

Aikido and care of the self: a path in physical education for well living

Authors' Contribution:

- A Study Design
- B Data Collection
- C Statistical Analysis
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Abstract

Background and Study Aim:

Aikido is considered a modern budo. Created in Japan around 1942, aikido has its origins in several martial arts and some religious aspects. In turn, the care of the self represents an antique spirituality composed by knowledge and practices that have been passed down through ages. Our study aims to reflect on elements of the care of the self in aikido philosophy, identifying contributions for physical education.

Material and Methods:

This is a qualitative study with a hermeneutic approach based on Paul Ricœur, which interprets some works by Morihei, Kisshomaru, Moriteru Ueshiba, and Michel Foucault.

Results:

We identified notions of ki (vital energy), kotodama (the spiritual study of sounds), misogi (purification) and budo (path of self-improvement) in aikido, and in the care of the self, the formation of the ethical subject and their art of living. We identified elements of the care of the self in aikido, and finally, we perceive physical education as an art of well living through the spirituality notion built from the identified elements.

Conclusions:

We perceive this hermeneutic study as a possibility to identify the care of the self elements in aikido. Beyond this, the identified elements favour physical education socio-philosophical studies when we perceive them as a path, a lifestyle through the aesthetics of existence in the martial arts context, especially in the practice of budo, in the sense of considering it as an art of well living.

Keywords:

budo • ki • kotodama • misogi • philosophy

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Aikido – martial art created by Morihei Ueshiba, around 1942 (“He probably changed the name of his art to *aikidō* in 1942. Until then, a number of appellations were in use such *aiki-jujutsu*, *Ueshiba-jujutsu*, *aiki-budō*, and *aiki-bujutsu*.” [2, p. 207]).

Bu – Japanese concept that expresses a divine way of truth and justice.

Bu-no-ichinyo – concept developed by Morihei Ueshiba, which changed to *Iwama*, which means martial arts practice and agriculture practice.

Budo (Budō) – originally a term denoting the “Way of the warrior”, it is now used as a collective appellation for modern martial arts of *kendō*, *jūdō*, *kyūdō* etc. The primary objective of these “martial ways” is self-perfection (*ningen-kesei*) [2].

Chikon kishin – sitting meditation appears in *aikido* from Morihei Ueshiba’s studies with his master Onisaburo Deguchi, from the *Omoto-Kyo* sect.

Do – Japanese particle that expresses the idea of path.

Ki – the basic energy or “life-force” that flows through and exists in all things. *Ki* is the kinetic energy responsible for perception, awareness, and sense. *Ki* is said to determine the relation between mind and body and is a core element of all *budō* arts [2].

Kotodama – spiritual science or exoteric sounds.

Masakatsu Agatsu Katsuhayabi – the principle that expresses the idea to “overcome oneself in the here and now”.

Misogi – purification.

Omoto-Kyo (ōmoto-kyō) – religious sect from Japan, created by Nao Deguchi in 1892, which has its origin in Shinto.

Taijutsu – body techniques.

Takemusu aiki – the greater power of love.

INTRODUCTION

Morihei Ueshiba created *aikido* through his spiritual and martial art formation, receiving that definition around 1942 [1, 2]. Approaching is as a path of self-improvement for peaceful and harmonizing purposes, *aikido* makes uses of the artistic martial practice and assumes the imperative of *budo* to establish itself [2]. *Budo* is a broad Japanese concept which derives from *tao*, a Chinese expression that connotes an idea of path [3].

In our readings, we realize that *aikido* has central elements such as *ki*, *kotodama*, *misogi* and *budo*. These elements appeared in several moments of our studies and different works. Their respective meanings express an idea of vital energy, purification, a spiritual study of sounds and, finally, the idea of self-improvement path, a continuous exercise of oneself.

