chuang-tzu interpreted this as "emptiness unlimited" or "absolute nothingness³." When one grasps and masters the flow of ki of all the phenomena in the universe as it is, one is in the state of "mu-i-shi-zen" and "absolute nothingness." To strive to attain such a state is a true way of life for humans. This is what Taoism teaches.

What has changed in grasping aikidô as Tao?

I encountered the following words regarding seeking Tao: Lao-tzu said, "In studying, one accumulates everyday. In carrying out Tao, one reduces everyday. Through reduction upon reduction, one reaches the point of doing nothing, whereupon everything is complete." Dôgen said, "To choose the path of Buddha is to learn the self. To learn the self is to forget the self." Kanô Jigorô named jûdô and took as a key phrase, "Softness overcomes hardness," based on Lao-tzu's 36th text, which states, "Soft and weak defeats hard and strong." "Soft and weak" means soft and supple. When one is in such a state one can feel ki, match the partner's ki, and fall into a state of riding the flow of ki. From there one becomes able to move in a "mu-i-shi-zen" manner. On the other hand, "hard and strong" denotes a rigid and unyielding state, in which one can move only with the ego fully exposed. Based on these ideas, in seeking Tao, I now have as a major goal to practice softly in such a way that I rid myself of egotistical consciousness.

Could you elaborate on "softness"?

We are endlessly told during practice to release the strength and tension from our shoulders and not to use the strength in our arms. Then what should we do exactly? No one actually teaches how to use the body or what we should do regarding our internal states.

30 years ago, for the first time I heard a way to realize the above from Yamaguchi shihan: "Put strength into your lower abdomen and use your feet lightly." Subsequently I learned that the *kyûdô shihan* Awa Kenzô, in teaching Eugen Herrigel, instructed him to put strength into his lower abdomen, which Awa confirmed by striking him there. Awa said, "In drawing the bow, throw away all the strength in your body and draw with only your mental/spiritual strength." I later came across the words of many people known to be masters and have found that they all say basically the same thing. In order to practice with no strength and to rid oneself of egotistical consciousness, I have come to practice while always keeping in mind the words of forebearers (masters). Even now I continue by trial and error, as I will explain next.

In the beginning I would continuously practice the tori role of shômen-uchi ikkyô. Wherever I went I would practice only ikkyô. I did this for more than six months. Later, I would continuously practice a single technique for 30 minutes to a full hour. The best experience I had was at a seminar in France, where attendance exceeds 300. I would continuously practice a single technique with each and every participant. Performing one technique over a thousand times was the norm, as I would continue until I got to every participant.

What I noticed in practicing this way was that, while my movement may be awkward when I start, as I go through more and more repetitions I start to get into a rhythm and my movement becomes more flowing. Also, I almost forget which technique I'm doing. I face my partner, and when he moves I respond naturally. In addition I become better able to see myself. I came to wonder if this is what is meant by mushin (no mind) and releasing strength. It is like being in a trance.

As I continued to practice this way wherever I went, after some years it ceased to matter whether my technique worked or not. I meet my partner, move, and my partner's balance is broken. My ki is extremely concentrated and I use my body smoothly and lightly. Furthermore, I began to check my use of my body, arms, and feet in the midst of movement.

Next in practice, in jiyû-waza for instance, I decide not to do anything forced or requiring significant strength. When I meet my partner, if I feel engagement (atari), I refrain from trying to engage him or her. If my partner resists, I accept and value the feeling of the reaction and change my movement with respect to that feeling. Then I make the movement my own. The more I release strength and relax, and the softer I try to be, the easier it becomes to feel my partner's ki and respond to it.

Recently I have been organizing what I have learned from my experiences – the encounters, the engagements, how to use my body, arms, shoulders, and feet, and states of mind – and have gradually incorporated them into practice.

Could you tell us your thoughts regarding teacher and student?

