



The Aiki Dojo

道の為、世の為、人の為、合気道

2

The Year of the Boar

by David Ito

2019 is the year of being ferocious
and courageous like the Boar.

4

Get A Move On

by Ken Watanabe

Movement is about control – how we
control our own movement.

7

The Samurai Mind

by Rev. Kensho Furuya

Like the Samurai, our minds are
set free to act instantaneously.





Doji Yoshiharu overthrowing a giant boar in the forest while being watched by warriors among the trees by Utagawa Kuniyoshi.

梅が番に	Ume ga ka ni	Suddenly the sun rose,
のっと目の出る	notto hi no deru	to the scent of the plum blossoms,
山路かな	yamaji kana	along the mountain path.

– Basho

The Year of the Boar

by David Ito Aikido Chief Instructor

Happy Lunar New Year!

2019 is the year of the Boar. The Boar is the last and 12th sign according to Chinese astrology. The Boar came late to the Jade Emperor's party and was then relegated to the last position according to one story. The Boar was late because he is pragmatic and had to repair his home after a wolf had destroyed it. The sign of the Boar is supposed to be a lucky sign since the Boar has a big ears and a chubby face which are supposed to be signs of wealth and good fortune. The Boar's nature is supposed to be pragmatic, straightforward and fierce.

The Boar is a popular motif in Japanese *budo* culture. The job of a Samurai requires them to not only be ready to fight but to do their utmost when they fight. The Boar is supposed to be an animal which ferociously charges forward relentlessly when it attacks. Thus, more than any other trait, the Boar's ferociousness is the characteristic that many warriors admire the most. However, the Boar's straightforwardness embodies the Samurai's desire to be decisive and assertive when the need arises. This straightforwardness can be seen in the old Samurai proverb of *bushi no ichigon* which means "a warrior only says one thing" or in other words a

warrior says what they will do and does what they say they will do. Some of the Samurai admired the Boar so much for its unwavering courage and ferociousness that many quietly adorned their battle accoutrements with design of the Boar. One can see its obvious usage as horns on helmets, but also as designs on sword guards, armor and kimonos. Another popular Boar motif is the *inome* or the Boar's eyes. The *inome* is such an ordinary symbol that most overlook its placement because it looks like a heart, but it's supposed to be the symbol of the hardened eyes of the Boar to remind the warrior to have steadfast courage and to fight with ferociousness in battle.

The warriors of old generally had two concepts that they wrestled with: life and death. The conundrum of life is, "how do we live knowing that we are going to die?" The question of death is, "how do we face death." On the surface, humanity is a duality between life and death where one opposes or is in contrast to the other. We often see death as the end of life. When we approach a deeper level, we come to the realization that life and death are one in the same. Life and death, like mind and body, are subjective which means that they are perceptions of our consciousness.

When the warrior goes to battle or when a person is trying to develop themselves, they must put their "life" on the line so to speak. Standing on the precipice of one's death, the warrior can use that



impending doom to realize that life and death are one and then finally realizes their own humanity. In a sense, they learn “how” to live knowing that they are going to die.

Today, we live far from that line and, in a sense, it can seem harder to “realize” how to live without the element of the danger. One can, however, realize the non-duality of life and death through training. O’Sensei once said, “I did all the work for you and created Aikido.” What O’Sensei is talking about is that with training a person can reach the level of *Masakatsu*, *Agatsu* or “victory over one’s self.” When we train, we come to learn about humanity and with the understanding of humanity we realize that life or death only exists as a concept in our minds and the only thing that exists is this one moment.

Once we reach this point of consciousness whether in battle or in training, we realize that only this single moment exists and we come to be mindful of that moment. We treat it like the last drop of juice from an orange; we try and savor it and not waste it and we then experience it in a more deeper and broader sense.

The haiku above written by Matsuo Basho deftly illustrates how one can cross over that line without the need for danger and how when we savor the moment it can be much more.

The poem at the beginning of this article was translated by R.H.

Blyth. Here is some of his commentary about Basho’s poem.

