

The Birankai Continental Europe Newsletter

SHIUN

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ONLINE or PAPER

To take up the Shiun torch after Norbeto Chiesa was a real challenge! I had to do as well as he and yet change. Collecting the texts is not the most difficult work. The Birankai members have many beautiful and interesting thoughts to express. And fortunately, confirmed English-speakers full of goodwill ensure their translation. The spark of creativity is needed when it comes to finding appropriate images to illustrate these texts. Finding them often means inventing them. But with the help of enthusiasm, we find them and are then faced with the difficulty of choosing. When it comes to printing, everything has a price. The last Shiun went well beyond the budget and the shipping was ridiculously more than even the printing.

In order to continue in the same way that was defined in the first issue and to limit expenses, the summer issue of Shiun will only be published online. As readers, you are free to print it all or simply the articles you wish to keep. Below you will find the e-mail address where you can send your opinion on the subject; whether you prefer the paper version or the on-line version.

Thank you for your understanding and I wish you all a wonderful summer.

Suzanne Brunner

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Any human being needs certainty,

as our history shows since the beginning. In a group, this need will be achieved with a structure that will guide the activities. Then people will be designated to lead these institutions and to apply and enforce the rules.

When some people share a common practice, they create an association, so that they belong to a structure.

Martial arts are not different. As soon as techniques are developed, they are normalized and organized in a more or less logical way. Practitioners must learn them, if possible under the guidance of a teacher who knows them all.

During my journey along the path, I often heard: *what you do is wrong! Left foot first!* Putting the right foot first would jeopardize the common standards. (That is only an example.)

But martial arts do not work that way: as soon as a rule is established, it is obsolete, as it tries to freeze something that evolves constantly. We must keep an open, fresh and critical mind and reject certainties, as they are usually true only for those who expound them.

The best example of this is the last scene of the film Sanjuro, directed by Akira Kurosawa: the slightly unorthodox technique performed by Toshiro Mifune mystifies completely his adversary who follows the classical form. The latter is frozen in his certainty while Mifune is totally free, without constraining rules, totally AI, i.e. he is fitting to the situation to the best of his ability. That is why he wins the duel.

In our school, the political situation evolves. What was true yesterday is not adequate today. We created national entities . We set new rules that will surely be constraining and inadequate in many cases

The most important thing is to remain open and able to communicate, in the respect of the martial spirit taught by Chiba Sensei. One must accept evolution and adapt constantly to be always «ready to fight». Everyone is expected to contribute to the process in order to live together without rules but the practice and transmission of Chiba Sensei's aikido.

Daniel Brunner Shihan



Christophe Peytier
4e Dan
Shidoïn

SAN JU KAN
LISBONE

Note : this article written in three independent parts. The first is published in this issue.

At a time where the structure of our Birankai and its functions are questioned, I thought it would be useful to share some perspectives on the transmission of our art, in particular from three complementary angles: The angle of the Sensei, the angle of the practitioner, and finally the teacher-student relationship, which remains a fundamental element in the spirit of the Birankai.

TRANSMISSION

Part 1: From the Sensei's side: What does one transmits, and how?

For every instructor came the day where the first class had to be taught, and thus ask oneself the key questions : what am I going to show them ? Which techniques will I make them practice? What message do I want to transmit? With a mixed bag of intentions : on the one hand, do things simple, by humility, and the other hand, not leave the students with the feeling that they haven't practiced anything worthwhile.

Since that very first class as an instructor, fundamental questions arise regarding the transmission of martial arts: what are we really transmitting? Is there a concrete "matter" to hand down to the next generation? How is the content defined? In fact, it is important to come back to the meaning of the word "Sensei": in Japanese, it means "One who has come before". That is: a person who is in front of us on the path of Budo. This definition is important to highlight the process of martial art teaching. Without being provocative, one could say that a Sensei does not have anything to teach to his student. He (or she) can only help them to reveal. Reveal the capabilities that exist in all of them. O Sensei used to say: "Aikido is Misogi", that is purification. Literally : "removing layers of flesh", hence the process of cleansing that occur little by little during practice. It might be interesting to come back briefly to the meaning of the word «Educate». The original signification (in Latin : e-ducere) is : to «drive out», to reveal. One can then understand quite well the notion of personal work of the practitioner, aimed at purifying, removing the superfluous, in order to come back to the essence of things. This gives weight to the sentence from O Sensei: «Aikido is already in you».

But the following stage of this reasoning, then, is: what must be done in order to promote and achieve that purification process? Using the analogy of a diamond : what must a Sensei do so that his students-stones reveal themselves as diamonds? By what means will he help them to remove the coat of dirty mud, to fashion the man-stone so that he can be revealed under his optimal angle? Doesn't he French philosopher Jean-Pierre Changeux tell us: «To learn is to eliminate»?

"The Sensei transmits a set of conditions".

