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BOWING TO YOUR ENEMIES: COURTESY, *BUDŌ*, AND JAPAN

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Introduction: Sanshirō Sugata, Courtesy, and Budō

The first film of the great Japanese director Akira Kurosawa was *Sanshirō Sugata*. Based on Tsuneo Tomita's book recounting the beginnings of *jūdō* in the Meiji era, it follows the fortunes of Sanshirō Sugata, a young man who travels to the city to learn *jūjutsu* 柔術 from a famous teacher.¹ The teacher turns out to be a dissipated alcoholic, and his students vulgar thugs. After watching these students get thrashed by the founder of a new martial art, *jūdō* 柔道, Sugata begs to learn from this teacher. Much of the film follows his physical, ethical, and spiritual development from an angry and headstrong young brute to a calm and selfless young man. One of the most powerful scenes in the film is its penultimate fight, which pits Sugata against the head of the rival *jūjutsu* school, Hansuke Murai. While the latter has given up his alcoholism, he still represents a dangerous threat to Sugata and to the reputation of his teacher's school. Indeed, the prize of the tournament is the opportunity to train Tokyo's police forces—and the social and economic capital associated with this. Against this backdrop of past enmity and present risk, we might expect Sugata and Murai to behave rudely, aggressively, and callously. Yet this is not what happens. Murai treats Sugata with respect, bowing courteously, smiling when his opponent's *jūdōgi* 柔道着 rips, and asking politely: "Shall we begin?" While the aging and ailing Murai gives his all, his younger opponent is simply too swift, too strong, and too proficient—the older fighter is almost killed by the force of Sugata's throws. Murai tries to stand, and courageously faces his opponent again and again, but he soon admits defeat. As Murai is carried from the arena, he thanks Sugata sincerely for the match, praising the younger man's effort and ability. Clearly moved, Sugata says luck was with him, but Murai shakes his head and falls into unconsciousness. Sugata tells him to take care, and soon visits him in his home to take dinner and tea. Their relationship after the fight is one of civility, politeness, and care.

What struck me about this scene was not only the intensity of feeling, but also the depth of courtesy present in both combatants. The generous smiles, the bows, the thanks, the praise, the visits, and the hospitality—these are courtesies that seem foreign to the intense physical conflict between the two men, and the economic and political strife that divides their schools. What this story suggests is that courtesy is essential to the martial arts at their best, and I am inclined to agree.

Moreover, it seems I am not alone in this: in the *Hagakure*, for example, Tsunetomo Yamamoto is keen to laud the virtues of etiquette and good manners,² and many of the modern Japanese martial arts stress similar courtesies. Alan Fromm and

Nicolas Soames write: “Without etiquette Judo would be in danger of becoming a system of thugs and would not be Judo.”³ For Gichin Funakoshi, courtesy is essential to *karate* 空手.⁴ He approvingly quotes the words: “Karate begins and ends with courtesy.”⁵ *Aikidō* 合気道 founder Morihei Ueshiba speaks of courtesy cosmologically: “When you bow deeply to the universe, it bows back.”⁶ It seems that courtesy is essential to *budō* 武道, the Japanese martial way.

Yet what is courtesy? While a richer account of courtesy in *budō* will have to wait, a provisional definition will help to orient us. In English, the word ‘courtesy’ is derived from the Old French, whence we also have ‘court’ and ‘curtsy.’⁷ It refers first to the elegance and politeness of the royal court, and second to all the associated qualities of respect, deference, sensitivity, and tact. It is defined as both “politeness or considerateness in intercourse with others”⁸ and as “nobleness, generosity, benevolence, goodness.”⁹ While politeness has the connotation of a polished façade—from the Latin *politus*—courtesy implies authentic virtue. Rather than being vulgar, selfish, miserly, and inconsiderate, the courteous gentleman is someone who is interested in the happiness and welfare of others. He is not necessarily ethically or politically radical, but he is certainly against anything that seems to overlook the immediate needs and wants of others. Perhaps this is why courtesy has become associated with the reactionary conservatism of the *bourgeoisie*, who accept the miseries of poverty and exploitation as long as they are far away or veiled in the niceties of middle-class politeness. However, if courtesy does not always include radical class, race, or gender politics, it does not necessarily exclude them either. Instead, courtesy is simply a virtue associated with recognition and expression—it allows us to acknowledge others, and to show that we do so.

While it is difficult to speak of exact correspondences,¹⁰ the Japanese word that seems most closely to approximate this general idea of courtesy is *reigi* 礼儀. *Reigi* is best understood as ritualized courtesy and etiquette, with a particular emphasis on respect for elders, seniors, and superiors, but also with a strong emphasis on civility, etiquette, generosity, and so on. Indeed, these elements are present in the encounter between Sugata and Murai—the former is keen to express his deference to the older man, who in turn is generous in his patience and praise. However, we might also point to *teinei* 丁寧, or ‘politeness,’ in their civility. While classical Japanese *bushidō* 武士道 authors stress the rituals of courtesy and deference,¹¹ contemporary studies point to the importance of *teinei* in modern Japanese interactions. Saeko Fukushima describes *teinei* as “communication strategies intended to maintain mutual face and to achieve smooth communication.”¹² The strategies of *teinei* often involve the location of oneself in a group, and the differentiation of oneself from others in a particularly hierarchical social order.¹³ However, *teinei* is also associated with genuine affection, sensitivity, and care, the emotions that attend ritualized courtesy.¹⁴ When Yamamoto stressed the importance of compassion in *bushidō*,¹⁵ he was making a similar point: the emotions of compassion motivate and celebrate the filial and civil virtues. And we can identify both of these tendencies in the fight scene in *Sanshirō Sugata*. The men are endeavoring to maintain the dignity of the other fighter, preserving face in a public arena. But Kurosawa has also highlighted

the genuine warmth and human kindness of each combatant—as if to stress that the formalities of *reigi* require the emotional commitment of *teinei*.

In this light, we might suggest that the ideal of Japanese courtesy can be understood as a unity of *reigi* and *teinei*, requiring respect, discretion in manners, modesty, and reverence, but also genuine warmth and kindness. As in the English, this is clearly much richer than simple politeness, or the strategies of saving face. In its essence, it is the careful and considerate capacity to overcome self-interest and self-absorption, and the words and deeds necessary to express this.

Yet why should fighting have any relation to courtesy? Proficiency in combat does not require courtesy, good manners, respect, or any of the moral virtues. The real question is: why does fighting in the Japanese martial arts require courtesy? To answer this question, we must grasp the basics of the Japanese martial arts tradition. When the unity of Japan was finally consolidated under Ieyasu Tokugawa in the early seventeenth century, many of the warrior arts lost their immediate practical necessity in the face of peace. In Hyams' words, "the martial arts were transformed from a practical means of combat-to-the-death to spiritual educational training."¹⁶ They developed from forms of war to forms of sophisticated aristocratic practice, and in the late Meiji period they eventually became what the Japanese call *budō*. Even relatively recent creations like *karate-dō*, *jūdō*, and *aikidō* all share with the older Edō fighting arts a commitment to this *budō*, and this is indicated by the suffix *dō* 道. *Dō* is the Japanese equivalent of the Chinese *tao*; it quite literally means 'way,' as does *michi* 道. However, as in English, the notion of a 'way' also implies a path rather than a single destination, and an underlying principle rather than an empirical fact. It is closer to what Heidegger calls a 'woodcutter's path,'¹⁷ which is not a preordained and predetermined journey, but a path that is created as it is walked, and through this very walking. In the contemporary Japanese martial arts (*gendai budō* 現代武道), *dō* is usually taken in contrast with *jutsu* 術, as in *aiki-jūjutsu* 合気柔術, *jūjutsu*, and so on. So, what does it mean to follow a *dō*?

