

Professional paper

THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE ETHICAL PRINCIPLE OF NON-INJURING THE OPPONENT IN JAPANESE MARTIAL ARTS

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Abstract: Far from plain physical conflict, Japanese martial arts today represent a profound philosophy of life. However, in its early beginnings, the basic principles were exactly based on the overcoming of the opponent with all means available, where the consequences that the opponent could suffer were not regarded as significant. The paper critically analyses the development of a new, revolutionary, ethical principle of non-injuring the opponent that had significantly influenced the formation of martial arts, the techniques as well as philosophy. The philosophical bases can be traced back to Confucius and Mencius, but the first step towards the foundations of this principle was made by Miyamoto Musashi with his philosophy of conflict. Nevertheless, the philosophy of Musashi failed to make a profound impact on martial arts back then: the society of medieval and early modern Japan was not yet ready for the complex ethics of combat. Three centuries later, Jigoro Kano tapped from the same ethical principle when he created Judo. His steps were followed by Gichin Funakoshi, who created Shotokan Karate. Finally, the peak of the ethical principle of non-injuring the opponent can be found in Morihei Ueshiba's Aikido, whereupon not only was the philosophy of martial art formed by this principle, but it was established that the techniques of self-defense themselves have for their purpose the overcoming of the opponent as well as the non-injuring phenomenon – the unique zenith of martial arts mastery.

Keywords: *Miyamoto Musashi, Judo, Aikido, Karate, Ethics, Martial arts*

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INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon that exceeds all definitions such as sport, art or even culture – martial arts, demands a specific approach and interpretation. In its complexity, its research requires several different disciplines.

The martial arts ethic is a separate and unique aspect that cannot be found in any other human activity. It exceeds the boundaries of plain conflict and profoundly positions itself into the existing philosophical thought but also, with its practice it creates new ways of philosophical thinking. A significant element of this ethic, the principle of non-injuring the opponent in Japanese martial arts, is the subject of this paper.

Japanese martial arts have their own historical development, whereupon different epochs had shaped the arts themselves so that we would have them today in, at first glance, a complete but still changeable state. The very ethic of Japanese martial arts had come a long way in order to be shaped into a complex philosophy, of an art itself as well as an approach to life and the world.

What surely separates Japanese martial arts is the unique ethics. The paper analyses the development of one of the ethical principles - the principle of non-injuring the opponent – which has had a distinctive impact on the formation of modern Japanese martial arts and has contributed to their transformation into sports.

Japanese martial arts ethics did not emerge on their own, without the influence of other martial arts. Therefore, a broader glimpse of the ethics of martial arts as a whole is needed, as well as on the development of martial arts from earlier civilizations, from China to Japan through various sorts of philosophical, religious and cultural aspects of fighting, so a consideration of them in order to gain full understanding is surely necessary.

Finally, by perceiving the ethical postulate of the great masters of Japanese martial arts, the ethical principle of non-injuring the opponent will be analyzed in its most influential phase: in judo, karate and aikido. Still, the first traces were found in Miyamoto Musashi, while, centuries later, the Meiji restoration martial arts initiated their transformation, among others, also influenced by this ethical principle. Under analysis is the historical context, the character of Japanese society in every phase, as well as the philosophy of great masters that had significantly influenced the development of this principle: Jigoro Kano, Gichin Funakoshi and Morihei Ueshiba.

1. THE THEORETICAL BASIS OF THE PAPER

1.1. The genesis of the development of ethical principles in fighting

It is almost impossible to find a civilization without some traces of martial arts in it. Yet, the first strong traces can be found in ancient Greece

where fighting sports had held a significant place in culture in general. On the one hand, they were marked by a certain brutality, as the safety of the participants was not regarded as being significant. A mixed fighting sport, Pankration, stood out, in which the rules allowed a broad specter of often dangerous techniques. On the other hand, even then there were significant limits in the spectrum of allowed techniques. For example, in Pankration itself, biting and thrusting of fingers was banned. Adding to this, in the first painted source about the history of martial arts and a significant element, one that could have had the role of safety, was noticeable: a glove on the right hand of a boxer boy (Ćirković, 2006, 49, 91).

