

Using Aikido and Transpersonal Psychology Concepts as Tools for Reconciling Conflict: Focus on Aikido and Related Martial Arts, Such as Hapkido

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ABSTRACT

Aikido, and related martial arts, such as Hapkido, offer insights for reconciling conflict at intrapersonal, interpersonal, organizational, and global levels. How these operate can be understood scientifically using psychological concepts, especially from transpersonal and transcultural psychology. Some basic approaches for applying these principles are explained, and case examples of their application across different levels for reconciling conflict are provided.

Key Words: Aikido, conflict, Hapkido, reconciliation, transpersonal, transcultural

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Introduction

Aikido is often presented as a martial art that reconciles conflict, rather than one that focuses merely on winning and losing. Its founder, Morehei Ueshiba (n.d., n.p.), is frequently quoted as stating: *"Aiki is not a technique to fight with or defeat an enemy. It is the way to reconcile the world and make human beings one family."* Conceptual tools from psychology, especially transpersonal and transcultural psychology, provide avenues to deepen the understanding of

Aikido's potential for reconciling conflict, including at the intrapersonal, interpersonal, organizational, and even global levels. These situate Aikido within a scientific, albeit a very open-minded and broad, framework, that provides a naturalistic lens through which to examine pathways for reconciling conflict.

Aikido

Aikido is usually seen as an unarmed grappling skill emphasizing circular motions to defensively outmaneuver attackers. Aikido is often presented as being soft and non-competitive, but hard combat techniques and competition through tournaments are also part of current martial arts using that name. Aikido evolved from precursor forms of Aikijitsu, combat systems used for temporary survival when a weapon was not at hand. If a warrior were to become disarmed in battle or be in a situation where carrying weapons were forbidden, unarmed fighting skills were required for self-preservation. Aikido's typical strategy of avoiding direct use of force stemmed from

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practicality, as it would not be very effective in general for an unarmed warrior to attempt to use force against armed opponents. Likewise, its practice retains vestiges of its original cultural context, such as emphasizing techniques derived from the traditional use of the Japanese katana sword and relying heavily on wrist techniques shaped by responding to the types of protective armoring traditionally used by Japanese warriors that resisted attacks to the main part of the body while leaving the wrists exposed as a vulnerable target. These evolutionary opportunities and challenges led Aikido to develop in such a way that it could be later used for so-called higher purposes, such as reconciling conflict and spiritual development.

Like many contemporary martial arts transitioning from earlier and brutal forms of combat, Aikido dropped the suffix “jitsu” and replaced it with “Do,” meaning a path for self-improvement and possibly spiritual “enlightenment” (for a discussion of enlightenment, see Johnson and Friedman, 2008). Aikido also evolved within a specific spiritual context, as all aspects of Japanese culture were influenced strongly by Shintoism, Confucianism, and Buddhism, as well as by centuries of devastating warfare within Japan. Modern Aikido has preserved that spiritual heritage, such as through fostering an acceptance of death without fear and attending to the present without distraction. These attributes were adaptive in combat, both armed and unarmed, and today offer a possible path to reconciling conflict and spiritual development as a Do, rather than being limited to only a form of self-defense or combat.

However, it should also be kept in mind that these same noble practices and values can be misused and have spurred many atrocities in the name of spirituality, such as those perpetrated by the Japanese during World War II (e.g., through the blinding ideology guiding the suicide bombings of kamikaze pilots). It is also important to recognize that there are many divisive factions within Aikido that have resisted their own reconciliation, so Aikido should not be seen as offering a panacea for reconciling all of the world’s conflicts, as its own house remains in disorder. In fact, as a student of Aikido in the United States during the late 1960s and early 1970s, I was chagrined to have my beloved dojo (i.e., place where Aikido was practiced) torn asunder by the split between its founder’s son, Kisshomaru Ueshiba, and Aikido’s then top-ranked practitioner, Koichi Tohei. When

that occurred, about half of my dojo members remained loyal to the founder’s son and the other half formed a new dojo following Tohei’s Ki Society, a spin-off group. Unable to accept such a split within a martial art claiming spiritual privilege and the ability to reconcile conflict, I left Aikido practice for nearly a decade to practice other martial arts. Since then, I have returned to Aikido, in which I now hold the rank of third-degree black-belt, but I do not practice Aikido exclusively and have also recently taken the rank of fourth-degree black-belt in Hapkido (Kim and Lee, 1988), a Korean martial art closely related to Aikido. Consequently, I see much of Aikido’s rhetoric about its noble purposes as more aspirational than achieved, especially as applied to its own organizational difficulties. This is nothing new, however, as exemplified by a Japanese saying I paraphrase from memory: “I am following the path of my master, as he left his master to start a new martial art style, and so I have left him the same way to start my own style.” Just as Morehei Ueshiba left his teacher, Takeda Sokaku of Daitōryū Aikijitsu, to found modern Aikido, so there are many spin-offs arising from the founder’s teachings.

There are also many arts related to Daitōryū Aikijitsu and that are very close to Aikido in practice. For example, Hapkido supposedly originated from the teachings of Sokaku through a Korean student, and then was combined with various traditional Korean martial arts. Also, it is noteworthy that the Chinese calligraphy used to write Aikido is exactly the same as used to write Hapkido, and the meaning of the names are the same across the Japanese and Korean languages, as “Hap” and “Ai” are usually translated as equivalent terms. Unfortunately, the common roots of the two arts are seldom discussed, and there is little interchange among their many practitioners.