“Notto,” “suddenly,” represents the “jerk” to the mind of the poet of his impressions, rather than the suddenness of the sun rising. The two senses of smell and hearing were so simultaneously affected that Basho felt as if he had smelled the sun, had seen the scent of the plum-blossoms.



Inome or Boar’s eyes tsuba

Boars can be resolute and fight with ferociousness because they are not conscious of the act. Because the act is within their nature and the Boars have “no mind” then they are not easily overtaken by the duality of life or death. We, as humans, are not beasts and conscious of our mortality and thus that the duality exists. When we learn how to live then we can see the scent of the plum-blossoms and smell the sun rising because we are mindfully aware of the moment and truly living.

Today, we no longer need to train to destroy or kill so we don’t need to hold on to the concept that life and death are separate. With training, we learn to be like the Boar and be resolute in the face of death and fierce in the way we live our lives. This is what O’Sensei means by *Masakatsu*, *Agatsu* because when we defeat ourselves we can live a life at a higher level of consciousness or at a higher level of humanity.

I wish everyone a wonderful 2019 and may you all be like the Boar!•



Get A Move On

by Ken Watanabe *laido* Chief Instructor

Strength and speed might seem to be the most important aspect of martial arts training. We might see images of a lithe, sinewy Bruce Lee, or the well-developed upper body of any sports fighter and think, “I have to be like that.”

Using strength and speed certainly feels more effective for the martial arts. It might feel more “martial artsy” to throw or pin our partners a little too hard, or rush through the technique to show how good we are, but is that what training is about? How to become self-satisfied?

Strength and speed do have their place in martial arts, but before worrying about that, we should concentrate on the technique’s movement. Why emphasize the movement? Movement is what protects us when we evade our opponent’s attack. Movement is how we align ourselves with our opponent’s power, blend with, and neutralize that attack. Movement is what unbalances and displaces our opponent’s posture so we can throw and pin them.

If we compared our training to a railroad, we might think it’s important to have a fast, powerful locomotive that can pull many cars. Yet, that train’s speed and power is limited by how well the tracks are laid. If the rails are not aligned perfectly or installed haphazardly, too much speed and power can spell disaster. Our movement is like the railroad tracks supporting the speed and power of the train. Emphasizing the movement allows our strength and speed to develop naturally, instead of awkwardly.

Movement in the training is also an important consideration for instructors. All Aikido techniques encourage movement. All Aikido techniques require movement to be effective. When teaching, it is important to teach techniques appropriate for the students’ level.

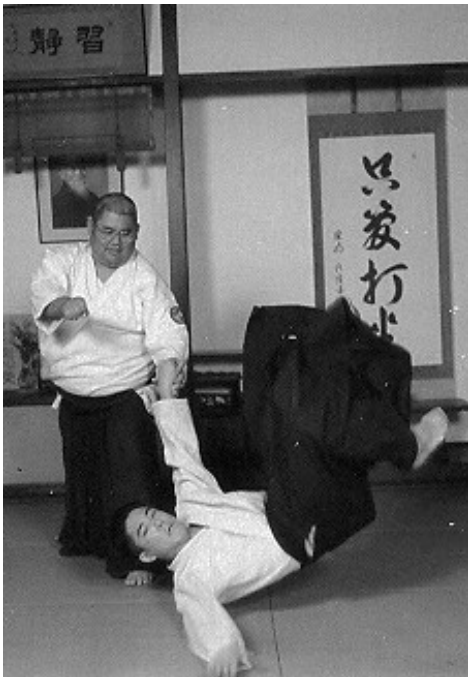
When a new black belts begin teaching, they often want to show how much they know or how strong they are. They might teach something advanced or fancy. If students have to stop to figure out the technique then this discourages movement and slows the pace of the class. This kind of approach to teaching doesn’t help the students develop their basics. What the students need to develop in their training is movement and practicing techniques that encourage that movement.

