



The following is a transcript of an essay (or speech?) by Kanō Jigorō regarding the "true spirit of *jūdō*". It is one of the last Kanō made in English, this time to the *Japan Times & Mail*, a long published English language newspaper printed for the foreign community in Japan. It is not clear if Kanō *shihan* wrote this or dictated it for transcription.

The added endnotes are to explain some aspects that may not be clear to casual observers.

The Japanese terms were originally without italics or capitalization, so edited for clarity.

I hope you enjoy it - any questions are welcome, and you can sign up to receive email notices of updates by entering your email in the blank below.

## The Japan Times & Mail - Aug 17, 1936

### True Spirit of *Judo*

### By Jirogo Kano

### The Superintendent of the Kodokwan<sup>1</sup>

When I was still young, I learned various types of "*jujitsu*".<sup>2</sup> However, I found it difficult to discover the fundamental principles that decide as to which is the correct method because the teaching of each type was different. Thereupon, in order that I might find out the fundamental principle somehow or other, I began to study seriously. And, in the course of time, I was able to succeed in discovering it. What is this fundamental principle? It is to let our spirit and bodies work most effectively in order to accomplish our purpose, whenever we wish to throw others down, or cut, push, or kick others. Having found out this

principle, I put my whole effort to studying various tricks<sup>3</sup> of time-honored *jujitsu* of different types according to it. This is the way that *randori* (random practice) of *Kodokwan judo* was completed.

Here I must draw my readers' attention to the fact that the word *judo*, which we use at present, originated in 1882, when I first established the Kodokwan. However, it is true that even in the olden days the word *judo* had been used occasionally. In olden days the word *kendo* (fencing) had also been used in some cases. We also use such words as *chado* (the art of ceremonial tea-making) or *kado* (the art of flower-arrangement). Therefore, I do not say that the word *do* (road or Way) was not used in olden days. However, it is used for various meaning according to different cases, and it may differ in meaning from the word "*do*" which I use. When I began to teach *judo* at first, the people did not trust me at all. Though I had confidence in my teaching, they never accepted my teaching, and they even said "Why, is he not a bachelor of arts? How can we expect to learn real military arts<sup>4</sup> (EN2) from a man who studied literature at the university?" That is why in the beginning I found it very difficult to obtain disciples. In some cases one of the brothers came to my hall, while his brother went to some other old teacher, but in the end both of them came to my hall, and they even persuaded their friends, who were learning under their old teacher, to come to my hall. In this way the disciples gradually increased. It was because I taught with explanations based on the fundamental principle. And what is more, since I taught them more refined tricks, they began to realize that they could make rapid progress in a shorter time by learning under me than to receive instructions from other teachers. These are the reasons why almost all the different types of time-honored *jujitsu* have lost their traces, and *Kodokwan judo* spread throughout the world. Therefore, it may be said that the result of studying military arts in accordance with this fundamental principle was a success. Being encouraged by this success, I began to think that this fundamental principle - that is to say, the principle to make use of the power of the body and mind most effectively should be applied not only to military arts, but also to physical training. If we think from the standpoint of this principle, we can find various defects in the present day physical training. As it is physical training, no doubt people are thinking of how to make their bodies strong, but the real object of physical training is not clear. In my opinion, the general subject of physical training is to make bodies serviceable for human life by causing them to be healthy and strong. In other words, we must make our bodies strong, healthy and serviceable. There are three important to be remembered in our physical training.

How does judo differ from present physical training?

The physical training which is being practised in each of the countries of the world today is not in accordance with the fundamental principle of judo. For example, in the case of Swedish gymnastic exercises or Danish gymnastics, although room may still be left for discussion even concerning such points as how to be strong and healthy, since they were established for such objects in view, we may regard them to be suitable for the present; but in such a point as of service there is practically no value. This is a great defect. Again there is no interest in such physical training. Students may practice such exercises, if the school compulsorily teaches them, but is a question whether they continue to practice Swedish or Danish gymnastics after their graduation. This is a proof that they are not

suitable as a method of physical training for the whole nation. If gymnastics are interesting so much the better. If not, it should be either interesting or serviceable; then it is easier for us to practice it continuously until we get old. For this reason, it is necessary that we should reform gymnastics from this point of view.

Then what about the present sports? Being one of the supporters of sports I do not hesitate in saying that they are good. However viewed from the standpoint of true physical training we can find defects all the same, because in the case of sports more stress is laid on interest than on physical training. Since gymnastics are not interesting, compulsion is necessary. For this reason, it would be advisable to add some interest to gymnastics. In this sense, we find value in sports. We do not say that such exercises as jumping or running or performing various techniques are not at all useful. No doubt they are interesting; but when we speak from the standpoint of physical training, we find various defects. Causing injuries to internal organs, or unnatural development of the bodies are some of the defects. This is natural since the object of these exercises is not to improve the physical condition of the bodies. Such exercises are quite apart from the ideal of physical training. Although for the sake of interest and mental culture, I am the supporter of athletic sports, I find that much reformation of them is needed. Again, in the selection of sports, which should be encouraged, we must always endeavour to select such sports as would coincide with three conditions - namely, strength, health and service.

