

Thirteen Rules for Disciplinants: #3

Friday, July 29, 2016

C. Curtis

Good evening everyone. This is the third of the 13 Rules for Instructors, and once again Sayaka Reasoner has translated for us. So let me first read the original, which is in the Training Manual. I was telling Sayaka that I got these originally from Suzuki Sensei and they were just in a drawer, and he handed them to me and said, "Here, put this in the Training Manual. This came from Tohei Sensei. He sent me that." This was back in 1984. So I don't know who translated this, but it is quite different than what Sayaka came up with.

So what is in the Training Manual is:

"There is no discord in the absolute truth of the Universal, but there is discord in the realm of relative truths. To contend with others and win, brings only a relative victory. Not to contend, and yet win, brings absolute victory. To gain only a relative victory, sooner or later, leads to inevitable defeat. While you are practicing to become strong, learn how you can avoid fighting by learning to throw your opponent and enjoy it, and to be thrown and enjoy that to, and by helping one another in learning the correct techniques you will progress very rapidly."

OK, so what Sayaka did is translated it literally, and it will sound quite different.

"There is no conflict in the absolute universe. Conflict only occurs in the relative world. Winning by fighting is a relative victory. Winning without fighting is an absolute victory. A relative victory will always be lost eventually. We should train to commit ourselves to the principle of non-dissension. Be happy to throw and be happy to be thrown, and we will see remarkable progress in our practices, if we train the correct principle by supporting each other."

Student: It's much more flowery in the first one.

Yeah, much more flowery and in that original translation the translator does not even mention non-dissension. To me, in that one, the message is virtually lost, because of all that falderal. And we always try, at least I always try, to make it as simple as we can, as simple and straightforward as we can. I was looking at Facebook the other day and saw something that some Aikidoist had written about the meaning of Aikido. And basically he said it means to make friends with people. It was a long paragraph and it never said that explicitly, but that's what he was saying.

Yes, the translator here used very flowery language, it sounds very "spiritual," he sounds highly developed and well educated, like he was talking down to me. Like, "I'm trying not to use big words, but I really don't have any choice, because it's the only thing really that expresses the depth of this." Actually the depth of something is expressed by simplicity. The more simple it is, the deeper it goes. The more complex, the more shallow. This is not recognized in our world, and not recognized in our world because in

our world we only value relative victory. If you want to be better than someone else, you have to sound better.

Some years ago, Shinichi Sensei, (well, Tohei Sensei first, but later Shinichi Sensei), in 2003 or 2004 at a seminar in Japan, he said, "There are three ways we can approach something. We can struggle or fight to achieve it, we can ignore it and walk away from it, or we can move together." So this is what Tohei Sensei is trying to express here in this rule.

So what is absolute victory? It says, "win without fighting." You are training Aikido. What is winning without fighting? How do you do that?

Student: You agree with everybody?

Well, is that it? That seems like that might be a little hypocritical. It might be, might not be. It depends on your spirit, not what you are doing, but what you are being. Anybody want to say? How do you win without fighting?

Student: Well I wasn't ready to say anything, but since you ask me I guess I have to answer. You know, maybe what she means is finding a way of accord. We have to find accord. I mean, this kind of conversation always makes me think of foreign relations and wars and things that are going on in the world. And of course, with relative victory, always someone comes back to bite you and try to win over you with bigger weapons. Obviously that is no good. So how do you win without fighting? I don't even think "win" is the right word. I don't know. Win, seems to imply conflict. There is somebody who is going to be better than somebody else. But I think you mean to come to a good accord with somebody else. And you have to respect them.

OK, thanks. Yes, you have to somehow come to an accord. How do you do that?

I will tell you a story, which you probably have heard before. It's a famous story from Aikido. In the early days, a student was training with O'Sensei in Japan, and he was Shodan or Nidan. He got on the subway at night. He was a big guy, very strong, Westerner, Terry Dobson was his name and he tells this story in one of his books. He passed away some years ago. He said that, as he was on the subway and there were lots of people in the car, this guy got on the subway that was obviously drunk and very disturbed, and was swearing loudly, and not exactly molesting but pushing people out of the way and being very rude. And Terry Dobson thought to himself, "Ah, here is my chance to use Aikido." He had been training Aikido for several years and always he had been thinking, "I can't wait to get a chance to do this, to try this and see if it works in the street." Clearly his idea of Aikido was fighting and winning at this point. Right? So, as he is about to go over and confront this crazy drunk, this little old man stands up, goes over and tugs on the drunk's sleeve and says, "Sir, sir? You look like you enjoy sake." And the guy says, "Oh, what business is it of yours?" It wasn't an easy sell. So the old guy put his arm around him and said, "You know when I get home tonight I will sit down and have a sake with my wife. I look forward to that sake with my wife every time I go home, every night at the end of the day. I am telling you I am really looking forward to this." And within moments, according to Terry Dobson, the drunk had his head in the old

man's lap and was crying and telling him what was really wrong and how his life was falling apart. The old man basically supported him, consoled him, and got him into a relatively good state, got him off the train, and got him home.