Picture 1. “Boxing children” fresco – Minoan culture, Knossos
(Source: Ćirković, 2006, 49)



Nevertheless, the civilization of China had a decisive impact on Japanese martial arts, where, according to tradition, a monk from India – Bodhidharma, preaching a new direct approach to Buddhism had also taught his followers specific breathing techniques. As he lived with his disciples in desolated but dangerous areas, Bodhidharma also trained his followers in the art of self-defense (Reid and Croucher, 2007, 20, 21).

For the civilization of China, one of the most influential philosophers and a unique reformer was Confucius. The basis of his ethics was philanthropy, which left a significant trace in philosophical thought as well as in the foundations of the Chinese state and in every-day social relations. A step further was enacted by his student Mencius who claimed that human nature in its essence was good and that a lack of adequate social circumstances makes it bad. He endeavored to prove that altruism is deeply rooted in every human with a simple example: “Let’s assume that a man sees a child that was just about to fall down a deep well. A man would save the child even if he had to risk his own life, no matter how himself morally degenerated he is” (Nukarija, 2010, 129). Both philosophers had left a profound influence

on China, where every aspect of the state and culture was shaped by their thoughts. Consequently, they had also strongly influenced the formation of a martial arts ethic.

Being under the strong influence of its far greater and then more developed neighbor, Japan had adopted martial arts from China. Almost completely isolated from the rest of the world, Japan nourished its martial arts where the dominant one was kenjutsu - the art of the sword. For a warrior class of samurais, an efficient martial art was needed in order to use katana, wakizashi and tanto. The martial art itself was direct, efficient and almost completely without “merciful” ethical principles. In case of a loss or inability to use a sword, an extra martial art was put to use – jujutsu, which had also taken efficiency as a key principle so it was common to end techniques with the death of the opponent. The stated is surely a consequence of the fact that both martial arts were shaped by the battlefield of medieval Japan (Janjić and Gigov, 1983, 37, 99).

Still, traces of ethics can be found indirectly – in Bushido. The rulebook of samurai life is filled with ethical principles, often also principles of fighting that were influenced by Mencius himself (Nitobe, 1985, 23). However, the rulebook represents, on one hand, directions how to serve one’s master (daimyo) and, on the other hand, specific laws for the mutual respect of the samurais in order to preserve their own class. The warrior class of samurais had risen above the rest of Japanese society and gained significant privileges that had their root in their warrior skills. Very similar to European knights, samurais had had a strong mutual protection and were aiming to preserve themselves, both physically and as a separate class. Consequently, a certain morality in the conflict between two samurais is certainly evident but the same morality lacks in conflict of the samurai and, for example, a simple peasant. The rulebook itself is conservative and aims to preserve “public order and peace and thus to secure the safety of the members of other three classes” (Kliri, 2006, 61).

The change came in the period of peace under the Tokugawa shogunate (1600 – 1868). As conflicts were rare, because the ancient hostility between masters was overpowered by the central government of the shogun, samurais had to face new conditions. The effectiveness of martial arts was not primary any more, and a search for art in fighting emerged – a search for the “perfection of form” (Reid and Croucher, 2007, 180). The warrior class had lost its brutality as well as efficiency, and had turned to art and philosophy which it had incorporated in its martial arts. The term itself had changed: the suffix “jutsu,” which was marked as adjustable and practical, had been transformed into ‘do’ which states that it is a matter of a complex philosophy of martial arts and, more precisely, a lifelong journey of perfecting the art in order to achieve goals that are far from a simple victory in plain physical conflicts (De Majo, 2010, 96).

1.2. Philosophical and religious aspects of fighting

Taking into consideration the fact that martial arts had emerged and developed in certain areas with specific cultural aspects, the interference of religion in them was unavoidable. As we have seen, the Bodhidharma himself was first a Buddhist preacher and only used martial arts as a tool for the achievement of religious goal.

Buddhism was decisive for Chinese martial arts. There is the well-known phenomenon of monk warriors – Shaolin, who practice martial arts daily and where the thin line between this type of training and prayer can hardly be seen. On the other coast, in Japan, Buddhism also had a strong impact. However, Japan had taken the key aspects of Chinese culture but did not stop on pure miming. Buddhism itself on the Japanese islands had been transformed into Zen Buddhism.