When we learn something, we call the person teaching, teacher e.g. shihan, shishô, sensei. It may be that these different words indicate different meanings and significance depending on how a person is learning, but it can also be said that they are all same. In recent times, in entertainment industry-related contexts, there is still a tendency to use the words shihan and shishô, but in general we call the person who teaches, sensei, and the person who learns, seito. So, is the shihan-deshi relationship the same as or different than sensei-seito? If both the one who learns and the one who teaches have strong devotion and consideration for each other, and their relationship is deep and long lasting, I believe it doesn't matter whether we say seito or deshi.

Now we have the words uchi-deshi, the student who resides and trains in the dôjô, kayoi-deshi, the student who commutes to the dôjô, and soto-deshi. The uchi-deshi takes care of the shihan while training together, thus creating the strongest bond with the shihan as well as gaining the richest teachings. Indeed, the ultimate thing that can be gained by being so close to the shihan is to know the breath of the shihan.

Currently there are few actual dôjôs and most people begin their practice in some sports center or gym. In such places one needs only to fill out the registration paperwork to become a member, start practicing, and enter into a teacher-student relationship. I don't believe a shihan-deshi relationship can develop in such places. However, more and more people are showing a tendency to go ahead and say, "So-and-so is my deshi," after a short period, and speak of others as if they were possessions. As for the students who started out their practice pleasantly in a convenient location, the teacher calling them deshi may impose an unwanted pressure and lead to disappointment in the teacher's actions.

In Zen, it is said, "Take three years to find your teacher." A monk who is in training is referred to as un-sui, which is taken from kou-un-ryû-sui (meaning to flow and move naturally, without stopping or attaching to anything). They flow and drift like water and clouds, searching for a master with the capacity to guide them in their training, before finally calling on a temple. After being admitted to a dôjô, they begin their training under a teacher. If, after some spending some time training under the teacher, one felt that that teacher was not suitable, it was acceptable for him or her to leave the dôjô and search for another teacher and dôjô. Such was an indication of the seriousness with which one undertook his or her training.

This must mean that a student must be capable of making a good selection if a teacher. You wrote on the Saku Dôjô website, "If one has been practicing for over 15 years, one should try to find one's teacher based on careful consideration. However, when you think you've found 'the one,' you must practice thinking seriously and diligently on every single movement and every single word of that person."

Actually, the number of years doesn't really matter. However, in Japan, once one decides on a teacher, it is considered improper to change to another teacher. On the other hand, if one simply started out at a convenient or local dôjô, I think it is okay for him/her to go anywhere to learn – of course after informing the instructors. In the end, if a student feels that he/she absolutely cannot keep up or that the practice is of no value, he/she should just go to another dôjô. The student must be feeling the discomfort because he/she is putting forth all his/her effort. Anyone who strives to grow will have such experiences. When a student finally determines that he/she has found his/her teacher, he/she should spend at least ten years following that teacher, hanging on every word and syllable of that teacher.

You wrote, "In aikidô practice, it is necessary to avoid becoming preoccupied with whether or not techniques are effective, and first simply repeat the forms, both uke and tori, correctly. ... One should be mindful to take the time to absorb into one's body everything from techniques involving small movements of the arms and legs to larger and simpler movements, in such a way that strength is not overused."

In Japan, we transmit and learn culture through forms, often becoming captive in those forms, so much so that our culture has been called a "culture of form." Forms are the heart/mind of our forebearers and a mode of transmission of the same. It is known that, when we learn or train in something, we pass through the stages of shu, ha, and ri. These stages are explained as follows. In shu, we repeat the forms and discipline ourselves so that our bodies absorb the forms that our forebearers created. We remain faithful to the forms with no deviation. Next, in the stage of ha, once we have disciplined ourselves to acquire the forms and movements, we make innovations. In this process the forms may be broken and discarded. Finally, in ri, we completely depart from the forms, open the door to creative technique, and arrive in a place where we act in accordance with what our heart/mind desires, unhindered while not overstepping laws.

In Jikishinkage-ryû and Mutô-ryû, it is said that we must rid ourselves of all habits that we have acquired since birth without noticing or intending. This is in order to completely deny our impure egos and take away any distinction among mind, body, and technique. We achieve this negation by thoroughly practicing forms and attacks, to the extent that body and mind are forgotten.

