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## **Modern Aikido – Aikido For Sale**

**by David M. Valadez**

Today, there is a trend to create what can be called a "Modern Aikido." There are other names given: "Aiki Movement," "Aikido for Health," "Aikido for Everyone," "Open Aikido," "Aikido Resolution," etc. In Modern Aikido, the defining characteristic, which goes unsaid, is to make Aikido as non-intrusive as possible. The idea is to not have it disrupt anything or anyone; to have it satisfy the tastes of the even the most closed-minded and finicky palate; the idea is to conform silently to that mushy middle ground that lies somewhere between what Merton calls the "ludicrous pantomime of 'togetherness'" and the pseudo-spiritual and moral facade of individualism. Modern Aikido is in perfect line with all else that has been built up within this Time of ours - where what passes for thinking is only that which is mass-produced and passively accepted - where mass-production and passive acceptance are not only calls for legitimation but now legitimation itself.

More than mastery in the art, more than true spiritual cultivation, more than anything that might be considered valid by any real system of thought on Aikido, the main consideration of Modern Aikido, in perfect harmony with our material culture, is nothing more than economic success. More members means more money; more money means more success; more success means more legitimacy; more legitimacy means more members. How else, for example, should we understand the lack of communal outcry over a global \$200 testing fee for shodan ranking - when \$200 around the world goes from being a mere night out on the town in one nation to being a month's (or more) salary in another nation?!

Strangely, more and more people are coming to believe Modern Aikido to be Traditional Aikido. This they are able to hold though Modern Aikido has almost none of the significant elements relevant to the actual transmission of Budo. Modern Aikido's oldest methodologies for the most part stem from the 19<sup>th</sup> century and are derived mostly from absurd anthropological premises that posited a connection between the body, exercise, and good citizenship – which was very much an unsettled issue for the nations that were just burgeoning through the Industrial Revolution.

Increasingly, if there is an element of training that cannot be packaged, recorded, and accounted for, any of the traditional elements that may still be part of Modern Aikido, it is to be purged from the training curriculum. Still, there is no outcry at all - since Modernity's golden justification of "the more people that buy it, the more true it must be" is firmly at work. "Give me an art that will offend no one!" "Give me an art that will impose nothing upon anyone!" – these are the slogans of Modern Aikido. I say, what a strange idea, this notion of an art that will not offend at least someone if not most! I say, we should deny the easy route of reshaping Aikido according to the tired standards of mass consumption. We should deny

all of the supposed justifications the easy route brings via a capitalistic world. Rather, we should remain creative and laboring in our efforts to share Aikido with the growing global culture. There are ways to keep more of traditional Aikido intact and still have it speak to a shrinking world that is in so much need of it.