Transforming under the Tokugawa shogunate, martial arts decisively took on some religious aspects. The term ‘do’ was deeply religious, as it marked a road or a path: “It is the path of Buddha, “bushido,” which leads to the direction of unrevealing your true nature by waking up your sleeping ego (infra self, a limited “I”), encouraging it to leave its place to a super, more fulfilled self” (Deshimaru, 2008, 19). The secularization of martial arts came with an overall secularization of society – the Meiji restoration. At that moment, Jigoro Kano stepped out and created judo from jujutsu, where he liberated ‘do’ from its religious burden and for the goal of judo he takes the perfection of one selves and the contribution to the society as a whole (Kano, 2007, 101).

Overcoming the religious past does not mean a lack of profound philosophy in martial arts. On the contrary. Martial arts themselves had adjusted to secular society where the goal was to perfect one’s self through progress marked by belts. Due to that, they spread through the world and are practiced by atheists and believers of other religions, which are also gaining elite levels of mastery. Nevertheless, the philosophy was preserved and had further been developed, and one of its aspects - the ethical principle of non-injuring the opponent is the topic of this article.

1.3. The cultural aspect of fighting

If we consider Japanese martial arts, they are filled with aspects of Japanese culture. The terms and names of techniques are almost exclusively in Japanese. Often even the counting of certain exercises is done in Japanese. The gyms themselves, or “dojo,” are filled with images of classical Japanese iconography and pictures of famous masters of martial arts. Of course, the uniform is a kimono. Viewed in such a manner, every gym for martial arts and every martial arts club represents “Japan in a nutshell”.

The interference of cultural impacts through martial arts is unquestionable. Even in countries that are thousand miles away from the Japanese island, parts of its culture are cherished and kept from vanishing. Still, spreading through the world and developing in all areas, martial arts themselves changed and accepted influences from new cultures. Consequently, today we can tell the difference between, for example, French Judo from Japanese or even Russian. The stated is certainly the case with other martial arts.

Going a step further, today it is almost impossible to claim that a certain martial art is strictly Japanese, Chinese or other. Every martial art had developed where the culture in which the art was practiced influenced its development and shaping. Therefore, in the 21th century the conclusion that martial arts, as well as sports, represent a mutual heritage of all humanity certainly stands (Ćirković & Jovanović, 2002, 13).

2. THE ETHICAL PRINCIPLE OF NON-INJURING THE OPPONENT

2.1. The basic principles of martial arts

The basis of martial arts is fighting. Each move has for its goal the avoidance of the attack and disabling the opponent. On the other hand, during the period of certain brutality (dominantly before the Tokugawa shogunate) attack techniques were also present. Even other physical exercises for its aim had the strengthening of the body for the upcoming potential conflict. Spiritual exercises improve calm and focus so that in the case of physical conflict a practitioner would stay calm and able to react in an adequate way.

Although their basis is in fighting, martial arts go far beyond that aspect. Through the practice of martial arts form, higher principles had emerged, which find their basis in the contribution to society or even in religious aspects. So, for example, judo has five principles, where only the first represent physical exercise and the highest, fifth principle, has for its aim the contribution to society of an individual. Far from physical conflict, Kano regarded judo as “the teaching of the way”, and its use is “the teaching of the best way to achieve any kind of success” (Kano, 2007, 73, 110). On the other hand, aikido forms its principles around “the way of love”, where an individual, by practicing aikido, conducts an “act of faith”. The founder of aikido, Ueshiba, saw the very techniques of self-defense as manifestations of “merciful deeds” of the goddess of mercy Kannon (Ueshiba, 2008a, 43, 56, 105).

However, even though significantly different, the basis of all martial arts is fighting. What is common with all of them is that they have gone far from plain physical conflict. Overcoming the opponent is surely present, but the way in which it will be done depends on numerous factors, religious and

cultural. Taking the conflict between two or more individuals to a higher level, an ethical principle of non-injuring the opponent emerged in martial arts, a principle that is complex and represents the peak of martial arts skills. In the conflict with the opponent, the use of that principle would mean a victory over him but in such a mode that the opponent would not suffer any consequences. For that, complete certainty of one's own skills is needed as well as mastering the techniques in order, during the combat itself, to select techniques which can be used but also remain safe for the health of the opponent. The essence of this principle will be perceived through the thoughts and practical direction of the great masters of Japanese martial arts.