Would it be, after all, that the Sensei transmits a collection of conditions? Conditions in which he will place his students so that they have the possibility to grow, evolve and reveal themselves to their maximal potential. Most of us possess a potential largely superior to what we actually use. We all have heard extraordinary anecdotes: that Russian mother who single-handedly lifted the car under which her son was stuck. Or the NDEs (Near Death Experiment), those occasions where some individuals have seen death from such a close distance that they have returned transfigured. Such American carpenter became professor of physical sciences, created a charity organisation, and learned five foreign languages, etc. These anecdotes all come from isolated origin, usually of accidental nature. On the contrary, the revelation, as we have described it above, stems from a reproducible and transmissible process. The objective is similar: to help the students become conscious of their potential. This revelation of potential helped, in the past, to survive the battle fields, but it has since then been used also to make of every person a better human being, in order to allow each of us to "live his personal legend" as Paulo Coelho writes in the "The Alchemist".

If one admits that the role of a Sensei is to put his students in conditions to awaken their capabilities to the maximum, then logic would indicate that, in order to reach this result, the Sensei would have had to follow the same path himself. Let us try to analyse concretely the key elements that define those conditions of revelation. At first glance, they appear at a physical and technical level, like Ikkyo to Rokkyo in Aikido, the trilogy Kihon/Kata/Kumite in Karate, the Long Form in Tai Chi Chuan, or the Ne Waza (ground work) in Judo. This represents the visible part of the iceberg, and obviously belong to the “conditions of transmission”, however the hidden part is of a more significant weight. This is probably the reason why, in most martial arts, beyond a certain level, one can hear “You need to forget the technique”. In the less visible part of the conditions of transmission, in my opinion three are outstanding enough to deserve to be discussed more in detail:

- **The Mind-Body integrity**
- **The state of vigilance**
- **The individualized intensity of practice**

The Mind-Body integrity begins with the development of the body consciousness. It is an essential aspect of martial arts, but also of dance, gymnastics and many other disciplines. It includes the perception of time and space and the situation of the body in these four dimensions. In the case of Aikido, these four dimensions are multiplied by two to take into account those of the partner, since right at the beginning an intense contact is developed between the two practitioners.

Corporal integrity assumes an acute perception of the rectitude of the body, what is called

Sen Chu Sei in Japanese: the consciousness of the central axis. This represents a life-long study. In Aikido, this can be arguably better learned from the Uke side, since it reveals the ability to adapt to a situation that one does not master. One may say that learning to be the strongest will not give us many opportunities to apply what we have learned. On the contrary, learning to react in adapting ourselves to circumstances stronger than us will have almost daily applications. That is the way it is: life imposes its conditions on us, we cannot force our owns. And with the development of the “right posture”, hence the rectitude of the body, comes the consciousness of the centre and the resilience: “To not resist, but to not give up”. Adapt oneself to the blows of life without losing what represents our centre, our own personality.

Preserving this attitude during the practice will have a contagious effect on the mind, and will develop the ability to preserve the sense of what is important, even during extraordinary conditions. In fact, one will quickly determine, in a martial arts

adept, the degree of “Shizei” that he or she displays. The Shizei is seen during the bow, during the walk, the practice, or even the sitting position, and reveals the degree of harmony in the relation between space and one’s body.

- **The state of vigilance:** those who have seen the difference of attitude of a lion in a cage versus one in the wild will have understood already. This might be the central quality of martial arts adept.

A Sensei must maintain his students in a state of permanent vigilance so that they can refine their capacity to sense the details at an extreme level. For example, when a Sensei prepares to show a movement that requires a partner, suffice for him to look slightly in the direction of the chosen student for the latter to get out of the line and prepares to practice with the Sensei. In the Japanese culture, this type of communication without words is called I Shin Den shin: "From your soul to mine", and is considered to be the most sophisticated form of communication. This is the form that needs to be developed between the Sensei and his advanced students.

Let's take another example: the warm-up session that precedes the actual practice, during an Aikido class: we will compare a Sensei who gives spoken explanations of the exercises to practice during warm-ups, with comments such as "Change directions" before switching from one side of the exercise to the other, with another Sensei that says nothing. In the first case, it is not necessary for the students to be vigilant. One just needs to wait to hear the Sensei's indication to switch sides; one can look by the window, or day-dream without losing much. In the case of the second Sensei, his students must always look then try to feel when he is going to change the motion. Since the very first seconds of the class, one can note a martial dimension (or the lack of thereof) in the practice. Seeing a Sensei lead a warming exercise shouting "change direction", one can wonder if that teacher will have the capacity to help his students to reveal this basic quality: the spirit of vigilance, fundamental quality in jungle or battlefield survival, and predominant factor in the development of a human being, if we consider that it is at the origin of many other qualities: lucidity, sensitivity, good judgement, speed in decision making, etc.

A Sensei will look for every opportunity to refine this sensitivity amongst his or her students. I had the immense privilege to translate for Chiba Sensei at the French summer camps for over ten years, and this has given me innumerable opportunities to refine my sensitivity to Sensei's words in order to be able to translate them to the best I could, trying to render the depth and the emotions of his messages, often in adverse conditions of poor acoustics, with Sensei moving all the time, which forced me to sharpen my sense of distance and timing. I came to question whether he was actually doing sometime on purpose to turn his back to me, in order to see how I would maintain the proper distance, and whether this, in fact, was not a hidden training he was giving to me, like a private class during the public class. Whether this was conscious or unconscious from him, I wish to let him know

that I am extremely grateful about it.