Terry Dobson said "The shock was that the old man did Aikido. What I was going to do was fight with him! I was going to clean his clock. I was going to beat his butt to a pulp." You know, some Aikido locks, a little nikkyo, a little kotegaeshi.

In all these years, Aikido has been teaching the spirit of non-dissension. And yet, just the other day, I heard on the radio that psychologists have finally invented a name for what we do in Aikido. It's called "non-complimentary behavior." I thought, "What on earth does that mean?" The person on the radio explained that human beings generally mirror whatever the other person is doing. If the other person is loving and happy to you, then you are loving and happy to them. Whether it's sincere or not, that's what you do. And if you are challenging me, then I am liable to resist and challenge you back. This is complimentary behavior. So non-complimentary behavior is what the old man did, it's what the spirit of non-dissension is. It's what we have been practicing since the day we all walked into this dojo.

Of course, this has been known for thousands of years, this approach. But the difficult thing is, how to practice it. Fortunately our teachers invented ways for us to practice it, and we are inventing, now, new ways to practice it, as long as that is what we are practicing. So that's why Tohei Sensei says, success means to be one with the universe. Right? What does "to be one with the universe" mean? What does that feel like? It feels like love. Success is love. When you are loving, when you are in a state of loving kindness, this is what that is talking about.

This is not talking about getting the other person, whose idea is generally somewhere away from, or opposite to, yours, whether it's on a personal level or international level, to agree with your idea. It is establishing an accord. You are both moving together towards something neither of you know about. If you know where the goal is, then you are trying to manipulate and control them.

This is why it is so difficult, because you take a position. Pick any position you like. In our society, the whole world is filled with relative positions. That's all there is in this world. So pick one. When you take a relative position, you want that to work out. Let's say it is anti or pro GMO. If you are pro GMO, you want to be allowed to do any GMO you want, anytime. And if you are anti GMO you don't want any GMO, never, anytime. Right? You don't want it. But if you came together and established an accord, neither of those things would happen. We call it compromise. There would be some new way. It takes at least one of us, in every one of these situations, to practice Aikido, or non-complimentary behavior. It takes at least one of us.

And the way that I have been taught is that when one person exhibits the spirit of non-dissension, which is a characteristic or quality of our original, loving condition, the other one tends to recognize that and be drawn to it, attracted to it.

Student: Sensei, you say that when one of us exhibits love, non-dissension, the other one responds to that, or tends to respond to that. But we all know people in the world who don't respond to that. You know, there is such a thing as a sociopath, for example, which people define as someone who is just not capable of empathy, like there is something wrong. So, in most cases, when you encounter someone in the world and you are having difficulty with them, yeah, if you can practice non-dissension, if you can show loving compassion to that person, in most cases they will respond to that. But what do you do in those situations where there is someone who not only will not respond to it but maybe even takes advantage of that, who responds to your gentleness with more aggression. We know that there are people like that in the world.

So how to you take that practice to the next level, when you encounter someone who is really not participating in the way that most people participate in that exchange?

What are you really asking me?

Student: How do you deal with really difficult people?

Well, first of all, you never know until you engage. So you can't look from afar and say, "This guy is really crazy. He's on drugs. I am not going to engage him." Like the guy in the subway was totally nuts and drunk, and normally that is a really difficult person to engage with. But this little old man found the key, found the way. He didn't find it because he was so smart. He found it because he cared, and the guy could feel that he cared.

Of course, "sometimes the magic works and sometimes it doesn't." But there is something off about the question. I mean, I understand your question, and probably everybody has this question. Like, "Yeah, but... what about when it doesn't work?" So leave the room! So leave them alone. You know, it's like most people would say, "What about ISIS? We have to blow them up. It's the only solution!" There's a good example. "They chop people's heads off. They are animals, they are inhumane, they are monsters, not to be dealt with nicely. You can't walk away from them. You have to do something. You have to deal with them in some way." So you don't always get to just walk away and leave them. Something has to happen.

