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March 2009

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### **Important Aikido Concepts (Part 2)**

So ... what is Aikido now? Often the answer depends on the school in which we train. Naturally, the styles that developed over time amongst Ueshiba Senseis' students are expressions of the period in which they trained (as above, his students can be separated for convenience into pre-war and post war periods.) Students often came and went during these periods with little knowledge of the preceding or following periods and their individual emphases. What they learned was, naturally enough, considerably coloured by their own backgrounds and personalities as well as that of the person or people who actually taught them (often not Ueshiba Sensei). Following his parting from Takeda Sensei, Ueshiba Senseis' art was for some time referred to as "*Ueshiba Ryu Bujutsu*" and, in a similar way, several key students followed their teachers' example and established what are effectively their own '*Ryu-Ha*'.

These included Tomiki Ryu (Tomiki Kenji), Shin'ei Taido (Inoue Noriaki), Yoshinkan (Shioda Gozo), Yoseikan (Mochizuki Minoru), Ki no Kenkyu Kai (Tohei Koichi) and Iwama Ryu (Saito Morihiro) to name the more prominent ones. The son of the Founder, and now his grandson, inherited the title of Doshu from Ueshiba Sensei, yet have no more claim to perpetuating his Aikido than any other. In their turn, they have brought their own capacities, style and personalities to the mix.

It would be very easy to focus on the differences between these 'styles', and sometimes attempt to 'take the high ground' based on the somewhat dubious distinctions suggested previously, such as effectiveness, modernity or heritage. In this climate it is very difficult to answer "What is Aikido?" without unearthing a largely meaningless yet significant degree of divisiveness. The fact is it is many things to many people. As I look out my window I see the rain falling on my garden. There are many plants – all different. Even though there are some plants from the same species, each plant is unique. This is as it should be. All share the same earth and the rain falls on them equally – none have a claim to be the 'true' plant. We can simply admire them all, recognise their intimate connectedness and even choose to fill our garden with the ones that best suit our requirements at the time. So it is with Aikido. A very perceptive description of the relationship between the styles of Aikido came from Chiba Kazuo Sensei. Again using an analogy from nature, he said Aikido is like a tree – roots, trunk, branches, twigs and leaves. The different styles resemble various parts of the tree and the only problem is when people mistake the trunk or the roots for the twigs or the leaves.

Given all of this, I can only share with you what Aikido is to me ... how I understand it to be. This understanding continues to develop through study under and/or exposure to the systems of a number of Bujutsu / Budo teachers. Principal among these have been Shioda Gozo Sensei (Yoshinkan),





Saito Morihiro Sensei (Iwama) and Nishioka Tsuneo Sensei (Shinto Muso Ryu). Primarily I have been able to synthesise and experience this understanding in action through thirty years of martial arts practice.

Can you learn Aikido or can I teach you Aikido by considering these understandings? No.

I usually want to go straight to the Dojo and start training when Nishioka Sensei comes to my Dojo. Many times he has said – “Don’t rush off over there – let’s talk first. Action’s wasted if it isn’t guided by intelligence.” That is what the following can provide – an intelligent framework for our action. **The majority then needs to be transmitted ‘on location’ as such, during actual keiko, by a teacher to a student on an individual basis.** I can show a student how the Yoshinkan or the Ki Society or Saito Sensei did such and such a technique, but this is like taking someone for a tour through an art museum. It misses the point that the style we study is only a road towards unearthing our technique and that is only a path towards polishing our ability.

**Some Key points in the Aiki Framework** .... (Continued in *Important Aikido Concepts Part 3*)

**David**