Psychology and Transpersonal Psychology

Psychology is the scientific study of individuals (a word derived from the root “divide,” meaning separated from the rest of the universe), including their behaviors and experiences. Transpersonal psychology is a branch, or specialization, within psychology and, as such, is also committed to science (Friedman, 2002). There is no simple definition of transpersonal psychology, as it consists of a variety of theories, methods, and practices, but all emphasize the



term's prefix, "trans," which means across or beyond. This implies that ordinary notions of the person, usually viewed as an isolated monad within conventional Western perspectives to psychology, is an illusion. Instead of being seen as separate, individuals are seen as profoundly interconnected in transpersonal psychology. This also allows for extraordinary behaviors (e.g., as in parapsychological phenomena, such as so-called "psychokinesis" in which mind presumably acts on matter at a distance without a known physical cause) and experiences (e.g., as mystical phenomena, such as so-called transcendent states of consciousness in which non-duality is supposedly experienced) to be taken seriously, despite that conventional psychology has difficulty assimilating these notions within its narrowly materialistic paradigm. These transpersonal psychological phenomena include what might be consistent with supernatural interpretations of Aikido, but still attempt to see them in scientific ways as being part of psychology. In a recent book on transpersonal psychology (Friedman and Hartelius, 2013), numerous transpersonal authors wrote chapters from their own varied viewpoints, thus not reducing transpersonal psychology to any singular definition. However, this compendium of viewpoints as a whole does a relatively good job of capturing the numerous commonalities and differences that exist within, and can define the diversity of, transpersonal psychology.

Transpersonal approaches provide a strong critique of, and alternative to, mainstream assumptions and practices (Friedman, 2012). Transpersonal psychologies tend to focus on an expanded vision of the individual, and they emphasize the individual's radical interconnectedness with the world, including aspects of the world seen as holistic and even sacred that are often ignored by mainstream approaches to psychology. Transpersonal psychologies provide avenues to help individuals and groups deal not just with deficits (e.g., psychopathology) but also growth, including extraordinary growth, such as in achieving so-called higher states of consciousness and unusual powers, and possibly even spiritual enlightenment. In addition, transpersonal psychologies differ from traditional spiritual approaches by not just embracing faith-based notions but, rather, distilling these for beneficial purposes using science as a method of discernment. Transpersonal psychology seeks a

balance between the naïve romanticism that accepts extraordinary beliefs and behaviors as given and a rigid materialism that dismisses the possible reality of many of the phenomena of most interest to Aikidoists (i.e., those practicing Aikido) because they do not easily fit into a conventional scientific framework. It challenges the belief that all that matters is matter, as in dogmatically reducing consciousness to only being brain activity, despite evidence that consciousness might exist during near death experiences with documented brain shut-down (Fracasso, Greyson and Friedman, 2013), while it also challenges romanticized notions that accept unusual constructs as real without substantial evidence (e.g., accepting the physical "existence" of something that can be meaningfully called "Ki" is quite controversial).

Instead of conventional approaches, transpersonal psychology provides a deeper and broader view of the self as interconnected with all of existence, including spiritual possibilities. This rests on the fundamental fact that individuals are not in actuality divided from the rest of the universe as separate entities, because an individual cannot exist alone without physical sustenance and human individuals, born as helpless infants, require at least initial social support to survive. Furthermore, individuals are always inextricably embedded in various contexts, including contexts inclusive of all existence with implications toward the sacred. In these and many similar ways, transpersonal psychology provides a critical alternative to the implicit worldviews shaping, and limiting, much of conventional psychology.

Historically, transpersonal psychologies developed out of the turmoil in the United States during the 1960s, which included psychedelic exploration (shattering the naïve belief in reality as conventionally understood), social justice (shattering the blind acceptance of authority, such as in civil rights struggles), and specifically in response to multiculturalism (e.g., shattering the hegemony of Western religious parochialism through exposure to Eastern and indigenous spiritual traditions). Multiculturalism provided a great shift in emphasis in Western psychology from a biased view that denigrated non-Western, especially indigenous, psychologies as being "primitive" to one that gave different traditions more respect. At the advent of transpersonal psychology, Western psychology encountered many Eastern philosophies and spiritual practices,



including the influential writings of Suzuki (1959) on the spiritual implications of Japanese martial arts. Part of this exposure included Western psychology's encounter with Aikido, and Aikido has been closely associated with transpersonal psychology through being taught at a number of schools granting transpersonal psychology degrees. For example, Sofia University, formerly the Institute for Transpersonal Psychology, was founded by Robert Frager, a high-ranking Aikidoist and direct student of the founder. This school has long included Aikido within its curriculum as an attempt to give an experiential basis to what otherwise were more traditional academic teachings on transpersonal psychology. Also, a number of influential transpersonal psychologists have studied and written about Aikido (e.g., Lukoff, 2002), including my own work as both an Aikidoist and transpersonal psychologist (e.g., Friedman, 2005).

