



Discovering Aikido: Principles for Practical Learning

Author: Rupert M.J. Atkinson
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Should students of Aikido really 'seek the principles, not the form' when training? Well that's what the author of this book suggests... but is he right?

In asking and attempting to answer this question in his book, writer and Aikido instructor Rupert Atkinson addresses a very important aspect in the study of martial arts in general. So, is this effort really that different from other books on Aikido? Well, it depends.

On one hand, all the things that need to be addressed are here, but on the other the emphasis they are given is certainly different from what one might find in other books. For instance, most texts on this subject follow a simple formula: a short introduction giving general information, followed by a main body that describes numerous techniques, each with frame-by-frame photos and a very small caption underneath. This book is different; or to put it another way, *Discovering Aikido* is 'wordy', but wordy in a good way. The second thing that sets this text apart from its contemporaries is the length of each of the book's 25 chapters, averaging out at about 4 pages each. This is a clear departure from the large-and-few approach adopted by most other writers. Finally, and as a result of the first two differences, a great many of these smaller chapters (and therefore a significant percentage of the book) does not actually address specific techniques at all. Instead, Mr. Atkinson offers a full insight into all the bits that other authors cram into a page or two at the start of their own books. His message, then, is simple: to be able to do the physical stuff properly, one needs to understand the ideas behind it first.

So, to sum up, this book is largely (but not wholly) about the thinking behind the doing. In this vein, each of the many chapters is headed by a pertinent quote from a historical figure, and in my opinion the book is worth buying for these alone. Ultimately, *Discovering Aikido* would be well suited to a fairly new student, one who wants to know what Aikido is all about as opposed to what it does. Add this insight to the author's (very competently) presented chapters on techniques, and you have a real winner here.

10 sausages out of 10

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