

Over a drink, a member of another aikido school spoke enthusiastically about their ki training. As he gushed about being blindfolded last night during their ki training in which he was asked to sense when uke were close by, I was reminded of an incident that happened some years ago.

Around midday, I was waiting at a busy major intersection in Sydney's CBD, Australia, waiting for the pedestrian lights to change so I could cross the road. At a guess, I estimated there were at least 20 people waiting with me all bunched together.

As a type "A-person", I would habitually walk very briskly across the road just after the very instant when the little red man changed his colour to green. But for some inexplicable reason, I didn't want to rush across the road that occasion. Why? ... I don't know. Instead I looked around and noticed that a woman close to me was priming herself to rush across the road as I would have normally.

As she was about to step off the curb, I saw a truck running through the red light at speed in her intended path. But she didn't see it.

"Look out!"

She froze in mid-stride. And the truck barely missed her.

In that instant, we both understood that she would have been mashed had she'd taken that extra half step.

I acted nonchalantly and a warning didn't really come from me – being the reserved type, I didn't really want to draw attention to myself. But the woman turned and thanked me, and she was able to go home to her family that night.

Incredibly no one else in the waiting crowd apparently noticed the drama?! The drama was only experienced by the woman and me. It was a very surreal moment like an episode of Twilight Zone that lasted no more than micro-seconds.

Was it a "ki" moment? I don't know.

Actually I'm not sure what ki is. And if you asked different aikidoka to define ki, I suspect (with respect) that the responses could range from the mystical and spiritual to "Let's do the unbendable arm test".

I wasn't actually training in aikido at the time. But I had trained in various martial arts for several years, on and off, when this incident happened. So maybe I could say that my senses were heightened by my martial arts training and I was alert to my immediate environment.

Or if you believed in guardian angels, perhaps the woman had one looking after her. Now, Yoshinkai Aikido does not emphasise or teach ki specifically. But I have seen some amazing demonstrations of aikido by Yoshinkan senior instructors, for example, by my Sensei, Darren Friend Sensei of Aikido Yoshinkai NSW (<http://aikidosydney.com.au/>), when he was hoisted by two burly men over their shoulder level. Then Friend Sensei became deadweight and the two collapsed under his weight!

Was that ki?

On ki, Chida Tsutomu Sensei, former head instructor of Yoshinkai honbu in Tokyo, observed that: "Many people have misconceptions about high level metaphysics such as 'ki power'. I don't focus on that. I teach in the physical realm. It's a kind of introduction to the higher level, and it's just like my teacher Shioda (Gozo Sensei, Yoshinkan's founder) taught. Many teachers talked about using ki, but Shioda taught in a physical way." (www.fitnessjp.com/025_76_aikido,+the+yoshinkan+way).

And interestingly, one of our new kyu students opined that ki demonstrations by other aikido schools which he'd seen were more about physics and relaxation – this was an impressive insight. But such demonstrations – physics and relaxation or "ki" – are still indicative of amazing internal skills and control.

So no, our dojo does not teach ki as such although it is a part of aikido depending on how you define it I think.

As for me, I am happy just to continue practising.