The initial publication of the *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology* officially began transpersonal psychology as a unique discipline and, in that journal's first issue, Maslow (1969) attempted to define it as a refocusing from a human-centered to a cosmos-centered psychology in which humans are viewed as radically interconnected with everything. Transpersonal psychologies have pioneered many areas of great popularity within contemporary psychology, including some that were formerly marginalized and even denigrated during the 1960s but are now considered mainstream. Consciousness studies is now a legitimate scientific area, but it was taboo when transpersonal psychologists first took it seriously. The tremendous interest from mainstream psychology in mindfulness approaches also began with a series of articles published in early issues of the *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*. And many have translated insights and practices from various transpersonal systems into frameworks congruent with a conventional scientific approach. For example, Benson's (1975) translation of yogic mantra meditation into the "relaxation response" has been widely researched and shown effective for many applications. Meditation is, in fact, so successfully integrated in contemporary psychology that it is now widely considered mainstream. Transpersonal psychology also explored limitations in psychology's traditional scientific methods, and helped innovate the paradigm shift allowing qualitative and multi-method research

approaches to be accepted within psychology, and transpersonal psychology has promoted various human-science approaches to research that put into practice alternate assumptions about epistemology and ontology (e.g., Braud and Anderson, 1999). Despite its many contributions becoming widely accepted as legitimate, much in transpersonal psychology still remains outside of, and considered suspect by, the mainstream, such as its controversial interest in parapsychology, which much of the mainstream rejects as being spurious despite considerable evidentiary support for the validity of at least some of its findings (Krippner and Friedman, 2010).

One contribution from transpersonal psychology that I pioneered, and which is germane to this article, is the construct of "self-expansiveness" (Friedman, 1983, 2013). This considers the interconnectedness of the self within a range of space-time possibilities, and I demonstrated that one can have a very narrow view of oneself or a greatly expanded view of oneself that encompasses others and even the entire universe. Similar approaches to transpersonal psychology include Walsh and Vaughan's (1993) definition of the transpersonal as experiences in which "the sense of identity or self extends beyond (*trans*) the individual or personal to encompass wider aspects of humankind, life, *psyche*, and cosmos" (p. 3) and Grof's (1985) definition in which the transpersonal is defined when "consciousness has expanded beyond the usual ego boundaries and has transcended the limitations of time and space" (p. 129), although my approach predates these pronouncements and anchors them firmly within a sound scientific methodology.

Science and Aikido

Demystifying Aikido through replacing what appears incomprehensible, and even magical from the vantages of both ancient Japanese culture and its currently romanticized interpretations, with rational explanations based on sound science provides a useful way to understand Aikido, especially using tools from psychology and its specialty area of transpersonal psychology (Friedman, 2005a). Good examples of this strategy are a series of studies on the anatomy of some of Aikido's basic techniques (e.g., Olson, Bozeman and Seitz, 1994; Olson, Bozeman, Seitz and Gulbrandsen, 1994). That many other Aikido principles have not adequately been translated into



a scientific perspective, despite the proliferation of Aikido books, is a noteworthy lack. Although some of these many books purport to provide the secrets behind Aikido (e.g., Stevens, 1987), they often do little more than transmit romanticized notions rather than scientific explanations of the art, such as Steven's touting alleged amazing feats by Aikido's founder (e.g., his putatively dodging bullets).

In this regard, I think it crucially important to judge the worth of any supernatural explanation of transpersonal phenomena with critical discernment. One such approach would be to rely on the scientific heuristic of the law of parsimony (or Occam's razor) to attempt to find simpler naturalistic explanations, rather than positing complex supernatural ones, especially when these lack compelling evidence for their existence. Such an approach still allows for many innovative avenues to scientific work, such as renowned transpersonal psychologist and Aikidoist, Tart's (1975) state-specific science that can be used to research otherwise inaccessible transpersonal phenomena (e.g., exploration of altered states of consciousness with investigators who are themselves in such states in order to authentically understand them). In addition, Tart also argued that science does not have to be limited to conventional materialistic assumptions while remaining good science, a position with which I concur. I conclude that the possibility of supernatural explanations for transpersonal phenomena should not be arbitrarily dismissed, but any such claim should be viewed skeptically, especially when more ordinary explanations suffice.

Cooperation as a Key Concept

Part of adapting to social life, for both individuals and groups, is the cooperative pursuit of shared goals, which may converge or diverge in varying degrees (Friedman, 2011). My own research has looked closely at cooperation as a mechanism for individual and species survival. My first independent research (Friedman, 1971), for example, looked at how married couples cooperated in playing complex games, using their performance as an indicator of the strength of their relationship. More recently following this same approach, I looked at how warfighters could perform in virtual-reality simulations (Friedman *et al.*, 2013), again focusing on cooperation as a major variable. I have also recently looked at the

ability of humans to recognize the emotions of dogs (Bloom and Friedman, 2013), which enables trans-species cooperation. An essential part of reconciling conflict involves cooperation, and this relates to the transpersonal interconnectedness of all.

However, cooperation is not an all-or-none process. Psychologists (e.g., Deutsch, Coleman and Marcus, 2006) have identified a continuum between cooperation, competition, and conflict as key to understanding the many types of social interactions in relationship to goals and how we strive to obtain them. From this perspective, reconciling conflict requires a movement from conflict toward cooperation for mutual benefit.