Budō and Ēthos: Dō, Jutsu, and the Greeks

Somewhat surprisingly, to clarify these Japanese ideas it is often helpful to draw on the well-articulated epistemological insights of the Greeks. While I am wary of stating with Donald Levine that "Sino-Japanese *jutsu* corresponds exactly to Greek *technē*,"¹⁸ I agree with his assumption that the parallels are close enough to be instructive. For Aristotle, *technē* was a very particular kind of knowledge.¹⁹ It was not concerned with the necessary and eternal *a priori* truths of the cosmos, nor with the *a posteriori* contingencies and exigencies of ethics and politics. Rather, *technē* was instrumental reason, concerned with actualizing the potentialities of beings that had no capacity to do so on their own, and which could be otherwise. Moreover, this was a kind of knowledge associated with people who were bound to necessity.²⁰ That is, *technē* was chiefly operative in the domestic sphere, in farming and slavery, and not in the free realm of the Greek *polis*. It implied neither knowledge of the 'divine' eternalities and necessities of the universe, nor the self-

knowledge of those who actualize themselves through lasting words and deeds. It was simply a technical skill, a ‘know-how.’ While not identical, very similar things can be said for the Japanese notion of *jutsu*, particularly in the *gendai budō* of Meiji, Taishō, and Shōwa Japan, but also among the samurai arts. Yamamoto, for example, stressed that samurai were not to become dilettante technicians—their way was *budō*, not this or that art.²¹ Shigesuke Taira endorsed a similar distinction, urging youth to cultivate their sensibilities before learning simple skills²² and distinguishing sharply between the all-encompassing samurai attitude and its complementary arts.²³

In Japan a *dō*—the ‘way’ that Yamamoto and Shigesuke spoke of—was much closer to what Aristotle would have called an *ēthos*, whence we have ‘ethics.’ Though the Japanese distinction was not necessarily absolute,²⁴ in Greece a *technē* could be divorced from life as a whole, while an *ēthos* was this life as a whole.²⁵ An *ēthos* could not be learned as a specialized knowledge, but instead required ongoing engagement with the world at large, including its diverse political, economic, and social dimensions.²⁶ Indeed, for Aristotle, justice was the central virtue of the good man because it aimed at coherence of character: possession of all the appropriate virtues in relation to others,²⁷ without contradictions of belief and value, word and deed, or will.²⁸ To develop an *ēthos* coherently required *paideia*, understood as free self-cultivation, rather than the necessary labor of the slave, or the ‘molding’ associated with Plato. For Classical Greeks, this entailed *praxis* and *phronēsis*, understood, respectively, as free action and the ethico-political ‘know-how’ required to orient this action.

We might say the same for a *dō*.²⁹ As British diplomat and *jūdōka* Trevor Leggett puts it, a *dō* is “a Way, as distinct from merely a technical skill.”³⁰ As in Greece, modern *budō* emerged in opposition to necessity: the old agricultural and familial ties of Japan broke down, leading to greater personal freedom for young men, which was expressed in professional and vocational terms.³¹ We must be careful not to conflate the democratic *polis* with the often authoritarian Japanese society (or its analogues in formal *budō*), but, for young men of Meiji Japan, the martial arts were a way to shape themselves in exciting new ways. For example, much to his parents’ horror, Funakoshi gave up his proud samurai topknot to be a teacher—a modern *ēthos* that was intertwined with his martial arts training.³² These and similar developments in Japanese society required a similar commitment to something like the Greek *paideia*—to the integrated and deliberate cultivation of an *ēthos*, through committed action and ethical ‘know-how’ rather than through labor dictated by necessity. This, in turn, suggests a conscious attempt to cultivate a life—a whole way of living, rather than simply a passive assimilation into the needs of society. As a result, the ideal modern *budōka* is neither fragmented, contradictory, and helpless nor rigid and doctrinaire, but rather coherent, dynamic, and self-assured. The *budōka* cannot be a combat specialist or a narrow pugilist, but must be as balanced, faithful, courageous, and resilient in the workplace and the café as in combat.³³

Of course, we should be wary of reifying this distinction, or projecting it anachronistically. As Karl Friday has persuasively revealed, many of the old *koryū* 古流

schools associated *jutsu* with the heightening of moral and spiritual qualities.³⁴ Accordingly, Michael Random warns readers of the dangers of “making the way of *dō* far too spiritual and . . . rejecting *bugei-jutsu* as if it were an illness.”³⁵ A dehistoricized *dō/jutsu* dichotomy can easily conceal this reality, and, following Donn Draeger,³⁶ perhaps many Western martial artists have too readily accepted this distinction.

Nonetheless, samurai educators like Yamamoto and Shigesuke did stress the unity of the samurai way, in contradistinction to piecemeal skills and complementary arts.³⁷ And masters of the *gendai budō* have often drawn (knowingly or unknowingly) on a similar assumption. Obviously drawing on Jigoro Kanō’s legacy,³⁸ Fromm and Soames downplay merely technical skills and speak of each *budōka* developing in his own life “a deeper experience[,] . . . a far richer existence.”³⁹ Funakoshi affirms precisely this point when he writes: “Karate-do is not only the acquisition of certain defensive skills but also the mastering of the art of being a good and honest member of society.”⁴⁰ Elsewhere, Robert W. Smith speaks of Leggett as no match for the Japanese fighter Kimura, but a “more complete *jūdō* man and scholar.”⁴¹ In each of these is an enunciation of the *dō* in *budō*. We might combine the Greek and Sino-Japanese account by saying that a *dō* is a way of life rather than simply a way of fighting.

So, if we accept that *budō* as a modern *ēthos* is an authentic expression of Japanese culture, then any investigation of courtesy in *budō* requires that it be assessed in light of this culture. This, in turn, requires a brief investigation of the essential philosophies of Japanese civilization, what Paul Varley calls “the three great systems of religion and belief in premodern Japan.”⁴² We are, of course, speaking of Shintō, Confucianism, and Zen Buddhism, and this same triumvirate is repeated by other thinkers.⁴³ It is no pedantry to note that Varley speaks of ‘beliefs’ as well as ‘religions,’ because what these systems represent in Japanese culture is not simply faith contrasted with everyday Japanese life. Rather, they represent the grounding assumptions that make the Japanese who they are in everyday life. To understand the various practices of *budō* it is necessary to have some grasp of the unique Japanese philosophical and religious traditions.