Whenever Furuya Sensei taught, we did many of the simpler “beginner stuff” type techniques on a daily basis, almost to the point where we took them for granted. It’s only many years later that I realize how important many of these techniques are. These simple techniques contained the building blocks of the Aikido, and develop our *irimi*, *tenkan*, and *tenshin* movements, as well as the basics of blending with the opponent’s attack. These techniques also develop our timing, spacing, energy, and concentration.

Emphasizing movement isn’t only for when we are the *nage* – the one throwing or pinning. It’s important to emphasize movement when it’s our turn to be the *uke* – the one being thrown or pinned.

FURUYA SENSEI MEMORIAL SEMINAR

March 8-10, 2019



Everyone is invited to attend!

Schedule of Classes

March 8th (Friday)

6:30 – 7:30 PM: David Ito, Aikido 5th Dan

8:00 PM: No Host Dinner

March 9th (Saturday)

8:00 – 9:00 AM: David Ito, Aikido 5th Dan

9:15 – 10:00 AM: Ken Watanabe, Aikido 6th Dan

10:15 – 11:00 AM: James Doi, Aikido 6th Dan

11:15 AM – 12:00 PM: Santiago Almaraz, Aikido 5th Dan

12:15 – 1:00 PM: Maria Murakawa, Aikido 3rd Dan

6:30 PM: Seminar Social

March 10th (Sunday)

7:30 – 8:45 AM: Santiago Almaraz, Aikido 5th Dan

9:00 – 10:00 AM: David Ito, Aikido 5th Dan

10:15 – 11:15 AM: David Ito, Aikido 5th Dan

11:15 AM – 12:00 PM: Furuya Sensei memorial

12:30 – 1:30 PM: Gravesite visit

Taking *ukemi* is one of the best ways to develop our ability to move and strengthen our bodies. *Ukemi* is so important that a student's potential in Aikido is not based on their ability as a *nage*, but on their skill in taking *ukemi*.

Emphasizing movement in *ukemi* might seem like we are just throwing ourselves. Why not resist? Resisting might feel stronger, but in doing so it stops not only their movements but ours, which creates openings for counter attacks. Resisting can make us physically stronger, but in the long run, resisting doesn't develop the kind of power that transcends physical strength, and furthermore it can put us in danger of a serious injury by the technique. Moving with the technique is the best way to defend ourselves against the technique and at the same time learn about the technique.

Ukemi which is strong and dynamic, and at the same time, light and flexible, develops good focus, awareness, and a sense of connectivity – all things needed to practice good Aikido. Good *ukemi* brings out the energy and movement in the technique, not stifle it. A good *uke* who understands the technique helps bring out the correct technique in their practice partner. Thus, we can see why good *ukemi* skills are important.

Movement is about control – how we control our own movement; how our movement is connected to our opponent's attack and defense, and how our movement controls and influences our opponent. As our movement develops and becomes more clear, we can

begin to sense how it blends with our partner's movements.

Once we can control ourselves, we can control our opponent. If our movement stops, our energy stops. When our energy and movement stop, our opponent's stops as well. When our opponent stops, they regain their balance, and therefore, their strength.

When emphasizing movement in the technique, we don't have to hurry, or use too much strength. Try not to push or overpower, but develop clear, purposeful, and complete movements with the proper energy and focus. That is, if we have to move our hand straight, then we move it straight. If we have to move our hand in a circular path to our partners face, then we move it in a circular path to their face. If we have to move our body behind our opponent, then we move behind our opponent.

Aikido's power is generated from movement. Even when we are still, there is still movement happening internally and when we are moving, there is also complete stability. When practicing the techniques emphasizing the movement in our legs, hands, and center, we can begin developing the true strength and power of Aikido.

Aikido uses timing and spacing to throw or pin our opponents. This means that we must be at the right place at the right time, and that means that we gotta move, when we gotta move. •



Furuya Sensei used to say, “If you think Aikido is about throwing people down, you are sorely mistaken.” For the practice of Aikido we must go beyond the mere execution of techniques with the idea or desire to hurt others. Aikido at its higher level can be a method for our personal growth.