2.2. Principles in fighting sports

Most commonly, martial arts lack competitions, as we have seen, and their goal is in the way ('do'), often expressed through levels of knowledge or belts. On the other hand, the essence of fighting sports is to be found in competitions and everything is subjugated to that. Many of those sports had emerged from martial arts, like judo and karate. In that process, they abandoned their own principles and adjusted to the principles of sport.

The basic, as well as dominant, principle is surely the principle of competition. In fighting sports, the rules are clear, winners and losers. The key factor in the process of transformation from martial arts principles into classical sport principles is surely the International Olympic Committee, which had with its rules, in which fighting sports strive to adjust, permanently changed the nature of these sports, whereupon today, for example, judo has come far from the judo of Jigoro Kano, and even from judo as a martial art. It is significant to bear in mind the terminological and phenomenological difference between sport and martial art. The ethic of fighting sports is based around the terms of competition, fair-play, justice, moral education etc. (Radoš, 2016, 45).

Sport competitions and the IOC failed to have a profound impact on the development of principles and ethics of martial arts. For the shaping of the ethical principle of non-injuring the opponent, decisive were the great masters of Japanese martial arts and the philosophy of conflict that they preached to their students. Their thoughts about that issue will be perceived in the next chapter.

2.3. Thoughts, sayings and advice of the great masters of Japanese martial arts

2.3.1. Miyamoto Musashi

The life of Miyamoto Musashi was marked by combat. Born in the 16th century, the century of merciless wars of Japanese magnates and a weak central government, Musashi found his path in the sword.

When he was just 13 years old, he proved himself by beating Arima Kihea, a well know samurai of the Shinto-riju school (Musashi, 2006, 11).

At 17, Musashi was involved in the great battle of Seikigahara. By chance he was on the defeated side of Hideie. The victor Tokugawa brought a period of peace and the centralization of the government in Japan, the same period that marked the uprising of Musashi (The History of Japan, 2008, 97). Without a master, Musashi traveled around Tokugawa's Japan in search for the masters of swords art (kenjutsu) and perfected his own skill in many duels (around 60). His most famous battle was with the disciples of the Joshioka School, firstly beating their master and consequently being challenged to a fight with all of the members of the school. Around 100 members of Joshioka School attacked Musashi, one by one, by the rules of Bushido, and Musashi greeted them with his two swords – the katana and the wakizashi. It was then that he invented a new method of fighting – Niten Ichii-riju – the art of swordsmanship with two swords at the same time.

Musashi was invincible with the new method of fighting. Finally, with one blow he beat Sasaki Kojiro, the only master that could compete with Musashi, and by doing so, Musashi established himself as the invincible master of kenjutsu. His name became famous in medieval Japan and soon he found several masters whom he served and held swordsmanship trainings with. Restless and egoistic, Musashi could not remain a classic samurai for long. He found refuge on a mountain in 1643. After meditation he wrote his work “The book of five rings,” a unique record about the perfecting of the skill and the philosophy of martial arts from the kansei, the saint of swordsmanship himself (Simić, 2005, 339-344).

Picture 2. *Miyamoto Musashi – Utagawa Kuniyoshi*



Still, Musashi was more than the master of kenjutsu. For the art of the sword he stated: “By the virtue of the sword the society and the individual are

put in order, it is because of that that martial arts originates from the sword” (Musashi, 2006, 24). In his philosophy we find first traces of the ethical principle of non-injuring the opponent: after he had proven his skill and gained tremendous self-esteem, Musashi had started, even as a young boy, to avoid conflicts if he estimated that he could not learn nothing new from them. On the other hand, being a recognized master, conflict found him: everybody wanted to prove themselves by beating Musashi. In any case, after decades of fighting and building a following, Musashi carried out a revolutionary move – he started beating his opponents with a wooden sword (bokken). He was so certain in his skill that he used a wooden sword, using his method of Niten Ichii-ryu, and still beat his opponents. There were some real swords there, in the belt and in their cases - for every eventuality (Utagawa).