Japan Is not Japan: Orientalism, Capitalism, and Authenticity

Of course, we should not reify ‘Japan’ and ‘Japaneseness’ in some Orientalist farce. Clearly, Western capitalism and mechanistic materialism have had a significant influence on the Land of the Rising Sun. Anne Allison, for example, reports the increasing commodification of the intimacy once provided by family and friends in Japan,⁴⁴ and Don Cameron speaks of the shallow consumption of fashion.⁴⁵ James Fujii writes of the woman of the Japanese city transformed into a “commodified subject—and more often . . . a commodity-object.”⁴⁶ The martial arts themselves, such as sport *jūdō*,⁴⁷ have often become narrow, glory-driven industries, antithetical to *budō*. Just as contemporary Athens is not the Athens of Pericles, modern Tokyo is no longer Musashi’s Edō, or the Tokyo of Kanō’s Meiji. Moreover, it is necessary to

acknowledge the diversity and complexity of the martial arts tradition itself. Edō *bushidō* 武士道 was certainly no homogeneous ideal,⁴⁸ and the modern Japanese reimagining of arts like *karate* has been shaped by vague historicity and various power struggles.⁴⁹ Indeed, the turn to *budō* itself can be seen as an attempt to heighten Japanese identity in the face of post-Meiji modernity; a backward glance in the midst of reform.⁵⁰ This trend continued when Westerners took up the martial arts, with Japanese playing up “their associations to a former golden cultural age, by evoking imageries of a ‘glorious and noble’ but also mystical past rooted in grand narratives.”⁵¹ As Friday points out, Western scholars continue to conflate the contributions of the Edō and Meiji periods, and the martial activities associated with the various Japanese classes.⁵² Clearly, we cannot treat Japanese culture generally, and modern *budō* specifically, as an unproblematic and monolithic mass.

Nonetheless, while a cynic might therefore see modern *budō* as a hollow fiction born of Western modernity and Japanese fakery, there are at least two good reasons why we should treat it as a legitimate entity. First, while Western cultural pathologies have clearly besieged Japan, the island people will encounter Western technologies and cultural principles in a Japanese way, in accordance with Japanese history.⁵³ This is not to say that there will not be some convergence of values or behaviors, but that these cannot be understood properly unless they are placed in a Japanese context.⁵⁴ Second, a more enlightened approach must recognize that culture is always developing, and that the key to authenticity is not premodern stasis, but the educated and creative development of past traditions in the present.⁵⁵ For example, while *karate* was clearly a renationalized Okinawan *te* (手), Funakoshi notes how the Japanese emphasis on etiquette was already present on his island before the Japanese heightened and formalized it.⁵⁶ More explicitly, Kōdōkan *jūdō* was born out of Kanō’s enlightened integration of Japanese tradition and Western science.⁵⁷ It is likely that Japan’s philosophical and religious traditions were similarly taken up into many of the modern *budō* arts. In Stephen Chan’s words, *budō* is “still full of the courtesies and unconscious skills that Bushido was said, in the 18th century, to incorporate. . . . The martial arts are part of that culture and have played a major role . . . in keeping alive a widespread adherence to Zen and Shintō.”⁵⁸ It is clear that if the Japanese have any distinct beliefs that can be used to shed light on *budō*, they will be found within Shintō, Confucianism, and Buddhism, for these have been essential to Japan’s ongoing cultural development and redevelopment. In what follows, we will therefore turn to each of the three, and highlight the ways in which their essential principles are related to courtesy.

The Etiquette of Purity: Shintō, Sincerity, and Courtesy

While Shintō 神道 might not be a fully autonomous, homogenous, and unbroken religious or reverential tradition,⁵⁹ it does have some clearly defined characteristics. Of the three great belief systems of Japan, it is Shintō that has been labeled as the most authentically ‘Japanese.’ Indeed, much to the detriment of its reputation internationally, Shintō was associated with Japanese chauvinism and nationalism, particularly

in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.⁶⁰ Certainly Shintō has historically been a rallying point for ethnic Japanese against other cultures, as is evidenced by Bashō's recollection of the shrine keeper at Ise refusing him entry for looking like a Buddhist priest.⁶¹ However, there is nothing essentially nationalistic about Shintō, at least insofar as nationalism represents a distinctly modern movement associated with capitalism, print technology, and the demise of feudal economic and social formations.⁶² Rather, Shintō is considered Japanese because its premodern folk roots predate the Chinese religious and philosophical traditions of Buddhism and Confucianism, which were introduced to Japan in the sixth century. While State Shintō can legitimately be seen as an *ad hoc* outgrowth of political exigencies in late Tokugawa and Meiji Japan,⁶³ we can speak of Japanese folk shrine worship and nature reverence as 'Shintō,' from the Chinese *shen* and *tao*, meaning 'Way of the Spirits.' Of course, metaphysically, Shintō is close to primitive animism worldwide, and now shares an *ēthos* with Japanese Neo-Confucianism.⁶⁴ Yet there is something unique about its worldview and relation to Japanese civilization. The essential ideas of Shintō, as Varley puts it, have been "probably the most important guide to behavior in Japanese history."⁶⁵ So what are these ideas of Shintō?

Like many primitive religions, Shintō is a form of animism. That is, it has many divinities—millions are spoken of in the story of Amaterasu—which dwell within the natural world, rather than on high in a transcendent kingdom. Obviously, this involves none of the dualism inherent in Christianity, or in Cartesian science and philosophy. Rather, the spirits—or *kami* 神—are beings of natural excellence, which inhabit the world and are worthy of reverence. Indeed, this indicates another essential element of Shintō: awe and reverence. The *kami* are not gods in the Judeo-Christian sense, but all that is resplendent in nature and man. This means that Shintō—unlike Confucianism and Buddhism—is less concerned with prescriptive ethics and more concerned with recognizing in word and deed the primordial wonder of existence itself. As Campbell puts it, "living Shintō is not the following of some set-down moral code, but a living in gratitude and awe amid the mystery of things."⁶⁶ As an animistic polytheism, this 'mystery of things' is not otherworldly, but an essential ingredient in the play of everyday life.

However, while the *kami* might be immediately present in man and nature, they are not always manifest. Instead, mortals must open themselves up to the divine nature of things, and this often involves various forms of purification. For example, Shintō practitioners often hold prayers and meditation under rushing waterfalls, simultaneously cleansing themselves of taints both physical and reverential and engaging in embodied relations with the divine phenomena of nature. Indeed, the great Gojū-Ryū Master Gogen Yamaguchi was famed for his religious approach to *karate*,⁶⁷ and to Shintō in particular. He often conducted meditation under waterfalls: "During his long stays in the mountains where he lived alone, he subjected himself to ascetic exercises and chastening. He worshipped the *kami* and the forces of nature."⁶⁸ As indicated by Yamaguchi's example, Shintō places great emphasis on purity, and this is symbolized by the goddess Amaterasu's mirror: only a mirror that is pure, free from taint, is worthy of the great sun *kami*. In Smart's words, "[t]he mirror

reflects clearly, and so stands for honesty and sincerity."⁶⁹ For devotees of Shintō, the greatest virtue is this sincerity of self.

