

Finding Aiki

Noah Levine
Aikido of San Leandro
8/22/20
Sandan Essay

"Life is within death, death is within life; you must exist right here right now!"

- O'Sensei

A man finds himself on a boat in the middle of the ocean and cannot remember how he got there. He bobs up and down, side to side as the waves splash against the small boat. Looking around he sees the vastness of the water in all directions. The sun is high in the sky and there is not a cloud in sight.

The man drifts for days without food or drinkable water. The sun beats down on him and he feels like the end is near. In his deliriousness he sees with blurred vision a shape off in the distance.

"Is that land?" He asks himself.

Probably a hallucination. But as he gets closer the image gets bigger and bigger.

"It's an island. I'm saved!" He exclaims.

Too tired to paddle, he lets the boat carry him to shore. The boat thuds against the sand and the man throws himself off the boat onto the island. He lays there staring at the blue sky. Eventually he rolls over and looks at the land around him. To his left is a long stretch of beach that ends in jagged rocks. To his right the beach curves around and hugs the island. In front of him is a tree line.

Which way should I go? He thinks to himself.

He is still thirsty and weak so he figures he should get out of the sun. Where there is vegetation there could be food and water. He decides to head for the tree line. He gets up with whatever strength he has left and walks toward the trees.

All of a sudden he notices that in between the trees is a path.

"What's this? Are there people on the island?"

He becomes very curious and begins following the path. The path goes on for quite a while. He is starting to wonder if he should turn around when he hears splashing water. A spring. He rushes forward to find cold spring water and he drinks to his health. With new life in him he keeps on the path. Now with more vigor he moves along and walks for several more hours. The path opens a bit wider and he notices the trees here bear fruit. His stomach growling, he grabs a handful and sits for a while eating the fruits of his labor. Feeling satisfied with vitality he gets up and walks headstrong along this path of his.

Walking now for a few more miles. The sun begins to set as he comes to another clearing. It seems this is where the path leads. There's a field of grass surrounded by trees with a cliff wall in front of him. The cliff face must be 100 meters high. At the bottom of the cliff is a statue. Covered in vines and moss. He walks toward the statue to get a better look.

He can't see much of the statue but what he can see is an angry looking face.

"This must be the inhabitants' deity" he says.

"I want to get a better look at this statue but I think I should rest because it's getting dark"

He lays at the foot of the statue and falls asleep.

Immediately he begins to dream. The face is staring at him with piercing eyes. He can't look but he can't look away. The statue is judging him. A booming voice asks

"What is equal on all sides?"

"I don't know," The man responds.

"What is stable and endures?"

Again the man answers "I don't know".

The voice asks again "What is never ending?"

The man starts to cry. He doesn't understand. A huge flaming tornado erupts from the mouth of the statue and the man is thrown back and...

He wakes up. Staring at the statue. The sun is rising. He gets up and starts cleaning the statue of the vines and moss. First clearing the shoulders and arms. He notices a sword in one hand and a rope in the other. The statue's face is also very strange up close. One

eye is looking at the heavens while the other is looking at the earth. So are two of his teeth.

He clears more debris away. There's an image. No. A character of some kind. He doesn't recognize the language but the character looks like a house. He thinks of his home and it reminds him of love. He clears a bit more debris and there is a second character. It looks like a lightning bolt with a person contained inside. Like it's giving him energy.

Love?...energy?...

I wonder what it means? He thinks.

He clears away all the vines and moss that covered the statue. Stepping back to take in his work he is in awe.

What a magnificent feeling he has. Then the ground begins to shake. The statue starts to move and slides to the right. Behind it is revealed an entrance. He looks at it. He can't see very far in. Building up his courage he walks towards the cliff face and steps through the door.