To practice by forms means to be able to repeat the same thing. In repeating the same thing, we rid ourselves of habit and make our bodies absorb that which is correct. In addition we can broach the experience of mushin. In thinking this way, I think the form of uke, not only of tori, becomes unavoidably necessary.

Is there such a thing as uke forms in aikidô?

In aikidô there is virtually none. Even if we take just shômen-uchi, there are a multitude of ways to strike, which makes executing the forms the way they are supposed to be executed and absorbing them into our bodies very problematic. In order to properly carry out the stage of shu, the stage for learning the foundations, it is absolutely necessary to attack and take uke in a clear and correct way, even if this means movement in practice becomes rigid. Also, there should be no concern about effectiveness in this stage.

Because there are currently no set uke forms, there is too much emphasis on the tori forms. What this means is that one must execute the tori form even if it is forced. Although the idea behind forms is that they should not be forced, we do so anyway, and regardless of how many years of experience we may have, we are preoccupied with whether techniques are effective, breaking the forms. "If there is attachment, there is no still and quiet mind (heijôshin)." Looking inward and entering into a practice of releasing strength become impossible.

(In conclusion)

Much time has passed since I began thinking about aikidô as a way of seeking Tao. Of course I don't think I've done enough, but I am coming to be sure that this direction and way are right. That said, I don't even presume to think that I will be able to master this art that has been dubbed a "-dô."

Nevertheless I question whether these "-dô" are currently being taught with the objective of realizing the original Path. I wonder whether currently the various "-dô" have ceased to be nothing except for winning/losing, strength/weakness, beauty/ugliness, etc.

*- Translation from [Dou, No.144, Spring issue 2005 \(Aiki News\)](#) -
You can find more about Dou at [Aiki News website](#).*

(Notes by the translators)

¹ <http://www.logoi.com/notes/laozi.html>, <http://people.stu.ca/~gycwp/Taoism%20Group.html>. The problematic word in the phrase is "chang" translated here as "enduring and unchanging". It could also be understood, however, as "common, ordinary", which would reverse the meaning of the entire phrase. The "enduring and unchanging" way is the creator of the universe, while the "common or ordinary" way is a road leading from one village to the other. Clearly, the phrase wants to establish the difference between these two aspects of the word "dao" but it is vital to understand which one is which. There could be several possible interpretations:

"The path that can be regarded as a path is not the great eternal Path." - The road that is seen as a road under our feet is different from the great Tao I am going to be speaking about.

"The path that can be regarded as The Path is not an ordinary path." - The road that is understood as the Great Tao is different from the ordinary road where the donkey carry rice to the market.

"The Path that can be regarded as The Path is not the great eternal Path." - The Tao that can be conceived as the Tao cannot be the great Tao because that is inconceivable. The great Tao cannot be understood by the mind, cannot be expressed in words.

After 2500 years of debate and guessing, scholars of the book came across some new early manuscripts [which] provided material that was way older than anything before. And all the material says that the word "chang" for "enduring" or "common" was actually written as "heng" which means "constant". The substitution took place during the Han dynasty as part of putting into practice the name taboo for the emperor's personal name. In any case, the archaeological discoveries had cleared the ambiguity about the meaning of the word and we can be certain that it means "constant, eternal, unchanging" and refers to the great Tao.

"The name that can be named is not the enduring and unchanging name." - The structure of this sentence is the exactly the same as that of the first one, only "dao" (path) was substituted with "ming" (name). It seems that grammatically we do not have a really problem anymore, we can translate the sentence as "the name that can be used to name things, is not the constant Name." But what does it mean? What name? The book talks about the Way but it does not really talk about names. Maybe the book was not, but the entire country was talking about the importance of names. One of Confucius's great pursuits was to "rectify the names" (zheng-ing). This could be understood more as setting the terms right, a key issue before going into a heated debate. In those times a name was understood as a tag that was attached to an object, sort of like today's nouns.