- The individualized intensity of practice, obliging each student to give the best of himself during the exercise. A Sensei must sense where every student is on the path of practice, and consistently push their limits, with regards to strength, speed, flexibility, ability to react to new circumstances, etc. There are unfortunately many dojos where one can feel an impression of comfort, like a car quietly cruising on the highway. Even if the students practice in silence and appear sincere, this does not mean that they are practicing seriously. The role of the instructor is to make sure that each practitioner is permanently "raising his own bar", that during each class a level of energy and an intensity transpire in an obvious manner. This willingness to push towards the top also applies to the students among themselves.

It is always a great pleasure to see adepts helping each other to grow, to challenge each other with a spirit of mutual progress. That has nothing to do with the need to show one's superiority, to the contrary. It is a manifestation of respect and generosity, giving the partner the opportunity to improve. Here again, this attitude can be felt immediately, for example during the practice of Jyu Kumite in Karate, or Randori in Aikido, where there is an obvious difference between the "ego battles" and a sincere practice, challenging but with intention to help the partner/opponent to raise his level. This search of the best intensity for each student is also a source of progress for the Sensei. He must remain sensitive to every student, feel in the fraction of a second where the limits are. Whoever has practiced with a real master knows that he has to be at his top level to do so. Suffice to be slightly tired, to have had a bad night or too much party to create an opportunity of injury. In the encounter of two forces, there is always a probability of de-synchronization, from one side or the other. From the Sensei side, a wrong estimation of the current capacity of the student, and from the student side, a performance below usual standards. This tension obliges each party, instructor and student, to give the best of themselves, even if this sometime creates the risk of a regrettable incident. However, this risk has an immense advantage: it is the origin of fear. That fear forces the student to remain alert and vibrant. In fact, every time one enters on the mat, one should wonder "Am I going to get out alive and in one piece?" The sentence of Chiba Sensei that I heard almost twenty years ago, during one of my first seminars in San Diego, always comes back to mind: "When you attack me you have to think that you may die". This fear to inflict or to be victim of a bodily damage creates a mutual progress, because fear is a motivating feeling. It must not repress but,

to the contrary, leverage. It is fear that maintains in life. If you have the opportunity to talk with army veterans who survived battlefields, you may have already heard that.

However, let us clearly state that we are not talking about purposefully injures students, which would be an attitude eminently condemnable. When stepping on the mat, we must be conscious of the possibility of an accident by lack of attention, not wondering if it is on us that “the teacher is going to pass his frustration today”.

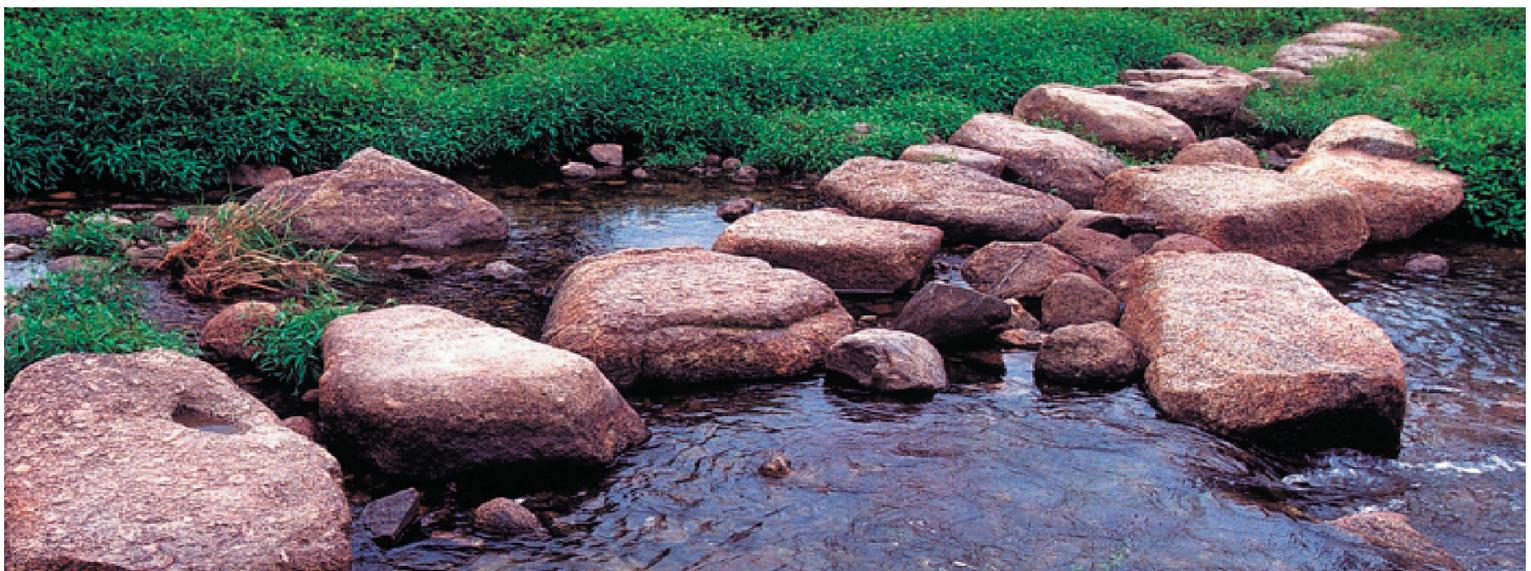
Suffice to look at a martial art class for 30 seconds to feel the degree of intensity in the practice, and if the conditions above are present.