There are people...right now we are in the middle of the political deal. We have just had the two conventions, Democrats and Republicans, and Trump said, "Just trust me. I am going to blow the hell out of them." But then I heard a commentator talk about it and he said, "Well, that means he has very little understanding of the complexity of this situation." "Always we want to let diplomacy work first," we say, or Obama and some other politicians say. They don't all say this. Like in Iran, some people wanted to just go drop a bomb on them. But Obama said, "No, let's talk first. Let's not just drop a bomb." And sure enough, we came to an accord. Now, everything isn't all fixed between us. But it's a step in the right direction. And even with someone that is incorrigibly, adamantly resistant to you, there is always something, because they are human beings. In the case of a drug addled person, you may have to wait until they are off drugs. Maybe they have to spend the night in jail, and then you can talk the next day, or the next week, or the next month, and you can find a way to support and help them to bring them some sort of peace.

Not with the idea that that is success, but just to bring them your peace, to be with them in your state of calmness.

In my view, there is never an excuse for resorting to war. That's my view, but then I am not being confronted by it, either. So maybe that is disingenuous, or "easy for me to say," because I don't have the responsibility. But if I did, I would certainly try everything I knew to find a way, as some of our leaders do, to find an accord.

Student: I was just going to say that I think that perhaps it has to do with the depth of the honesty of your compassion, and that's why we train, because it takes a lot of practice, I guess, or depth. A person will know if it is not completely there, if you are thinking that this is something you should be doing, and doing it because it is a prescribed idea. This may be all you can do, sometimes, given the level you are at. I don't mean you, but anybody. I mean only certain leaders have reached...it's a very deep thing, and this is also what I think has some effect. That old man, I think, totally was compassionate.

Yes. I have been practicing this spirit of non-dissension for over 40 years, and I got mad at my grandson yesterday, flipped him over and threw him in the corner, and my wife and daughter said, "Whoa, what are you doing?!" "Well, he was out of line."

It's like my first teacher used to say, "When you come upon a tiger in the forest, you had better be able to accurately assess your ability to stare it down, and if you can't do it, get our ass up a tree." So, of course, you have to be honest about the degree of your abilities in this arena. It's very difficult, as Joni says, and very, well, we like to use the word "deep." We call it "deep" because it's not easy to access that part of us, because we have so much reactivity standing in the way of that natural condition. We don't have to do anything to achieve it. It's the way we already are. We are already completely connected with each other. There is no discord. We are absolutely connected already. Except that we don't experience it that way, because we look through a scrim of judgment and reactivity.

So, depending upon how much you have worked with that scrim, you will be able to interact with other people on a shallow level, or maybe on a very deep level.

Student: I appreciated what you said a few minutes ago, that "the magic doesn't always work," because maybe what I'm thinking about is the way that we sometimes judge ourselves, based on whether you are able to get that other person to agree with you. So, like, you express compassion for someone else, and they are still coming at you, and you feel like the magic didn't work, so there must be something wrong with me, or I failed in some way. And that seems like that is also a dangerous way to think about it.

Well, yeah, it's inaccurate and incomplete. It's seeing it backwards. The other person is a mirror of you. How you are is how they will be. So, if you think you are being compassionate, and they are yelling at you, you are not actually being compassionate. You are just having an idea about compassion.

Student: I am sitting here thinking about some models that I have seen in my everyday life, that have been able to do that. Outside of our dojo, I mean besides the good teachers in our dojo, I am wanting to convey somehow what I have seen in Hawaiian

leaders, women, teachers, elders in the community that I have had the benefit of knowing since I came to Maui. It's not just gentleness and it's not just compassion, but there is a dignity. If a person is coming towards an interaction, and inside themselves they have confidence and dignity in addition to the compassion and the desire to respect and find an accord, there is a better chance that they other person will calm down. It's not just compassion. You know I grew up with the religion of "turn the other cheek," and actually a lot of people interpret that wrong. I mean I don't even know how to interpret it, but I used to think it meant to just take anything, you know, like let other people do things to you because if you are a really good Christian, you will just turn the other cheek and let them slap you on the other side. That's never going to go anywhere. You know, it's coming to the situation with a sense of one's own groundedness that is conveyed so clearly in a respectful way, that just helps everybody to calm down, that helps everybody to feel OK. I can't even express it correctly, but I bet you've all seen it, and can remember it, that feeling.