The victory over the opponent, who would surely use a real sword, would be complete. Not only was the opponent defeated, but he was defeated with a wooden sword and the triumph of Musashi’s skill was complete. However, in his philosophy Musashi did not go far from the mere overcoming of the opponent. For example, in his work he gives direct advice of how to kill the opponent quickly: “The blow is when you walk towards the opponent and collide with him, even then with the virtue of your strength, he dies instantly.” In the case of a weaker opponent, Musashi advised that “from the very beginning you should have the intention to scare and completely crush him” (Musashi, 2006, 47, 77).

In any case, the society of Japan back then was not ready for the refined philosophy of combat. A decisive change came with the Meiji restoration and the philosophy of Jigoro Kano.

2.3.2. Jigoro Kano

Japanese society experienced profound changes during the reign of Emperor Meiji and his restoration, which meant taking the most efficient aspects of imperial powers in order for Japan itself to become imperialistic. Consequently, the restoration involved a significant aspect of westernization, and because of this, martial arts went through significant changes (Stojanović, 2015, 57; The History of Japan, 2008, 115).

By then, the dominant martial art of swordsmanship (kenjutsu) was completely repressed by one decree – the ban of carrying a sword. A martial art emerged into the spotlight - without the use of weapons: jujutsu. The art itself was filled with brutality because it was shaped on the battlefields of Japan. Each technique had in it certain efficiency where the consequences of the opponent’s suffering were not regarded as significant. The ethic of this martial art is controversial, considering the fact that its primary goal was victory by all means necessary.

One of the prominent masters of jujutsu and a university professor, Jigoro Kano, realized that in modern Japan there was no place for such a martial art. As the whole society underwent profound changes, the same reform was needed for jujutsu. In 1882, Kano created judo whereupon the suffix 'jutsu,' meant adjustability and efficiency, replaced with 'do,' thus creating 'judo.'

There was no place in judo for the brutality of jujutsu, and Kano stated: "Especially Kodokan judo, which I created, as newer includes anything dangerous. I cannot state enough that I stand for something that is far from a violent and dangerous sport." The goal of martial art itself had significantly changed: "Crucially, for the goal of judo I had not stressed the mere exercise for fighting, which was the focus of martial arts such as jujutsu, but I had for its basic principle established mental and physical training." Not only was he clear about the brutality of martial art, Kano was also cautious about competitions as such: "Students should practice judo not for competition, but preferably to become capable to put to use this martial art for the goal of reaching higher goals in life. Consequently, competitions between schools are not the goal but the mean for the achievement of noble goals" (Kano, 2007, 26, 62, 102).

However, the techniques of judo were controversial. Martial art soon became a sport that developed instantly since becoming an Olympic sport in 1964 in Tokyo. Using grappling techniques (nage and katame waza) became dominant and its use was found in sports competitions. Due to the rigorous rules of the International Olympic Committee, sports competitions of judo are relatively safe for the practitioners and dangerous techniques are not a part of it. Still, judo has a third group of techniques, atemi waza, which is today almost completely eradicated. The key manual of judo of Kazuzo Kudo (1969) remained unfinished – without the third section which would consider atemi waza. Adding to this, by looking at other literature, atemi waza cannot be found even in traces (Ćirković, 1991; Dragić, 1980; Dominy, 1974; Mandić, 1996; Savić, 1999). Hence, just how safe atemi waza is for the opponent we cannot claim with certainty without an insight into its techniques.

In any case, Jigoro Kano laid the foundations for modern martial arts. In them there was no place for brutality, their aim was the progress of an individual and the whole society. Still, the techniques themselves had originated from fighting and can be even deadly in reality. Nevertheless, the ethical principles of judo had significantly influenced other masters of martial arts who also had adjusted their chosen martial arts to the modern society of Japan and the whole world. The most important follower of that principle, on whom Jigoro Kano himself a great influence, was Gichin Funakoshi.

2.3.3. Gichin Funakoshi

Almost symbolically, Funakoshi was born in 1868 in the year of the Meiji restoration. He was a witness of profound changes in Japanese society

but also accepted them, well aware that the course of history cannot be stopped. He himself obeyed the decree of the ban of traditional samurai haircuts, and when he showed up home without a ponytail, his father shouted angrily: “What have you done to yourself? You, a son of a samurai!” (Funakoshi, 1988, 18).