Cooperation refers to interactions in which not only are goals shared, but in which there is room to share the distributed fruits of goal attainment. It thus can be rational for individuals or groups to interact together in pursuing a common goal, if all would benefit from its attainment. Furthermore, without some degree of cooperation, social life in general would be impossible and humans would simply not survive. People cooperate when they promote a common good, and this can lead to a so-called *win-win* scenario that benefits both parties in a two-person dispute. In addition, to the extent that other stakeholders might benefit (e.g., by reducing collateral damage from a conflict), this could even be seen as a *triple-win*. Cooperation is also congruent with the essence of "Ai" in Aikido, harmonizing with others, and the results of achieving cooperation can produce a synergy that exceeds the mere sum of the parts that went into the cooperation.

Competition on the other hand, involves a limited struggle among individuals or groups for the same goal, but one in which all cannot win (or win equally) in sharing the distributed fruits of attaining the goal. Competition is not necessarily bad, as it is a human universal that can be adaptive, such as by tending to stimulate efficiency and encourage innovativeness. People may engage in pure competition when two or more seek an exclusive opportunity, such as winning the love of one person in a monogamous relationship or seeking a sole provider contract for a service. In such a circumstance, when only one winner is possible, this would be a so-called *win-lose* scenario. However, competition involves adhering to agreed-upon rules, such as sharing



courtesy and respect—and competitors can maintain collegiality and do not have to seek to destroy each other. These are also competitive situations in which there are possibilities to partially win and partially lose in varying ratios. When two or more people seek a valued opportunity that has rewards that might be shared to some, but not necessarily a fully equal, extent, they could all be both cooperating and competing somewhere between the poles of pure cooperation and pure competition, a so-called *mixed-motive* scenario that is neither clearly win-win nor win-lose.

Conflict is a form of struggle that leads to not only a possible winner and loser as in competition, but also may involve an attempt to destroy the other party. It does not necessarily imply violence, as there can be nonviolent forms of destruction (e.g., limited to the economic sphere, conflicting parties may try to put each other out of business). With conflict, there not only can be a clear winner and loser as in pure competition, but sometimes it can devolve into *lose-lose* scenarios in which all get destroyed in the process. It thus can be irrational for individuals or groups to be in conflict if it hurts all, and conflict is almost always mean-spirited in some ways, such as in the frequent denigration of the other by one or more of the conflicting parties.

Understanding these graded nuances of cooperation, competition, and conflict can provide a better psychological understanding of how Aikido might be employed, and allow for considering areas in which people might cooperate, instead of cultivating competition or pursuing conflict. In one of my overseas consulting roles, I recollect a wise Japanese business executive, a master of the game “go,” gently chiding me, “You Americans are so concerned about how to divide the pie, while we Japanese are more focused on how to bake a bigger pie.” Although people often are engaged in competing and sometimes conflicting scenarios, these usually could be transformed to better outcomes by fostering more cooperation. One way this could occur is through providing those involved with better conceptual tools, such as through understanding the concepts of cooperation, competition, and conflict as a continuum, which allows more reflective choices in seeking a middle ground rather than an either-or solution. Without such understanding,

cooperative opportunities might simply be overlooked.

Unfortunately, there are often subtle biases that promote competition and conflict over cooperation. For example, I recall approaching a prominent attorney-psychologist for advice when I was first launching my business career as a psychologist. I described to him that I aspired to accomplish a cooperative culture in building my new psychology practice by forging positive collegial relationships with potential employees and subcontractors. I anticipated working with other psychologists, as well as various types of mental health professionals, in a cooperative way, such as by not requiring harsh and restrictive legal covenants (e.g., non-competition agreements) as part of any employment or subcontractor affiliations I might forge. The attorney-psychologist reacted in a pointed way: “It sounds like you want to build a commune, not a corporation.” This discouraging retort was correct in a conventionally legalistic way, but did not recognize the various nuances that I considered most important in building a practice in which cooperation was highly valued.

This reflects back to Ai, as Aikido involves relationship. It is not something that one can just do to another in an isolated fashion. One must, instead, do Aikido with another in a way that is in accord with the principle of Ai, similar to the psychological meaning of cooperation. In Japanese, the term Ai also has many mystical connotations, but it can be approached in more conventional ways compatible with Western understandings. To be in harmony (i.e., to express Ai) with another involves a recognition that there is not a firm distinction between the boundaries of people. In fact, through using the construct of self-expansiveness, a scientifically plausible way to conceptualize how individuals can extend their sense of self to include others is provided. At one level, this involves a recognition that the other is also a free and conscious agent. In this regard, any martial art practice has to take into account the capability of the other to anticipate and counter any move. At a deeper or transpersonal level, it also involves the recognition that the other is not so ultimately different from the Aikidoist, and vice versa. This leads to an ethical understanding that the other should be treated as the self in a different manifestation. This concept is the basis of many Western and Eastern religious and spiritual traditions (e.g., Judaism’s



golden rule for righteousness and Buddhism's *karuna* for compassion).