Aikido was developed as a unique art since O’Sensei developed it as another way of resolving conflicts other than by the path of violence. The more we study Aikido, the more it makes us reflect and think about not only other people’s humanity, but our own as well. Aikido is an art in which the techniques harmonize with our opponent’s attack, i.e., speed, strength, direction, intention, etc.

A shared humanity is basically the philosophical theory of Aikido. We practice so that we can be attentive and care for our attacker or training partner because we have a shared humanity.

In our vocabulary there is a word that defines this attention given to the *uke*, “empathy.”

Empathy is derived from the Greek word *empátheia*. The etymology the word is composed of the prefix *en* which means “inside” and the root *pathos* or “suffering or passion” which is then used to allude to the “feeling of a collective suffering.” So, this expression can be understood as “what is located within the feeling of others.” A more open translation comes to explain that empathy roughly means the ability to perceive, share and understand what another human being is feeling, worrying about or any other experience they are suffering with.

When we practice this empathy for our partner, it makes us aware

of many factors that could be influencing our partner or attacker and thus it affects the application of the technique. Having empathy enables us to perceive what the correct rhythm, speed or strength that we should be utilizing when executing the technique. When we can truly “see” our opponent’s suffering then we can take care of our partner. We can be careful in not only the strength and speed of the movement but also in the technique we choose so that we both don’t suffer some injury. Taking care or having empathy means we know where we are going to throw the person, how much to project them or how little or just how fast or slow we need to go because we are aware of the physical condition and emotional temperament of our opponent.

Having this “attention” or empathy for others is what makes us human beings and is what creates humanity. Learning to take care of others is crux of Aikido training and is something that we can apply to our daily lives as well, but it is a “skill” that we have to work on and develop daily with constant training.

This shared humanity or empathy connection is conveyed in the politeness and concern we have for others. Westerners call it urbanity and the Japanese call it *omotenashi* (お持て成し) or “courtesy” or *kikubari* (気配り) or to “care for others. Regardless of the word, having empathy enables us to anticipate the needs of others by putting ourselves in their place. When we can “see” the views, sufferings of another then we learn how to care for them. In caring for them we try to alleviate their suffering so that they can be happy which is what we hope for not only for others but for ourselves as well. This shared suffering is what makes us human and enables us to realize a shared humanity and with this we understand that Aikido is more than “just throwing people down.” •



The Samurai Mind

by Reverend Kensho Furuya

Everyone is talking about the Samurai these days, and many times I think people assume that the Samurai were like cowboys or Robin Hood, but actually they were very different. Here are a couple of stories to illustrate the Samurai spirit.

Once, there was a feudal lord with a hunting party who shot a large wild boar with his bow and arrow. As they approached their newly fallen prey, the boar suddenly got up and charged the lord. All of the retainers and warriors in tow were surprised and jumped out of the way of the rampaging boar, but the lord's good friend instantly drew his sword and cut the boar down with a single cut. The lord did not see anything because he was wiping the dust from his eyes.

The commentary on this story was that the lord only pretended not to see anything. By looking away he signaled that he was ashamed of his Samurai's shameful behavior and only pretended not to see their surprise of being suddenly attacked by the boar and how in that moment they could do nothing but think to save their own lives. Samurai are supposed to train themselves to be determined in their minds to always be there to save their lord. What this also means is that there was one Samurai who had already trained himself so he could act instantly without any thought at all.

For the Samurai warrior, often there is no time to deliberate and think what is good or bad or do this or that. This kind of deliberation and consideration is what is known as thinking for profit and loss which is referred to as *akinai konjo* or the "business mind" or "calculating mind." With training and deliberation, a Samurai thinks about their actions and sets their minds ahead of time so that in a moment's notice they don't need to think, they already know what to do.

Of course, our world today is more complex and it is important to

make the right decision in everything. Yet, like the Samurai, some things about life and death, we should think about deeply and resolve important questions in our heads so we can always be free of them when the time comes in a moment's notice.

