

The Paradox of Warrior Training to achieve harmony and The Art of Peace.

One of the 'must-read' books in business circles is *The Art of War*, the Chinese military treatise written in the 6th Century BC by Sun Tzu. It is arguably one of the oldest and most successful books on military strategy in the world.

It has, apparently, influenced the planning of *Desert Storm* and military leaders as diverse as *Napoleon*, *Mao Zedong* and *Douglas MacArthur*. Vietcong officers used it during the Vietnam war and it is on the US Marine Corps Reading program.

The Art of War has also been applied to fields well outside the military. It has gained popularity in corporate culture and corporate strategy and tops reading lists of many leading business schools.

It has also crept its way into sport. Apparently Australian Cricket coach *John Buchanan* handed out excerpts from the book to his players before a match against England in 2001. Football coach *Luiz Felipe Scolari* is said to have used the book to help devise tactics and to plan his team's win against England in the 2006 FIFA World Cup in Germany.

However, this article is not about the *Art of War*.

It is instead about the comparatively-unknown *Art of Peace*.

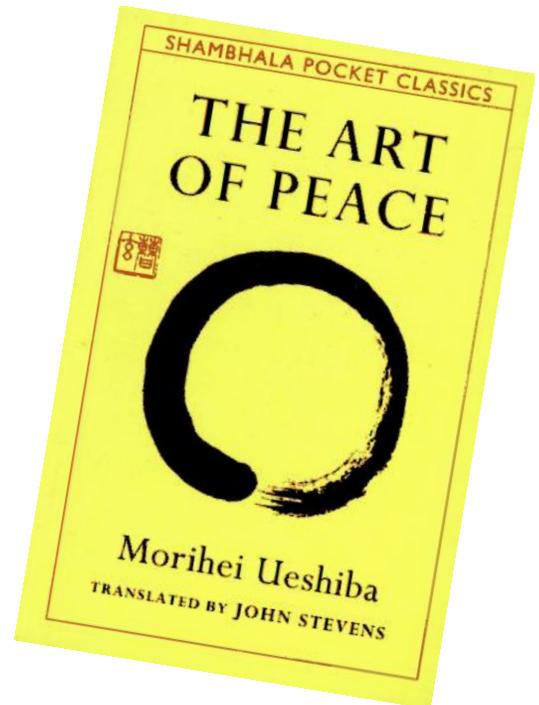
Written less than 100 years ago by a small, old, Japanese man, Morihei Ueshiba (1883-1969), the *Art of Peace* is already a modern classic with a message that is particularly resonant in the modern world: the futility of violence.

It is inspired by the terrible devastation that Ueshiba experienced during one of the darkest periods in recent human history - the destruction he witnessed during World War II.

"The Art of Peace is Medicine for a sick world"

The book's focus is on compassion, wisdom, fearlessness and love of nature. It would be easy to dismiss *The Art of Peace* as just the esoteric writings of a gentle pacifist were it not for the fact that its author was one of the greatest martial artists ever to have lived in Japan.

Morihei Ueshiba served his youth as an infantryman in the Russo-Japanese war, fought pirates in Mongolia and, after mastering a number of martial arts, served as an instructor at



Japan's elite military academies. Ueshiba was known to have defeated unarmed a high ranking swordsman avoiding all cuts and thrusts. He became an invincible warrior who even as an old man of 80 could disarm any foe, down multiple attackers and pin an opponent with a single finger.

Difficult to believe? Check out YouTube.

If it were only for his abilities as a Martial artist Ueshiba would have gone down in history as one of the greatest, but he would soon have been forgotten.



Instead he has become famous for developing a system of martial arts that, true to the principles he lays out in *The Art of Peace*, sets out to achieve the apparent paradoxical: a highly effective self defence system without violence or aggression.

One that protects the attacker as much as the attacked.
One that promotes love and cooperation not competition and exclusion.

Ueshiba called his martial art Aikido: the way of harmonious spirit.

Aikido is sometimes referred to as the 'gentle' martial art for its emphasis on controlling aggression by guiding energy towards harmless dissipation. Central to the deceptively simple teachings of Aikido is the principle of becoming one with your opponent – being one with life's energy. Where one's centre harmonises with life's energy then one is invincible.

So, instead of responding to aggression with more violence Aikido focuses on leading an attacker's movement by using entering and turning movements, on 'blending' with an opponent's energy. Students of Aikido neutralise an attack or several attacks by utilising various throws, pins or joint locks.

In the martial arts Aikido is unique in many ways. Aikido is cooperative not competitive. It does not feature punches (or kicks). It is not a sport.

"As soon as you concern yourself with the 'good' and 'bad' of your fellows, you create an opening in your heart for maliciousness to enter. Testing competing with and criticizing others weaken and defeat you"

There is no competition in Aikido. Instead, there is co-operation in an environment of mutual respect, courtesy and caring for others. Aikido teaches students how to handle violence both physically and verbally without themselves becoming violent.

While Aikido is indeed the way of the warrior it broadens the definition of a warrior to one who restores harmony and balance to the world. Ueshiba, the great warrior, discovered that the ultimate aim of a warrior was to put things right in accordance with nature. A warrior restores balance. His own and others'.

In *The Art of Peace* you will not find a great deal of specific techniques. As Ueshiba points out, one should not focus too much on any specific aspect whether of a technique or of an opponent - neither his eyes, his sword, his tricks. Instead one should become centred and reach out. Encompass the entire opponent within the sphere of one's being. One should flow with him, engulf him. Meet fire with water.

Despite the spiritual inclination of *The Art of Peace* Ueshiba makes clear that there is no substitute for practice, practice, practice. This is what attunes our body with life energy. This is what forges a body and a spirit.

And just in case this is sounding esoteric, unrealistic and ineffective consider this: Aikido is required training for the elite Tokyo Metro Riot Police and for every female officer.

Unlike *The Art of War* Ueshiba's book will be of limited appeal to the materialist. This book speaks of learning from nature, from sages, from looking deep into one's own heart. It makes it clear that all true spiritual paths are naturally compatible with the Way of Peace. What's more his Way can transcend time and space itself. Ultimately the Way of the Warrior, like the Art of Politics, or the Art of Business is to stop trouble before it starts.

Unlike *The Art of War* which accepted the inevitability of war and emphasises strategy, cunning and one-upmanship Morihei Ueshiba understood that continued fighting with ourselves, with others and with the environment, will ruin the earth.

*"What we need now are techniques of harmony not those of contention.
The Art of Peace is required not the Art of War"*

Ueshiba contended that a warrior does not defeat an adversary, whether in war or business by harming them but by making them realise that their actions are contrary to the Way, to the balance required for a satisfying, meaningful and good life.

In his unique martial art, Aikido, Ueshiba gives us a remarkable, invaluable tool to achieve this harmony.

Claude Calleja

Claude Calleja is a business consultant He has worked and trained Aikido throughout the Asia-Pacific region. In Malta he trains Aikido at the Aikido Yamato Club at the Maria Assumpta School in Hamrun. For further information visit www.aikidomalta.net