There are certainly other conditions that should be part of those “conditions of transmission”. Some of which I am not conscious of but that I am nevertheless transmitting and that my students will be able to capture, others that I was not able to understand from my masters, and that may be forgotten by the next generation.

I wish there is are only few of the second category, since if not there is a risk that these

conditions be insufficient to allow the optimal revelation of the students through the capture of the essence of the art and, in consequence, a great loss which will transform the practice of Budo in a mere sport.

Christophe Peytier



Matt Teale
Yon Dan
Shidojin

AIKIDO AT
KOLONOS



WOOD AND FIRE

Wood represents structure, growth and form, the physical movements/techniques of Aikido. The cellulose in wood gives it its strength and allows a plant to grow against gravity. Healthy, living wood is green and flexible.

Fire is pure energy. It is expansive, explosive and destructive. It represents the raw, martial spirit, the immediate, instinctive reaction which is the goal of any martial artist.

Fire burns up and destroys wood but if the old, dead wood is not cleared in this way, the plant becomes stiff and dry and there is no room for new, green, young, flexible shoots to grow. In this way the plant loses its vitality. The fire also turns the old wood into ash, which then feeds the roots of the new growth.

Fire destroys the wood but needs it as food. Without a good supply of wood the fire will burn itself out and die.

So these elements are very different and seemingly opposed but actually part of the same continuum and mutually entwined and inter-dependent.

I see this dynamic tension playing out very clearly in Aikido and especially in Birankai. Chiba sensei himself has immense power and martial vitality but anyone who has spent some time with him knows that he demands great attention to the details of the physical movements. His students each take away a different balance of these two elements depending on their abilities, personalities and their personal experience with him.

These differences seem sometimes to polarize with time. Some emphasize the technical details

but don't manage to pass on the fire and spirit that they experienced with the master. Others take away a feeling of the immediacy, danger and vitality and see the technical details as an artificial construct that gets in the way of the real business at hand. I think any teacher (or student) in Birankai fits somewhere along the spectrum in between these two extremes. The tension between these extremes can be seen in each individual, in each dojo, in each national organisation and amongst all the Aikidoka following Chiba sensei's teaching as a whole.

To go back to the metaphor, I see the technicians as caught up in dead wood. As their teaching is passed on from one generation to another, the Aikido will become just empty form, lacking any spirit. At the other end of the spectrum, fire without wood will burn itself out eventually.

This becomes highlighted when we look at different people's approaches to the disciplines of weapons, *iaido* and *zazen*.

In weapon work the two elements come closer together. The physical structure of the techniques is simpler (especially with *bokken*). So attention can be paid to the precision of the movements but the reality of a large wooden object moving towards you at speed keeps the martial essence alive. Even here though you see people working on the physical form but not injecting it with the spirit it needs to keep it alive. This leads to an empty dance with sticks. Others reject doing long, complicated katas as losing the point and focus on single encounters where the intensity of the encounter is clearer or even just sticking to body art because that has everything we need. They have a point but here we all come to Aikido with different abilities.

Some people naturally have a martial attitude. The tendency to be naturally physically confident, risk takers, who are not fearful and have quick reactions, uncomplicated by intellectualization. Maybe, these people don't need the extra stimulation of weapons (I don't know) but the majority of us are inhibited by fear and over intellectualization and I believe we need the stimulation that weapons give, to heighten our sense of *ma-ai*, immediacy, martial awareness, timing and penetration which can easily become diffuse and unclear in body arts.

Iaido is an exercise in precise attention to the details of physical form. It hones our self-awareness and helps us develop centeredness and a firm base. It tends to attract the more intellectual types because it seems “easier” for their abilities and does not involve any danger or instinctive reactions in its everyday practice. Of course, without fire iaido really does become dead wood and you can often see this empty, mechanical style. The spirit which is essential to keep is alive has to be generated internally but needs to be cultivated by the teacher. With the correct stimulation, iaido can be the ideal “safe” environment for the intellectual types to develop a sense of fire. Of course the other physical types often find iaido boring, with its repetition and attention to detail but I believe that it is ideal wood for their fire. It can temper and focus their natural martial spirit, for them to become more effective martial artists.

Finally zazen!

Here the mechanical technique is almost eliminated. There is almost no form for the intellectuals to get stuck on and yet they do!! Of course the mind can keep itself occupied for hours without the need for other toys but some manage to distract themselves from the point by becoming focused on the sutras, bells, bowing etc. These all have important roles to play within the discipline of zazen but they are not meant to be empty ceremony. Our instinctive, martial types have not usually come to Aikido for a spiritual path and have great difficulty swallowing the pill of zazen. It is the part of Chiba sensei’s vision that is hardest to deal with for many people. People initially come to Aikido for many different reasons – fitness, self defense, a physical challenge, only a few come to it as a spiritual path (initially) and those that do are the ones that will get lost in the woods.