This perspective of exercise calls our attention when, in another moment of the study, we came across the philosophy of the care of self; the occupation with oneself discussed by the French philosopher Michel Foucault. This imperative was addressed along with the history of occidental, antique philosophy, especially by the figure of Socrates in the 1st and 2nd centuries, which are considered the Golden Age of the care of the self, and in the 4th and 5th centuries, by the religious characters of Christianity [4].

Regarding the implications of physical education (PE), we surveyed Brazilian academic productions. We did not identify studies that establish relations between *aikido* and the care of the self or the relation between *aikido* and PE. However, we found 9 dissertations in the Brazilian Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations (*Biblioteca Digital Brasileira de Teses e Dissertações –BDTD*) and the Coordination of Improvement of Higher Level Personnel (*Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior – CAPES*) theses archive, from several areas: psychology, odontology, arts, theatre, sociology, education, PE, and human movement science.

In PE, Prado [3] conducted interviews, which searched for meanings in the individuals’ memories concerning the arrival of *aikido* in Brazil, *aikido* conception and the appropriation forms of the art, the identities, the representations of Japanese culture and the values assigned to the techniques, martial art, spiritual and philosophic dimensions.

In education, Domingos Júnior [5] (also a PE professional) reflected on the body and nature through a dialogue between the philosophies of Merleau-Ponty and Morihei Ueshiba, promoting an education for the senses that recognizes the body and its relation with the world, others and objects through the flesh, the technique, motricity and expression.

In human movement science, Silva [6] conducted a biomechanical study analysing variables of the gripping force in maintenance tests of continuous and maximum interval isometric force in judo, *aikido*, rowing athletes and non-athletes. The author of this study evaluated the dominant hand and the non-dominant hand to the methodology and performance improvement in the training of these modalities.

With the same keywords, in the databases of Latin-American and Caribbean Literature of Information in Health Sciences (Centro Latino-Americano e do Caribe da Informação em Ciências da Saúde – LILACS), Borges Junior et al. [7] conducted a quantitative biodynamic study of isometric grip force in athletes and non-athletes. Bin Bu et al. [8] conducted a systematic review of martial arts effects on health, showing the potential of several martial arts and its impacts. The study by Jones et al. [9] implementing a quantitative and qualitative approach, investigated the motivation that makes people participate in martial arts in England. No works were found in the Online Electronic Scientific Library – (*Biblioteca Científica Eletrônica Online* database – SciELO). Only one work was found in the LILACS, and it is already discussed with Borges Junior et al. [7] works in the study about isometric grip force.

Fumiaki Shishida, an outstanding expert in *aikido*, concludes that “ (...) Ueshiba with his talent and efforts had been devising a unique skill based on methods of *Kito-ryu*, judo, and *Daito-ryu* as a part of his jujutsu, later called aikido, at the same time also forming another part dealing with techniques against sword and spear” [10, p. 7].

We can perceive that all these studies contain important knowledge on the biodynamics in the PE and sports sciences areas. However, they do not clarify our questions about the socio-philosophical perspective, showing the need for new approaches in this matter.

Our study aims to reflect on elements of the care of the self in *aikido* philosophy, identifying contributions for physical education. In the face of the presented problem, our study questions were: how to identify the care of the self elements in *aikido*? How can the identified elements contribute to PE? As the research objective, we seek to identify the care of the self elements in *aikido* philosophy, in the sense of perceived contributions to PE.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology used was the hermeneutic interpretation. Based on Paul Ricœur [11], it seeks to understand the meanings which emanate from the text itself. In this type of methodology, 'we treat the text as an entity without world' (some of the studies that we approach are found in Portuguese; we sign the translated quotes with 'T.N.', which means translated note), [11, p. 92 T.N.]. In other words, the hermeneutic is conceived 'just right in which interpretation updates the meaning of the text to the present reader' [11, p. 103 T.N.].

