

The Historical Background and Philosophic Basis of Kanō Jigorō's Jūdō Principles *Seiryoku Zenyō Jita Kyōei* (Best Use of Energy / Mutual Prosperity)

Efforts to ascribe philosophical meaning to various martial arts seem perennial, but documents supporting origin claims are often transparently contrived or unsupported. Notable exceptions are China's *Shaolin kung fu*, developed centuries ago and still taught at the Chan (Japanese: *Zen*) Buddhist Shaolin temple in China, and Japan's *Shorinji Kempō*, developed to popularize the school's Zen practice. Many *koryū* (ancient Japanese martial arts) claim unique philosophies but cite tales of inspiration by intense, training-inspired visions or even visitations by *tengu* (long-nosed goblins). But the genuine philosophical roots of one modern Japanese martial art practiced worldwide were misunderstood, overlooked, then finally lost to history. That art is *jūdō*, a modernized version of *jūjutsu*, the ancient *samurai* martial art of fighting barehanded.

In 1915, in *Jūdō* magazine of the Kōdōkan *Jūdō* Institute, founded by Kanō Jigorō¹ (1860-1938) in Tokyo in 1882, in a series of articles entitled "Outline of Kōdōkan *Jūdō*", Kanō, the founder of *jūdō*, wrote that "*Jūdō* is The Way to the most effective use of body and spirit". But to what ends? Was this for the sake of effectiveness alone or something more? And why would anything Kanō taught be of interest today?

To answer the last question first, Kanō was a senior member of Japan's Ministry of Education from the late 1880s to 1920, and participated in key decisions including incorporating the Imperial Rescript on Education into the education system, structuring its philosophic, ethics and morals instruction, revolutionizing sports and physical education, and even creating the artificial "Japanese language" itself. In the cultural world, he and his colleagues created, developed, and helped export much of modern Japan's culture, including *budō* martial arts, the modern contrivance called *bushidō*, and Imperial *Shintō*. After retiring, the Emperor nominated him to the House of Peers for life, where he served from 1922 during the tumultuous years as Japan militarized. Asia's first member of the International Olympic Committee from 1909, Kanō was Japan's Olympic ambassador to the world and was critical to Tokyo winning its 1940 Olympic Games bid; only months after his death, those Games were canceled as Japan plunged deeper into war with China, which he warned was the greatest danger to Japan in its 2600-year history.

While Kanō used a number of different approaches to explain *jūdō* philosophy up to the mid-1920s, later speeches and writings referred to two principles he used to explain the significance of *jūdō*. Their final, shortest form is known to many *jūdōka* (*jūdō*

¹ Throughout this paper, Japanese and Chinese names are given in Japanese fashion: family name, given name.

practitioners) today, and copies of Kanō’s calligraphy of it adorn *jūdō dōjō* (martial arts place of practice)² worldwide. It reads:

精力善用 自他共栄
Seiryoku zenyō *Jita kyōei*

They have been translated in a number of versions, but the last known English translation, given in a lecture in English by Kanō himself late in life is:

Maximum efficiency - Mutual welfare and benefit

But precisely what do these principles mean? And how did Kanō derive them? In a brief hint, Kanō himself cryptically wrote once that, in fact, he did not create them, but rather that they were the brainchild of another Japanese.³ Despite hundreds of articles on *jūdō* philosophy written in many languages over eight decades since his death, the origin and precise meaning of these principles eluded *jūdōka* and Kanō researchers, and that person remained unknown until now.

While *seiryoku* is a common term for “energy”, with the nuance of using energy correctly, and *zenyō* means best or utmost, the term *jita kyōei* is apparently original to Kanō.⁴ Today, taken together, the saying is usually taken to mean that if you use your energy efficiently, both you and your *jūdō* opponent will best benefit, presumably through learning the best *jūdō*, getting the best physical workout, etc. So far, so good. But this understanding does not illustrate what Kanō meant when he said, as he often did, that *seiryoku zenyō / jita kyōei* also applied to life outside the *dōjō*, on the interpersonal basis and even at the level of societies and nations.

To understand the background, it is necessary to go back even earlier, first to the ancient fundamental principle underlying *jūjutsu* and to Kanō’s education and life.

The martial art we know today as *jūjutsu*, literally “gentle technique,”³ was developed no later than the 16th century. The *jū* in *jūjutsu* is the character for gentleness /

² *Dōjō* was adopted from Buddhist tradition, in which it designates a place of Buddhist practice or meditation.

³ The Japanese language is typically vague regarding whether a subject or object is singular or plural; the author determined that Kanō’s intent was to mention that both principles were the creation of single or multiple ‘other Japanese’.

⁴ Kanō not infrequently salted his formal Japanese presentations with classic Chinese and Confucian terms. In fact, from time to time he used words so obscure that they don’t appear in Japanese or Chinese dictionaries, which, even in the context of early modern Japan, must have often bewildered his typical Japanese audience, much less Westerners.

³ *Jū* is typically translated into English only as ‘gentleness’, which does not capture the essence of the term as pertinent to *jūjutsu* and *jūdō*. *Jū* connotes flexibility in the sense of yielding before force, flexing when pressed, the quality of giving way before a strong force while nevertheless retaining integrity of balance and thus the power to respond when appropriate. On the contrary, the negative aspects of *jū* as softness are clear in The Analects, 16:4

suppleness, read as *jū* in compound words or *yawara* as a single character word, while *jutsu* means “skill” or “technique”. In 1887, in his earliest description of *jūdō* in English, Kanō described *jūjutsu* as the art of winning by yielding, by being pliant when attacked. In order to distinguish his new martial art from traditional *jūjutsu*, which, had fallen into disrepute when used by strong arm thieves and political ruffians, Kanō called his art *jūdō*, the “Way of gentleness”. Four decades later he described *jūdō* as “the meaning of the way being the concept of life itself”⁵ and claimed his intent was to make his new style *jūjutsu* a vehicle for the purposeful teaching of comprehensive life skills.