Note - I wrote this essay for myself before our recent seminar with Chiba sensei in October, to try to put down some of the thoughts I have been having after recent conversations and reflections. However during the seminar he emphasized the need for martial spirit/vitality during practice, so I decided to share it with Shiun.

Matt Teale
translated by Christophe Peytier



In Chile, a new branch of Birankai which has its roots in Europe.



Marcelo Torres
2nd Dan

Javier Fernandez
3th Dan
Fukushidoin

TAIGA AIKI DOJO
aiki dojo del Gran Rio
Concepción, Chile.

an event that to this day happens regularly at the University of Concepción.

The very first course of that inaugural seminar brought a startling surprise. The set up was still uncertain because the University was having difficulty securing the tatami and the future of practice was therefore still in doubt. A few minutes before the beginning of the course the gymnasium was packed with students.

The Aikido club Taiga Aiki Dojo dates from November 1999. At that time a series of coincidences would mark the development of Aikido in Concepción. Javier Fernandez and Marcelo Torres, two friends and old karate students, return to Chile after a period of time spent in Switzerland and Canada respectively, countries in which they come in contact with Aikido.

Shortly after their return, the first practice sessions were organized in nearby beaches and parks. Right away there is talk of Aikido in Concepción and other people join the group.



Confronted with these expectant faces the seminar organizers assumed that there was some other activities going on in the campus and that these students had found themselves in the wrong place. The first opening announcement went out: "may I have your attention please, all of you intending to participate in the Aikido seminar please come forward", and they did, all 120 of them took part in the first Aikido seminar in Concepción. The future was promising.

By April 2000, a group of ten students is practicing regularly, and faced with imminent arrival of winter they seek and obtain shelter at the University of Concepción with access to their facilities and infrastructure. Towards the end of 2000 the first official Aikido summer courses take place, and in April 2001 begins an important phase of growth with the realization of the first Aikido Seminar in Concepción,



Javier Fernandez returns to Switzerland in June 2001 to complete his studies at the University and to continue with his practice of Aikido at the Ryu Seki Kai dojo under the direction of Daniel Brunner Sensei. During that time the group in Chile continues to exist under the responsibility of Marcelo Torres. Many of the aikidokas of today took their first steps during that period.



In the year 2003 classes start a few hours a week in another venue, in a hall rented from the ministry of sports. Thanks to this, Aikido practice, until then restricted to university students, becomes available to the general public. In December of that year, Javier Fernandez returns permanently to Chile. The group begins to grow and Aikido becomes well known in the city, (it should be mentioned that it was the first Aikido school to be established in Concepción.)



Many teachers have already visited the group: Norberto Chiesa, Patrick Barthélémy, Robert Savocca, Miguel Moreno and, of course, Daniel Brunner who came for the first time in 2004 and whose support has been fundamental during all these years. A fruitful connection with other national dojos also helped the development of the group.

As of today Aikido activities continue to develop at the University and in a hall in downtown Concepción.

Our deepest gratitude to all those that have made this experience possible.



<http://www.birankai.cl/>

«Daring to attack me, prepare to die» Chiba Sensei

Some Notes on the Notion of Danger- by Dr. Amnon Tzechovoy

A year ago, practicing Aikido with Chris Mooney Sensei (in Uzes, France), I experienced an alarming yet meaningful moment of danger and risk inherent in our school of Aikido. Mooney Sensei was about to attack me with a tanto. He moved forward ferociously, most forcefully. I moved fast as I could, but my heavy gi, which hanged somewhat loosely behind, got stabbed through and through. The hole was startlingly big. Chris laughed. «Every time you wear this gi, you will remember,» he said. If I had not moved fast enough, if I had been a little bit late, I would have been injured very badly. I kept dwelling on this moment, realizing the weight of danger and risk. As time passed, the experienced of this split of a second event became most meaningful, bringing home to me the essence and philosophy of our Aikido school.

Danger is indeed immanent to our school of Aikido. Upon practicing with real weapons we aim at the body and head of the opponent. We train our disciples and students to be aware of real dangers inherent in our practice, and to defend themselves adequately. This is an exciting dimension characteristic of our school.

In an article from 1985 (Aikidoists Beware) Chiba Sensei asserts:

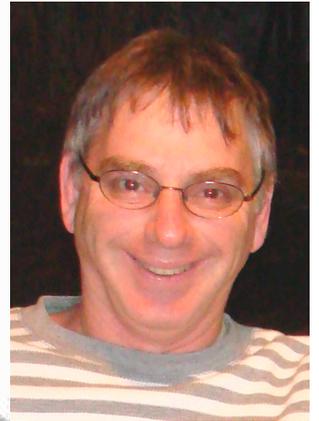
The martial art (budo) is truly a frightening thing...martial art is back-to-back with death...if we were to find the unchangeable ethic in our Japanese budo, its source should be found in the relative balance of tension between life and death and between the self and others.

