

Education and body language. Judo contribution to martial arts

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Summary

Thinking about judo contribution to martial arts the author goes back to the essential contributions of its founder, Jigoro Kano. His promotion of judo as a system of physical education is still up to date. At the same time J. Kano emphasized the role of judo in intellectual and emotional development, teaching how to learn the art of decision making.. To make it attractive for future, he gave this kind of martial art the sport formula, not neglecting its ancient dimension of self-defense and spiritual background based on non-violence attitude, self-realization and spiritual progress attained by the right training of the body. Such philosophical attitude should be reconsidered in our times of reduction the old samurai heritage only to the pure technical approach and to the martial arts prevailing in new millennium

Introduction

Among the handbooks dealing with learning languages in their original cultural contexts the Complete Idiot's Guide to Conversational Japanese published in 2002 by outstanding linguistic expert from Harvard University, Naoya Fujita, has been the text of unique value. This best seller attracted the attention of many people interested in doing business, searching friendship bonds and visiting the Japanese Islands. Translated and reedited, this wonderful book has been published in Polish version by Wydawnictwo Akademickie Dialog in 2003. This is the publication important particularly for the world of martial arts where body language has been combined with cultural studies of linguistic context.

What is unique about this work and method? In the text entitled less spectacularly in Polish – *Mówimy po japońsku*, the author asks some fundamental questions long before reflecting upon the grammar or linguistic structures. His fundamental remarks about the Japanese people have been followed by situational context where Japanese behave differently from Europeans. Their particular manners in the airports, banks, hotels, shopping centres, and their own houses have been marked by traditional behaviour apparently seen when you are asking questions, searching the way, going to restaurant, loosing documents, preparing the ground to business negotiations and so on. The author's suggestion is to learn the language together with understanding the Japanese iden-

tity, with reflection about their unique sense of being, together with studying some special products of Japanese civilisation, for example the taste of Japanese kitchen, body language of martial arts, philosophy.

The conclusion of such reflections leads us into the domain of good Japanese manners apparently marked by Zen art and Confucian philosophy. In this quest we enter in the realm of different set of values typical for civilisation strongly influenced by the notions of good conduct and right action. In this world the Japanese do not say 'no' preferring weak affirmations in entirely negative context. In such context the risky steps back are preferred to avoid 'impoliteness' typical of Westerners showing their backbones to friendly neighbors.

Such attitude of studies has been particularly useful for some more demanding explorers of the world of Japanese martial arts. Beginning with the simple body language apparently marked by meaningful postures and steps, the practice of self-defence begins with the progressive understanding of body balance, to end with the deepening concentration of spirit, and learning special techniques combined with growing discipline of correct breathing. The links between the language and movements lead to the traditional structures of thought being the real but hidden background of martial arts. There the areas entirely different to Westerners come close. Some experts strongly believe in the vital bonds of traditional calligraphy derived from old Chinese roots with the progressive excellency of movements leading to victory.

This kind of belief has been presented as a leading principle in the film "The Hero" where the master of sword tried to make progress in Chinese art of idiomatic writing before the final battle. The theoretical background of such approach has been widely discussed by F. Fenelosa in his book *The Chinese Written Characters as a Medium for Poetry* (New York 1936). It has been followed by the reflection of Ezra Pound about the broken bond of modern alphabets with understanding of nature and world order. Such theory has been controversial. Contested by some influential oriental scholars it has been accepted by some outstanding anthropologists. It has been widely discussed in the work of Izabela Łabęcka entitled *Chiny Ezry Pounda* (Poznań 1998, Wyd. UAM).

Fenelosa appreciated strongly the knowledge of Oriental painting, seeing in calligraphy the pattern of the language close to the nature. The Western alphabets based on growing importance of logic reasoning killed the primordial intuition and ruined the natural order of thinking. And doing so they have destroyed the perception of reality expressed in the language. Not only Ezra Pound, the scholar awarded by Nobel Prize, accepted such outlook. The ancient roots of such approach have been discussed in the times of medieval Japan; we can find the similar view in *The book of Seven Rings* written by famous Japanese swordsman Miyamoto Musashi.

The most influential spokesman for educational importance of the revival of martial arts in modern times was count Jigoro Kano, the founder of Kodokan Judo. In our times, he wrote more than hundred years ago, the traditional physical education has little value to young generations. It should be combined with sport, giving opportunity to compete. Such transformation may appeal to young people of these days. The idea of competition encourage people to participate in many physical activities.

But the aim of sports is not the balanced physical education. In order to win, the body is often pushed too far if not injured. Some muscles are overused, some others marginalised. For that reason, says Jigoro Kano, while there is no doubt that sports are a good thing, a serious consideration must be given to the selection the training method and a kind of chosen discipline. Sports must not be undertaken carelessly, over zealously, or without restraint. However, the competitive sports are a form of physical education popular in our times and for this reason they should be promoted.