The semi-legendary origin of the term describing the *jūjutsu* and *jūdō* philosophy of gentleness and pliancy embodied in *jū* is an ancient Chinese text, the *Three Strategies of Huang Shigong*, 黄石公三略 (Chinese *pinyin*: *Huáng Shígōng Sānlüè*). One of China’s Seven Military Classics, the text is thought to date from around 200 BCE to 0 CE, and consists of the Upper, Middle and Lower Strategies. The Upper Strategy was claimed in contemporary commentary not to be original to Huang but rather to be ascribed to an apocryphal, even more ancient Chinese text, *The Military Prophecies*.⁶ Rather than battlefield wisdom, it provides strategies for leaders’ interpersonal relationships, rulers’ interactions with ministers and people, commanders’ stance with soldiers, and draws its concepts from a combination of ancient Daoist, Confucian, and Legalist ideas.

Tradition has it that the core philosophy of *jūjutsu* is found in a four-character idiomatic phrase,⁷ the Daoist concept cited in the first line of the Upper Strategy, which in turn is apparently adopted from the *Dào Dé Jīng*, “The Book of The Way and of Virtue”, circa 300 BCE (Japanese: *Dō Toku Kyō*), one of the core Daoist texts.

柔能制剛

Jū nō sei gō

Gentleness controls hardness⁸

The Master said: “There are ... three kinds of friendship which are harmful friendship with the unprincipled...” with the ‘unprincipled’ being “the most gentle friends”.

<https://ctext.org/analects/ji-shi/ens>, accessed January 12, 2021.

⁵ Kano Jigoro. *The contribution of Judo to education*. Springfield, Massachusetts: Journal of Health and Education, 1932.

⁶ *The Governing Principles of Ancient China*, Volume 2 - Based on 360 passages excerpted from the original compilation of Qunshu Zhiyao (*The Compilation of Books and Writings on the Important Governing Principles*), page 508. Seri Kembangan, Malaysia: Chung Hua Cultural Education Centre, 2014. The exact date of the Military Prophecies is unknown, and modern scholarship suggests that it may well be a fabrication to add the weight of a “much older text” to the Three Strategies. The author acknowledges the invaluable assistance of Daoist scholar Mr. Stefan Handler for his discussions of the *Dào Dé Jīng* and the *Huáng Shígōng Sānlüè*.

⁷ The Japanese and Chinese languages have thousands of three- and four-character ideograms called *yojijukugo* in Japanese. These are used for many purposes, from mnemonics to short hand that evoke long stories or legends.

⁸ 柔能制剛 in Japanese is *jū nō sei gō*, gentleness controls hardness. Kanō shihan’s speeches in English typically use ‘gentleness’, ‘yielding’, or ‘pliancy’ for *jū*. The original *Dào Dé Jīng* texts on the topic read:

Laozi 36 柔弱勝剛強 the soft and the yielding overcome the hard and rigid

Lance Gatling - *The Kanō Chronicles*® - Copyright 2021 – All rights reserved

As presented to the Society for the Study of Philosophy and the Martial Arts, March 2021

The complete text of the first portion of the Upper Strategy translated into English reads:

軍讖曰 The *Military Prophecies* cite:

柔能制剛 Gentleness controls hardness,
弱能制強 weakness controls strength.

柔者德也 The gentle also have virtues,
剛者賊也 the unyielding also have faults.
弱者人之所助 The weak attract assistance,
強者怨之所攻 the strong attract opposition.

柔有所設 At times be flexible,
剛有所施 at times apply hardness,
弱有所用 at times use weakness,
強有所加 at times add strength.

兼此四者 One using all four
而制其宜 will then prevail.⁹

To better understand Kanō's mindset and the origin of his principles, it is necessary to review his education and his approach to philosophy and ethics.

Kanō began studying the Chinese classics, the Confucian canon of philosophical and military strategy texts, at the age of seven and continued his interest in Confucianism throughout his life. After studying English in Tokyo private schools and the government's official English school, in 1877 Kanō entered Tokyo University, studying political economy, and graduating with its second class in 1881. He then entered a graduate program in philosophy and graduated in 1882. Kanō studied for four of those five years under *oyatoi* "honorable hired specialist" Ernest Fenollosa (1853-1908), an American who arrived in Japan in 1878. Fenollosa taught philosophy and political economy from popular Western texts of the day, drawing on the works of English Utilitarian philosophers John Stuart Mill, Jeremy Bentham, and Herbert Spencer (1820-1903).

Spencer was so popular in Japan that the 1870s to 1880s were described as a "Spencer Boom" during which his ideas informed a range of discussions among the elites then

Laozi 76 強大處下,柔弱處上 the rigid and the big stay below, the soft and the yielding stay above

Laozi 78 弱之勝強。柔之勝剛 the weak overcomes the strong and the soft overcomes the hard

All translations by Mr. Stefan Handler.

⁹ Original Chinese text from *Kōsekikō Sanryaku* (1604), available at the National Diet Library, Tokyo, Japan. English translation by Lance Gatling ©2020

planning and creating the new Japan.¹⁰ Kanō and his classmates studied Spencer's works in English, but almost all were eventually translated into Japanese.¹¹ In fact, an early, perhaps the first, publication of the new Tokyo University in 1877 was a reprint of Spencer's influential *Philosophy of Style: An Essay* (1852) in English.¹²

The late 19th century was an era in which philosophers across the world struggled to incorporate enormously consequential, new scientific knowledge. In particular the First Law of Thermodynamics, also known as the Law of Conservation of Energy, which states that energy cannot be created or destroyed in an isolated system, engendered a surge of efforts to accommodate it in philosophical terms.