Thus, danger according to Chiba is not a mere incidental aspect of Aikido, but rather an essential component of our practice, without which a school of martial art is not worth the title.

Many practitioners of Aikido think that O-Sensei invented a new martial art inherently different from the traditional Japanese ones.

Amnon Tzechovoy
Yon Dan
Fukushidoi

A MON KAN
TEL AVIV



However, Chiba insists that this is not the case. He asserts that O-Sensei does indeed offer a new way for developing the human potential. According to Chiba Sensei, O-Sensei's road to human development via martial art incorporates the tradition of such arts. And Chiba Sensei continues:

...the transcendence of Aikido from the traditional martial arts as a new way of personal development does not mean it ceases to be a martial art, just as it is impossible for humans to stop being human or conversely to assert that their existence has been non-human.

Thus, Chiba's vision of Aikido implies that danger and risk are necessary components of any traditional martial art worth the name. Elsewhere Chiba proposes that insofar as martial arts are concerned, the dichotomy of harmony and conflict is not a viable conceptualization. Harmony and conflict are complementary aspects of a true martial art such as Aikido.

As I understand Chiba's articulation of harmony and conflict with respect to Aikido practice, danger (namely, conflict) and non-violence are both inherent dimensions of existence in Aikido. Thus, the Aikido universe is truly complex, deep, even paradoxical, as it were. Harmony, grace, and non-violence are essential to Aikido as are deadly danger and risk.

The question to propose here is: why do we expose ourselves to real risks implied in our Aikido practice? Furthermore, what is the phenomenology of danger underlying the experience of Aikido? It is obvious, I think, that co-existence of life and death generates excitement of unprecedented volume and intensity. Men and women approach the further reaches of their capacities and endurance. Co-existence of life and death energizes personal development, checking feelings of depression and confusion. However, some people would consider the statements above as insufficient; why are people exposing themselves repetitively to danger?

Here I wish to bring to this discussion Levinas' idea (1934) concerning the experience of real danger and risk. These, Levinas says, present an invaluable opportunity (and occasion) of experiencing psychophysical unity (or oneness). Who would dare to deny the value of such an opportunity? As Aikido practitioners on Chiba Sensei's school, we know about all this first hand. We have at our disposal mere glimpses of the much desired unity of body and soul. Due to the Aikido discipline and experience we sense the gaps between our present incomplete condition and the ideal of complete, total unity.

Being aware of such gaps intensifies the motivation to improve and grow. As Chiba says in his article *Discovering the Body*:

Recognition of an imbalance, disharmony, or disorder within one's system, sensed within the body, as well as between the body and consciousness, is a starting point for growth. One might characterize the development of this recognition as a conversation or dialogue, which occurs between one's body and one's consciousness. As the dialogue develops, awareness becomes clearer, and one begins to perceive the natural power or potential ability, which has, until then, been hidden.

Friedrich Nietzsche; the famous German philosopher, articulated most succinctly in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* the meaning and value of sheer danger as opposed to mere survival characteristic of «the last man» (in German, *der letzte mensch*). Such a person, tired and weak, obsessed with survival and security, is truly inferior and undeveloped. (There, p 7).

Mankind is a rope between animal and overman – a rope over an abyss. A dangerous crossing, a dangerous on-the-way, a dangerous looking back, a dangerous shuddering and standing still. What is great about human beings is that they are crossing over and a going under. I love those who do not know how to live unless by going under, for they are the ones who cross over.

Nietzsche is adamant in his criticism of such an existential condition of the last man. He glorifies the existential condition of the overman - (denoting a man who creates his own values) – who dares to take risks in order to develop and grow.

Chiba Sensei's insistence on the value of intense danger is not entirely different. We, Aikido practitioners in Chiba's school of Aikido take risks in our daily practice. Struggling to become better and more individual human beings, we gradually reach towards transformation and development. Exposed to actual danger and pain, we face fear and anxiety. Some of us cherish the opportunity lying in danger, but not all of us do.

Keeping in mind the value of danger and risk, I think we should also become aware of the fascination with danger. Or, rather, we should be aware to what I would like to refer to as 'danger with danger', namely, the psychological danger of dissociation and split under circumstances of imminent threat to body and soul. As much as danger in our practice of Aikido is an opportunity for growth towards unity of body and soul, it (danger) might create a schism between spirit and body. We see practitioners who master techniques of martial arts but lack a true spirit underlying the quest for unity of body and soul. Hence, rather than being used as an opportunity for development towards enhanced unity, danger might bring about a respective split. And so we notice how some masters of technique are devoid of spirit. They are 'without souls', as it were, lacking an authentic sense of value. They are competent yet shallow. This danger with danger, namely, of becoming body without soul, is rooted in the practicing martial arts.

Another danger in danger is the wi-

thdrawal of the body. A person might be facing danger

and yet lacks the ability to master the body, as it were, make it work. The Israeli master of Judo, Aric Zeevi, once testified to the source of failure in the Olympic games in Beijing. As you might recall, Zeevi failed very early on in the game, despite winning a gold medal in the past. Upon reflecting on these moments, Zeevi talked of «uncontrolled surge of hormones», of sobs and cries in the days previous to the fight. The body was not there in the crucial moment. In our language, Zeevi failed to unite body and soul. I therefore wish to stress how severe is the split between body and soul. Any split amounts to a betrayal also in the very essence of Aikido.