In order to attain this object, I have instituted a national physical training for the utilization of vitality.<sup>5</sup> Concerning this, a book has already been issued, and at various schools this is being practiced to a certain extent. But this is only a beginning, and I am always thinking of how to discover various methods of physical training in accordance with this principle, so that I might publish them to the world.

With regard to ordinary physical training, I am thinking of publishing opinions, in order to carry on reformation in accordance with this principle. If this reform is accomplished, I am sure judo, which concerns physical training, will be established, as in the case of judo, which concerns physical training, it is also possible to establish *judo*, which concerns the cultivation of knowledge and virtue.

### ***Judo for cultivating knowledge and virtue***

I have had long experience as an educationalist, and, even if I consider it from the specialist's point of view, there are many unsatisfactory points in the present-day system of education, and in its practice. Not only from the specialists (sic), but even from the fathers and elders of the children, we often hear discontented remarks concerning the present day education. What is the cause of this complaint? It is because the system and method of education at present is such that the fruit or the effect we obtain from it is much less, compared to the amount of money and effort we devote for it. Therefore, if we study this in accordance with the principle of judo, I am sure considerable reform effort can be carried out on concerning the point of intellectual culture and moral education.

Even with regard to various social problems, such as food, clothing and habitation, social intercourse, business, management etc., we find great many defects, if we consider them according to the principle of judo. But by making use of this principle, I am sure, we

can think out many new devices and plans for food, clothing and habitation. In Europe, people have been paying a great deal of attention to the utilization of human labor for many years, especially in the case of office attendance, or in manufacturing labour. Even in Japan, similar consideration is being entertained to a certain degree, in the name of scientific management or increase of efficiency. To apply the same reason or logic for all the affairs of human life is the mission of *judo*.

### **Europeans' and Americans' sympathy and impression of *judo***

About three years ago, I delivered lectures for 4 days continuously in London.<sup>6</sup> (EN4) In the morning of the first day of my lecture, a long article appeared in the London Times concerning my principle. In the evening of the same day, a newspaper called on me and said "I had the pleasure of listening to your lecture, and I quite sympathized with your opinion, which you talked of making use of human power most effectively to do any kind of work. Today, Japan's cotton spinning is a great success, and that of England is almost overwhelmed. I wonder sir, whether those, who are working in various factories have received your instruction".

In reply to these words, I said to him "In the industrial world of Japan, both the employers and employees are so teamed as to work under the same principle as mine, and without my instruction they are practising this principle in their work. Today, Japan is making rapid progress even outside the field of cotton spinning, and I am sure she will continue to progress in a steady and orderly manner, since the brains of Japanese are advancing towards this principle. Therefore, if Europeans wish not to be defeated by Japanese, it is necessary not only to industry, but for all the affairs of human life".

### **The application of energy most effectively**

Of all the work, which man can perform there is nothing, which can be done without spiritual and physical power. That is why, to make use of the power of body and soul most effectively is the fundamental principle in accomplishing human affairs. In other words we might say, "Most effective application of energy". Energy and power of body and soul are the same. To apply most effectively means to make a best use of anything. By condensing these words, we can get a phrase - "To make a good use of energy." This is what we call *judo*. In other words, I have given the name of *judo* to this fundamental principle. Now the difference between military arts and *judo* is quit(e) clear. As regards military arts, teachers in the olden days taught how to throw and cut other people according to their own ways, and their teaching was not based on this fundamental principle. *Judo* is based on this fundamental principle, and is to be applied for all things. When it is applied for attack and defense, it becomes a military art, and when it is applied for the improvement of the body, it becomes physical training, and when it is applied to cultivation of knowledge and virtue it becomes intellectual culture and moral education.

If it is applied for all the things of society, such as food, clothing and habitation, social intercourse, business, management etc., it becomes a method for the social life of men. That is why *judo*, when viewed from one side, is a name given to the fundamental

principle, and when viewed from another side, it is a name given to a method, which is applied for actual practice.

Some people may ask me "Why then do your disciples use their energy chiefly for the form of *judo* and random practice at the judo hall, and do not advocate the application of *judo* extensively for social life?" For this, I shall give the following answer.

In the first place, the study of old military arts gradually led me to master this fundamental principle. Therefore, I thought that the ordinary people also can gradually approach this principle by the study of military arts, and as I also considered it might not be so interesting, if I were to explain the principle in the abstract form, I began to think it better to let them master the principle from the actual exercises. Accordingly, I planned to teach a combination of military arts and physical training, so as to make it a stepping stone to enter into the sphere of this principle. For this reason, we teach *randori* (random practice) and *kata* (the form of Judo) at our judo-hall. If "*randori*" and "*kata*" are considered as physical training, it is necessary that we should all know them.