I heard that there will be movie based of the life of Saigo Takamori but I am not sure if most know or understand Saigo Takamori's strong Samurai spirit and conviction.

Once Saigo was a young page working the castle where he was already famous for his great courage and determination. One day he was carrying a cup of tea for his lord, walking down the long hallway with a tray held high. Some of the other young pages decided to get Saigo into big trouble and as he turned the corner, they all jumped out at him to frighten him and make him drop the tea. Calmly he put the tray down and stood and said, "wow, you really scared me!" Saigo then turned and picked up the lord's cup of tea and continued on his way. Saigo's resolve and calmness is what we think of when we talk about pre-determined courage. This resolve is just like the Samurai who could cut down the wild boar.

Aikido people do not fight or compete. This concept is something that we should all determine strongly in our heads so that when the time comes, in a moment, without thinking, we do not resort to fighting or violence. This is how we embrace O'Sensei's concept of non-violence. There will be no question about what to do because we have already thought about this question deeply and seriously before hand. In this way, like the Samurai, our minds are set free to act instantaneously. •

Editor's Note: *Furuya Sensei originally published this article, in a slightly different form, to his Daily Message on December 16, 2003.*

UPCOMING EVENTS

行事

February 2-4

Ito Sensei visits Kyoiku aikibudo Aikikai in Havana, Cuba

February 18 (Monday)

Dojo Closed
President's Day

February 23 (Saturday)

Dancing for the Dojo #5
Annual dojo fundraising event

February 23 (Saturday)

Intensive Seminar

March 4-11

Almaraz Sensei and students visit from Salamanca, Spain

March 8-10

Furuya Sensei annual memorial service and seminar

March 30 (Saturday)

Black belt examinations

April 2019

Dojo trip to Japan

The Furuya Foundation and the Aikido Center of Los Angeles (ACLA) admit students of any race, color, and national or ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school. The Furuya Foundation and the Aikido Center of Los Angeles do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, and national or ethnic origin in administration of their educational policies, admissions policies, scholarship and loan programs, and athletic and other school-administered programs. •

Aikido Training Schedule

合気道 時間割

Saturdays

6:30-8:00 AM*
9:30-10:30 AM
10:45-11:45 AM

Intensive
Advanced Class
Regular Class

Sundays

9:00-10:00 AM
10:15-11:15 AM
11:30 AM-12:30 PM
12:45-1:45 PM

Children's Class
Regular Class
Fundamentals
Open Practice

Mondays

6:30-7:30 AM
6:30-7:30 PM

Morning Practice
Regular Class

Tuesdays

6:30-7:30 PM

Advanced Class

Wednesdays

6:30-7:30 AM
5:15-6:15 PM
6:30-7:30 PM

Morning Practice
Fundamentals
Regular Class

Thursdays

6:30-7:30 PM
7:45-8:45 PM

Regular Class
Open Practice

Fridays

6:30-7:30 AM
6:30-7:30 PM

Morning Practice
Fundamentals

NOTE: Visitors are welcome to observe our Morning, Fundamentals, or Regular Classes.

*Last Saturday of the month is Intensive Seminar. By Invitation only.

Iaido Training Schedule

居合道 時間割

Saturdays

8:00-9:00 AM Regular Class

Sundays

7:45-8:45 AM Regular Class



The **Aiki Dojo**

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The Aikido Center of Los Angeles

has been awarded Official *Komin* recognition by the Aikikai Foundation, Aikido World Headquarters.

We are committed to the study and practice of the teachings of the Founder of Aikido, Morihei Ueshiba and his legitimate successors, Kisshomaru Ueshiba and the present Doshu Moriteru Ueshiba.

We are a not-for-profit, traditional Aikido dojo dedicated to preserving the honored values and traditions of the arts of Aikido and Iaido. With your continued understanding and support, we hope that you will also dedicate yourself to your training and enjoy all the benefits that Aikido and Iaido have to offer.

The Aikido Center of Los Angeles

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