The interpreted works compose the following themes: a) *aikido*: Morihei Ueshiba [12-14], Kisshomaru Ueshiba [15] and Moriteru Ueshiba [16]; b) care of the self: Foucault [4, 17, 18]. The topics constitute the structure of this paper: 1) The meanings of *aikido*; 2) The meanings of the care of the self; 3) The care of the self elements in *aikido*; 4) Physical education as an art of well living; 5) Conclusions.

The meanings of *aikido*

With the expression *aikido* being translated as path for harmonizing the energies, we realize, from Prado [3], the meanings of *ai* (合) as harmony or love, the *ki* (気) as energy and *do* (道) with a meaning of a path, coming from *tao*, a Chinese principle. According to Soares [19, p. 28 T.N.], *aikido* means 'path of unification of the spirit with the universe', also: 'path of the harmony of body and mind with nature T.N. In Moriteru Ueshiba's [16, p. 21 T.N.] interpretation 'Aikido is a modern *budo* created by Morihei Ueshiba, based on his intensive training in several traditional systems of Japanese martial arts. It is implicit in its name, AI KI DO, as being centred on the principle of *ki*'.

The union *ki*-mind-body is the guiding principle of *aikido*. This union is perceived in the movements which are sometimes 'impetuous and potent,

other times are slow and impassive' [15, p. 34 T.N.]. When it occurs, one can have the notion of the concentration degree, of *nen*, concentration all over the body, and 'the power of the individual pulsation becomes one with the universe, expanding it softly and naturally until the last limit, but in same time the person becomes each time more self-contained and autonomous' [15, p. 34 T.N.].

Deepening our studies about *ki*, in the words of Morihei Ueshiba [16, p. 22 T.N.], its 'vital energy which permeates the existence of everything and everyone, and it is the source of all this energy'. The objective of training in *aikido* is to regulate the pulsation (*kokyū*) of the individual *ki* with the universe's [15]. For that, Morihei Ueshiba, who received it from the Omoto-kyō sept leader, Onisaburo Deguchi, bases on Shinto concerning the knowledge and practices of *kotodama*, defined that in *aikido* 'you must find the balance between the energy, the intelligence, the virtue, the knowledge and the physical activity through the *aiki*' [14, p. 76 T.N.].

Kotodama matches the divine element in human beings and represents an exoteric science of spiritual sound [14]. With *kotodama* being a principle of harmony of the things in the world and of unification among humanity, the heaven, the earth and God [13], it is understood that in order to achieve such harmony, a purification work in oneself is necessary. From the *kotodama* theory, we came across *misogi*, which means, 'the purification of all the illusions, the removal of all the obstacles, a radiant state of purity without adornment, a conclusion of all things, a vibrant state of divine virtue, an immaculate universe' [14, p. 114 T.N.]. *Misogi* reflects the idea of refining the mind, the body and the spirit [14].

To define the martial path that promotes the purification of the subject, we enter the Japanese concept of *budo*. From the perspective of *aikido*, this concept is composed of the elements of *Bu*, 'a path established' [14, p. 26 T.N.], and of *do*, which attributes the idea of 'spiritual path' [14, p. 11 T.N.]. Namely, the formalization of *budo* occurred in Japan during the Tokugawa period (1568-1603) from the changes in the antique combat arts, which are a Japanese cultural, historical legacy, to the perspective of a path [13, 15].

In *aikido*, the *budo* assumes characteristics of purification, a path for us to perceive our inheritance to nature and the divine through the training during

life [12, 13, 16], or *bu-no-ichinyo*, Morihei Ueshiba's concept to define the martial arts practice and the cultivation of nature. Therefore, the founder comprehends that the practice of *budo* takes us to 'a victory without 'winning' – a real victory, overcoming oneself' [1, p. 181-182 T.N.], with the principle *tatakawazu shite sudeni katsu*, 'winning without fighting' [1, p. 190 T.N.], and *Masakatsu Agatsu Katsuhayabi*, the victory over oneself, here and now [12, 14]. We realize that *aikido* is built as a spiritual path based on love (*Takemussu aiki*), humanity and sincerity, having four essential virtues of being incorporated through the training: 'sincere bravery, sincere wisdom, sincere love and sincere empathy' [13, p. 34 T.N.]. Furthermore, '*budo* forms our character' [14, p. 54 T.N.]. The spiritual path that *aikido* seeks with daily training is to unify *ki*, the mind and the body, the individual-*ki* with the universal-*ki* and form our character, which is expressed in good manners, suitable behaviours, mutual respect and happiness [1, 12-16].

