

Aikido.

In some ways, if it doesn't exactly define me, it does define what I strive for. (So forgive me in advance here, as I know I'm gonna get carried away). Like as not, in crystallising my thoughts it will give me some insight myself), I know you have done a little research already, but in short it was founded by a Japanese guy about 80 years ago. He had studied various martial arts and was a master in those, but somehow there was something missing so he developed his own system. I think that what makes aikido different is that whilst it is a martial art, the martial art is not there for its own sake, but the art is used to express a philosophy that can be applied in just about every situation. The idea is to become at one with yourself and in so doing, at one with those around you and the world in general. We are born with potential, we are made of mind and body and we have to have the two working in harmony to realise our potential.

Most of us fail, (in fact maybe all of us) to totally become at one with the universe, as there is always more to learn, but what is important is to set off on the journey and to make sure that the journey is always forward. What holds most of us back is fear! This is why the practice of a martial art is helpful in helping us to overcome this fear. It is physical, there is the risk of getting hurt, damaged and ultimately I guess, even the possibility of death. (I don't want to over dramatise that, but we can see how a technique taken to its intended end, would result in that). That's where the 'art' comes in. It is a stylised representation of martial technique, whose purpose of course was just that, i.e to kill someone as quickly and efficiently as possible. Art also allows personal expression, so everybody comes up with their own style and way of doing it.

In this sense, it is a very personal journey of self expression and study, but impossible to do, without working with others. They are the tool through which we work. In order to study, we need someone to attack in a meaningful way, and we need to develop sensitivity to the way our partner works and also sensitivity as to how our own bodies and minds work, so that we move and think appropriately. Move wrongly and the technique will break down at some point. Think wrongly and you get the same result. I have to trust that my partner, will attack in a committed way, but have the sensitivity to pull back if I make a mistake and equally the partner has to totally give themselves to their partner and hope that this incredible trust is not abused and that the person applying the technique applies the technique in a safe and ultimately energising way. Proper aikido is a thing of beauty and immense power, bad aikido, isn't really aikido at all it is martial technique that can be incredibly destructive.

So aikido always appears to have these apparent dichotomies. It's about self, but then it's about others. We have to attack with an intention to destroy, (never realised, we hope), but yet ultimately it's about love, because there is no greater power. It's about deflecting the negative and turning it into a positive. You have to look within and yet to have to look outwards. You have to learn to love/ accept yourself warts and all, before you can truly feel at peace with not only yourself, but also with everyone else. Sometimes, I look in the metaphorical mirror and what I see, have seen, does not make for pretty reading, but self recognition is a necessary process for change. Once a thing is accepted, it is possible to make changes.

It would be impossible for mistakes not to be made along the way, so at times, we are hurt or hurt someone else, (I'm not sure what feels worse), but there should be a recognition

that it was an accident, that the intention to wasn't there. Not always easy to feel good about someone who has just wrenched your shoulder out, but if you want to make an omelette, I guess a few eggs get broken along the way.

The more I study, the deeper and more meaningful it all becomes. (Having an Obi Wan Kanobi moment here..... Do you feel the force)?

Hmmmmm, I knew I would get carried away there.