

Aikido Connection Monthly

Volume 1, Issue 3

November/December 2003

UPCOMING EVENTS

Holiday Schedule

The dojo will be closed:

Thanksgiving weekend

(November 27-29)

and Christmas week

(December 22-27)

We will be open New Year's

week. Make plans to

celebrate the New Year's

Eve with us with

Etsunengeiko

2004 Event Schedule

*... is posted in the dojo—
make your plans now!*

Happy December Birthdays to:

Tim Kosch

John Kurker

Karl Nelson

Tom Rea

Tyrone Sledge

Mike Wurster

TRANSLATING THE FOUR PRINCIPLES OF AIKIDO—PART 3

In the third part of our exploration on the four principles of Aikido, I would like to talk about keeping weight underside.

Of all the principles, this one is the easiest to understand, but not necessarily the easiest one to put into practice. It should be obvious that if the distribution of weight in a given object is below the halfway point of that object, it will be more stable than if the weight were to be higher up. Allow me to give an example: if you have an object with the majority of the mass at its base, it would be more difficult to push over than if that object had its weight higher, such as this:



The triangle on the left would be more stable because if the weight were distributed evenly throughout it, it would have most of its weight underside. The triangle on the right has its weight topside, and therefore it would be easier to knock down.

When applying this logic to people, we again start with our centers. We all know by now where our center is located, so it is just a matter of keeping our weight below this point when applying technique and moving our bodies. In our culture we are taught, especially the men, that big chest, arms, and shoulders equals strength. We are taught that if we are big and strong we can move anything and no one can move us. Therefore, we have

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Elements of Aikido

by Denny Dombkowski

This is an interesting perspective of Aikido (and life). As some may know, Aristotle claimed long ago that the world and all its inhabitants were made up of 4 elements, Earth, Air, Water, and Fire. Of course, Aristotle said a lot of strange things that were WRONG, including the Sun revolves around the earth, etc. Of course, the world is made up of a lot more specific things, like Hydrogen, Silicon, and things like that.

However, let's go back to the Earth, Air, Water, and Fire thing. Being the gaming nerd I am, and the semi-philosopher, I like to apply certain religious beliefs to these elements, as the simple concepts behind them can, believe it or not, actually relate to science and religion, no matter how mythological they might be. So, first, I guess I should explain the concepts behind them.

Air is mind, earth is body, water is soul, and fire is ambition. A person primarily composed of the "Air" essence will think of his mind as his most important part, therefore he will read a lot and do research a lot, and stuff. Scientists tend to be Air people; Air represents open-mindedness, freedom, and change. "Earth" people will think of their body as the most important part, they are their bodies. I can think of several athletes who are "Earth" people; Earth represents stability and focus. Water people care about their souls, and tend to be very social, very empathetic, and well, compassionate, etc. Water represents spirituality, emotion, healing, empathy, and in many cases compassion (though this is not always the case) Water types tend to be artful types, like musicians, painters, sculptors... hmm, writing is more of an Air type, but you need water to convey emotion; Water people are said to have the most psychic potential. Fire people think that their accomplishments are the most important part, and well, tend to be all sorts of occupations, needless to say. Fire represents ambition, quests, and goals.

NEWSLETTER

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INDIANA**

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Translating the Four Principles... (continued)

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the tendency to puff out our chest and move everything up high. Go into any gym and watch people as they lift weights. Unless they are educated in some respects to the dynamics of bodybuilding, most people spend the majority of their time doing upper body exercises and hardly ever work the lower body. The result is like the triangle on the right.

All of us starting out in Aikido have a tendency to move higher than our centers, and what usually occurs as a result of this is a loss of balance and failure to execute the technique properly. If we keep our one point lower than uke's, it is a lot easier to move them than if we are higher up, because the higher up the weight, the less stable we are.

Occasionally we may be able to make techniques work if we are stronger than our opponents, but if they are just as strong, or more knowledgeable on how to move their centers and their bodies, you will fail almost every time.

Remember that the importance of keeping your weight underside is related to balance and movement. If you find yourself up on your toes or are falling over when throwing uke, just dropping your center can usually solve the problem. When you are practicing *aikitaïso*, think about keeping your weigh underside, especially when doing tenkan with step or happo undo. This will keep you from losing your balance. When doing ki testing during a kyu test, instead of pushing back against the force of the push you should just drop your center into the earth. This is helpful because if you are grounded to the earth, you are stable and solid. If you just push back against the force on your body, you are not blending with the energy but merely engaging in conflict. Then if the force is suddenly removed you stumble in the direction in which you were pushing...not good and potentially embarrassing.

I hope this helps you in understanding the principle of keeping weight underside and how to apply it in your practice. Next month I will talk about the fourth and final principle, relax completely. This should be interesting since it is the one with which I have the most trouble!

Don Honeycutt, 3rd kyu

Elements of Aikido (continued)

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One thing I have learned... there is no "Good" or "Evil" element. Each element can be good or evil on it's own. Air people can be self-centered, Fire people can be cruel, angry, and uncaring, Water people can be lazy and apathetic, Earth people can be narrow minded. Of course, being Narrow Minded isn't a characteristic of a strong Earth, it is the characteristic of a weak Air. Having anger problems isn't a characteristic of a strong Fire, it's a characteristic of a weak Water (anger is an emotion, isn't it? Negative emotions mean your water is negative, or weak) As you can probably guess, Water is the opposite of Fire, and Air is the opposite of Earth. Therefore, people strong in one element tend to be weak in their opposite. I personally am an Air personality, therefore I tend to not take care of my body (as much as I want to), which would explain why I oversleep and miss Aikido class a lot. Hee.

Anyways, back to the point... What does this have to do with Aikido? Well, as I said previously, there is no GOOD element. One should not seek to become strong in a specific element, one should try to seek development in all four. By improving your Body, Mind, and/or Soul, one can make great accomplishments. One can also make great accomplishments by not improving anything and just using devious and underhanded methods to accomplish things, but that only leads to destruction, they say. If one combines two opposite elements, one can be very, very powerful. If you combine fire and water, then you can accomplish things and move ahead in life, and have ambition, but have the moral strength to not harm anyone in the process. If one combines Air and Earth, one can be open-minded but very stable at the same time.

Look into the four principles of Aikido: Extend Ki, Keep Weight Underside, Relax Completely, and Keep One Point. You can look at these four concepts and basically see the four elements. Extend Ki basically can mean to constantly extend your energy and make everything you do count, which is obviously fire. Relax Completely means to calm yourself and clear your mind, which can be seen as air or water. Keep one point is to focus, which is obviously Earth. Keep Weight Underside... well, it has something to do with the body and keeping it balanced, so it sounds like an earth?

Just an interesting way of looking at things. So a good way to better your learning in Aikido is to master your weaknesses. If you think you have a strong earth (like taking care of your body, exercise a lot, have a physically intensive job), then pick up a book and read it. Study. Likewise, if you have a strong mind, exercise more. Meditate, focus. If you have a strong fire, talk to people more, try to understand them. Draw, try to play an instrument. Finally, if you have a strong water, well, go out and accomplish something, no matter how small. (Fire and Water are hard elements to build up, because you cannot clearly define how).

Denny Dombkowski, 6th kyu

Contributions of Aikido-related writings and artwork for these newsletters is appreciated !!!! This is your newsletter- please help make it useful and interesting!