The meanings of the care of the self

Regarding Foucault's [20, 21] thought, we may face themes such as the conduct, the codes and law, the mode of one's behaviour, the self-techniques and the arts of existence [22]. The care of the self was investigated by Foucault in three periods: the Socratic-platonic, the Hellenistic and Roman in the 1st and 2nd centuries, and in the Christian precepts of the 4th and 5th centuries of our age [4], being imperatively incorporated into practices and philosophical, medical and even religious recommendations [4, 17, 18].

The care of the self on the Antiquity

For the Socratic-platonic period, we are faced with the relation between the *epiméleia heautoû* and the *gnôthi seautón* notions, the principle of the care of the self and self-awareness, respectively. Foucault [4], therefore, emphasizes that the *epiméleia heautoû* notion is based on the necessity of self-awareness. Beyond that, the philosopher considers that the relation also situates the care of the self on the thinking and existence of Socrates, despite recognizing that the practices are older.

The principle of occupying oneself with oneself assumes the form of a rule as part of prudential advice from Socrates to Alcibiades, because it 'has in mind something more than just benefiting from his connections, family, and wealth for the rest of his life, and as for his beauty, this is fading', continues the philosopher, 'is someone who wants to transform his statutory privilege

and pre-eminence into political action, into his effective government of others' [4, p. 33 T.N.]. Thus, Foucault [4] evidence from Socrates's recommendations the necessity of a *tékhnē*, composed of specific exercises from those the subject appropriates to perceive if one is or is not capable of making use of the discussion or of facing the events and which defines the form of *askesis*.

Besides the proposed exercises from *askesis*, Foucault [4] emphasizes the question of pedagogical insufficiency of Alcibiades, and approaches the example of Greek education, the *Paideia*, which has the meanings of virtue and power in learning which is conceived by 'gymnastics and endurance trials, music and the learning of vigorous and manly rhythms, practice in hunting and warfare, concern with one's demeanour in public, acquiring the *aidōs* that would lead to self-respect through the respect one showed for others' [20, p. 76].

Concerning the exercises of the care of the self in the Antiquity period, we perceived those of purification, the concentration of the soul, retirement, resistance and breathing [4]. In Plato, Foucault [4] discussed the *khrēsis*. Expression is understood as the soul, remounts the figure of the subject that makes use of your body, of the body actions and the language, to care for yourself, as we can perceive by: 'the subject of all these bodily, instrumental, and linguistic actions is the soul: the soul inasmuch as it uses language, tools, and the body' [4, p. 55 T.N.].

Developed in three great lines, the care of the self is related with Dietetics, which have a medicinal approach; Economics, being related to the social activity; the Erotics, constituting a line that reflects on love relationships. Dietetics has, in medicinal thinking, the goal to not 'dominate nature, but to use it for human beings' [23, p. 32 T.N.], however, in philosophical thinking, to conceive knowledge and practices in relation to body, wife, men and truth. Regarding economics, we faced the 'art of man's conduct as the head of the household' [17, p. 115 T.N.], 'art of ruling [17, p. 152 T.N.], which analyses man and woman's figures in matters of fidelity, sexual exclusivity, maintenance of status, marriage and reciprocity. On Erotics, the purposeful art of love, inquiries about the formation having the other as a reference, in the middle of a loving relationship, the use of the *aphrodisia* (the pleasure), existing in the Socratic perspective, the idea of love of the soul and of the body, with the soul's love being the true one [17].