He dedicated his entire life to martial arts. He studied karate with the greatest masters from Okinawa and perfected his skills in Tokyo. Soon he established his own school, later known as Shotokan. He himself called his school Karatedo, following the line that was established by Jigoro Kano. It was him who spread karate from Okinawa to the Japanese islands when he opened the first dojo in Japan by the name of Mesei Diuku. In that process he found help in Jigoro Kano who had left a profound impact on him (Funakoshi, 1988, 65-66). Soon his martial art spread even outside Japanese borders where today it finds its practitioners all around the world (Simić, 2005, 207-210).

For the topic, it is significant to understand how Funakoshi treated his potential opponents. His master of karate Itosu was a good example: upon entering a drinking place, a young and strong man attacked him, whereupon Itosu merely contracted his abdominal muscles and took the blow without any consequences. Instantly he grabbed the young man and said: “I don’t know what you have against me but let’s have a drink together.” Another time, now as an old man, Itosu was attacked by a young man with a strong blow to the back where he again just took the blow and grabbed his opponent by the hand and said: “You really shouldn’t try such tricks on an old man like me.” Afterwards he released him uninjured but defeated (Funakoshi, 1988, 25-26).

Funakoshi adopted the ethics of his masters in full. One time he was intercepted by a group of bandits who demanded money. Funakoshi only had manju cookies with him which he planned to bring to his home shrine. Without hesitation, he gave the cookies to the bandits who released him with a couple of insults. When he told his masters Azato and Itosu what happened, both were pleased. Azato exclaimed: “You did that really well! That is the true spirit of karate!” However, decades later, now as an old man, Funakoshi was attacked again. This time he instinctively reacted and with a strong grip of the genitals he disabled the opponent. Seeing that the attacker almost fainted, Funakoshi realized his mistake and in his biography he stated: “Going down the road, I realized that that potential robber was almost certainly some war veteran that had just returned from a distant front. Jobless and surrendering to an impulse, he decided to rob me and I impulsively did that which I always advise my students not to do – I carried out an assault. I felt no pride about that (Funakoshi, 1988, 52-53, 96).

Still, if we look at the techniques of karate, they are extremely brutal. They predominantly rely on punching and kicking techniques, where the practitioner uses his hands and feet as a deadly weapon. A blow of a karate practitioner is so strong that it can crush a series of wooden blocks, tiles and

even concrete blocks – a test of technique known as tameshiwari. Funakoshi himself was well aware of this and stated that true karate is beyond techniques, in avoiding combat or in the non-injuring of the opponent “because when the knowledge of karate is applied once, the matter becomes one of life and death” (Funakoshi, 1988, 83). Basically, Funakoshi kept the ancient deadly techniques of Okinawa but advanced them with refined ethics and the imperative of avoidance of combat as the supreme test of skill. Whereas, the forming of techniques of one martial arts guided by the ethical principle of non-injuring the opponent was done by Morihei Ueshiba.

2.3.4. Morihei Ueshiba

The life of Morihei Ueshiba is under the veil of mystery. Being deeply religious to certain aspect of his life, that he regarded as significant he introduced an element of mystique and unnatural so it very hard to tell the difference between truth and myth. By founding his own martial arts of aikido, where not only did he become a sensei but also a prophet of new religion (“The way of peace”), the biography of Ueshiba is highly questionable.

In any case, a great master of jujutsu, who had studied with the greatest and the most brutal masters of that martial art, went through enlightenment and found his radically different martial arts of aikido in 1942. While the goal of jujutsu was fighting for victory, Ueshiba set the saying “combat is love” as the ultimate goal of aikido (Simić, 2005, 355-361). Jujutsu was completely transformed by Ueshiba. Almost every technique of aikido is “merciful” by emerging from the imperative of “love” which the founder himself had established: “The way of the warrior is wrongly interpreted as a means to kill and destroy others. To punch, hurt or destroy is the biggest sin that a human being can do. The original way of the warrior implies prevention of this – it is the way of peace, harmony and love” (Ueshiba, 2008b, 10). And Bushido had gone through complete transformation under Ueshiba: “Bushido is not a teaching how to die. Bushido is the teaching how to live, how to protect and improve life” (Ueshiba, 2008a, 24).