Although largely ignored today, Spencer introduced his notions regarding conservation of energy in *First Principles of a New System of Philosophy*, first self-published in 1857. Spencer sought to unify science, religion, and philosophy into one "Synthetic Philosophy". Its first principle was "Persistence of Force", the term created by Spencer himself at the suggestion of his friend, Professor Thomas Henry Huxley¹³ to replace "conservation of energy", the more prosaic term which Spencer found unsatisfactory. With this new, comprehensive philosophy, Spencer sought to build on the works of Newton, Kant, and Laplace, and, "combining this with the doctrine of the Persistence of Force, was led to discover the law of the entire cosmical process from star to soul"¹⁴ as one admirer assessed his universal, monistic philosophy.

One key Spencerian concept was the critical balance between *egotism* and *altruism*, the inherent tension between individual self-interest and group interest as the fundamental driving force of all societies and international relationships. Later Kanō helped insert this concept into Japan's first official ethics textbook.

Spencer's other contributions to Utilitarianism included coining the phrase "survival of the fittest" to describe the concept of Social Darwinism; this is often mistakenly thought to be from Darwin himself. Spencer applied the notion to societies and nations, in processes by which the strong progress by overcoming the weaker. This concept was so widely discussed in Japan that it later became a common reference for Western critics of the later expansionist, colonizing Imperial Japan, who accused it of using "social Darwinism" to justify its military adventures against and conquest of weaker neighbors.¹⁵

¹⁰ G. Clinton Godart. *Spencerism in Japan: Boom and Bust of a Theory*, pp. 56-77 in *Global Spencerism: The Communication and Appropriation of a British Evolutionist*. Bernard Lightman, ed. Leiden: Brill, 2016.

¹¹ Herbert Spencer, *Education: Intellectual, Moral and Physical*, 1861. Japanese translation entitled *Kyōikuron*, Tokyo: Japan Ministry of Education, 1880.

¹² Herbert Spencer, *Philosophy of Style; An Essay*. Tokyo: Tokyo University Department of Literature, 1877.

¹³ Spencer, *First Principles*, pg 262.

¹⁴ Hector MacPherson, *Herbert Spencer: The Man and His Work*. London: Chapman and Hall, 1901, page 58.

¹⁵ Godart, pg 56.

After the Meiji Restoration in 1868, official Japan abandoned the ancient neo-Confucian orthodoxy of Tokugawa regime ethics. While the early Meiji education system adopted current Western texts for science, medical and engineering education, ethics simply was not addressed. Rather, the new education system focused on the rapid integration of the knowledge, technology, and culture of advanced Western countries, and stressed individual effort and objective knowledge.¹⁶ Ethics and moral instruction or even the question of whether to teach ethics at all was at first left to the discretion of individual schools. Only later, when students from various backgrounds came together in higher education situations, did the problems of a lack of standard ethics instruction become evident, as universities had to work with students' ethical and moral notions ranging from traditional Confucianism to the latest Western thought to none whatsoever.

Japan's first Minister of Education, Mori Arinori, was a former samurai who spent much of his life overseas in the US and England, first as a student then as a diplomat. In the US, he studied and discussed the works of Spencer; when Mori moved to London, he sought out and became personally acquainted with Spencer himself. The two men discussed a range of issues, from ethics to individual rights to Japan's draft constitution; later, for years after Mori's assassination,¹⁷ Spencer continued to correspond with Japanese about its development.

In his earlier role as the Education Magistrate after the Restoration, Mori countered attempts to insert traditional Confucian measures into Japan's ethics education system. He also enacted education reforms that forced austerity measures on schools and students into dormitories. From 1886, he also imposed military style physical education and discipline on the normal school system, largely in accordance with Spencer's *Education: Intellectual, Moral and Physical* (1860).¹⁸ The Spencerian concept that complete education must encompass those three aspects became so entrenched in Japanese education that the term coined then to describe it, *san iku shugi*, the three educations, survives even today. Kanō also adopted these three aspects as standard elements for his philosophy of education, as did Japan's Ministry of Education. Even in the 21st century, one hundred sixty years later, Japan's Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEXT) cited the importance of a balance between what it terms today the Cognitive, Affective and Psychomotor Domains, while including the ancient characters *chi*, *toku*, *tai* – for knowledge, virtue, and body - as reference.¹⁹

¹⁶ Saito Yasuo. History of Japan Educational Development: What implications can be drawn for developing countries today. Chapter 1. The Modernization and Development of Education in Japan, pp 13-20. Chapter 9. Tackling the Problem of "Repeaters" and "Dropouts", pp 130-143. Tokyo: Institute for International Cooperation, Japan International Cooperation Agency, 2004.

¹⁷ Mori was assassinated in February, 1889 by one of Kanō's own *jūdō* students, a tale explored in *The Kanō Chronicles*®.

¹⁸ Herbert Spencer, *Education: Intellectual, Moral, and Physical*, A.L. Bert: London, 1860.

¹⁹ Japan Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, *Heisei 24 Nendo E-Dash Plan Kenkyu Kaihatsu Kosoju* pamphlet, 2012,

In 1885, shortly before Mori was named Minister of Education in Japan's first cabinet, a Ministry top bureaucrat ordered the adoption of a Confucian-based ethics training program; Mori canceled the order immediately after he became the Minister²⁰ as, while planning to adopt Spencer's idea of a moral component in education, he was firmly against incorporating any religious or traditional philosophies, even the neo-Confucianism that guided Japanese thought for hundreds of years, into Japan's new ethical system. To assemble modern Japan's first official ethics textbook, he established a compilation and editorial committee consisting of:

- Nishimura Shigeki: former samurai, educator, staunch Imperialist
- Nose Sakae: academic, Ministry of Education assistant to Mori Arinori
- Walter Dening: former Christian missionary, English teacher, scholar
- Suga Ryōhō: Buddhist priest cum academic, studied education in Europe
- Kanō Jigorō: then vice principal and lecturer at the Imperial Household Agency's Gakushuin Peers' School, seconded to the Ministry of Education for the project²¹

At the time Kanō was a member of Japan's *Tetsugakkai* Philosophic Society. In early 1887 its magazine published a long, detailed two-part essay by Kanō titled *Utilitarianism*, in which he compared Utilitarian philosophers Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill and introduced Spencer's contributions to the field.²² This was one of the first presentations on Utilitarianism in Japanese, and Kanō's first known published writing, 5 years after Kanō's study of Spencer at Tokyo University and during the "Spencer Boom", Japan's infatuation with Spencer's teachings.