Chiba's Aikido provides a version of controlled, disciplined martial art serving the quest for unity of body and soul. Danger, as I have shown, is an opportunity for making a move towards unity, yet there is no 'safe route' via which to reach this goal. A true Aikido practitioner never tires of heeding the danger with danger as he moves forward towards unification of body and soul.

Translated by Christophe Peytier.

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What does AIKIDO mean for me?

We often get confronted with this question.

Aikido has to do with movement, dealing and confronting myself.

I am Uke and Nake and always I work with myself. I am practising Aikido for ten years, more or less on a regular base. We have been on many courses, and have learnt very much.

I've learnt in my daily stressful life to calm down.

Entering the dojo I feel like coming home. If I go to the changing room I put down all my problems with the everyday clothes and step on the Tatami almost free from worries.

Aikido in the first place is calmness to me. This is very important for me and I'm very grateful for it.

For the first 10 years I've been training Aikido were influenced by meeting interesting people. About 2 years ago I had to realize that I missed myself in it. This was the turning point in my practice. It was not the fact, that we had the opportunity to practise more often. But all the questions I had were changing. I began to look for my own centre within myself.

My Sensei may excuse my ability to do

not know the names of all the techniques after such a long time. Mixing up left and right over and over again - it doesn't seem so important for me.

Looking for my centre has been developing to a daily search for myself.

This involves changes in my life and influences my home and my job.

Recently I've received my Nidan. I was very surprised and I wanted to refuse this appreciation because I felt I have just begun with Aikido.

Meanwhile this graduation is a kind of a bowl which has to be filled. This will be my next work. And I hope my Sensei will continue being patient with me.

Arno Berger
Aikido Dojo Gen Ei Kan
Landau Aikikai

Piort Masztalerz
Yon Dan
Shidojin



TAN REN KAN
AIKIKAI WROCLAW

Image of teacher

In the following text I would like to touch on the problem of changing teacher's image, which takes place in student's mind during the years of practice. This consideration is naturally based on my cultural, social and religious experiences, but I am convinced, that the process itself is characteristic for every student – teacher relation.

Beginners join Dojo with their own vision of what they will see and find there. They often choose place and teacher to fulfil their expectations, which are partly built on stereotypical ideas of both Aikido and the teacher. Those ideas are created by mass media and personal hopes. Growing out of Christian mythology and pop-culture, we imagine the teacher to be soulful half-monk, with superhuman abilities. In this way we are similar to children from the period in which they treat their parents like an almighty defenders and authorities.

On the other hand, Aikido, seen through system of values contained in the Decalogue, or in established, love-streaming art of giving a hug, can be an alternative for other disciplines, brutal and inconsistent with our expectations.

Finally we arrive in Dojo with this comic-simple representation and - like a child – we begin to follow our own way. During the process of learning, this representation will collide with reality. We'll realize, that the teacher is made of flesh and blood.

Anthony de Mello said: „Pain, disappointment and suffering always arise, where false vision crushes with reality”.

One of the first trials for beginner is, that what he gets is not the same as what he wants. Vision of Aikido will be ruined by first bruises and first nikkyo. Teacher won't be always kind and smiling.

Nowadays relation between teacher and student seems to be turned upside down. In the past the

teacher was a person, who was making a choice, not a student. Teacher didn't have to come up to student's expectations – and student had to be fit for training.

Reality of free market has changed everything, and since art of fighting became the same good as brick of milk, a customer can choose among many different Dojos. According to this fact we shouldn't be surprised, that everyone can find Dojo, which fulfil their popcultural hopes and people, who – often in good faith – try to live a life of mister Miyagi from „Katare Kid”.

The truth is, that cleaning student's mind from false expectations is as much important for teacher, as teaching the forms themselves.

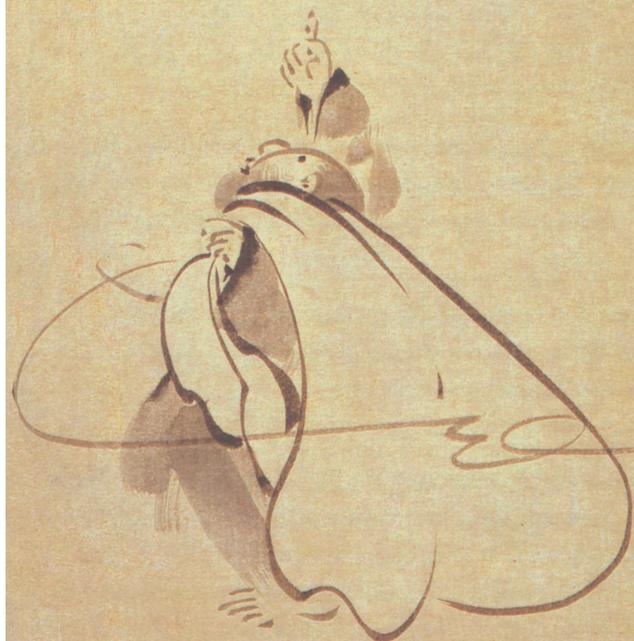
During the years of co-existence student will get to know his teacher – his problems with health, weaknesses, shortcomings, problems at home and many other things, completely different from the vision, which he had in head, when started his way. Shining statue on the pedestal will turn out, after years of looking at it, to be a rough stone. And this ability to see people as they are, not as we want to see them, to see technique as it truly looks, not through expectations and patterns, is important part of our studies.