Ueshiba himself stayed away from physical conflicts during his life. He went so far that he did not hurt any living beings, not even flies. When the techniques of aikido began to be used in training of members of the military and the police, Ueshiba was unsatisfied because of the fact that aikido was used for deadly purposes while other masters treated this as an recognition of the martial art itself (Ueshiba, 2008a, 25, 43).

Finally, for a true master of martial arts, Ueshiba considered as the one who had sufficient knowledge of techniques and was so certain of his knowledge that he was capable not to imply it. Funakoshi’s philosophy was

a similar one, but while karate is extremely deadly, aikido is merciful in its techniques. Ueshiba did not see the peak of martial arts in the victory over numerous opponents, a successful tameshiwari test, but in a smile: “No matter how well armed your opponent is, you can, by using the The Way of Peace, disarm him or her. When someone approaches you in anger, you greet them with a smile. That is the zenith of martial arts” (Uešiba, 2008a, 94).

3. CRITICAL REVIEW

The ethical principle of non-injuring the opponent has come a long and hard way. Musashi's postulate had not left a profound mark on Japanese society. Only by radical and comprehensive changes that came with the Meiji restoration and Kano's transformation of martial arts did the ethical principle get a foothold. Through judo and karate, a new way of fighting, as well as a new higher way of victory, was established. It was no longer the case of only winning but also how to achieve that victory. In the life and work of Morihei Ueshiba, the ethical principle was at its peak. Not only was the potential conflict defined by it but the martial art itself, namely - its techniques, had for their goal the overcoming of the opponent as well as not injuring him.

However, what is the case with the ethics of fighting today? If we look at the emerging popularity of martial arts which for its goal have only efficiency (similarly as jujutsu before the Meiji restoration) like the Russian Sambo or the Israeli Krav maga, it is clear that ethics is no longer relevant. Additionally, in the field of fighting sports we are also witnessing the rise of brutality, most clearly seen in Mixed Martial Arts (MMA or Ultimate fight).

What is surely needed is a return to the thoughts of the great masters like Jigoro Kano, Gichin Funakoshi and even Morihei Ueshiba. In essence, the human body is fragile and a precisely conducted blow in a certain area, even done by a beginner, can be deadly. Because of that, these great masters were advocating victory over the opponent in the case of unavoidable physical conflict, but such that would leave the opponent defeated but uninjured – a unique zenith of martial art skills.

Still, the world of the 21st century is far from perfect. Crime is an everyday occurrence and a part of life in modern cities. For an individual who has no opportunity to fully dedicate his time to the perfection of a chosen martial art, a certain level of training for concrete self-defense is surely necessary. The great masters of Japanese martial arts were great philosophers but usually utopians. Today's world is far from a desired world of, for example Morihei Ueshiba, and in certain situations it is necessary to win and hurt the attacker for one's own safety and the safety of family and friends, and there is no doubt about that.

CONCLUSION

The existence of profound and complex ethics makes martial art unique. They can be used as a mean of training, as for example Special Physical Education, but they can as well be a lifelong psycho-physical and philosophical path that an individual can dedicate himself to.

The interference of various different aspects, such as physical, cultural, philosophical and religious makes martial arts a significant phenomenon that consequently demand separate researches with a specific approach. The ethical principle of non-injuring the opponent is just a small but significant segment of that complex phenomenon.

From its exclusively combat beginnings, with a significant influence of religion, martial arts have come a long way and become a unique life philosophy, most often strictly secular. As such, they have been spread throughout the world and are practiced by millions. Their efficiency in reality has been proven numerous times and as such is a part of special forces training.

On the other hand, the ethics is a separate issue. Only one ethical principles – the principle of non-injuring the opponent, has been shown as exceptionally complex and demanding. With Musashi, Kano and Funakoshi, this ethical principle had been formed so that it would gain its peak in Morihei Ueshiba's aikido where every technique of that martial art is primarily merciful and careful for the health of the attacker. Still, the issue of the reality of the ethical imperative remains: which level of mastery is necessary so that the ethical principle of non-injuring the opponent could actually be put to use? For many practitioners of martial arts, that level will surely remain unreachable. Nevertheless, its very existence should serve as an example for further improvement in a chosen martial art.

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