Indeed, it is this notion of sincerity that reveals the contribution of Shintō to modern Japan generally, and *budō* specifically. In the West, 'sincerity' is often an ambiguous word, chiefly because it is seen as a simple synonym for honest, committed, straightforward, and unpretentious—and certainly it has these connotations. However, as the *Oxford English Dictionary* reminds us, to be sincere is to be "pure, unmixed; free from any foreign element or ingredient."⁷⁰ In this sense, sincerity is not simply honesty or naïveté, but rather the basic condition of being unalloyed, untainted, uncontaminated, and so on; internal and external 'purity' is the grounding metaphor underlying all these qualities.⁷¹ For Varley, this purity is one of the hallmarks of Japanese civilization.⁷² Moreover, it is apparently still valued in modern Japan. Having detailed the importance of sincerity, Robert Wargo writes of shrine Shintō that an emphasis on "purity of heart over the specific content of action continues down to this day, even in the public arena."⁷³ Leggett cites examples of modern Japanese folk who were able to recognize the sincerity of someone whose beliefs appeared ridiculous, as if sincerity could be appreciated above all else.⁷⁴ Takie Sugiyama Lebra also stresses purity of self,⁷⁵ and speaks of the *yakuza* (or *gokudō* 極道) finger-cutting ritual as a sign of extreme sincerity of repentance.⁷⁶ While he does not attribute this directly to Shintō, Ames' articulation of *bushidō* in Tokugawa and contemporary Japan reveals a similarly stringent emphasis on sincerity of intention, regardless of the purposes this intention is put to.⁷⁷ This is not to say that Shintō does not have a morality, only that at the center of whatever morality it does have is an emphasis on freedom from pollution, on purity.

So, how does this purity manifest itself in Japanese martial arts generally, and in the courtesy of *budō* more specifically? To understand this, we need to turn our attention from society and its philosophical principles to the character of experience. As all *budōka* know, the capacity to flourish in the traditional martial arts requires an incredibly intense form of focus. Known as *kime* 決め in Japanese, this focus requires that all techniques be fully committed and concentrated on their goals. Yet this is not a cognitive concentration or a narrowness of vision. Rather, it is a lack of contradiction, of tension, of second thoughts. All these activities are harmonious, not simply because they physically blend one into another, but because the mental state associated with this harmony is without contradiction. As Ueshiba put it, "at the instant a warrior meets a foe, all things come into focus."⁷⁸ This *kime* is essentially a form of sincerity—a state of experiential purity. As Reasoner argues, this sincerity can also be found in Japanese aesthetics and ethics, where only the sincere poet can open himself up authentically to nature without contrivance, pretence, or disharmony.⁷⁹ Professor Sumitomo Arima, a Japanese educationalist and one of Jigoro Kanō's high-ranking students, writes: "Sincerity is as necessary to the human race as is oxygen to the human life; without it man can scarcely hope to live in the true sense of the word."⁸⁰ In other words, sincerity is necessary to see the world truthfully, and to do justice to what is seen in word and deed.

This is essential to understanding courtesy in *budō*. A sincere *sensei* 先生 possesses this sincerity of experience in all his actions—what *budōka* Alain Burrese speaks of as a capacity to “strip away all that’s extraneous and concentrate on what’s essential.”⁸¹ The sincere *sensei* will experience his students neither as servants nor as fodder for a quick dollar nor as meat for egocentric pounding. Instead, he will encounter them as fellow travelers, who need guidance in order to approach—and perhaps even to pass—him on the path of *budō*. This can be recognized in the rituals of bowing. While the bow, or *rei* 礼, is obviously an expression of politeness, it also serves to focus attention on the specific relationships of the *dōjō* 道場. When the student bows, the sincere *sensei* will return this bow. He will do so not because of empty formality but because he is genuinely grateful for the student’s participation in his *dōjō*, and to the consequent deepening and broadening of his martial arts experience. Even if the student is a poor *budōka*, the *sensei* will bow because he wishes the student to learn what it is to be patient, understanding, and careful—to be the ‘bigger man.’ In the same way, the teacher’s decisions to pull his punches, or to follow through with his severe takedowns, will be prefaced on sincere courtesy. That is, they will be expressions of a concern for the student’s martial arts education, rather than because of temper or personal gratification. This is sincerity—clarity and honesty of purpose.

Of course, this same sincerity can lead to dangerous fanaticism or viciousness. In the *Hagakure*, for example, sincerity of action was essential,⁸² but a single-minded and macabre cruelty sometimes took precedence over mercy or sensitivity.⁸³ In the contemporary martial arts world, a similar narrowness can be found in some professional and amateur fighters, whose vengeful pride seems unmitigated by mercy or charity (and which is vicariously enjoyed by fans). Nonetheless, even sincerity can result in injury. This is not to say that injury is an end in itself, or that fighters should simply attempt to hurt their opponent, but rather that the consequence of *dōjō* combat with a sincere opponent will be pedagogical rather than debilitating. Fighters will wound well because their sincerity of combat will be integrated with sincerity of purpose: excellence in *budō*. As Joe Hyams puts it, the *dōjō* is “an arena of confined conflict where we confront an opponent who is not an opponent but rather a partner in helping us to understand ourselves more fully.”⁸⁴ In short, Shintō’s contribution to courtesy is understood as a steadfast commitment to the martial arts in word and deed, and the emotions, perceptions, and thoughts that allow these arts to flourish.

However, what this examination of Shintō does not properly provide is an account of the conditions that make possible the teaching and learning prized by *budōka*. While Shintō emphasizes purity, this alone does not allow us to grasp in detail the relations of reciprocity that make sincerity necessary and that sincerity is required to preserve. If purity rightly affirms the sanctity of student-teacher relations, why are these student-teacher relations necessary in the first place?

To understand this, we must shed light on the social relations associated with Japanese society in general, and *budō* in particular. Lebra speaks of Japanese society as characterized by ‘social relativism,’⁸⁵ while Steve Odin uses the more construc-

tive notion of the ‘social self.’⁸⁶ Like Lebra,⁸⁷ Odin situates his insights on Japanese society within the broader tradition of pragmatism, with particular emphasis on George Herbert Mead. With strong affinities with the broad ‘process’ tradition of thinkers like Vico, Herder, Heidegger, and Whitehead,⁸⁸ the pragmatist approach abjures atomistic, egoistic, and mechanistic accounts of human nature. Pragmatists portray human existence in terms of dynamic, distributed spatial and temporal wholes. Instead of prioritizing cognition, they place human consciousness within a broader interplay between organism and environment.⁸⁹ And one of the most important kinds of interplay is social—Mead writes of “a social self . . . a self that is realized in its relationship to others,”⁹⁰ including others in the past.⁹¹ As Odin suggests, this has strong parallels with the traditional Japanese ontology of humankind as explicated in the ethics of Tetsurō Watsuji,⁹² with its critical approach to narrow individualistic and rationalist accounts of human nature. Watsuji speaks of the “betweenness . . . of human beings,”⁹³ a dialectical relationship between *I* and *Thou* that cannot be reduced to isolated subjectivities encountering discrete objects. “A mere solitary person,” writes Watsuji, “is an abstraction.”⁹⁴ While Mead stresses a more Western dialectic between the social ‘me’ and the individual ‘I,’ the general portrait of selfhood is remarkably similar. As Odin puts it, “the general pattern of Japanese society that Watsuji’s *ningen* theory seeks to articulate offers itself as a rich cultural paradigm illustrating the notion of a social self as set forth by Mead.”⁹⁵

In short, the Japanese self is essentially and explicitly ‘social.’ This is not to say that the Japanese do not feel immense personal responsibility—as we shall see, they do. Rather, it is to say that this responsibility is ultimately justified by social relationships rather than institutions or the idiosyncrasies of egoistic individuals. This individuality is best characterized as relational, dialectical empiricism and experience, rather than as the logically distinct selves of orthodox Enlightenment thought.⁹⁶ To grasp this phenomenon, and its contribution to courtesy in *budō*, we must turn to the essential Sino-Japanese philosophy of the social self: Confucianism.

