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San Dan

Kaishiwaza

I believe kaishiwaza is an example of the essence of aikido, one of the truest expressions of our training and our understanding of the art. The give and take of energy, the morphing of form, the growth of something that is more than the sum of its parts – for me, that is aikido.

O'Sensei said "Aiki has a form, and does not have a form. Aiki is a life which has a form and still flows with change; it expresses itself by changing itself. A form without a form is a word in a poem which expresses the universe limitlessly." In kaishiwaza, we start with a nage and an uke and, when it's appropriate, the roles merge and then change. For a moment, it's impossible to tell which role belongs to which player. The two energies meet, join, and become something new. Aikido, for me, is creation itself. Energy – ki – is shifted from the universe to a person, from one person to another, from one person back to the universe. It joins with other energies and turns in a new direction, becoming something that could not have been imagined moments earlier. Birth, creation – life.

For partners to train with the confidence to take and redirect each other's energy, and at the same time have the humility to *allow* their ki to be redirected, is a form of love and trust that is amazing to watch and transforming to be a part of. Receiving a technique with trust, performing a technique with generosity, both players believing that what emerges will be something beautiful, is training at its finest.

Kaishiwaza is aikido not beginning or ending, but just living. O'Sensei's rules for training included the following: "The original budo is training in the spirit of harmony. Its purpose is to produce real human beings who will improve the world." If a precursor to death is stagnation, then kaishiwaza is one of the finest examples of the universe creating life, and using us to give it birth.