In many ways relation teacher – student is quite similar to the relation father – son, so in the space of years it will be characterized by negation, protest and searching for its different shape.

In the past, Japanese fight techniques were instruments that made survive on the battlefield possible. Teacher's personality was a secondary question – more important was to train student in techniques as much as it was possible. That's why student had to adjust many requirements. Hard training sessions, mental pressure and continuously increasing demands created a special bond between teacher and student, based on whole gamut of feelings: from respect, admiration, through attachment, to hatred and fear. Thanks to such a strong emotions, this bond was as deep as between members of one family. It was also handed over to every next generation, like in relation children – parents. In other words mechanisms of teaching were copied and, after years, they created profile on each school.

Teacher is not always perfect – in the space of ages there were many examples of masters and teachers living with serious home problems, wrestling with alcoholism, diseases, poverty and community.

Hôtei pointing the finger at the moon
zen drawing from Fugai (1568-1654)



moods and bad days. He suffers from problems with his health and family, he likes some students and dislikes the others.

On the other hand it may happens, that teacher will try to reach this unreal, perfect image and live a life of ideal and statue. It is no use to explain how mistaken and aimless are such attempts – sooner or later ideal will destroy everyone. Most liable to this are they, who haven't meet their own teacher and – starting the way by themselves – try to fit dreamed-up expectations. It seems to be natural in situation, when teacher doesn't know somebody, who could show him with his life and words the right path.

There are not the popcultural patterns, but only leaning on teacher's example, combined with personal character, will create something rare and inimitable.

Nobody can become a master by starting from teaching other people – one needs many years of experiences and passing the same way many times to get peace and understanding. But in reality most of us remind one-eyed man, leading herd of blinds through the path we've never crossed before. Posing as masters will bring unavoidable disappointment for both teachers and students. The only natural things in such relation are honesty, respect and trust. If the relation is based on them, false visions and ideals will painlessly disappear. Behind those visions there is a human being, and real human relations. When student holds a sober view of his teacher, he can follow him consciously – and then everything possible will happen.

Finally he will choose the teacher.

Piotr Masztalerz

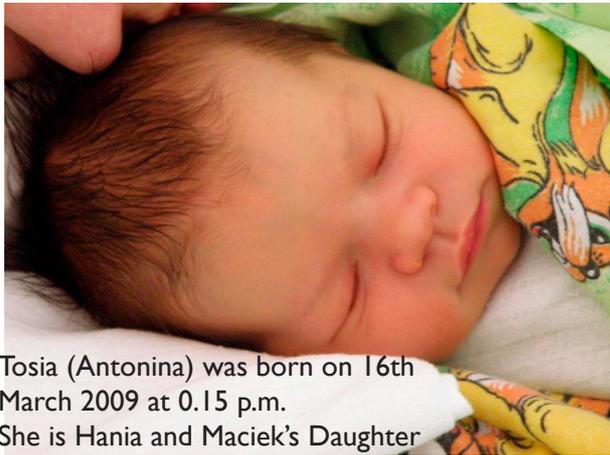
In Poland, which is deeply Catholic country, Aikido seemed to have message as strong and active, as Christianity. Operating with simple notions of good and evil and slogans showing, that Aikido is an art of love and carrying for opponent, made this school very attractive for many people. Even now, when Church in Poland is much weaker, O'Sensei is still perceived as saint Francisco on the picture. He is expected to be friendly, unselfish, careful. He is expected to represent in his life all the virtues, which student associates with comic image, strained by Christian mythology.

In reality teacher often keeps both feet on the ground, claiming a rewards for classes, has



2nd Young Europeans' Seminar in Labaroche...

<http://www.aikido-strasbourg.com/news.htm>



Tosia (Antonina) was born on 16th March 2009 at 0.15 p.m.
She is Hania and Maciek's Daughter Wroclaw.



Seminar in Landau, with Alexander Broll, Yon Dan, Shidojin and Didier Hatton, Yon Dan, Shidojin, 13 - 15 February 2009...

Gen Ei Kan Landau www.aikido-landau.de

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as we know....

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Ni dan

Arno Berger, Gen Ei Kan LANDAU (2008)
Dariusz Wieczorek, Tan Ren Kan WROCLAW
Michal Orlik, Tan Ren Kan WROCLAW

Sho dan

Georg Stoll, Gen Ei Kan LANDAU (2008)
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Shoden batto-ho

Stephan Corsten, Aikikai Zurich

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Thanks also to Yves Lepoivre who did it for long years.

Please note that the Extraordinary General Assembly will take place during the Summer school in Wroclaw, on 19th August, 2009. Please ask somebody to represent you if you cannot come. DB