

O Sensei's Aikido'



Moonsensei, 'Deshi to the Aiki Kami'

Without O sensei's guidance and 'divine' connection, how do we, align our practice, to produce O sensei's art? Might we examine together, if the way we teach and practice the art, will, 'get us there'? What are the signs that point to the path?

**"Aikido is not for correcting others,
it is for correcting the discord in
your own mind.**

**Winning means winning over the
mind of discord in yourself. It is to
accomplish your bestowed mission."**



How might the above quote from the founder, inform our common and visible practice, of repeatedly correcting, i.e. applying techniques, to another person. We train endless repetitions of, how to throw or pin or strike 'them'. When, and how, do you practice, 'the way of harmony with the 'ki' of the universe'? It seems even the 'corrections' we make on ourselves, how to stand or move, are done, in order to better, 'do it to them', and maybe that makes you feel better. Yet, how consciously do you study, 'winning over the discord in yourself'?

Or is the unspoken assumption that, if you learn precise technique, that will by itself, create your alignment with the universe? Or the reverse, that the idea of harmony will divinely bestow undefeatable technique?

One of the key teachings was the floating bridge. As one of O sensei's deshi (direct students) describes, "O sensei always said,

"You must stand on the floating bridge of heaven! If you do not stand on the floating bridge of heaven, aikido will not come forth."



"But," the deshi continued, "but, we didn't know where the floating bridge was or how to stand on it, so we just put on a good face and kept applying techniques to each other."

** thanks to Chris Li*

<https://www.aikidosangenkai.org/blog/aikido-floating-bridge-heaven/>

The deshi who 'put on a good face' and 'kept applying 'techniques' to each other', trained an incomplete understanding. Inevitably, as they became teachers, that is what they transmitted. Does that sound like, the Aikido you would like to study? Yet, DO you practice, "standing on the floating bridge"? DO you practice, allowing aikido to come forth? Or is your practice the reverse, repetitively imposing an external form someone taught you?

The floating bridge metaphor derives from ancient Shinto mythology. In one understanding, 'standing on the floating bridge' implies one foot 'stands' in the realm of heaven, and, at the same time, the other is 'grounded' in the earth realm. The earth domain, we might call application, which we practice by applying techniques to an uké. And let's call, 'correcting one's own mind of discord', the heaven aspect of aikido, which we practice(?) by "bringing ourselves into accord with the universe itself". Whether we describe heaven & earth, as forces, realms, domains, or dimensions, balancing them which allows a unified field, is the practice of Aiki.

"In your practice always keep in your thoughts, the interaction of heaven and earth, fire and water."



Standing in both places at once, implies, an equally balanced experience of, both forces, yin and yang, heaven and earth, the cosmic and the mundane. When, heaven and earth, are out of balance with the other, we are apart from the way.

"The "Way" means to be one with the Will of God and practice it. If we are even slightly apart from it, it is no longer the Way."



"Standing on the floating bridge of heaven", implies that aikido functions in the world, BY harmonizing with the 'ki' of the universe. Aiki is, 'correcting the discord in our own mind', WHILE, we're doing the external technical execution, whether martial technique, business deal, or artistic creation, et. al. If our focus devolves, to favor either aspect, the 'whole' is out of balance. Harmonizing our technique with the universal source of power, (1+1=1), makes the technique of Takémusu Aiki, 'divine art', possible and effective.

Most importantly, when the 'two' are unified "standing on the floating bridge of heaven" is not an idea. The power of oneness comes forth, EXPERIENTIALLY.

"This is not mere theory you practice it. Then you will accept the great power of oneness with nature."



The power of aiki unifies the two seemingly opposing, yet complimentary aspects of the duality. This is the essence of the practice. As you allow the unity of the two forces, to balance within your system, "one plus one equals one". In a state of harmony, an entirely different world of possibility unfolds.

"The secret of Aikido is to harmonize ourselves with the movement of the universe and bring ourselves into accord with the universe itself. He who has gained the secret of Aikido has the universe in himself and can say, "I am the universe."



My instructor Robert Nadeau & O Sensei

Some notes FYI

1. These days I understand Osensei's words about standing on *ame no uki hashi* to mean that we must begin in a natural state of mind, a fluid state of mind that is not fixed in one place. Stand naturally, with your mind on the Floating Bridge of Heaven: a clear, egoless state of mind.

Motomichi Anno Shihan 8th dan, Kumano Juku Dojo

2. The Floating Bridge of Heaven, consists of creating a state within yourself wherein you are in the center. Like the spinning top, you are stable yet dynamic. The center is on the neutral point between Izanami and Izanagi to the left and to the right, and between heaven and earth from above and below. And from this point, the Aikidoka connects opposing forces (In and Yo) and expresses that connection in spirals through the body through Breath (Iki). <https://aikidonosekai.wordpress.com/2014/03/20/aikido-floating-bridge-of-heaven/>

3. Japanese creation mythology speaks of a bridge that connected heaven and earth, a passage by which the gods could access the world below. This floating bridge of heaven, Ame no ukihashi as it was called, presents an evocative image, with myriad mystical possibilities. What would it be like, this bridge whose two ends exist in such utterly different worlds?

The idea of standing between two places, not quite existing in either, but sensing both, was the impetus for 天の浮き橋 The Floating Bridge of Heaven. While considering how I might approach the unique ensemble of shakuhachi, shamisen and string quartet — to my knowledge, this is the first-ever piece for this combination — the image struck me as an apt metaphor for combining these instruments from different musical worlds.

DONALD WOMACK 天の浮き橋 The Floating Bridge of Heavenshakuhachi, shamisen, string quartet 尺八、三味線、弦楽四重奏