Nose Sakae, the sole Ministry representative on the committee, was Mori's personal assistant and right-hand man; Kanō later credited Nose with the committee's success. While Mori's original notion was to produce a detailed, 500-page guide for teachers on how to implement modern ethics training, the text, published in October 1888, titled *Rinrishi: Chūgakkō Shihan Gakkō Kyōka Yō Sho* or *Ethics Text: A Textbook for the Use of Middle and Normal Schools*, was a mere 86 pages long. By design, it adhered strictly to Spencer's *Principles of Ethics* (1879), which had been translated into Japanese in 1883. The *Rinrishi* contained a chapter labeled "Standards of Conduct" with a subsection entitled 自他ノ並立 *jita no heiritsu* ("self and others standing side by side")²³ subtitled

https://www.mext.go.jp/b_menu/shingi/chousa/shotou/092/shiryo/_icsFiles/afieldfile/2012/09/24/1326033_3_2.pdf accessed Dext 25, 2020.

²⁰ Abe Yoshiya, "Religious Freedom under the Meiji Constitution," *Contemporary Religions in Japan*, Vol. 10, No. 1/2 March - June, 1969, pp. 57-97.

²¹ Lin Zibo, "Zasshi "Kokumin no Kyoiku" ni miru Dotoku Kyoiku Ronso: Mori Monseiki ni okeru "Ronrishi" Hensan Katei no Sai Kento", Tokyo: Japan Society for the Historical Studies of Education, 2012, Volume 55, pp 6-18.

²² Kanō Jigorō. *Yuchiritarianizumu (Kōrikyō) wo ronsu*. Tokyo: Philosophic Association Magazine, Apr 1887, pp 107-120. *Yuchiritarianizumu (Kōrikyō) wo ronsu (shōzen)*. Tokyo: Philosophic Association Magazine, May 1887, pp 145 – 157.

²³ After the chapter heading *jita no heiritsu*, the term is shortened to *jita heiritsu* without changing its meaning.

in English “The Cooperation of Self and Others”, Spencer’s own language. Therein the committee incorporated Spencer’s notion of the necessity of compromising egoism with altruism to mutual benefit into the *Rinrisho*.²⁴ The *Rinrisho* also mentions the importance of *seiryoku* energy (or force, in Spencer’s English writings).

Decades later, the Englishman Denning described the *Rinrisho* to the Asiatic Society of Japan.

This work declares the ultimate end of man to be conformity to reason and perfection, and the standard of conduct to be followed in endeavouring to attain to this end is said to be the co-ordination of the ego and the alter. Readers of Mr. Spencer’s Data of Ethics will remember how clearly he shows that pure egoism and pure altruism are alike illegitimate; that the maxim “Live for Self” and the maxim “Live for Others” are both wrong; that a compromise is the only practicable course. Viscount Mori was an intimate friend and a great admirer of Herbert Spencer, and I have the best authority for stating that the Standard of Ethics adopted by the late Minister of Education as intended to be in entire accordance with Spencerian principles. Consequently I am not inclined to attach too much importance to the Chinese term *jita-heiritsu*. Spencer distinctly says that while egoism and altruism are to a large extent interdependent there are times when they are in direct opposition to each other, when one or the other has to be exclusively followed...²⁵

Denning dismissed what he called ‘the Chinese term’ (i.e., *jita heiritsu*, the novel Japanese term written in Chinese fashion) in favor of Spencer’s original English. Denning cited the concept of “The Cooperation of Self and Others” and its centrality to Spencer’s philosophy and the *Rinrisho*, demonstrating that the committee understood in detail Spencer’s notion that the co-existence, or co-equality of egoism and altruism, were critical to the advancement of humankind. According to Spencer, this balance of interests was the process through which cultures and nations progressed, by working together, in balance to varying degrees, or, in extreme cases, in complete opposition.

Denning continued, reciting a translation of a portion of the *Rinrisho*.

²⁴ Lin Zibo and Hanyang Lu. *In search of a moral standard: debates over ethics education and religion in Meiji Japan*. Hampshire: Journal of the History of Education Society, Volume 49, 2020 - Issue 1. Pages 38-56.

²⁵ Walter Denning, Asiatic Society of Japan Proceedings, Volume XLI, Part 1, Japanese Modern Literature, Chapter XII, Religion and Ethics, pp 174-179. Tokyo: Asiatic Society of Japan, 1913. In his detailed discussion, Denning modestly said “I have the best authority...” without mentioning that the basis for that authority was his own participation as a member of the five-man committee. Underline added for emphasis by author.

It is in the relation of the *ego* to the *non-ego* that has brought the ethical world into existence, and in proportion to the degree of nicety with which this relationship is adjusted do nations make moral progress.²⁶

Then he continued in his own words:

It will be seen, then, that the standard determined on is practically utilitarian in character. The highest interests of mankind constitute the Ultimate End, and this end is to be reached by the maintenance of the mutual relationship of the individual and society on lines that yield the largest amount of attainable happiness to each. This is the essence of Utilitarianism, and this was the main principle of the Monbusho²⁷ Ethics in Mori's time and for some years subsequent to his assassination (February 11, 1889).²⁸

A valued Kanō associate, Dr. Morohashi Tetsujirō (1883-1982), made the link to Spencer explicit. Morohashi was trusted by Kanō, who had arranged funding of a very young Morohashi's long research trip in China that started his long career as a Sinologist. He was afforded broad access to Kōdōkan archives and Kanō's private papers as the senior editor of the official (and sympathetic) Kōdōkan biography, *Kanō Jigorō* (1964). In it, Morohashi simply noted without fanfare that *jita kyōei* was Kanō's version of *jita heiritsu* without referring to the origin of the latter term or Kanō's role on the *Rinrishi* ethics textbook committee.²⁹

Spencer's philosophy of "The Cooperation of Self and Others" is clearly the inspiration of Kanō's *jita kyōei*, "self and others mutually benefit". When Kanō credited the invention of one or the other principle to another, unspecified Japanese, he almost certainly meant Minister of Education Mori, who either coined or approved the term *jita heiritsu* to translate "The Cooperation of Self and Others".³⁰

From early in the Taishō era (1911-1926), Kanō spoke about his *jūdō* philosophies at seemingly every opportunity, often to the confusion of his audiences. So, in 1925 he made it explicit: in answer to "various questions about *jita kyōei*", Kanō outlined the relationship and similarities between the principles of the Kōdōkan Culture Council and the Utilitarianism of Bentham and Mill.³¹

²⁶ Denning op cit pg 178. Italics added.

