

On Aikido

**Shodan Essay by Matthew Lowes
Aikido of Eugene**

It is important to go beyond the performance of memorized movements. This knowledge alone will never lead to spontaneous action, or a real understanding of the application of aiki.

The mind can only conceive of a finite number of techniques. The body, however, can create infinite variation. Therefore, we must begin to learn through the entire body, rediscovering our natural instincts for movement, unhindered by the analytical processes of the mind.

When you were a baby a log in your path was a mighty obstacle. Attempts to crawl over were filled with struggle and conflict. Then you grew up and learned to walk. Now it is nothing. You do not need to think about it. You step over the log and go on your way.

The Greeks have a word, "paideia." It means education, training or upbringing. Ancient philosophers taught that the divine principle and source of the universe was the Logos, which penetrates all that exists. Implicit in the idea of paideia was the unification of the individual with the divine Logos through ever increasing spheres of connection.

In the Gospel it's written, "You have heard that it was said, 'you shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rains on the just and on the unjust."

The Aikido that O'Sensei taught was not a mechanical system of defense or a catalog of techniques and I always try to be mindful of this. Two days before O'Sensei's death he said, "All my students must remember, I did not create Aikido. Aiki is the wisdom of God; Aikido is the Way of the laws which He created."

References:

Werner Jaeger, Early Christianity and Greek Paideia, The Belknap Press of Harvard University 1961

Mt. 5:43-45 (RSV Catholic Edition)

Mitsugi Saotome, Aikido and the Harmony of Nature, Shambhala 1993