² <http://www.geocities.com/therapeuter/nonbeing.html>. "知北遊" (Zhi-bei-you, or "Knowledge rambling in the north") means that a person of wisdom or knowledge goes on an excursion to north (<http://www.chinapage.com/philosophy/zhuangzi/zhuangzi.html>).

³ Not a relative idea of non-existence, the opposite of existence.

Huainanzi

The True Man

In dwelling he has no shape, and in abiding he has no place. In movement he has no form, and in quiescence he has no body. He is there but looks as if he were gone, he is alive but looks as if he were dead. He comes in and out of the spaceless and has gods and demons at his orders; he sinks into the unfathomable and enters into the spaceless. He exchanges his form with what is different from him. End and beginning for him are like a ring, and nobody knows his patterns. This is how his essence and spirit can lead him to ascend to the Dao. This is where the True Man roams.

As for inspiring and expiring while emitting the sounds *chui* and *xu*, exhaling the old and inhaling the new [breath], hanging like a bear and stretching like a bird, bathing like a duck and leaping like a gibbon, glaring like an owl and staring like a tiger--these are for the people who "nourish their form," and he does not confuse his mind with them.

Source: *Huainan zi*, chapter 7. Translation published in Fabrizio Pregadio, "The Notion of 'Form' and the Ways of Liberation in Daoism," *Cahiers d'Extrême-Asie* 14 (2004): 119-20.

The saintly man

[The saintly man] has forgotten his five viscera and has abandoned his bodily form. He knows without apprehending, sees without looking, accomplishes without doing, and discerns without applying himself. He spontaneously responds to the outer stimuli and acts only if he cannot do without it. He moves without wanting it, like beams of light and particles of brilliance. As his rule he follows the Dao and attains to it. He embraces his foundation in the Great Clarity and nothing can enthrall him or trouble him. Vast and deep, he maintains himself empty; pure and serene, he is without thoughts and worries.

A great marsh can burn, and he is not scorched; the Yellow and the Han rivers can frost, and he is not cold; a great thunder can shake a mountain, and he is not frightened; a great wind can obscure the sun, and he is not distressed. (*) Therefore he looks upon precious stones, pearls, and jade as stones and gravel; he looks upon the most venerable and esteemed ones as passing guests; and he looks upon Mao Qiang and Xi Shi as deformed and uncomely (**).

He takes life and death as a single transformation, and the ten thousand things as a single extension. He communicates through his essence with his foundation in the Great Clarity and roams in the indistinct space. He does not stir his essence and does not budge his spirit. Keeping up his tally with the simplicity of the Great Inchoate, he establishes himself at the center of Culminant Clarity.

(*) Compare the passage of *Zhuangzi*, chapter 6, translated in Burton Watson, *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu*, 46 (New York: Columbia University Press).

(**) Mao Qiang and Xi Shi were ancient paragons of female beauty.

Source: *Huainan zi*, chapter 7. Translation published in Fabrizio Pregadio, [*Great Clarity: Daoism and Alchemy in Medieval China*](#), 37 (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006).

In ancient times

In ancient times, when there were not yet Heaven and Earth, there were only images without forms. Deep! Obscure! Broad and wide, boundless and measureless! Vaporous and opaque, vast and cavernous! No one knows where this came from. There were two spirits (*shen*) generated from the inchoate, which aligned Heaven and oriented Earth. Empty! No one knows where it ends. Overflowing! No one knows where it stops. Thereupon it differentiated itself and became Yin and Yang, it separated itself and became the eight poles. The firm and the yielding (*) completed each other, and the ten thousand things took form.

(*) I.e., Yin and Yang.

Source: *Huainan zi*, chapter 7. Translation published in Fabrizio Pregadio, "The Notion of 'Form' and the Ways of Liberation in Daoism," *Cahiers d'Extrême-Asie* 14 (2004): 104.