Rites of Authoritative Conduct: Confucianism, Ritual Propriety, and Practical Wisdom

The social and political philosophy known as Confucianism was developed in China in the sixth and fifth centuries before the Christian era. Its main text, the *Analects*, is a collection of saying mostly attributed to Confucius (K’ung-fu-tzu) (551–479 B.C.E.), though the original Confucian corpus is clearly the result of collaboration between Confucius and his later disciples and followers, building on previous traditions. Like the works of Plato and Aristotle over a hundred years later, the *Analects* depicts scholarly gentlemen trying to understand and reinvigorate an older tradition crumbling in the face of social change and unrest. As Peimin Ni puts it, “the Zhou ritual system was undergoing disintegration, and the society was witnessing deep moral decline, social chaos, and general destruction. It was upon such a social background that China has its most glorious period of philosophy.”⁹⁷ Whereas Epicurus, like Hobbes and Locke, would later respond to social upheaval with atomistic

individualism, Confucius presaged Plato and Aristotle by stressing the fundamental unity of society, and the importance of socially oriented individuals. Confucianism made its way into Japan almost a thousand years later, but its influence was keenly felt. Moreover, the Neo-Confucianism of Chinese scholars like Chu Hsi and Wang Yang-ming guided much of the social and political philosophy of Edō Japan. In order to grasp the essentials of Japan, we must therefore explore the fundamental tenets of Confucianism.

The most obvious trait of Confucianism is its deep sense of personal and communal responsibility. For Confucians, society cannot be secured by divine decree, any more than people can be born ethically responsible. Rather, society and its members must be created and recreated lest they fall into oblivion. As Ni writes, “the realization that human conduct can affect the will of Heaven logically leads to the sense of being responsible for one’s own destiny.”⁹⁸ What therefore differentiates Confucianism from Christianity and the other Abrahamic religions is that it neither defers to the commandments of god, saints, or prophets, nor does it place the source of human morality in a transcendent realm. Instead, it admits that ethical life and the health of the community are burdens to be borne by mortals, who must work throughout their lives to maintain goodness, just as they maintain health. While Confucians speak of a ‘Way,’ the Master is quick to qualify this: “It is the person who is able to broaden the way (*tao* 道), not the way that broadens the person.” In short, Confucianism is a philosophy of human responsibility, rather than faith or blind obedience to divine or cosmic will.

From this responsibility comes Confucianism’s basic concern for healthy human relations. Rather than treating society as a secondary aggregate of primary individuals, Confucianism treats society as the primary ethical and political reality. This is not to say that it omits recognition of individuality, but simply that it does not accord it the same metaphysical priority as do thinkers like Hobbes and Locke or the Christian theologians of the eternal soul. As Confucius put it, “human beings are similar in their natural tendencies . . . but vary greatly by virtue of their habits.”⁹⁹ Similar statements stressing a shared though diverse community recur throughout the *Analects*.¹⁰⁰ In short, we are naturally social—we might even say ‘political,’ with Aristotle—and atomistic individualism is against this nature. If we are to follow nature, we must therefore address ourselves to the needs of our fellow men. Of course, we should care for family and ancestors before distant strangers and their dead kin—Confucius is no Christian universalist.¹⁰¹ This filial piety is at the heart of social concern, “the root of authoritative conduct.”¹⁰² Yet this genocentrism does not exclude consideration of the great multitude who are not our blood relations. Rather, filial piety is the grounding predisposition of the gentleman, upon which a concern for others is built. Indeed, for Confucians, we need these others to become good ourselves—they are the context for our ethical and political care,¹⁰³ particularly when they are our superiors.¹⁰⁴ In short, Confucianism is a philosophy of broad consanguinity. As such, its orienting metaphor is the family, which is used to contextualize and motivate a more general concern for harmonious social relations.

The word Confucians give to this concern is *ren* 仁, which is variously translated as humaneness, benevolence, impartial benevolence, human-heartedness, altruism, goodness, and humanity. ‘Humaneness’ is one compelling version,¹⁰⁵ though Rosemont and Ames’ ‘authoritative conduct’ emphasizes the essential normative character more clearly. What, then, is authoritative conduct for Confucius? As Confucianism is not a systematic philosophy, it is not so easy to give a straightforward theoretical account. As the Greek ‘*analects*’ suggests, the founding document of Confucianism is a collection of sayings and conversations, and not a tome of rigorous post-Aristotelian philosophy. Nonetheless, it is possible to gain a rich sense of Confucian thought from these, just as it is possible to grasp the character and knowledge of Socrates from the Platonic dialogues. Indeed, the *Analects* give a particularly illuminating account of *ren*. Early on, Confucius speaks of the man of *ren* as a kind of moral collaborator, helping his fellow men along the path of righteousness. He is not a saint, but a gentleman, helping to cultivate others as he cultivates himself, or, as Confucius puts it, “authoritative persons . . . seeking to establish themselves and promote others in seeking to get there themselves.”¹⁰⁶ In short, *ren* entails concern for the goodness of others, and the identification of their interests with our own. Yet this does not mean that the Confucian gentleman is officious, overbearing, patronizing, or tyrannical.¹⁰⁷ Rather, as one who has cultivated himself to appreciate the subtleties of right and wrong in varying contexts,¹⁰⁸ his task is to reflect on his own words and deeds while simultaneously bringing out the best in others.¹⁰⁹ He is generous and tolerant with the lesser everyman.¹¹⁰ In this way, Confucianism does not ignore selfhood, but instead reveals how the quality of this self is bound up in its orientation toward other selves. Complementing this, Confucius maintains that the gentleman should focus on his own qualities, and not on others’ appreciation of these qualities.¹¹¹ In short, the good man is rightly concerned with his own character, but this character is improved by trying to help others instead of placating them. This help is not paternalistic, coercive, or patronizing, but rather supportive and exemplary. Such is the way of *ren*.