²⁷ 'Monbushō' is the Romanized name of the former Japan Ministry of Education.

²⁸ Denning op cit pg 178. In a strange twist of fate, Mori was assassinated by one of Kanō's Kōdōkan students, a fanatic Shintoist who believed Mori had defiled the Ise Jingu, Shintō's most sacred shrine.

²⁹ *Kanō Sensei Denki Hensen Kai Hen*, ed. *Kanō Jigorō*. Kodokan: Tokyo, 1964.

³⁰ Mori's assistant Sakae, to whom Kanō attributed much of the actual content of the *Rinrishi*, or someone else may have actually coined the term, but certainly Mori approved its use in his pet project.

³¹ *Kanō Jigorō, Jita kyōei ni taisuru shuju no shitsumon ni tsuite* in *Sakkō* magazine. Kodokan Jūdō Kai: Tokyo, April 1925. Cited in Kotani Sumiyuki et al, ed., *Kano Jigoro Taikei*. Tokyo: Hon no Tomosha, 1987, Volume 9, pp 21-26.

Another close Kanō associate who understood was Munakata Itsurō (1866-1941, *jūdō* 7th *dan*), who was arguably the only member of the Kōdōkan staff whose Chinese classics education and career as an educator resembled Kanō's. Munakata noted in his diary:

...in large part, Kano *sensei* taught British rationalist thought, along with the feeling of the Chinese classics...³²

While Bentham, Mill, and arguably Spencer were British rationalists, indeed, Kanō's writings and speeches are replete with “the feeling of the Chinese classics”. When describing the most desirable attributes of dutiful sons, daughters, and Imperial subjects, Kanō frequently drew on variations of common Confucian themes such as the “five relationships”, the importance of self-improvement, the proper role of humanity under heaven, and one's responsibilities towards society. More esoteric studies infer Daoist themes from advanced *jūdō* practices such as yielding to overcome strength, development of and dependence on intuition rather than conscious thought, and cultivation of a calm, detached mind and spirit, all in harmony with The Way, to which Kanō made various frequent reference.³³

Consistent with Spencer's teachings, Kanō's claimed his *jūdō* principles comprised a universal moral standard, a monism³⁴ applicable to all human affairs, from solitary man to society to nations and global affairs, best, but not exclusively, learned through intense study of *jūdō*. While the practice faded over time, then slipped away completely after Kanō's death and the post-Occupation obsession with competition-oriented “sports judo”, early observers noted that up to half of Kanō's *jūdō* instruction time was spent in lectures on ethics, morality, and health; unfortunately, almost none were recorded in detail.

One of the oldest books in the Kōdōkan library is Kanō's 1875 English edition of John Stuart Mill's *Principles of Political Economy: With Some of their Applications to Social Philosophy*. He was 15 when it was published.

³² Munekata Itsuro, *Rakuzensho: Munekata Itsuro Goroku*. Munekata Seiya, ed. Tokyo: Munekata Seiya, 1943, 34. *Sensei* means teacher. Munakata is largely overlooked in *jūdō* history as his 7th *dan* rank was overshadowed by the higher ranks of a number of the Kodokan's professional *jūdō* instructors. After retirement from an education career, Munakata joined the Kōdōkan staff in 1920 and spent the rest of his life supporting *jūdō*, serving on the boards of both the Kōdōkan and the *Kōdōkan Bunkai* (Culture Council); he actually died on the way to work at the Kodokan one day. His obscure period writings serve as important counterweights to the increasingly militaristic works of the majority of *jūdōka* in the prewar period.

³³ In fact the very meaning of *Dao* 道 is “way” or “path”, in Japanese, *michi*, but read as *dō* in compounds such as *jūdō* 柔道 and *shidō* 斯道, “This Way”, a term used by Kanō and certain some *jūdō* initiates during Kanō's days to refer to their commonly shared, lifelong *jūdō* undertaking. *Shidō* originated in Japan's feudal era art schools, which operated much like closed guilds in Europe.

³⁴ A *monism* is “a viewpoint or theory that reduces all phenomena to one principle”. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/monism>. Accessed March 21, 2021.

Sometime after retiring from his Ministry of Education post in January 1920 after 20 years as the head of the Tokyo Higher Normal School, which was essentially the teachers' college for the Empire, Kanō toured Europe and the US for 8 months.

Returning to Japan, he announced that he had made two determinations:

- Even though he termed them “splendid”, Japan must to ensure its people were of the best possible quality to deal with numerous, stronger foreign countries, as Japan now competed with nations worldwide.
- As Japan was limited in resources such as iron ore and farmland, Japan's human capital must improve to benefit society at large.

Kanō summed up the problems he saw. "Along with our country having scarce resources as sources of wealth, the day will come when the people are unprepared."³⁵ So, he became even more determined to use *jūdō* instruction to teach the ways of life, the most efficient use of mind and body.

