

Kisshomaru Ueshiba, The Spirit of Aikido

Competition:

(TSOA, P.14), "Ultimately, Master Ueshiba concluded that the true spirit of Budo is not to be found in a competitive and combative atmosphere where brute strength dominates and victory at any cost is the paramount objective. He concluded that it is to be realized in the quest for perfection as a human being, both in mind and body, through cumulative training and practice with kindred spirits in the Martial Arts."

(TSOA, P.15), "A great temptation lures people into combative sports-everyone wants to be a winner-but there is nothing more detrimental to Budo, whose ultimate aim is to become free of self, attain no-self, and thus realize what is truly human."

(TSOA, P.16), "Aikido seeks to maintain the integrity of Budo and to transmit the spirit of traditional Martial Arts, remaining true to the first principle of Budo, as enunciated by Master Ueshiba: the constant training of mind and body as the basic discipline for human beings walking the spiritual path."

Ki:

(TSOA, P.21), "Ki was, for example, the essential principle of harmony, and it was the source of creativity expressed in the form of Yin and Yang (Lao-tzu), the vital fullness of life (Huainan-tzu), the courage arising from moral rectitude (Mencius), the divine force that penetrates all things (Kuan-tzu)."

(TSOA, P.21), "Broadly speaking, the principle of Ki was associated with the working of Yin-Yang dualism."

(TSOA, P.26), "When Ki is actualized and confirmed through personal involvement, it leads to the development of character and wholeness of a person. At the same time, this pursuit of Ki leads inevitably to an appreciation of its philosophical and spiritual basis."

With regard to the relationship of Ki to the universe we may quote Master Ueshiba (TSOA, P.29), when he says "'it is to harmonize the Ki of the universe and the Ki of the individual, responding to all things from Ki, and becoming one with Ki.'"

Hara development:

(TSOA, P.35), "A strong firm center is what Master Ueshiba constantly called the unity of Ki-mind-body."

(TSOA, P.78), Master Ueshiba said, "True breathing means to breath in unison with the universe. Then one gains the power of nature. Spiraling rightwards, he ascends. Spiraling leftwards, he descends. One spirals and rotates freely in heaven and earth. The crucial point is to fully realize the principle of breathing-spiraling."

Training:

(TSOA, P.36), Master Ueshiba said, "This body is the concrete unification of the physical and spiritual created by the universe. It breathes the subtle essence of the universe and becomes one body with it, so training is training in the path of human life. In training, the first task is to continually discipline the spirit, sharpen the power of *Nen* (concentration, habitual way of thinking), and unify body and mind. This is the foundation for the development of waza, which in turn unfolds endlessly through *Nen*.

"It is essential that waza always be in accord with the truth of the universe. For that to take place, proper *Nen* is necessary. If one's *Nen* is connected to the desires of the small self, it is erroneous. Since training based upon erroneous ideas goes against the truth of the universe, it invites it own tragic consequences and eventual destruction.

"*Nen* is never concerned with winning or losing, and it grows by becoming properly connected to the Ki of the universe. When that happens, *Nen* becomes a supernatural power that sees clearly all things in the world, even the smallest movement of hand or foot. One becomes like the clear mirror reflecting all things, and since one stands in the center of the universe, one can see with clarity that which is off-center. This is the truth of winning without fighting.

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"To develop the subtle movements of Ki based on Nen, you must understand that the left side of the body is the basis of Martial Art and the right side is where the Ki of the universe appears. When one reaches the realm of absolute freedom, the body becomes light and manifest divine transformations. The right side brings forth power through the left. The left becomes a shield and the right the foundation of technique. This natural, spontaneous law of nature must be based in the centrum, and one must manifest the self freely as dynamic, spherical rotation."

Posture:

(TSOA, p54), "The upright body is related to the upright mind. The crux of the matter lies in respect for the individual student, who out of his center and initiative will want to behave in accordance with the highest standards or conduct. ...Seiza...is the source of proper etiquette, it is basic to many techniques, and it is essential for good training."

(TSOA, p54), "Aikido is a spiritual path and its ideal is the realization of harmony and love. By disciplining mind and body, especially mind, it leads to the perfection of personality and humanity...it is the cultivation of Ki through mind-body training which will eventually build confidence, self-esteem and a sense of control over one's life."

Tactics:

(TSOA, p77), Master Ueshiba said, "Don't simply look at the opponent's eyes, because they will absorb your mind. Don't just look at the opponent's sword, because it will take away your Ki. Don't just look at your opponent, because his Ki will control you. Martial Arts training is the training of the magnetic power in yourself to absorb the other as he is. That's why all I need to do is to just stand here."

Teaching Style:

(TSOA, p84), "Master Ueshiba did not accept just anyone. He interviewed each person individually and was very selective. No outside factors could influence whom he would take as a student, and once a person was permitted to enter the Dojo, he met with the rigorous training program."

(TSOA, p85), The Master wrote (circa 1935) in his guidelines to teaching entitled "Reminders in Aikido Practice":

"1. Aikido decides life and death in a single strike, so students must carefully follow the instructor's teaching and not compete to see who is the strongest.

"2. Aikido is the way that teaches how one can deal with several enemies. Students must train themselves to be alert not just to the front but to all sides and the back.

"3. Training should always be conducted in a pleasant and joyful atmosphere.

"4. The instructor teaches only one small aspect of the Art. Its versatile applications must be discovered by each student through incessant practice and training.

"5. In daily practice, first begin by moving your body and then progress to more intensive practice. Never force anything unnaturally or unreasonably. If this rule is followed, then even elderly people will not hurt themselves and they can train in a pleasant and joyful atmosphere.

"6. The purpose of Aikido is to train mind and body and to produce sincere, earnest people. Since all the techniques are to be transmitted person-to-person, do not randomly reveal them to others, for this might lead to their being used by hoodlums."

Comment: Point three means that one must learn first to fall in a supple manner so that practice is not painful and that what pain there is - one learns to become accustomed to.

Future:

(TSOA, p104), "Master Ueshiba demonstrated by his own example that the prosperity of Aikido is not measured by the number of followers but by the depth and intensity of the personal quest for truth through training and practice."