For Confucians, *ren* is given life by *li* 禮, *yi* 義, and *shu* 恕. *Li* is best translated as ‘ritual propriety,’ though it is also a ‘path’ or ‘pattern.’ As the manifest expression of Confucian righteousness, *li* covers the multitude of behaviors from the most obvious points of politeness to the finer nuances of aristocratic courtliness. *Yi* is what is expressed in these behaviors, and it is characterized as the right words and deeds at the right time and place; it is righteousness itself—what Ames and Rosemont translate as ‘appropriate.’ Put simply, *yi* is to *li* what matter is to form. For example, if we are mourning in the West, our black clothes, tears, and quiet words all ‘fit’ with *yi*; they are the right rituals at the right time and place. Yet this ‘fit’ can never be universal or eternal—it is not a Kantian categorical imperative. Rather, *yi* and *li* are always associated with a given background, so that different people in different circumstances have different obligations and privileges.¹¹² As Confucius put it, “exemplary persons . . . are neither bent on nor against anything; rather, they go with what is appropriate (*yi* 義).”¹¹³

As Odin has suggested,¹¹⁴ drawing on Mead, the relationship between *li* and *yi* mirrors that between the social 'me' and the individual 'I'; rather than a universal logic, it is an ongoing tension between complementary principles. In order to achieve *ren* through the dialectical reconciliation of *yi* and *li*, the Confucian gentleman requires *shu*, 'putting oneself in the other's place.'¹¹⁵ *Shu* is the capacity to reflect on our own emotions, thoughts, and perceptions and to use these to develop empathy for others. This is expressed in what is erroneously called the 'Golden Rule': "Do not impose on others what you yourself do not want."¹¹⁶ Rather than being a universal law—which would lead to a host of absurdities—it is an exhortation to treat others as actual selves, worthy of the same consideration we ourselves so desire. With none of the epistemological anxiety that characterizes the post-Cartesian West, *shu* allows us to afford others the same humanity we have. This does not lead to easy answers, but it is clearly the first step toward the full expression of *ren*. It allows traditions to provide the common stock of ideas, phrases, and practices, but does not necessarily shackle gentlemen to the empty repetition of these. It sees each individual as capable of judiciously developing good habits in morality and etiquette, without assuming that these individuals can provide the context and conditions for these habits on their own. As with *phronēsis* in Aristotle,¹¹⁷ this is an *ēthos* of 'practical wisdom,' which sees individuals working together to develop good habits for a good society, without reducing these habits to arbitrary whims or empty universal formulas. While clearly conservative, Confucianism in this way provides a wise philosophy of everyday ethical life, and the means to develop this life.

In short, the Confucian ideal is one of education. In order to keep wisdom alive, men must be educated, and educate others in turn. For Chinese gentlemen, *ren* required a worldly grasp of *li*, *yi*, and *shu*, as well as a grasp of literature, fashion, and art. In Edō Japan, this Confucian educationalism led to the ideal practical ethicist: the samurai. Of course, the shogunate and its samurai supporters drew on the more conservative elements of Confucianism to justify and maintain its rule. In particular, the theories of the Chinese Neo-Confucian Chu Hsi (1130–1200) influenced Japanese thinkers like Seika Fujiwara (1561–1619) and his student Razan Hayashi (1583–1657), who focused more on the binding qualities of *li* than on *ren* and *shu*. Chu's writings had a more metaphysical tone than those of Confucius, transforming *li* into a cosmological principle toward which the masses could be turned. Perhaps retaining a typically Japanese distaste for philosophical abstraction,¹¹⁸ his Japanese interpreters, such as Hayashi, retained this emphasis on manipulation or guidance, without seriously taking up the metaphysics. Befitting the shogun's absolute rule over a once-divided country, Chu's affirmation of Confucian filial piety was used as the central metaphor for the state, with consanguinal hierarchy analogous to the Japanese 'family' under the shogun. W. G. Beasley writes: "Humanity, righteousness and decorum all had a place in the virtues identified [by Neo-Confucianism]. To Chu Hsi, however, loyalty and filial piety were the primary ones, defining the duties of low to high. To the feudal leaders of Japan . . . this gave the doctrine more appeal than the . . . ideas of Buddhism."¹¹⁹ While warriors before the Edō period also endorsed practices like filial piety,¹²⁰ under the Tokugawa it became institutional-

ized. In other words, what was once the practical ethics of a Chinese meritocratic bureaucracy became the legitimizing philosophy of Japan's hierarchicalized and hereditary ruling classes.

Nonetheless, there were heterodox schools whose writings gave alternatives to orthodox Edō thought. Tōju Nakae (1608–1648) and Banzan Kumazawa (1619–1691), for example, were influenced by the ideas of Neo-Confucianist Wang Yang-ming (1472–1529), who took issue with Chu Hsi's more conservative interpretation. While Chu stressed *li*, Wang maintained the virtues of *xin*, or 'mind.' Perhaps more true to the ancient Confucian stress on practical wisdom and contextual morality, Wang's approach was particularly attuned to the pragmatic and strong-willed samurai class.¹²¹ While we must be careful not to idealize the samurai, we can nonetheless recognize that the best of Tokugawa Japan maintained an excellent Confucian education, balanced between literary and artistic pursuits and those of the sword and abacus. Often bureaucrats and poets as well as soldiers, the finest samurai were the embodiment of the Confucian emphasis on responsibility, collaboration, and education. While other samurai also endorsed clear Confucian principles,¹²² this was best characterized by the *Bushidō shoshinshu* of Shigesuke Taira (1639–1730), Confucian scholar and strategist of the Edō period. Steeped in the Confucian virtues,¹²³ Shigesuke's writing recommends that samurai be well read in the classics before they learned *jutsu*,¹²⁴ spending their free time practicing calligraphy and reading ancient stories and military texts.¹²⁵ For Shigesuke, the greatest warriors were not narrow specialists or hardened thugs, but well-rounded, cultivated gentlemen-soldiers.¹²⁶ They faced death each day, not out of macabre obsession or grim Stoicism, but out of the sober realization that mortal finitude requires us to make the most of the time we have, rather than wasting it with degeneracy or foolishly throwing it away.¹²⁷ In view of this samurai ideal, we might characterize the essential Confucian legacy in this way: mortal life is our own responsibility, and we must carefully work together to cultivate ourselves and one another.

This samurai legacy can be found in *budō* courtesy. While combat can always be necessitated by self-interest and indifference, *budō* as an educational discipline requires Confucian *ren*. Under the authoritative conduct of superiors, we learn without undue fear in an atmosphere of patience and consideration. Under the authoritative conduct of inferiors, we are allowed to teach, to transform our embodied knowledge into fresh insights. Under the authoritative conduct of our peers, we test our skills. Yet all this would not occur, were it not for *li*, *yi*, and *shu*. It is *li* that expresses all of this; it is each bow, each expression of welcome, and each firmly delivered command. While *li* might change its expression in ritual, *yi* will always be retained: righteousness, understood as appropriateness of words and deeds. In other words, Confucian courtesy in the *dōjō* is how we let our fellow *budōka* think, feel, and perceive our authoritative conduct toward them.

For example, when we injure an opponent severely during *kumite*, it is often appropriate to sit to the side in *seiza* 正座, facing away from the mats. As an expression of regret and remorse, it is the right thought, feeling, and deed at the right time. Were we to begin crying, or to glorify our violence with shouts of triumph, we would not

be gentlemen. In other words, we would not have *yi*. Yet if our opponent were wounded less severely, we might not feel that regret and remorse were appropriate. Our *shu* would remind us that too much expression of regret and remorse is patronizing and shameful, just as too little is arrogant and shameless. By sitting out in the right time and place, we demonstrate our commitment to the well-being of our fellow *budōka*, and continue to maintain the virtuous habits of sensitivity, empathy, and discipline. In this environment, our opponent knows that he can train hard and with strength in an environment of safety, and we assume the same for ourselves; we might bruise, strain, or bleed, but we can face these things with courage because we know they are in our best interest. In this way, the *dōjō* is a place where mortals create themselves, and help one another to do the same. This creativity is neither law-making nor whimsy, but education, understood as the cultivation of habits that lead to the right words and deeds in the right place at the right time. In this Confucian world, courtesy is neither a divine commandment nor a hollow shibboleth, but a path to *ren*.