If there is any one, who thinks that military arts are to be studied only by soldiers or "samurai" and that they are of no use for general people, then he is mistaken. All must learn military arts. If we live as human beings at all, we should all know how to protect ourselves.

Again, in the case of an emergency today, soldiers in the active service only may not be sufficient. The whole nation must always be preparing to fight for the country. If such poor-spirited people, who would run away saying that war is terrible, were to be in power, there will be a great danger for the country. We must always prepare to have such energy and technique, so that we may be able to bear any hardship for the defense of the country, and at the same time, we must be prepared to lay down our lives, if it is for the country's sake.<sup>7</sup>

I thought, therefore, that best way is to teach the military arts at first, since these are very important for all nations, and then let them gradually understand the underlying principle, so that they might apply it to their daily life. That is why I made it my principle of start from "*kata*" and "*randori*" in my judo-hall in teaching *judo*.

Fundamental principle of *judo* is a great principle, which promotes progress, development, and improvement, so as to accomplish the object, and it explains how to utilize energy most effectively. Therefore, if we live according to this principle, we can make our bodies strong, and at the same time we can acquire knowledge, and cultivate superior virtue and lofty sentiments, and thus we become powerful elements of the society. A society or a country formed by such individuals will be sure to prosper, since each member of such a community lives according to the principle of live-and-let-live, and ever ready to give way to others or render a helping hand to others, and does not try to be selfish.

If such an ideal country associates with other countries of the world according to the principle of live-and-let-live, she can find no enemy in any part of the world, and since each of the countries of the world respect each other, we can look forward to the appearance of the so-called golden world. In this world there is "a rule of right". The mission of judo is to advocate "a rule of right" throughout the world.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Kodokwan* was a common transliteration in pre WWII Japan before post WWII standardization; today of course it is known as *the Kodokan*. Note similar period transliterations of 'kai' as *kwai* in such names as London's Budokwai.

<sup>2</sup> *Jujitsu* was a common transliteration, *jūjutsu* today

<sup>3</sup> "Tricks" is a dated term used to translate the Japanese word "waza", which today we would translate as "techniques".

<sup>4</sup> "military arts" here means *budō*, not military techniques used by modern armies.

<sup>5</sup> "I have instituted a national physical training for the utilization of vitality."

Here Kanō *shihan* means the Kodokan's *Seiryoku Zenyō Kokumin Taiiku*; *Seiryoku* means "best (or correct) energy", or vitality.

"The Maximum Efficiency National Physical Education was devised in 1924 as a method for national physical education based on techniques for attack and defense. It is intended to help practitioners learn how to train their bodies and minds properly while practicing offense and defense with a focus on Atemi waza including strikes, thrusts, and kicks."

<http://kodokanjudoinstitut.org/en/waza/forms/08/>

accessed 2023/08/09, and edited for this entry.

Example video link at the Kodokan website above.

We will explore what Kanō *shihan* actually intended for *Seiryoku Zenyō Kokumin Taiiku* in a future paper now in development.

<sup>6</sup> EN4 - Kanō, age 73 years old, departed Japan in May 1933, crossing Siberia to Europe by train, to attend the 31st International Olympic Committee meeting in Vienna, Austria. He was accompanied by his then by *jūdōka* son-in-law Takasaki Masami and Kodokan instructor Kotani Sumiyuki (later 10th dan) to join him in providing judo demonstrations, including in London.

He was in London Aug 28-31, 1933, and gave a number of judo lectures and demonstrations.

Year later famous British *jūdōka* Trevor Leggett wrote in the *Budokai Bulletin*:

"In London, Dr. Kano gave a public talk on the principles of judo to an audience of about 250 I should estimate, at the drill hall off Kensington High Street. We had expected it to consist largely of demonstrations of technique, and though he did show some movements, the main part of the talk was on intellectual and philosophic lines. This was a considerable

surprise to most of the British audience, but his obvious intellectual capacity, combined with his almost magical charisma as founder of the mysterious judo, completely captivated the audience for nearly two hours."

see [https://ejmas.com/jcs/jcsart\\_leggett1\\_0300.htm](https://ejmas.com/jcs/jcsart_leggett1_0300.htm) for more interesting anecdotes of this visit, including Leggett's description of Kanō *shihan*'s "impeccable "Headmaster's English". (I mean by this that each word was separately and clearly pronounced, as an English Headmaster does to set a good example of correct pronunciation to pupils.) "

Accessed 2023/08/09

<sup>7</sup> From his study of the origins and prosecution of World War I, Kanō became very concerned with the requirements of national mobilization required for nations during modern warfare and how physical education could contribute to Japan's national security, and wrote not infrequently on the topic from the early 1900s.

<sup>8</sup> From numerous, largely indirect (but sometimes more direct) statements (and criticisms) such as this, given the geopolitical tensions between Japan, China and its supporters the United Kingdom and America, Kanō *shihan* gained a reputation among some as an anti-militarist and anti-Imperialist. There are some truths and some misunderstandings in this interpretation, which we will explore later.

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