The origin

At the commencement of Great Clarity, in harmony and conformity people were silent and boundless, and in the perfection of their constitution they were pure and simple. Being at leisure and quiet they had no haste, drifting along with things they had no purpose. Within themselves they joined with the Dao, and outside they adjusted to righteousness. Their movements were achieved with elegance, and in acting fast they were of advantage to all creatures. Their words were few and complied with their principles, their actions were pleased and followed their feelings. Their hearts were content and without artifice, their doings were pure and unadorned. Therefore they had not to choose [proper] days and times [to act], and did not need to divine through trigrams and omens. They made no schemes at the beginning and no discussions at the end. In tranquility they halted, and under stimulation they moved. Their body communicated with Heaven and Earth, and their essence was equal to Yin and Yang. Joined in oneness with the four seasons, their own light was reflected by the sun and the moon. They were one with the creation and transformation of things.

Source: *Huainan zi*, chapter 8. Translation published in Fabrizio Pregadio, [*Great Clarity: Daoism and Alchemy in Medieval China*](#), 37-38 (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006).

The Formless and the Soundless

Now, the Formless is the great forefather of creatures, and the Soundless is the great ancestor of sounds. . . . Therefore you look at it and cannot see its form, you listen to it and cannot hear its sound, you follow it and cannot get to its person. (*) It is formless, but what has form is generated from it; it is soundless, but the five sounds resonate from it; it is tasteless, but the five tastes take form from it; it is colorless, but the five colors are developed from it. Therefore Being is generated from Non-Being, and the actual is generated from the empty. What is below heaven is its fold, and thus names and actualities (*mingshi*) dwell together in it.

(*) Compare *Laozi*, sec. 14 ("If you look at it, you do not see it: it is called invisible. If you listen to it, you do not hear it: it is called inaudible. If you grasp it, you do not get it: it is called

imperceptible") and sec. 35 ("If you look at it, this is not sufficient to see it; if you listen to it, this is not sufficient to hear it").

Source: *Huainan zi*, chapter 1. Translation published in Fabrizio Pregadio, "The Notion of 'Form' and the Ways of Liberation in Daoism," *Cahiers d'Extrême-Asie* 14 (2004): 100-1.

What gives life to life

. . . Therefore forms come to depletion but spirit never undergoes transformation; this is because when what undergoes no transformation responds to what is transformed, it will never reach an end even throughout one thousand alterations and ten thousand reversals. Undergoing transformations means returning to formlessness; not undergoing transformations means living as long as Heaven and Earth.

Now, the death of a tree is due to the fact that what makes it green leaves it. So how could the tree itself be what causes the tree to live? The same is true of the formlessness of what fills the form. Therefore, what gives life to life never undergoes death--it is what it gives life to that dies. What transforms the things never undergoes transformation--it is what it transforms that undergoes transformation.

Source: *Huainan zi*, chapter 7. Translation published in Fabrizio Pregadio, "The Notion of 'Form' and the Ways of Liberation in Daoism," *Cahiers d'Extrême-Asie* 14 (2004): 101.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Huainanzi>

The **Huainanzi** (淮南子; [pinyin](#) *Huáinánzǐ*, [Wade-Giles](#) *Huai-nan Tzu*; literally "The Masters/Philosophers of Huainan") is a 2nd century BCE Chinese philosophical classic from the [Han dynasty](#) that blends [Daoist](#), [Confucianist](#), and [Legalist](#) concepts, including theories such as [Yin-Yang](#) and the [Five Phases](#). It was written under the patronage of [Liu An](#), King of [Huainan](#), a legendarily prodigious author. The text, also known as the *Huainan honglie* 淮南鸿烈 ("The Great Brilliance of Huainan"), is a collection of essays presented as resulting from literary and philosophical debates between Liu and guests at his court, in particular the scholars known as the [Eight Immortals of Huainan](#).

Before the 1978 discovery of the inscriptions on each of the [bells of the Marquis Yi of Zeng](#) (433 BC),^[1] the *Huainanzi* contained the oldest known Chinese 12 tone tuning in music, with 6-digit precise values and 2-digit approximations.^[2] It also made use of the [Pythagorean comma](#).^[3]

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The book

The date of composition for the *Huainanzi* is more certain than for most early Chinese texts. Both the [Book of Han](#) and [Records of the Grand Historian](#) record that when Liu An paid a state visit to his nephew the [Emperor Wu of Han](#) in 139 BCE, he presented a copy of his "recently completed" book in twenty-one chapters.