The implications of this are far-reaching. If I am attacked by someone, a schism is created in the world. The very act of the attacker, through seeing me as separate in order to attack, places that one out of harmony with me and serves as an impediment to the effectiveness of the attack. This can be rationally understood as based on the principle that an attacker is severely limited when only able to observe from an external perspective. On the other hand, if one harmonizes by keeping in mind the interconnectedness of all, capacities for deep empathy are possible in which I can know the attacker not just as an objective "it" but, instead, also as an aspect of my own self. This potentially enables me to better put myself into the experiential position of the attacker, thus being able to anticipate and structure a viable defensive strategy. The application of this principle is similar to what is required in the intensely psychological game, rock-paper-scissors, in which each item has an advantage over, and a disadvantage under, another item (i.e., paper covers rock, rock smashes scissors, and scissors cuts paper). In this game, players sequentially choose one of the items through a hand signal in hopes of gaining the advantage, a decision that always involves knowing that the other also knows that "you know that they know," ad infinitum. To consistently win in this game involves a psychological skill similar to Ai. From a martial art perspective, if I can make use of this principle of harmonious interconnectedness, I can also accrue a number of other advantages besides just better anticipating an attacker's approach. For example, I might have no interest in defeating or hurting an attacker since I believe it to ultimately be my own self that is attacking me, as I can feel so interconnected with the attacker that I consider "us," me and the attacker, as but one entity. Then, my job of mere self-defense is much simpler than if I tried to negatively return unto my attacker that which is being attempted upon me (i.e., both defend myself and try to defeat or hurt the other). Thus transpersonal psychology can provide a number of vantage points from which to scientifically understand the principle of Ai, in contrast to forms of misunderstanding from romanticism that may blindly embrace supernatural explanations without proper discernment. And, at the level of physical conflict in self-defense and even combat, this provides the basis for a strategy for conflict reconciliation.

Reconciling Intrapersonal, Interpersonal, Organizational, and Global Conflict

Expanding upon the relatedness of the concept of cooperation and Ai, Aikido can be applied beyond this physical level of self-defense and combat toward reconciling personal, interpersonal, organizational, and even global conflict. This leads to the highest applications of Aikido, congruent with the numerous teaching that its founder considered to be Aikido's essence.

Intrapersonal Conflict

At the intrapersonal level, people can be in conflict within themselves. Individuals are not just inseparable from others, but they are internally divisible, not just in terms of being structured at the cellular and organ-system levels, but psychologically they are often torn apart, as with internally competing motivations (e.g., wanting to express anger at one's boss, while wanting to remain employed). These intrapersonal conflicts can be reconciled through a variety of approaches that can be called psychotherapies. Some psychotherapies help people clarify their internal conflicts by tracing their roots back to childhood experiences; one type of this kind of psychotherapy is psychoanalysis, which allows irrational decisions made when people were children incapable of understanding their ramifications to be re-decided by them as adults once their origins are comprehended in a rational way. Another type of psychotherapy focuses on current irrational thoughts, examining them for their usefulness to people without necessarily delving into their origins; one popular variety of this is cognitive-behavioral therapy, which is now evolving with mindfulness into a variety of hybrid forms increasingly similar to various approaches to meditation, which can be seen as transpersonal. There are many other transpersonal psychotherapies (Rodrigues and Friedman, 2013; Friedman, 2014a), and from my view all psychotherapies can be seen as transpersonal if practiced from a transpersonal perspective (e.g., using tools such as derived from Ai and self-expansiveness).

A type of psychotherapy that I have been practicing for many years is bioenergetics (Friedman and Glazer, 2010). This psychotherapy focuses on embodied patterns of chronic muscle tensions resulting from conflicts.

The example mentioned of a man's intrapersonal conflict between wanting to express anger at his boss, while also wanting to remain gainfully employed, can be understood at a psychosomatic level. Muscles involved in wanting to hit his boss can be activated and, simultaneously, blocked by the desire to want to not be fired. In other words, competing muscles are fighting against each other in the attempt to deal with a strong emotion (i.e., a word derived from "motion" as in movement caused by muscles). This muscle tension could result in symptoms such as headaches and, if not reconciled, lead to psychological collapse, often called depression (i.e., literally the whole mind-body can become depleted of energy). One of my first patients when I was a young psychology intern came to me with a big smile on his face and stated, "my legs are paralyzed and I can't go to work." As part of my assessment, I induced a light-hypnotic trance in him, and in that altered state he could walk fine but, once aroused from the trance, he could no longer move his legs. As I explored what was going on with this man, he revealed that he hated his abusive boss but could not leave his job, as his wife had just given birth to their new baby and they had no other means of financial support. This set the direction for the psychotherapy that aimed to reconcile the intrapersonal conflict that led to his "paralysis."

This notion of muscle tension is similar to an interpretation of the traditional Japanese perspective on "Ki," which refers to a universal energy, the alleged fundamental stuff of which all are seen as made in traditional Japanese culture. Eisenberg (1985) described how a teacher of Traditional Chinese Medicine explained Qi, the Chinese equivalent of Ki, as follows:

Qi means that which differentiates life from death, animate from inanimate. To live is to have Qi in every part of your body. To die is to be a body without Qi. For health to be maintained, there must be a balance of Qi, neither too much nor too little. (p. 43)

In regard to martial arts, Yuasa (1993) stated, "*ki* is a nebulous concept rather difficult to grasp, yet in the martial arts it designates the 'mind' in the lower abdomen" (p. 70) which presumably is the source of a unified mental-physical, and perhaps spiritual, power. In contrast to these ambiguous and romanticized approaches to Ki, Tohei (1994) has extensively discussed the development of Ki in naturalistic ways. Consequently, the concept of Ki

can be understood from a scientific perspective, although Ki may go far beyond this limited understanding in some exceptional individuals, veering toward the parapsychological.

