

FOUR-DIMENSIONAL AIKIDO

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Ever since O'Sensei refined the practice of aikido in the 1940's, aikidoka attuned to his evolving vision have sought to shape the practice so as to resonate more directly with his dictum that aikido is meant to be a Way—to help individuals realize their personal missions and to promote mankind as a single family. In this spirit some of his deshis, including Senseis Koichi Tohei, Seishiro Endo, Terry Dobson, Robert Nadeau, and Mitsugi Saotome, created technical and philosophical innovations.

In this spirit as well, Aiki Extensions was formed, an organization seeking to embody what Sensei Richard Strozzi-Heckler described as “the 21st-century iteration of how O'Sensei envisioned aikido's role in global peace. AE is in a direct lineage to his vision.” Aligned with this vision, Aiki Extensions took as its motto, simply, “Harmony in Action.” Its unspoken assumption is, in O'Sensei's words, that *aiki waza michi shirube*—training in aikido is a signpost to the Way. This means that mat practices should feed directly into ways we handle any and all situations in personal and public daily life.

How does conventional aikido training relate to that notion? For the most part, we teach and test virtues of the role of Nage: capacities to receive attacks non-reactively—without fear, anger, or paralysis—and to neutralize and redirect aggressive energies. Often our practice is confined to physical techniques, assuming that our goal is reached when we have neutralized a bodily attack. To align with the Founder's vision might mean that we should configure that goal in a fully integrative manner, and practice ways to deal with non-physical attacks, using somatic resources.

Although managing attacks and frustrations figures prominently in our lives, it is not primary in human experience. Rather, the creative energies through which we pursue our respective missions are of greater moment. In aiki terms, this could be considered the work of Uke: initiating projects and dealing with obstacles, resistances, and the like. In ki development, this appears when ki is allowed to extend freely. In “sparring” practice, it means attacking someone effectively but not destructively. Conventional movements available for this emphasis include *leading* (“attacking” *nage* first, to elicit a counter-attack response); *kaeshi waza* (responding to *nage*'s response by seeing openings through which to persevere); and katas like the first of Saotome Sensei's *kumi-tachi*, where the first person to attack wins. In one area of applied aikido, it appears in aiki music.

If Uke-centered Aikido embodies ways to pursue one's mission in life, what embodies the goal of turning antagonism into harmony? Many of us speak of social conflict resolution as an important contribution of aikido, yet classical aikido training provides few if any exercises to facilitate this. Devising exercises on the mat that work to break up fights and move combatants toward harmonious resolutions forms an important frontier area: Mediation-centered Aikido.

The foregoing suggests a paradigm we might call three-dimensional aikido:

- 1> Projective intention: extend, pursue, overcome, persevere.
- 2> Receptive intention: receive, accommodate, redirect, release.
- 3> Mediative intention: check, engage, extend, resolve.

In rethinking our ideas about aikido, moreover, we must engage with problematic terms commonly used to represent the practice. A logical prerequisite for re-visioning aikido would thus seem to be:

- 4> Reflexive Aikido: Reconsidering the language used to frame our practice.

Workshops with Don Levine Sensei

Reflexive aikido; projective aikido; receptive aikido; mediative aikido

Workshop I. Reflexive aikido. How might it work as an aiki practice?

1. O'Sensei as model. Parallel with Freud.
2. O'Sensei on aikido: *Aiki Waza Michi Shirube*. What *mochi* (Way) does he identify?
 - a. help individuals realize their personal missions;
 - b. promote mankind as a single family.
3. How does conventional aikido practice relate to those missions?
4. How might aikido practice be expanded to a more fulsome curricular repertoire?
 - a. Reflexive intention: words, meanings, and diverse intentions.
 - b. Projective intention: extend, pursue, overcome, persevere.
 - c. Receptive intention: receive, accommodate, redirect, release.
 - d. Mediative intention: check, engage, extend, resolve.
5. Common Aikido terms
 - a. Japanese?
 - b. Martial?
 - c. Art?
 - d. Self?
 - e. Defense?
 - f. Nage?
 - g. Uke ?
 - h. Extend ki?
 - i. Blend?
 - j. Relax! ?
6. Other vocalizations.
 - a. *Kotodama* (Gleason Ss.).
 - b. *Qi Gong* vocalizations.
 - c. Common words.

Workshop II. Projective ("Uke"-centered) aikido

1. Seven modalities for cultivating ki (chi).
2. Preparing to attack/play/create. *Viola-do* (Masumi Ss.). Making your move.
3. "Leading" the other.
4. Managing "obstacles." *Kaeshi waza* as a way of life.
5. Embracing mistakes. Falling down and getting up

Workshop III. Receptive ("Nage"-centered) aikido

1. Being ready to receive. *Qigong. Six directions ready flow*.
2. Welcoming attacks. "*Thank you*" responses (Linden Ss). Outer/inner vocalizations.
3. Making room for guest (Heiny Ss.).
4. Ways of connecting and staying connected.
5. Transforming the energy. *Yogic breathing. Qigong. Tonglen*.
6. Throwing away the concept of Throwing (*Nage*).

Workshop IV. Mediative aikido

1. Opting to engage.
2. Ways to initiate engagement.
3. Ways to forestall escalation.
4. Techniques that enhance mediation.
5. Conflicts between unequal/ equal parties.
6. Conflicts involving disputes over third parties.
7. Conflicts over ideas.