The care of the self in the 1st and 2nd centuries

The 1st and 2nd centuries are the Golden Age of the care of the self [4]. This period has created the art of existence, especially through the Epicurists, stoics and cynical thinking [4, 18]. The focus of the care of the self is not anymore under the governance of cities; its issues are facing the self with which one ought to occupy as the aim of the care itself and the culture of self. This means, 'if the organization of the field of values and access to these values can only take place through regular and reflected techniques and a set of elements constituting a systematic knowledge' [4, p. 179 T.N.], it gives bases to the concept of *tékhnē tou biou* (art or aesthetics of existence).

The conduct norm for the subject that occupies within oneself, for Foucault [18, p. 41, T.N.], can be found from the insistence of attention that is convenient for oneself, beyond that, 'it is the modality, scope, constancy, and exactitude of the required vigilance; it is the anxiety concerning all the disturbances of the body and the mind, which must be prevented by means of an austere regimen'.

Although it has finalization in the self of the subject, the care of the self as an activity was not conceived as an individual movement dissociated from the others. The Epicurist friendship assumed a form of the care of the self that 'it constituted, not an exercise in solitude, but a true social practice' [18, p. 51 T.N.], in the same time that formulates an ideal of communitarian being [4, 18], which is everyone's duty, it 'is a privilege-duty, a gift-obligation that ensures our freedom while forcing us to take ourselves as the object of all our diligence' [18, p. 47 T.N.], as part of human community.

In other words, it was the subject's duty to carry out the conversion to oneself, a kind of self-subjection, to 'turning your gaze on yourself' [4, p. 218 T.N.]. It is in this way of the subject to oneself that we understand the meaning of the technology of the self and the art of living, the *tékhnē tou biou*. The practices and the conversion to the self formulated the *áskēsis*, the access with which sought 'a way of binding him to the truth' [4, p. 317 T.N.] through the *paraskeuē*, the equipment for transforming the subject's behaviour into reasonable or morally acceptable behaviour. Thus, *áskēsis* was a promoter of a subject's mode of being, and for this it depended on telling-the-truth, the *parrhesía* of the master to the disciple that was 'a technique and an ethics, an art and a morality' [4, p. 368 T.N.],

and the techniques of the body, as the proposals of Musonius Rufus with the *gymnázēin*, the gym to oneself that seeks to develop a body with patience, resistance and abstinence [4].

The care of the self in the 4th and 5th centuries

The care of the self in this period is formulated from the perspective of the renunciation of the self-present in Christianity. Spirituality that reconfigured the knowledge of oneself, the notions of salvation and purification, promoting practices of confession, abstinences and sacrifices [4, 17, 18].

Defining Christianity as 'belonging to the salvation of religions. It is one of those religions which is supposed to lead the individual from one reality to another, from death to life, from time to eternity' [20, p. 242 T.N.], Foucault investigates the condition and the conduct rules that aim to transform the self and identify that they are marked with 'comprising precise forms of attention, concern, decipherment, verbalization, confession, self-accusation, struggle against temptation, renunciation, spiritual combat, and so on' [17, p. 63 T.N.], based on Revelation, faith, Text and grace [4].

The salvation has binary and opposing elements, such as mortality and immortality, life and death, this world and another. For the practices, this system is organized in such a way as to constitute another conversion of oneself in a three moment scheme: a sudden mutation, a dramatic event, historic and meta-historic, and lastly, a rupture of the subject, the renunciation of the self [4].

In this context, the renunciation of the self represented a step towards rebirth in another self that does not have any connection with the last self and defines the one who seeks salvation as a Christian athlete [4]. Someone who is in the direction of the sanctity, alert against oneself, one is thinking and desires, overcoming oneself to the point of self-renouncement, practising the regime, the abstinence of the *aphrodisia* (pleasure), the virginity and the truth through another form of *parrhesía*, the confession.