However, from a more mundane scientific understanding, Ki can be seen as a phenomenon at least partially related to how muscle tension patterns function. For example, all people have two different types of skeletal muscles, motor and postural (also known, in general, as fast twitch and slow twitch, respectively). The motor muscles tend to be more under volition, whereas the postural muscles tend to be more unconscious. One understanding of an important aspect of the expression of Ki in martial arts involves how these muscles are used. At a basic level, motor muscles are always oppositional, such that each muscle is in a push-pull relationship to another. To obtain maximum strength, ideally when one muscle is pushing, the antagonistic muscle is totally relaxed and allows the pushing muscle free reign. However, this never occurs in actuality, as there is always some degree of residual tension in the antagonistic muscle, known as muscle tone. There are two strategies that can be used to increase the efficiency of motor muscles in this regard. The first involves learning to more fully relax the antagonistic muscles so that the ones employed are maximally efficient (i.e., by learning to reduce internal muscle conflicts through relaxation). The second involves the concept of "intentionality." In most situations, people are not completely of one mind, that is their intentions are split (or even fragmented) over simultaneously incompatible goals. This results in their brains sending contradictory messages to the muscles, so that they push and pull against each other. Imagine the one who wants to strike in anger at his boss yet, at another level, part of that person also recognizes that this will compromise his family's financial security. The muscles involved in wanting to strike (the agonist muscles) are governed by the anger, but the sense of that act's consequences sends inhibitory messages to the antagonist muscles, resulting in a diminishment of force. It is like driving a car with one foot pressing the gas pedal and the other on the brake simultaneously. If people can be unified (one-pointed) in their intentions, with minimal internal conflict, their muscles can be most efficient. If people embrace a positive and loving transpersonal perspective, they will have less internal conflict since they will be more in harmony with themselves, as well as with any potential attacker. In that regard, an attacker

whose intentions are aimed against another (keeping in mind that all are transpersonally interconnected) is always going to have some level of conflict, such as shame or guilt (even if it is deeply layered), literally holding (muscularly) the attacker back.

Many other similar natural mechanisms can be used to explain some of Aikido's extraordinary phenomena. For example, postural muscles (e.g., the slow twitch muscles along the spine that keep the skeleton erect) are often very strong compared to many of the volitional motor muscles. These can also be involved at a deep unconscious level in actions, potentially giving great power beyond that which can ordinarily be consciously willed (e.g., when a frail person lifts a heavy object to save a child). In addition, coordinating movement with breathing can greatly enhance power. Likewise, coordinating one's movements with that of an attacker's (using Ai) can further amplify power that is seen as Ki, suggesting these two are not completely different. Ki as used within Aikido, therefore, is not necessarily a mysterious concept, but can be seen instead as the most efficient use of our muscles, albeit in a way highly related to mental attitude and relationship with others. This understanding of Ki through the sciences of kinesiology and muscle physiology in relationship to transpersonal psychology provides a perspective that does not rely on invoking magical explanations.

This also shows how scientific approaches can be applied to both reconciling intrapersonal conflicts with psychotherapy and optimizing the practice of Aikido with Ki development. From a bioenergetic perspective, an unfettered body that has minimal emotional blockages, regardless of shape or size, is graceful due to lack of muscle tension. From a Western religious (i.e., Judeo-Christian) perspective, grace is the same term that is used to express a high state of spirituality when received as a gift from God that is given without being earned, while from many Eastern spiritual traditions, the free flow of Ki or related energy (e.g., prana, kundalini, etc.) exemplifies a similar state.

Interpersonal Conflict

Interpersonal conflict occurs in all relationships, as people unavoidably have differences. In married couples, for example, the ideal is for partners to coordinate their interactions to maximize the rewards for both, but too often

there is jockeying for power, incompatibilities regarding sexual desires, time management concerns, disagreements about money and other resource allocations, and a host of concerns that lead to competition and even conflict within the couple. These can cause bitter fighting, cessation of intimacies, and ultimately marital dissolution. There are many models of family therapy focused on reconciling marital conflict, such as systems approaches that analyze the various competing values and attempt to establish a better balance that meets both partners' desires. I once worked as a psychologist with a married couple in which the husband had been severely abused by his father and, although he loved his wife deeply, he was utterly incapable of expressing emotions except in the most "wooden" of ways, as his facial expressions and entire body looked frozen, like a deer caught in a car's headlights. To get this man to feel (i.e., remember the root meaning of emotion involves movement) in a nonthreatening way, I asked the couple to engage in some Aikido exercises involving two-person cooperative movements. If I had asked him to simply say he loved his wife, it would have been too threatening and would have been expressed with a hollow sound of inauthenticity, at best. However, using the principle of Ai provided a tangible way to work with this married couple, eventually leading to enhanced ability for emotional expression.

Organization Conflict

Organization conflict, like intrapersonal and interpersonal conflict, can also be intra and inter. Intra-organizational conflict can occur when different functional areas within an organization are at odds, such as due to differing professional values. Inter-organizational conflict can occur when different organizations are striving for a limited resource, such as to dominate a market and put all but one organization out of business.