Spencer also noted that preparation is key to force (i.e., energy), which is critical to any development, that intellect without energy to pursue a conclusion is pointless, that energy enables the development of individuals and societies, and that proper physical education is necessary to cultivate individual energy. Kanō adopted these ideas, too; in particular he stressed the need for physical education to cultivate the physical and mental strength necessary to become productive humans. Kanō's earliest known formal address incorporating *seiryoku* simply as strength or power is an 1892 lecture while the principal of the Fifth High School in Kumamoto. In it, he dwells at length on the necessity to cultivate the body's strength and mental fortitude in order to be efficient and effective, giving numerous examples and discussing exercise, rest, nutrition, and the role of the individual will.³⁶ Kanō first disclosed his notions of *seiryoku* as the best use of energy in a youth education book he authored in 1910,³⁷ one of Japan's first. After years of experimentation with various forms of similar sayings, he settled on *seiryoku zenyō*, which he translated into English as “maximum efficiency” (and variations of that), but which could also be translated as “best *energism*”.

Jūdō techniques are, optimally, based on flexibility and movement to counter force, using one's opponent's strength and energy against them when possible, so Kanō would likely have had interest in Spencer's discussions of the role of energy or force, which almost sounds like an attempt to use science to explain the Daoist notion of the “watercourse Way” of avoiding conflict and active opposition:

³⁵ Kodokan, ed., *Kano Jigoro*. Tokyo: Kodokan, 1964, pp 493-494.

³⁶ Kanō Jigorō, *Seiryoku: Ronsetsu*. Kumamoto: Goko Dosokai Ryunan magazine, October 1892, pages 1-5. This is a lecture Kanō gave while he was principal at the Fifth High School, Kumamoto. The transcript uses 勢力 *seiryoku* instead of 精力. Both mean energy, force or vitality, but the former is more nuanced toward physical strength and force while the latter is more spiritual. In the lecture Kanō cites two types of energy; one, a pervasive universal energy, and the other, the motive energy of human will.

³⁷ Kanō Jigorō, *Seinen Shūyō Kun*. Tokyo: Dōbunkan, 1910, 32-43.

Where repulsive forces alone are concerned, or rather are alone appreciable, movement takes place along their resultant; which is usually known as the line of least resistance. And where both attractive and repulsive forces are concerned, or are appreciable, movement takes place along the resultant of all the tractions and resistances.³⁸

But the greatest proponent of *energism* was perhaps German chemist Wilhelm Ostwald (1853-1932). First known worldwide for establishing the fundamentals of physical chemistry, for which he won the Nobel Prize in 1909, Ostwald participated in the monumental controversies regarding the theory of the existence of the atom before science could provide proof. Firmly in the anti-atom camp, he supported the primacy of the theory of energy-based matter over the theory of atom-based matter, *energism* versus *atomism*, and eventually become a primary proponent of the former. Ostwald's numerous works and theories were studied worldwide, including Japan, where he was famous, and many of his works were translated into Japanese. Most of Japan's early chemists spoke and read German because Germany's chemistry was considered to be more advanced than other Western nations, and many were taught in German; most of the first chemists who studied abroad studied in Germany, some under Ostwald personally. Indeed, it is quite possible that Kanō first heard Ostwald's *Energism* theory during Kanō's first visit to Europe from 1889 to 1891, as Ostwald introduced it in 1887 at the University of Leipzig. Kanō was soon after based in Germany, conducting a survey of European education systems as a functionary of the Imperial Household Agency.

By the time atomism progressed beyond theory into demonstrated science, Ostwald had expanded his concept of *energism* into a unitary, "scientific" monism encompassing sociology and the metaphysical realm. Eventually Ostwald developed the universal "energetic imperative" as the "key principle" of *energism*, which he summarized as: "Do not waste energy, utilize it."³⁹

Over time, *energism* assumed a twofold definition:

- First, as the doctrine that certain phenomena (including mental states) are explicable in terms of energy, and
- Second, as an ethical theory regarding "self-realizationism". The latter is the notion that the supreme good consists in the efficient exercise of normal human faculties rather than the hedonistic pursuit of happiness or pleasure.⁴⁰

³⁸ Spencer, *First Principles*, pg 270.

³⁹ Wilhelm Ostwald, *Die Forderung des Tages*. Leipzig: Akademischer Verlagsgesellschaft, 1910, page 85. Translated by Professor Janet Stewart, Durham University, in *Sociology, Culture and Energy: The Case of Wilhelm Ostwald's 'Sociological Energetics' - A Translation and Exposition of a Classic Text*. *Cultural Sociology* 8/3 (2014): pages 333-350.

⁴⁰ <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/energism> accessed December 30, 2020.

German philosopher Friedrich Paulsen summed up *energism* as follows:

It is a fact that man's actions are determined by motives which exist in the form of purposes, i.e., as ideas of a good to be attained by action. Thus the question arises: What is the final aim or the highest good for the sake of which everything else is desired?

Hedonism answers: Pleasure; it is for this that everything else is desired.

This view is opposed by another theory, which does not seek the highest good in subjective feelings, but in an objective content of life, or, since life is activity, in a specific mode of life.

Permit me to call this view *energism*.⁴¹

Ostwald and *energism* were introduced to the Japanese general public by muckraking tabloid newspaper editor cum philosopher Kuroiwa Ruikō (1862-1920). His essay “I believe in *Energism*” was first published in *Gunjikai* (Military Affairs World) magazine in 1904; in it he translates Ostwald’s *energism* as *seiryoku shugi* (literally, “energy-ism”) and advocates its importance as a strategic issue for Japan.⁴² Scores of articles in various publications for the next twenty years described the *seiryoku shugi* displayed by individual Japanese or Western societies. Japanese thinkers who wrote of energy / *seiryoku* in the period included Kanō friend and educator Dr. Kato Hiroyuki, Kanō philosopher/colleagues Sugiura Jūgō and Dr. Inoue Enryō, Tokyo Higher Normal School subordinate and novelist Natsume Soseki, and chemist Dr. Ikeda Kikunae, who studied under Ostwald in his laboratory for a year and a half.⁴³

To Kanō, *energism* was not simply pertinent to *jūdō* instruction, it was fundamental, and he pursued it long after the term faded from use in Japan. From 1919 to 1922, the *Kōdōkan Jūdōkai* ‘Jūdō Association’, the education and training organization that supported *jūdō* instruction, published a monthly magazine called *Yūkō no Katsudō*. The title translates to “Effective Action”, and, with Kanō as its editor, it published scores of articles on *jūdō* by famous *jūdōka*. But the majority of its articles were actually from renowned non-*jūdōka* experts from a wide range of disciplines, from efficient exercise, healthy diets and lifestyles, vignettes of “effective” individuals, current news in military science, and natural history to how the Japanese nation and people could prepare for war in the aftermath of the Great War. Most seemed tinged with an *energism* slant ensured by Kanō, its editor.