Thank you. Yeah, it's beautiful when you get to experience it. It's like, when we are doing a standing Kokyu Dosa. When you can let go of your desire to manipulate and control the situation, and you can actually just directly experience the connection that already exists between you, then anything can happen. Then you are free to move or not move. It's not about moving any more. Then you experience...I always call it "direct experience" or "direct knowing." And there is a tremendous dignity and a power that is never used. It's just there. True power is never used. If you use power, it is no longer power. It immediately becomes something else. And that is really important for the way we practice in Aikido, the way we approach this spirit of non-dissension, the non-complimentary behavior. And this is what is true dignity in a human being.

Student: Sensei, going back to the example of Terry Dobson, he was a big guy, very strong, and very capable physically, and the old man may have been, but not likely, so he doesn't have that capacity of strength to tempt him. He dealt with it maybe with wisdom and everything else, but he didn't have the capacity that Terry Dobson did. So, specially being raised in America, I don't really know about other places, as a man we are raised with this capacity that always seems to rise when we are physically challenged. And that is the physical sense to overcome, to win. If you don't have that, then you don't have that tool to access and so maybe you go to another sense of winning, maybe psychologically or something else.

Well, if you have a fight with someone that is less powerful than you are, physically, they just scream at you. If my wife gets mad at me, she just screams at me. She doesn't try to hit me. That wouldn't work. But she is still fighting. By the way, she doesn't actually do this any more. That was the old days. But, you know, everybody has experienced having an argument with your wife or with your husband, and if the husband is built like me, and you are a tiny little person, you are not going to attempt to wrestle them to the floor, or visa versa. You are going to scream at them, or you will use some kind of manipulative passive/aggressive behavior. That, too, is still fighting. We have all kinds of techniques that we use besides blunt physical trauma to the head, you know. Some people use their intellect just to beat you over the head with facts, with their massive "understanding." Some people are really good at that. Some people just insult you to

death. What's his face, that politician, does that, you know. Yeah? So, the physical is just one of many options, depending upon your physical stature and all kinds of other conditioning, you do whatever you do, but it's all contention. It's all contending for victory, trying to get your way. And to be able to maintain your dignity and give up getting your way, requires a deep level of awakening. People think it's their culture, which means their conditioning, which means their opinion, their view of life, which we make really fancy and attractive by calling it "my culture."

Believe me, I travel all over the world, and I see lots of different cultures. There is beauty in all of them, as long as they leave them alone. But most people are very attached to "You must be respecting my culture," which means that they don't respect their own culture. If they are telling you that you ought to respect their culture, it means they don't, because remember, it's a mirror universe. But we don't read it that way, because we just don't see it that way. We are all in a relative condition, striving to win. And the rare person that is not doing this, is seeing the world very, very differently than most people.

Student: Going back to the reading, the reading talks specifically about throwing and being thrown. Can you talk a little bit about how our physical Aikido practice can support this practice of non-dissension that we are talking about today?

I'll just read it again: "Be happy to throw and be happy to be thrown and we will see remarkable progress in our practice, if we train the correct principle [which is the principle of non-dissension] by supporting each other."

Yeah, that's a big question. How does being happy to be thrown and happy to throw, both equally help us to understand and become the spirit of non-dissension? What do you think? How does it do that?

What do we want, when we want to win? It's all about power. Everybody is fighting for power, the power to get what they want, to have their way. And of course, the one who is throwing is the one that has the power and the one who is thrown is the one who doesn't have the power. So, whether you have the power, or don't have the power, be happy to do it. It's like I said a little while ago. True power is never exhibited or expressed. Then it becomes something different.

Tohei Sensei was asked something a long time ago. The mothers in his community got together and asked if he would talk to their children's teacher, because the teacher believed in corporal punishment. He had been hitting the children when they got out of line. So Tohei Sensei said, "Yes, I will talk to him." So the teacher comes to see Tohei Sensei, and of course he has a chip on his shoulder, because he thinks that this crazy Aikido dude is going to try to tell me how to teach children and he doesn't know anything about it. And he probably wants me to stop hitting them. So he comes in and Tohei Sensei sits him down, pours him some tea, and says, "I am very happy to meet you. I have really admired you for a long time. I understand that you believe in and practice corporal punishment." And the teacher said, "Yes, of course I do. You have to keep the kids in line." Tohei Sensei said, "I couldn't agree with you more. At some point, probably, it is an effective tool." "You are damn right it is an effective tool," said the

teacher. They talked a little while about something else and finally the teacher said, “Well, is that all?” And Tohei Sensei said, “Yes, you can go.” The teacher got up to go and Tohei Sensei said, “Oh, wait just one moment please. Would you just promise me something before you go?” “Sure, whatever you want,” he said, because now Tohei Sensei was his friend. “Oh, I just wanted you to promise me that you would never hit a child again when you have anger in you. I am sure you understand that.” “Oh, yeah, no problem.” And the teacher never hit another child in his life.