The *Huainanzi* is an eclectic compilation of chapters or essays that range across topics of mythology, history, astronomy, geography, philosophy, science, metaphysics, nature, and politics. It discusses many pre-Han schools of thought (especially Huang-Lao Daoism), and contains more than 800 quotations from Chinese classics. The textual diversity is apparent from the chapter titles (tr. Le Blanc, 1985, 15-16):

Number	Name	Reading	Meaning
1	原道訓	Yuandao	Searching out Dao
2	俶真訓	Chuzhen	Beginning of Reality
3	天文訓	Tianwen	Patterns of Heaven
4	墜形訓	Zhuixing	Forms of Earth
5	時則訓	Shize	Seasonal Regulations
6	覽冥訓	Lanming	Peering into the Obscure
7	精神訓	Jingshen	Seminal Breath and Spirit
8	本經訓	Benjing	Fundamental Norm
9	主術訓	Zhushu	Craft of the Ruler
1	繆稱訓	Miucheng	On Erroneous Designations

11	齊俗訓	Qisu	Placing Customs on a Par
12	道應訓	Daoying	Responses of Dao
13	汜論訓	Fanlun	A Compendious Essay
14	詮言訓	Quanyan	An Explanatory Discourse
15	兵略訓	Binglue	On Military Strategy
16	說山訓	Shuoshan	Discourse on Mountains
17	說林訓	Shuolin	Discourse on Forests
18	人間訓	Renjian	In the World of Man
19	脩務訓	Youwu	Necessity of Training
2	泰族訓	Taizu	Grand Reunion
21	要略	Yaolue	Outline of the Essentials

Some *Huainanzi* passages are philosophically significant, for instance, this combination of Five Phases and Daoist themes.

When the lute-tuner strikes the *kung* note [on one instrument], the *kung* note [on the other instrument] responds: when he plucks the *chiao* note [on one instrument], the *chiao* note [on the other instrument] vibrates. This results from having corresponding musical notes in mutual harmony. Now, [let us assume that] someone changes the tuning of one string in such a way that it does not match any of the five notes, and by striking it sets all twenty-five strings resonating. In this case there has as yet been no differentiation as regards sound; it just happens that that [sound] which governs all musical notes has been evoked.

Thus, he who is merged with Supreme Harmony is beclouded as if dead-drunk, and drifts about in its midst in sweet contentment, unaware how he came there; engulfed in pure delight as he sinks to the depths; benumbed as he reaches the end, he is as if he had not yet begun to emerge from his origin. This is called the Great Merging. (chapter 6, tr. Le Blanc 1985:138)

[edit] Translations

The *Huainanzi* has never yet been completely translated into English. A complete translation is due to be published for the first time in 2009 by John Major, Harold Roth, Sarah Queen and Andy Meyer, with contributions from Judson Murray and Michael Puett. Besides Evan Morgan's free translation of eight chapters (1, 2, 7, 8, 12, 13, 15, and 19) and John Major's scholarly analysis of three (3, 4, and 5), the only published translations are of individual chapters: 1 by Frederic Balfour, 6 by Charles Le Blanc, 9 by Roger Ames, 1 by Roger Ames and D.C. Lau and 11 by Benjamin Wallacker: <http://www.powells.com/biblio?isbn=9780231142045>

Certain passages have also been translated by Thomas Cleary for use in several of his anthologies of Taoist philosophical thought.

[edit] Notes

1. [^](#) Temple (1986), 199.
2. [^](#) McClain and Ming, 206.
3. [^](#) McClain and Ming, 213.

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[\[edit\]](#) External links

- [淮南子](#), original text in Chinese 21 chapters
- [淮南子](#), original text in Chinese 21 chapters
- [淮南子](#), original text in Chinese 21 chapters
- [Tao, the Great Luminant](#), Morgan's translation
- [Huainan-zi](#), Sanderson Beck's article
- [Huainanzi](#), Chinaknowledge article