In a recent book (Glover and Friedman, 2015), my co-author and I discussed ways to reconcile such conflicts through using methods of transcultural competence. These derive from the social-science traditions of anthropology and sociology, and are now part of transcultural psychology. In one banking company whose corporate mission statement focused on providing customer service that exceeded customers' expectations, we posed a simple dilemma: if a well-regarded customer requests an exception to loan policies, should it be granted? What we found



through an organizational survey was that the marketing personnel overwhelmingly endorsed making the exception, while the accounting personnel overwhelmingly endorsed denying the exception. This evidenced the value differences held by these two functional areas, and on the surface it seemed an irreconcilable conflict. However, by emphasizing that each perspective needed to be recognized as stemming from a different professional value orientation and that each should be respected as contributing to the overall corporate enterprise, a basis for finding a win-win reconciliation through dialogue was established. This required an understanding that each functional area is part of the overall organizational structure that transcends its differing parts in constituting the larger whole. This holistic understanding is congruent with both Ai from Aikido and psychological approaches to developing cooperation, as well as a transpersonal psychology approach to expanding the boundaries of personnel's identification toward identifying with the entire organization and not just with a limited functional work area, a type of self-expansiveness into organizational arena.

Likewise, with inter-organizational conflict, I worked with a team to establish guidelines for tourist development in the south Pacific island nation of Fiji (Glover and Friedman, 2015). Individual hotels were seen as competing or even in conflict with each other for limited tourist dollars. Under the encouragement of the national government, a forum was created to help these different properties understand that, if they cooperated by working together to increase overall tourism, they would all benefit. This led to the various stakeholders pooling their advertising money, establishing quality standards, and otherwise cooperating rather than merely competing or engaging in conflict. Again, this holistic understanding is congruent with both the Ai in Aikido, cooperation from a psychological vantage, and transpersonal psychology's approach to self-expansiveness by seeking conflict reconciliation through working toward embracing a larger whole.

Global Conflict

Reconciling global conflict can also involve principles from Aikido, such as Ai, cooperation as understood through psychology, as well as through transpersonal concepts, such as self-expansiveness. I once worked with the ethnic

divide among two major groups in Fiji, indigenous Fijians and Indo-Fijians who were brought to the Fiji Islands many years ago (Friedman, Glover and Avegalio, 2002; Friedman, 2004). The backstory is that the British colonized Fiji and tried unsuccessfully to enslave the indigenous Fijians, but these people refused to work the mines and the sugar plantations by simply allowing themselves to starve to death before accepting enslavement. Consequently, the British left them alone and imported people from India as indentured servants to do their dirty work. The two ethnic groups evolved very different cultures, with the indigenous Fijians largely maintaining their traditional lifestyles while the Indo-Fijians became very Westernized. When Fiji became independent from British rule, the two groups remained relatively separate (e.g., intermarriage was almost non-existent). When I was doing a management seminar in a Fiji hotel over a decade ago, it was apparent that this segregation still occurred, as all the front-office and wait staff were indigenous Fijians, giving the hotel an appearance of indigenous Fijian authenticity, but the behind-the-scenes staff, such as the accountants and cooks, were all Indo-Fijians. At a seminar I was conducting, an Indo-Fijian manager introduced himself to the group, claiming his status as an Indo-Fijian. However, an indigenous Fijian attendee interrupted him and stated, "You are not an Indo-Fijian, but simply an Indian whose ancestors were brought to our land by the British; you are welcome to stay and prosper in Fiji, but there are a billion Indians in your land and less than a million of us Fijians in our land." The Indo-Fijian meekly responded, "But my family has now been here for many generations and we have no ties with India." Working in such a context where even the identifiers of people's ethnic and national identities are subject to dispute illustrates the challenge of working with global conflict.

From these experiences, I and my co-author have generalized some basic principles of transcultural competence for dealing with these types of conflict (Glover and Friedman, 2015), and these include recognizing and respecting cultural differences as prerequisites to any possible reconciliation. The reconciliation from this vantage ultimately involves finding a path that includes the values of all stakeholders without compromising any's unique values. Compromise is seen as a win-lose or even lose-lose proposition, whereas to create innovative ways to meet



everyone's needs better is the desired win-win reconciliation. More importantly, this is not just a temporary feel-good state that rapidly devolves back into business as usual. Instead, the goal is to provide lasting outcomes that realize change that moves from a temporary to a more permanent solution. The four principles we utilize, known by us as the 4Rs, are recognizing, respecting, reconciling, and realizing.

This can also be applied to understanding Aikido at the physical level of self-defense, as in recognizing (or even anticipating in advance) a physical attack, respecting (and never underestimating) the attacker, seeking to reconcile the attack by dealing with the aggressive behavior but not hurting (if possible) the attacker (and not getting hurt), and, last, realizing this into a permanent solution by hopefully befriending the attacker through turning an enemy into a friend.

Likewise, to engage in cooperation requires at least some degree of recognition of what motivates another and holding respect for them. A variety of strategies could increase cooperative behaviors among people, including by demonstrating Aikido so that these principles can be made visible and convincing. Showing how an attack at the physical level can be openly received in the spirit of cooperation rather than resisted with a fear response, and explaining how this type of strategy can result in more benefits for all to share, can be highly educational. Teaching people experientially about cooperation through various blending exercises from Aikido also provides a powerful physical metaphor for how this strengthens, rather than weakens, responses.