In this way, we see the care of the self-being transformed, undergoing extensions and ruptures [4], since prudential advice to the government of the self and the cities, in a culture of the self and art of existence as everyone's duty along life, also as work of purification, abstinence and renunciation of the self.

The elements of the care of the self in *aikido*

In Foucault [21], the distinction between Western and Eastern rationalities lies in mysticism. For example, in Christian mysticism from Western thinking, the philosopher points to it as an individualization movement: 'even when it preaches the union of god and the individual, there is something individual' [21, p. 112 T.N.]. On the other side, regarding the Eastern rationality, approached from Zen and the meditation experience that Foucault had when he visited a Buddhist temple in Japan, the philosopher considered that it is related with the body and the external world [21]. This allows us to understand the attitude of the subject in putting oneself as an object of analysis in a conscious and attentive manner, 'presence of self to self in the distance of self from self' [4, p. 223 T.N.].

Approaching the two philosophies, we aim to identify the care of the self's elements in *aikido*. Thus, we are faced with the idea of knowing oneself, spiritual knowledge and exercises, the understanding of the general principles of the ethical subject's constitution or *tékhnē*, the relation with age to the care of the self, the appeal, the existence of the master and disciple, the equipment to the subject's transformation (*paraskeuē*), the education of the self through life as a test and the *paidéia*, the knowledge of the nature (*phýsis*) and the *ki*, the practice of sincerity or *parrhesía*, the vital breath on the notion of *pnêuma* and of the *Kokyū* (Wagner Bull [24] already establishes this relation in *aikido* context and by the authors Melo, Schneider e Antunes, in the book *Práticas Corporais*, of Silva e Daminani [25] in PE context), the notions of soul, spirit, body and *krhêsis*, sin, ascesis (*âskesis*) and friendship, and other practices such as withdrawal (*retraite*), of purification, resistance, vigilance and health practices and its relation with divinity.

Regarding Morihei Ueshiba [14, p. 33, T.N.], the knowledge of oneself is the beginning of the subject's development, meaning that 'learning about one's own existence, realizing our true nature and understanding from where we came from, to perform things we should perform, knowing ourselves and discovering our mission in life'. With this spiritual exercise of the care of the self, we realize a continuity of the knowledge of the self to the present moment. In Foucault [4, p. 292, T.N.], we have to 'keep in mind the things that we must have in mind, namely: the definitions of the good, of freedom, and reality'.

In the Socratic-platonic period, the *krhêsis*, the soul-subject, represents the self that serves the body to occupy with oneself [4], on the other hand, in *aikido*, the notions that we can approach *Gitai Shinkon*, 'appears to be the body, but in truth it is the soul' [1, p. 189 T.N.], *haku*, or the bodily soul, and *kon*, the soul or spirit related to the conscious [1]. To educate this body, the examples of Greek *paidéia* and the *gymnazéin*, which seek 'to educate the man who would be of service to his city, and it was also moral training for anyone who intended to master himself' [17, p. 76 T.N.].

In the case of *aikido*, education has also been promoted throughout life, and its main elements are 'the development of the character and the integration of the body and mind', which have 'a positive effect on our character, making us more vivacious and objective. The physical techniques in *aikido* serve to polish our mind and our body' [16, p. 18, T.N.].

Thus, both *aikido* and the care of the self make an appeal for all to seek your ascesis, a kind of salvation understood as everyone's duty, whose goal is to take the human character to perfection for *ethos* modification [12-16], to conduct the transformation of the self through a sort of mastery, or conscious director, and the *parrhesía*, telling-the-truth, and this truth to the knowledge of *kotodama* [8].

Morihei Ueshiba's concept [13, p. 34, T.N.] of education based on *budo* aims to constitute a subject that 'creates value, sincerity, fidelity, kindness and beauty, as well as makes the body strong and healthy'. For the development of such elements, both the spiritualities conceive life as a test, a promoter of experiences that educates the subject [4, 12, 14].