According to *energism*, neither happiness nor pleasure are the ultimate aim of human action. The goal is self-realization. Kanō’s emphasis on individual development is explicit

⁴¹ Friedrich Paulsen, *Appendix: The Problems of Ethics in Introduction to Philosophy*, translated by Frank Thilly, Henry Holt: New York, 1895, pg 421. Formatted for emphasis.

⁴² Kuroiwa Ruikō, *Yo ga shinzuru Enerugizumu*, *Gunjikai* magazine, Kinkōdō Shoseki: Tokyo, June 1904. Later reprints indicate that the essay was actually a speech given by Kuroiwa in 1902 at an unspecified event.

⁴³ Kaneko Tsutomu and Suzuki Sadami, ed. *Enerugi wo kangaeu: Gaku no yūgō to kakusan*. Sakuhinsha: Tokyo, 2013, 220-221.

in the founding documents of the *Kōdōkan Bunkakai* Kōdōkan “Culture Council”, which he founded in 1922 and chaired until his death.

Objectives:

The purpose of the Kodokan Culture Council is to promote the idea of *seiryoku saizen katsuyō*, which can be translated as the best practical use of one’s energy. This should be applied to all aspects of one’s life.

The doctrine of the Culture Council is focused on the following aims:

1. To see the perfection of each individual, physically, intellectually, and morally in order for him to be capable of benefitting society.
2. To esteem the history of Japan and to work to improve whatever is deemed necessary for the good of the nation.
3. To contribute to the harmonization of society by means of mutual help and mutual compromise between individuals as well as organizations.
4. To seek the elimination of racial prejudice worldwide by the promotion of cultural pursuits.⁴⁴

The main principles of the *Kōdōkan Bunkakai* (Culture Council)

Utilization of the utmost energy is the main point of personal perfection

1. Personal perfection is fulfilled by assisting others' perfection
2. Personal perfection is the foundation of mankind⁴⁵

In 1925 Kanō wrote that the “true objective” of the Kōdōkan Culture Council was “as one with Utilitarianism.”⁴⁶ But its emphasis on personal perfection was also consistent with ancient Confucian teachings; perhaps this, along with Kanō’s explicit support of other Confucian concepts such as the importance of the family, the traditional hierarchal relationships, and service to the state helped disguise the Western origins of his *jūdō* principles from generations of followers. But such misconceptions were not a result of Kanō’s hiding their origins, as he never claimed any philosophy, whether *energism* or Confucianism as the foundation of his principles. He simply recited them without making direct reference or attribution regarding prior sources.

Soon after its founding, representing the Kōdōkan Culture Council as its Chairman, Kanō traveled throughout the Empire for several months. He covered thousands of kilometers to proselytize the Association’s principles in lectures to schools, civic groups and *jūdō dōjō* from Sakhalin to Kyushu, Korea to Taiwan, and even to Japanese expatriate communities in China. In fact, for the rest of his life, at every opportunity, around the

⁴⁴ Brian N. Watson, *Judo Memoirs of Jigoro Kano*, Trafford: Crewe, UK, 2008, 108-109. This is an invaluable resource for any student of *jūdō* or Kanō history.

⁴⁵ Kodokan Bunkakai, *Kōdōkan Bunkakai Kaihō*, Kōdōkan Bunkakai: Tokyo, October 1922, cited in Kotani Sumiyuki et al, ed., *Kano Jigoro Taikei*. Tokyo: Hon no Tomosha, 1987, Vol 9, pp 13-14.

⁴⁶ Kanō Jigorō, *Sakkō* magazine, Tokyo: Kodokan Bunkakai, 1925, April.

world, even once in a long, impromptu, after-dinner lecture to fellow members of the International Olympic Committee (perhaps underappreciated, as it was reported much of his audience promptly fell asleep), and in scores of in-house publications and articles contributed to a range of other journals and magazines, he pressed his case for *seiryoku zenyō*.⁴⁷

Kanō also indicated his principle's *energism* roots by holding forth that *seiryoku zenyō* was a universal truth, a monism. In hundreds of speeches, contributed articles and a long series of essays from 1924 in his own *Sakkō* magazine,⁴⁸ Kanō held forth that the “best use of energy” principle held true throughout the range of human activities: exercise, education, nutrition, home life, housing, clothing, personal life, social life, business, communications across cultures and languages, and international relations. Almost any field of human endeavor, according to Kanō, could be enhanced through *seiryoku zenyō jita kyōei*, *energism* and mutual benefit.

From the mid 1920s Kanō's presentations of the principles of *jūdō* remained consistent, repeated time and again. One example was a speech he gave at the University of Southern California in Los Angeles on the occasion of the 11th Olympic Games in 1932 which is salted with *energism* references and Kanō's teaching it through *jūdō*.

The Contribution of Judo to Education by Jigoro Kano⁴⁹

.....

I will finish my talk about the intellectual phase of Judo by referring shortly to the rational means of increasing knowledge and intellectual power. If we closely observe society, we notice everywhere the way in which we foolishly expend our energy in the acquisition of knowledge. All our surroundings are always giving us opportunities? Are we always making the best choice of books, magazines and newspapers we read? Do we not often find out that the energy which might have been spent for acquiring useful knowledge is often used for amassing knowledge which is prejudicial not only to self but also to society?