Returning to the 4Rs (Glover and Friedman, 2015), recognition, respect, reconciliation, and realization can all be seen as psychological principles for reconciling conflict. When facing a situation that could potentially degrade to conflict, it is first required to recognize what may be happening. If oblivious to a potential situation, an attack will not be perceived in time, whether at the physical or other levels. This requires understanding one's potential adversary in a deep way, such as through self-expansiveness that identifies with the other. It can start at the physical level individually (e.g., in terms of reading body language) or organizationally (e.g., in terms of examining the positioning of resources, such as in retail store locations arranged to compete for

market share), or globally (e.g., in terms of indicators of military strength). Respect is then required, and this means deeply understanding potential adversaries: what are their motivations and, if possible, what are the commonalities that could forge these into a basis for competition, rather than conflict, or perhaps even facilitate cooperation. Reconciliation involves finding win-win solutions, not just compromise in which both parties' give-up something but, rather, solutions that synergistically give more to both than either had at the start. Finally, realization involves working to make these solutions lasting, such as through memorializing (e.g., via a contract or peace accord) or institutionalizing (e.g., via setting up a regulating board or organizational structure) them.

The term *Do* in Aikido, which is the Japanese form of the Chinese term *Tao*, means a way or vehicle to obtain a higher purpose. As mentioned, the older and more traditional Japanese martial arts are usually characterized by a name that does not include *Do*, and it is often said that the purpose of a *Do* is to develop the practitioner as a person on a spiritual path, rather than to just facilitate learning to be strong in self-defense or combat. In accord, the founder of Aikido, after having had a supposed enlightenment experience, changed the name of his art from Aikijitsu to Aikido upon realizing the futility of pursuing traditional combat systems with their emphasis on violence. However, *do* as a concept also alludes to a principle in itself that can also be understood in scientific terms and is congruent with the method of realization, making conflict reconciliation not just a goal to be achieved but a path to be followed.

I have explored using these principles within a variety of areas of global conflict. In supporting educational programs with Jewish and Arab Israeli groups, youth from both ethnicities were encouraged to understand their common Abrahamic roots, despite their current differences (Friedman, 2005b). Through a variety of cooperative activities related to the principle of *Ai* from Aikido, they engaged in efforts aimed to develop a more inclusive identification than just with the one or the other ethnicity, similar to a transpersonal self-expansiveness. More recently, I have been helping to apply a similar model in a program reconciling former child soldiers (i.e., people who were conscripted as children and forced to commit war-crimes) in Zimbabwe back into community with those who suffered from



their actions (Machinga and Friedman, 2014). These efforts involve explicitly transpersonal psychology interventions, relying on using both indigenous animist and Christian beliefs about spirituality to encourage forgiveness and healing in both victims and perpetrators of atrocities. They emphasize cooperative activities and transpersonal concepts, such as self-expansiveness, as well as principles congruent with Ai from Aikido.

Conclusion

Concepts represented in the word constituents of the name Aikido (i.e., Ai, Ki, and Do), along with cooperation and the 4Rs from transcultural psychology and self-expansiveness from transpersonal psychology are used to illustrate a scientific basis for reconciling conflict at intrapersonal, interpersonal, organizational, and global levels. Placing these into a scientific framework does not remove them from the possibility of involving principles that go beyond science as currently understood, but it does provide a rational way to understand them without reliance on supernatural explanations as promulgated through ancient Japanese and modern romanticized interpretations of Aikido. In addition, I have discussed a variety of ways that I have used these as tools to reconcile conflict at all of these levels. I want to add that the underlying motif for these applications have focused on furthering social justice causes from a spiritual vantage (Coder, DeYoung and Friedman, 2014), something for which I have long advocated (Friedman, 2014b).

I end this article with a Japanese Zen teaching story, transmitted orally to me and paraphrased through my best recollection. A rude but powerful samurai challenged a peaceful tea-ceremony master to a sword duel just to demonstrate his prowess. When the samurai prepared to attack, the tea-ceremony master merely raised his sword, accepting that he would die since his sword skill could not match that of the samurai. But the tea-ceremony master also knew that, at the moment the samurai struck, there would be an opening in which he too could strike the samurai, despite his lesser skills with the sword, so the outcome would be that they both would die. The haughty samurai prepared to attack, expecting the tea-ceremony master to be terrified and easily defeated, but instead saw him calm and prepared to die. The samurai, at that moment, realized the inevitable outcome if he were

to proceed with the attack—and wisely begged the forgiveness of the tea-ceremony master. This story illustrates how conflict can be reconciled from a win-lose outcome to one that is win-win. The tea-ceremony master was able to find a way (in accord with the Do) to harmonize with his potential attacker by not allowing himself to be bullied (showing proper use of Ai), and was able to embrace the possibility of death by showing a proper intention (influencing his musculature in accord with optimum use of Ki). He did this through recognizing the superior sword skills of the samurai and respecting that prowess, but also was able to find a way to reconcile this conflict in accord with the founder's highest vision for Aikido that hopefully led to a higher realization for both the samurai and the tea-ceremony master.

In this sense, Aikido, using principles that can be understood by psychology (including transcultural and transpersonal psychology) offers great promise for reconciling conflict in ways that can have wide benefit for humankind. In addition, exploring the linkages across these areas may be useful for individuals who seek their own transpersonal growth and development as Aikidoists and also as practitioners of related arts, such as Hapkido.



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