This is an amazing story to me. I mean, I heard Tohei Sensei tell this story, and I heard other people tell me about this story having happened. I wasn't there. It could be apocryphal, because he is a teacher and Japan they do that. Well in America they do that. Everywhere in the world they do that. But it's a beautiful story and I really appreciate the beauty of how Tohei Sensei helped this man understand what was really going on. It really had nothing to do with hitting the kids. It wasn't about that at all. But that's what the mothers were all mad about. And they didn't recognize what they were really mad about, and that was that he had a temper and he couldn't control it. And that's what you do, when you can't control your temper.

Yeah, so that story about Tohei Sensei and the teacher and the Terry Dobson story about the man on the subway, those are my two favorite stories about what Aikido really is, and what it isn't.

Student: Did you hear the story behind the non-complimentary behavior?

Yes, I was listening to it. It is another similar story, but I thought to tell the Aikido story.

But yes, it is a similar situation. The guy on the subway didn't do Aikido. And the people in this situation on the radio, I don't really want to go into it...but now everyone is thinking, “What is the story?”

OK. These people are standing at a BBQ outside their house, having some French wine, some really good Bordeaux. They are standing around drinking the wine and getting ready to have their party. And this guy comes up with a gun and sticks it to this guy's head, and says that he will shoot her if they don't give him money. And they actually had been swimming, had bathing gear on, and didn't have any money to give him. So they said “Wait, we don't have any money.” They tried all different things to get him to put the gun down, but he was just getting madder and more frustrated. Finally one of the women said, “We are having some really good wine here. Would you try it? Have a glass of this wine with us. Come on, try the wine.” It turns out that the guy liked wine, and went, “Wow, this is really great wine!” So, they talked a bit, he got warmed up, and of course he saw them now as being human beings, and finally he asked the woman who had offered him the wine if he could have a hug. And she did, and then he wanted one with both her and her husband, which they did, and then he wanted a group hug, which they did. Then he said, “I have to apologize. I made a really bad mistake. I came to the wrong house. I should never have done this.” He didn't say what he did was wrong. He said he came to the wrong house. He is holding his glass of wine, and he just leaves, taking the glass and the wine with him.

Anyway, this is non-complimentary behavior. Then they all went inside the house and burst into tears because they were so terrified. They said to the woman, “How did you think of doing that?” And she said, “I was at my wits end. That’s the only thing that came up, so I thought I’d try it.” And sure enough, it worked.

And what they are describing is not on the same level as what we are talking about. We are talking about the spirit of non-dissension. The psychologists are talking about a manipulative technique. Sure, it’s better than getting shot, so there is nothing wrong with that. But that is not the whole picture.

Student: Back to the question about why we say the throwing and being thrown can be an aid to what we are talking about, it seems like that who we are manifests itself quickly and very obviously in the physical. Right? You cant hide it in the physical. You can hide it in your mind, and like you say you can hide it using techniques of psychology, and other things. But it is completely visible and demonstrated in the physical. So any art that you do, if you have the eye for it, even yourself, you can notice, “Oh, I had difficulty with that.” And so that would be my response to why Aikido works.

Yeah, I think the only thing I would add to that, if given the opportunity, is “Yes, and there must be a connection between you.” I have done Aikido with people who love to be thrown and have a great time taking uke, but there is nothing going on. They are just doing a performance, and they love the performance. So, it is not just “liking it,” it’s liking it in a deep way. Loving it, and loving the connection with the other person and not having any issues about them being the thrower or the faller.

We have run out of time so we have to stop, but I think this is a really important...it’s very much the same as the Spirit of Non-dissension that you read tonight from the Shokushu. In fact it has some of the very same wording in it, when he says, “there is no conflict in the absolute universe.” And Tohei Sensei repeated this again and again and again, so you know that he felt this was the key to our understanding, to see the difference between the conflict-ridden suffering and struggle in this world, which all comes out of that conflict, and the absolute purity of love.