.....

If I now state in a concise form what I have said, it might be summed up as follows:

Judo is a study and training in mind and body as well as in the regulation of one's life and

⁴⁷ Kodokan, ed., *Kano Jigoro*, pg 498.

⁴⁸ The title of *Sakkō* magazine comes from the term ‘arousal’ or ‘renewal’. Kanō established it after the Great Kantō Earthquake that destroyed much of Tokyo in September, 1923, to encourage the Japanese people to arouse the will and energy to recover quickly.

⁴⁹ Kano Jigoro. *The contribution of Judo to education*. Springfield, Massachusetts: Journal of Health and Education, 1932. The article is a transcription of a speech Kanō gave while in the US for the Los Angeles Games as a member of the International Olympic Committee. The Games were held from July 30 to August 14, 1932. The article is quoted as is, without macrons.

affairs. From the thorough study of the different methods of attack and defense I became convinced that they all depend on the application of one all-pervading principle, namely: "Whatever be the object, it can best be attained by the highest or maximum efficient use of mind and body for that purpose". Just as this principle applied to the methods of attack and defense constitutes Jiu-jitsu, so does this same principle, applied to physical, mental and moral culture, as well as to ways of living and carrying on of business, constitute the study of, and the training in, those things.

Once the real importance of this principle is understood, it may be applied to all phases of life and activity and enable one to lead the highest and the most rational life. The real understanding of this principle need not necessarily be arrived at through the training in the methods of attack and defense, but as I came to conceive of this idea through training in these methods, I made such training in contest and the training for the development of the body the regular means of arriving at the principle.

This principle of maximum efficiency, when applied to the keying up or perfecting of social life, just as when applied to the coordination of mind and body, in the science of attack and defense, demands, first of all, order and harmony among its members, and this can only be attained through mutual aid and concessions, leading to mutual welfare and benefit.

The final aim of Judo, therefore, is to inculcate in the mind of man a spirit of respect for the principle of maximum efficiency and of mutual welfare and benefit, leading him so to practice them that man individually and collectively can attain to the highest state, and, at the same time, develop the body and learn the art of attack and defense.

....The actual facts prove that our society is lacking in something which, if brought to light and universally acknowledged, can remodel the society and bring greater happiness and satisfaction to this world. This is the teaching of maximum efficiency and mutual welfare and benefit.

....Certainly none can deny the value of the principle "Whatever be the objective, it can best be attained by the highest or maximum effective use of mind and body for that purpose." Again, none can deny that it is only by aiming at mutual welfare and benefit that every member of society can keep from discord and quarreling, and live in peace and prosperity. Is it not because of the universal recognition of these facts that people have come to talk so much about efficiency and scientific management and that everywhere these are being advocated? In addition to this, the principle of give-and-take is more and more coming to be the determining factor in the lives of all human beings. Is it not because this principle of mutual welfare and benefit has been recognized that from the League of Nations and the Great Powers of the World we came to meet for the decrease of naval and military armaments? These movements are also automatic acknowledgment of the crying need of efficient and mutual welfare and benefit. The

*educational forces of every country in which Judo should have a prominent part must further them.*⁵⁰

What was the long-term impact of Kanō's proselytizing his *jūdō* principles to the world at large and particularly to *jūdōka*? Shortly after World War II, less than 10 years after Kanō's 1938 death, Mifune Kyūzō (1883-1965), 10th *dan*, only the fourth man to hold that highest rank of *jūdō*, a student under Kanō for 35 years, considered by many to be the most skillful *jūdōka* in history, was asked by a Western visitor, what philosophy did Master Kanō believe?

Something about energy, was Mifune's curt, vague response.

In short, understanding and teaching of Kanō's *jūdō* principles by and large did not survive him. They were arguably only understood by a few ardent disciples while he was alive,⁵¹ but after his death were ignored in the wartime Kōdōkan, which was not at all interested in compromise with the enemies of the Empire. Postwar, their transmission to the next generations of *jūdōka* was ignored by the Kōdōkan, first in the urgency to adapt to the Occupation's martial arts ban, demilitarization and other reforms, and then to adapt to adjust to and reintegrate into the post-World War II world, much of which was hostile to anything Japanese. In fact, Kanō's *jūdō* principles were so neglected that after just a generation or so few *jūdōka* even claimed to understand them. One result is today's sports-oriented 'judo', which barely gives a nod towards Kanō's teachings beyond physical *jūdō*, which he termed the lowest of three levels of *jūdō*. Recent surveys of college age Japanese *jūdōka* show that less than 20% can even properly identify the terms, and there is no evidence that anyone in Japan today, much less outside Japan, knows their origin.

Kanō took the secret of his apparent inspirations to the tomb at his death in May 1938: *jūdō* philosophy and principles span 2,200 years, from the Utilitarianism and *energism* of 19th century English philosophers, along with the "feeling" of pre-Christian era Chinese classics, mainly Confucian concepts of self-cultivation and contribution to society and Daoist concepts of acting in harmony with The Way.

⁵⁰ Kano *op cit*.

⁵¹ Some remarkable exceptions and their impact on the Occupation and postwar Japan will be examined in *The Kanō Chronicles*®.

The Kanō Chronicles® - Copyright 2020 – All rights reserved

– See LGatling@NexialResearch.com for questions

- Lance Gatling, a retired US government officer and aerospace consultant, has resided in Tokyo for 35 years. He studied at West Point, Western Kentucky University, and the US Naval Postgraduate School. Today he heads the US Embassy Tokyo *Jūdō Dōjō* and serves on the board of the Tokyo *Jūdō* Federation, Japan's largest. Paper adapted from *The Kanō Chronicles: The Untold History of Japanese Martial Arts and Modern Japan*.®

www.kanochronicles.com Email: Contact AT kanochronicles.com

See [LGatling AT NexialResearch.com](mailto:LGatling@NexialResearch.com) for questions.