Yet even with its practical philosophy of character and virtue, Confucianism as a doctrine fails to shed light on one of the most characteristic aspects of *budō*: no-mind, or *mushin* 無心. Indeed, both Confucianism and Shintō share a commitment to the specific content of subjective experience, and the individual and social benefits that this content affords. By contrast, modern *gendai budō* is sometimes characterized by the conspicuous absence of anything resembling personal experience, a state in which the self in general and the mind in particular are apparently nullified. For example, Master Egami, Funakoshi's successor at the Shōtō-kai, is quoted as saying: "The only secret is to practice seriously with perseverance, in order to attain the state of . . . non-ego."¹²⁸ Elsewhere, Funakoshi himself speaks of the *kara* 空 in *karate* as the "emptiness, the void, that lies at the heart of all creation,"¹²⁹ an emptiness we ourselves must be. While explicitly affirming modern principles of philosophy and science, *jūdōka* Sumitomo Arima writes of very similar things.¹³⁰ This commitment to no-mind, egolessness, or abandonment of self cannot be accommodated within explanations of Shintō and Confucianism. To account for this phenomenon, and to reveal its relationship to courtesy, we must turn to the philosophical tradition most associated with contemporary Japan: Zen Buddhism.

The Etiquette of Nothingness: Zen, Mushin, and Courtesy

Buddhism began in neither China nor Japan, but in what is now India, which also saw the origin of Hinduism, Sikhism, and Jainism. The best-known historical Buddha, Gautama, was born into an aristocratic Hindu family in the sixth or fifth century before Christ. Like many Hindu ascetics, he chose to leave behind his family and fortune for a life of spiritual purity. Sitting in meditation beneath the *Bodhi* tree, Gautama had a stunning epiphany: if, as Hinduism taught, all things were no-thing, then so, too, was *Brahman*, the great One. If grasping at illusions causes our ills, then the quest for spiritual unification with *Brahman* is itself a source of ills. As Alan Watts puts it, "apparently the Buddha felt that the doctrine of the *atman* in the *Upanishads*

lent itself too easily to a fatal misinterpretation. It became an object of belief . . . something to which the mind could cling.”¹³¹ The task of someone who is seeking enlightenment is therefore not to find joy in a pure place beyond the pains of suffering, but to recognize that all grasping leads to suffering. It is not to make distinctions between illusion and Brahman, but to recognize that all such distinctions are illusions.

While this sounds like a quite mundane, banal abstraction, it hides a stinging paradox. Indeed, this paradox is central to Buddhism, with its many riddles, puzzles, and absurdities. As Deguchi, Garfield, and Priest have pointed out, while many of these are metaphorical, pedagogical, contingent, or *reductio* arguments, the Buddha’s essential paradox is ontological.¹³² If everyday life with its distinctions is non-being, then it would be foolish to distinguish between this and the being of *nirvāṇa*—this would be yet another illusory non-being. The only truth is that which is neither true nor not-true, and yet both: the void. Better still, it has nothing to do with truth or non-truth; it is simply suchness.

How do Buddhists respond to this baffling realization? There are two versions of what happened to Gautama after his epiphany, both of which have very little historical value, but a great deal of philosophical value. The first version holds that the Buddha soon preached the Four Noble Truths to his disciples. However, the second version holds that Buddha did not preach a sermon. Instead, he simply held up a flower. If all suffering is caused by grasping, then words, too, are a cause of suffering; they trap us within illusions, and seduce us into grasping. Therefore the doctrine to be preached is not of words—indeed, there can be no doctrine.¹³³ Bodhidharma, the twenty-eighth patriarch who introduced Buddhism to China, is quoted as saying: “A special transmission outside the teachings,/ Not depending on the human word,/ Directly pointing to the human heart,/ Seeing into its heart, and becoming Buddha.”¹³⁴ This tradition of thought represents the essential orientation of Zen Buddhism, which grew under the influence of Chinese Taoism and Confucianism in sixth-century China, in opposition to Buddhist scholasticism.¹³⁵ Grounded in this non-analytical and practical milieu, Zen monks do not shy away from manual labor or physical activity, as their Indian kin once did. If the world of illusion is in fact *nirvāṇa*, then grasping at *nirvāṇa* in scholastic otherworldliness is itself linked to suffering. It is better simply to be and to do, quite naturally, in the everyday.

In the Mahāyāna tradition, of which Zen is one school, it is in this everyday that the *bodhisattva* works to help all life attain buddhahood.¹³⁶ In this tradition, we are all already Buddha; the compassionate *bodhisattva* simply helps us to realize this in word and deed. This, in turn, requires neither more nor less effort, but a kind of effortless effort, which gains something without grasping at it. This is the so-called Middle Way of the early Buddhist scholar Nāgārjuna, what Myokyo-Ni describes as a ‘razor-sharp path’ between effort and ‘letting go.’¹³⁷ In Taoism, this middle way is known as *wuwei*, which translates as ‘non-interference.’ It is a description of the Tao, and of *Brahman* in Hinduism: an effortless growth, wherein all things rise and fall, are born and die, without thought.¹³⁸ In Taoism and other Sino-Japanese philosophies, this *wuwei* is also a way of experiencing the world, referred to by the

Japanese as *mushin*. As in Shintō, the experience of *mushin* is compared to a mirror.¹³⁹ However, the mirror-like purity of Zen is one of absolute emptiness: “In itself, the mirror has no colour, and so it can reflect all colours.”¹⁴⁰ Clearly, there are strong similarities between Shintō and Zen purity, but in Zen there is no *kami*, no divinity, and no sincerity of self. Instead, in Zen there is no self, and to be and do in *mushin* is not for the gods, or for the good of self—it is simply to be and do, as if for nothing at all. Like *wuwei*, this is an ‘effortless effort,’ where our words and deeds are neither contrived nor lazy, without need for intellectual analysis or deliberate striving. As Watts puts it, “the idea is not to reduce the human mind to a moronic vacuity, but to bring into play its innate and spontaneous intelligence by using it without forcing it.”¹⁴¹ In short, Zen leads to an expert’s wisdom with a beginner’s naïveté, which neither brutally grasps nor senselessly lets go.

When the warrior classes of Japan gained power in the Kamakura era, this school of thought was taken up by the state. Not surprisingly, the experience of *mushin* was particularly attractive to the military aristocracy, whose mental state in combat required that their trained spontaneity be effective. It stressed self-discipline and introspection,¹⁴² and in its embrace of the Void it allowed the samurai to face the nothingness of death. To live and die as samurai, the warriors of the Kamakura era took from Zen the mindless acuity of *mushin*, and the calmness in battle that comes from an acceptance of the nothingness beneath all worldly illusions. Sōhō Takuan’s *The Unfettered Mind* is the perfect example of this philosophy in action: we put our mind nowhere so that it will be everywhere.¹⁴³ Takuan speaks of *fudōshin* 不動心, which William Scott Wilson translates as ‘immovable wisdom.’ This gives the impression of rigidity and weight—like a mountain—but Takuan stresses the lightness, elegance, and swiftness of *fudōshin*. It is a state characterized by the lack of narrow cognition and coordination, and unself-conscious, embodied action—“the mind that stretches throughout the entire body and self,”¹⁴⁴ writes Takuan. This is *mushin* incorporated into the framework of martial competence.