In this sense, the guiding principle of this education is evidenced by the notion of *phýsis* and *ki*. *Phýsis* were shown as a knowledge form of nature, susceptible to serving as a principle for human conduct, for the subject's transformation. In Foucault's words, 'a free subject who finds within himself the possibility and means of his permanent and perfectly tranquil delight' [4, p. 241, T.N.]. For its turn, the *ki* is understood as an energy that connects everything and everyone in the universe, also meaning the heart of nature [14].

In both contexts, we faced knowledge and practices associated with a kind of a breath of life, which allows us to understand the application of

ki and *phýsis*. In *Kotodama's* theory, *kokyū* has a meaning of subtle breathing or pulsation with the universe's *ki* [14, 15]. *PNêuma* was that which the Greeks of the Socratic-platonic period denominated as the breath of life, and concentrating that breath in the soul allows one to 'gather it up, condense it, and unite it in itself in order to give it a mode of existence, a solidity, which will enable it to last, to endure, and hold out throughout life and not be scattered when death comes' [4, p. 47 T.N.].

The practices or exercises that constitute this way of living matches the withdrawal, with the concentration of the soul and the resistance. In *aikido*, beyond its martial aspect, the seated meditation practice (*chikon-kishin*) seems closed of concentration. Concerning the resistance practice, in Morihei Ueshiba [12, 14], we found it associated with *misogi*, meaning under the idea of us to purificate ourselves, of our desires, sins and of selfishness to make the world better.

As the technology of the self, the objective of *aikido* is 'to improve the character, establish solid families and make the world better' [14, p. 26 T.N.]. The perspective of friendship and the care of the self as a social practice [4], finds its meanings approached to the idea of 'training which confers the highest priority to mutual love between human beings' [1, p. 287 T.N.], whose spiritual goal is 'to work for the well-being of all humanity, promoting love and peace, and in same time going deeper and deeper into training and in practice with the objective of performing the true essence of the universe' [15, p. 152 T.N.].

Freeing the subject of selfish thoughts and favouring a decrease of wars and discord, leading human beings to the laws of nature and divinity, is a precept that can be perceived in the knowledge of Dietetics of the care of the self and *aikido* with its perspective of health and curing practices. The martial art way of spiritual development which is *budo*, approaches it through *ascesis* present in stoics, which conceives an 'assimilation to God, how the necessity of recognizing oneself as participating in divine reason, or even as being a substantial part of the divine reason that organizes the whole world' [4, p. 420 T.N.], the principle of *homoiosis tō theō*.

We emphasize, therefore, that the elements of the care of the self-identified in *aikido* aims to develop a state of unshakeable serenity, which is called temperance, and the sincerity of the subject.

In this perspective, *aikido* assumes a modern formulation of the practice of the self that is related to some approaches of different knowledge and practices in the three periods of the care of the self-analysed by Michel Foucault. In our perception, *aikido* can have it as its crucial point, because of the re-readings of the soul, breath of life, *phýsis*, *parrhesía* and purification to the notions of spirit, *kokyū*, *kotodama* and *misogi*.

Physical education as an art of well living

We perceive PE classes as a space of philosophic reflection and educational practices, with philosophy being an instrument to reflect on the relation to society and the world [26]. In this sense, we emphasize that our comprehension of PE is based on recognizing this art of caring for the body, health and life, understanding what the Greeks called *tékhnē* and re-appropriating it to the scope of games, dancing, fighting, gym and sports [23].

For Mendes [23], PE awakens creation and is perceived as an artwork, which recognizes the Delphic precept of knowing oneself as fundamental to an educational practice that appreciates subjectivity, dialogue, life, loves and the energy that connects all of us and the rest of nature.

Ueshiba's tradition comprehends the spiritual practice governed by the knowledge of our nature and the enhancement of our relationships with other persons, with nature and the divine elements. This practice aims to modify the *ethos* of the subject, form one's character and to polish the spirit through daily training [1, 12-16].