These warnings are the important contribution of the outstanding man leading the Japanese school transformed soon into the leading Tokyo university. He became the first Asiatic member of the Olympic Committee, the influential and charismatic reformer active in Japanese Parliament. He introduced the judo training to the teaching programs of all Japanese schools and universities. And he soon has got the outstanding and loyal pupils winning all style competitions of martial art schools best in Japan.

His message has been precise: Maybe I could be a millionaire, a prime minister, but I have decided to be the Teacher, a man of education, he wrote. The time has come for the new way. Judo can be Japanese gospel for the world. I do not

reject the traditional Japanese physical education as a whole. At the same time, I am against simple body building popular in Western modernity serving no precise purpose. My way and my vision is keeping up with the principle of seryoku zenyo.

That category of Japanese philosophy aims at super effectiveness combining right method, right spirit and right use of energy. Half century ago the president of French Black Belt Society J. Jazarin expressed it in the first phrase of his book, *Spirit du Judo*: "Essence of judo is to practice the unity of mind and body in action. Long before this publication Jigoro Kano expressed this in his journal *Kodokan Judo*. "Judo is the most effective way to practice the unity of mind and body. To train the attack and defence in order to strengthen the body and mind is the essence. As a result it brings the individual self-realisation and social welfare. This is the final aim of the training".

This concept needs some explanation derived from the very name of judo. The principle of maximum effectiveness has been as old as Asiatic civilisations. Known to Indian experts of bow and arrow even before Christ coming, the art of Dhanur Veda it has been present in ancient Taoist book of Zhuang Zi promoting the knife of the master always sharp because wisely and effectively used. Famous Chinese scholar Sun Zi, the author of *Book of War*, finds his way (tao, dao, do) in the centre of cleverness, used as the weapon by mankind instead of lion paws, snake poison, or eagle claws which the man do not have. Similarly, in modern times Jigoro Kano applied the notion of DO to intellectual training. As a part of university programs, he said, judo has proved as important instrument for training leadership. Student may learn the art of proper decisions, quickly resigning from the wrong choices and avoiding the obvious blunders.

Such attitude has its sound background in judo. To be effective, JUDOKA must apply the principle JU (Ju no ri) -gentleness, non-violence. Kenji Tomiki combines it with clarity of mind. In the gospel of Jigoro Kano seryoku zenyo meets jita kyoei, mutual welfare. Expressed together these notions create the concept of worthy use of human efforts leading to mutual prosperity. There are things that cannot be done alone but need the assistance of others. Furthermore, argues Jigoro Kano, the virtues and strengths of one can complement and foster those of another. Accordingly, the situation affords advantages to each of them that they would not have alone. This is called shortly jita kyoei.

Rationality of such outlook seem to be clear. For some obvious reasons, each member of the training group should help others and act selflessly. Acting as one body, the society of martial arts will be harmonious and influential. And he world can make the best use of its energy. Seryoku zenyo together with jita kyoei may surely apply to modern society where everybody tries to achieve the results he hope for. Judo suits well to grasp this way of understanding. It has begun with the study of martial arts, and then gradually it became clear that it could be applied to physical education, intellectual training, moral education, social interaction, management, and everyday lives.

That kind of vision has been a great contribution to the world of values searched for in the modern world. Jigoro Kano always believed that body language of judo has universal merit. That is why he insisted to promote this discipline in the area of Olympic Games. Trained as the Olympic sport but oriented to many Japanese martial arts, in future judo may open the gate and the bridge leading to old Asiatic spiritual values. Establishing the society of Kodokan Judo has been intended to served for these aims. Beginning with physical educations, in long run its Japanese and foreign expert members had to take part in cultural program and civilisation studies. That road suited well for spiritual training and rediscovery of ancient martial art tradition as the whole.

The importance of Kano thinking and his contribution can be compared to Mahatma Gandhi's message to the world. They both did not believed in violence as the effective weapon of combat. Nor they considered the brutal force as the good and effective instrument for resolving the conflict. What more, they have been promoting the ideas of non- violence as the best weapon useful not only in fight and war, but also in many other areas – in negotiations, in education, in social life. Strong-

ly believing that violence is inhuman, they were foretelling its disastrous results: slowing the pace of human progress, the regress of mankind, backwardness of great civilizations.

Many people believed, wrote Jigoro Kano in his book, that judo means simply practice in the dojo. For all my life I have argued that it is not so. It is wrong to assume that judo ends in dojo and is a simple fighting art. I have emphasized that the basic meaning of judo is different, it is universal and profound. It may be useful in work and daily life if teachers and students thoroughly absorb its principles.

That message has to be remembered nowadays when global culture shows some signs of crisis. Martial arts of the 21st Century became the recreation area, the way of fitness or the path of health, the sport event or simply physical education. Its meaning has been shared mainly by universal and simple body language. It does not mean that on this road one cannot find the hidden treasures, the cherished values of old civilisations. At the times of expanding the virtual realities, the ancient teaching may be important for humans of modern age in search of their identity.

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