For Morihei Ueshiba, the true spirit of *budo* spirit is found in the pursuit of perfection as a human being, in physical and mental forms, with gentle spirits in martial arts [15]. The practice of *budo* make apparent the reason for being, the characteristics of truth in the modern world, being beyond any age or culture. From the perspective of *aikido*, *budo* seeks the unification of the universal *ki* with the individual *ki*, the pulsation force of each person harmonized and manifested in a dynamic and wavy movement, which expresses the power of *ki* in a free and fluid form, indestructible and invincible [12-16].

Deepening *budo* comprehension, in Sasaki's study [27] we identify an evident tendency to define it as a culture of spirituality and moral values, in a certain way connected to the Japanese tradition. From the perception of Barczyński et al. [28],

aikido, as an example of *budo*, is a cultural phenomenon that depends on the simultaneous method of strengthening the mind, the spirit and the body. The fact that it is not limited to the motor sphere, but based on ethical principles and practical dimension, characteristic from several martial arts, is what makes it attractive. Therefore, *budo* is considered inserted in PE, not the opposite [28].

In another study by Sasaki [29], *budo* is understood as Japan's unique feature, which is found in the educational scope. Under the form of the martial arts, the practice of *budo* has been present in Japanese schools since the period before the Second World War. The Japanese Curriculum Council (The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology) state that the objective of *budo*, in the 21st century, is to enrich people's way of thinking, making them adaptable to the changes and assuming their spot in the face of the society [29].

According to Sasaki [29], the new policy of the PE Department understands that practising sports does not mean to improve physical strength and only perform health maintenance, but is something important for living a happy and fuller life. The function of PE is to encourage all those things along life.

Kisshomaru Ueshiba [1] report the performance of Jigoro Kano, who saw PE as being indispensable to the moral and intellectual education, being neglected. *Budo*, from Jigoro Kano's perspective, was the fundamental aspect of PE, as its technical tradition was systematized, making it suitable for the public in general, and not just for athletes, with the objective of education and formation of character [1].

In the formation perspective, the understanding of Kalina and Barczyński [30] approaches training in *budo* as a self-improvement principle, a constant education with the objective including somatic, mental and social health, as well as the development of motor competence related to survival. Defining *budo* as a philosophy, at the same time, a practice of value, it is also a path of non-aggression with teachings aimed at overcoming the adversities of life [30].

Through the theme of spirituality, PE has the opportunity to revisit and renew practices and knowledge according to each context and subject, also recognizing the importance of the cultural sharing of principles, of human values such

as sincerity, kindness, friendship, love and pleasure [23]. We emphasize that PE being understood as a promoter of this conversion to oneself is a discussion in which Mendes and Gleyse [31] argue that the subject realizes their development and takes into account the relations of care with the body and health beyond the biological bias, which also means culturally and socially.

We are considering, therefore, a PE that appropriates the principles behind *budo* and of the care of the self to form an art of well living, concerned with the subject's character and relationships with nature, with oneself and with others.

CONCLUSIONS

We perceive the hermeneutic study as a possibility of identifying the care of the self elements in *aikido*. Beyond this, we realize that these elements favour physical education's socio-philosophical studies with a path, a lifestyle or aesthetics of existence in the martial arts context, especially in the practice of *budo*, in the sense of considering it as an art of well living.

The spirituality of both *aikido* and the care of the self is constituted with practices and knowledge that have close meanings and are performed in exercises created to transform the subject's way of being. This means being committed to *ascesis*, the truth, the formation of character and the development of temperance.

Moreover, *budo* as a martial arts path of spiritual improvement, we may understand its education's focus being on the knowledge of oneself, of nature and of the divine elements, which can promote harmony among human beings.

With this, we conclude that our research about martial arts or fighting in the scope of PE is not limited to the technical aspects of movement; it can be extended to the perspective of healing, care of oneself and others. In this effort, we believe that new studies, new inquiries and new ways of thinking about the body, health and martial arts are necessary.

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