While we must be careful not to frame the samurai entirely within the ambit of Zen philosophy,¹⁴⁵ or attribute to these warriors unattainable ideals,¹⁴⁶ it is clear that the Zen experience of *mushin* was essential to the identity of the Japanese warrior class. As Daisetsu T. Suzuki puts it, “it requires training to hear a voice in silence, to find action in inaction, motion in immotion, or to have preparedness in peace and fearlessness in death. Such a tendency must have appealed to the warrior class.”¹⁴⁷ While warning that the way of the Buddha was not that of the samurai,¹⁴⁸ Yamamoto stressed the importance of unthinking decisiveness, devoid of loquaciousness and calculation,¹⁴⁹ and non-attachment to life and death alike.¹⁵⁰ This was the military equivalent of the Buddha holding up a flower: a silent expression of suchness amidst a world of verbose illusion.

While it would be problematic to see modern *budō* as a direct outgrowth of the samurai *ēthos*, or to forget the role of Confucianism in both,¹⁵¹ it is clear that Zen is essential to modern Japanese martial arts. *Mushin*, in particular, is referred to by many modern *budō* masters in various ways: it is the ‘emptiness’ of Funakoshi, the ‘non-ego’ of his successor Egami, and the ‘absence and presence of mind’ of Arima.

The late Gogen Yamaguchi speaks of *muga* 無我: “a state of nothingness . . . freed to act without interruption and thought.”¹⁵² Similarly, *aikidō* founder Ueshiba writes: “return to true emptiness. Stand in the midst of the great void.”¹⁵³ Even the seemingly thuggish Masutatsu Oyama stresses that the “man who wants to walk the way of *karate* cannot afford to neglect Zen and spiritual training.”¹⁵⁴ Accordingly, training in *budō* involves means and ends akin to those of Zen. Just as Zen priests seek the novice’s naïveté, the goal of *budō* masters is *sho-shin* 初心, or ‘beginner’s mind.’¹⁵⁵ Just as Zen monasteries inflict psychological and physical pain on novices to ‘kill their ego,’¹⁵⁶ so, too, do *budō sensei*. In *kyudō* 弓道, for example, the techniques of the bow and arrow are painfully repeated over and over again, with little reward or personal gratification.¹⁵⁷ On this, Master Shibata says: “[M]y heart is the target. Ego gets cut out . . . cut, cut, cut.”¹⁵⁸ The celebrated Master Awa speaks similarly.¹⁵⁹ Bruises and cuts from fists and feet, strained muscles, bursting lungs, burning arms—these are all ways of seeking no-mind through suffering. As the self forgets itself in the face of physical and psychological pain, *mushin* can blossom.

However, in light of this brutal path to Zen enlightenment, it is difficult to see how a Buddhist *budō* could necessarily lead to courtesy. Moreover, this is not a peripheral side effect, but a central consequence: if all is illusion, the various conventions of care and sincerity are also illusion. Indeed, this is why Zen Buddhism is seen as a kind of ‘pressure valve’ for the moral orthodoxy of Confucianism and the Tokugawa shogunate.¹⁶⁰ In the face of Confucian righteousness and propriety, Zen is mocking laughter or profound silence, shrugging off or smashing the taken-for-granted in moral life.¹⁶¹ Instead of being hospitable, polite, patient, and calm, Zen masters can seem cruel, rude, bad-tempered, and violent. Yet this is not the whole story at all. Certainly, Zen does contain within it biting brutality and wit, but the task of the *Bodhisattva* and monk alike is nonetheless one of compassion. Alongside the supreme wisdom of *Maha-Prajñā*, Christmas Humphreys speaks of “*Maha-Karuna*, supreme compassion for all living things.”¹⁶² Instead of simply seeing Void, the compassionate *Bodhisattva* also sees the wondrous suchness of things—the Buddhahood veiled by *maya*. While the wisdom that knows Void might seem otherworldly, compassion leads back to the well-being of all things in their everyday diversity.¹⁶³

In *budō*, this *bodhisattva* mind is empty of vanity and pride, and equally devoid of anger, hate, and lust. The Zen *sensei* blessed with *bodhisattva* mind will therefore not be compromised by the usual vices that corrupt the arrogant, the lazy, the vicious, and the cruel. Instead, he will treat the pettiness and fear of everyday mortality with the same laughter, silence, and mockery we see in the old Zen tales. In this light, his courtesies will not necessarily be those of hospitality, good-will, and magnanimity—he will not overcome egocentrism and express his recognition of others simply through being friendly, welcoming, or charming. Instead, he will shrug off pain and blood, and smile at sweat and straining muscles. He will use the many tricks of the ‘Great Vehicle’ of Mahāyāna to lead his students and himself to *mushin*. For example, Suzuki tells the story of a master swordsman who had his student cooking, cleaning, and washing for years. When the student was preoccupied with some mundane task or another, the master stole up behind him and thumped him with a

stick. Over the years, the student slowly learned to sense the attack. One day, the student decided to attack the teacher while the latter was cooking, and the master calmly blocked his attack with a frying pan. The student suddenly grasped what he had learned, and understood the kindness of his master.¹⁶⁴ In short, this is brutality as courtesy, mockery as courtesy—the expression of a deeper love for all things, rather than simply the polish of politeness. This unyielding, unforgiving love is Zen’s contribution to courtesy in *budō*.

Conclusion

Courtesy is essential neither to the martial arts in general nor to being Japanese in particular. However, it is essential to the Japanese martial arts because *budō* is supposed to express the finest ideas of Japanese civilization. These ideas are neither homogeneous nor unalloyed by the forces of contemporary Western capitalism. In many ways, *budō* is a traditional product of a very modern Japan, and the various contradictions associated with this have been exacerbated and often obscured as the martial arts have been taken up in the West. Nonetheless, the Japanese martial arts represent the creative preservation and development of the three great Japanese philosophical traditions. Consequently, it is in light of these traditions that we must understand courtesy in *budō*. Courtesy is the purity of Shintō, the wise propriety of Confucianism, and the mischievous, brutal, but kind no-mindedness of Zen. This leads, respectively, to the removal of what is physically and ethically compromising, the forging of fruitful educational bonds, and the free and spontaneous activity necessary to take these up in the *dōjō* and in everyday life.

Of course, all *budōka* lean toward one tradition more than another. Funakoshi was influenced quite strongly by Confucianism, Yamaguchi turned to Shintō, and both took up insights from Zen. Master Egami seemed more compelled by Buddhism than anything else. Kanō’s writings are clearly marked by the sober secularism of Confucianism, with occasional themes from Zen. Similar differences can be seen in classical authors like Takuan and Shigesuke. Nonetheless, in the words and deeds of each master there is Shintō purity, Confucian propriety, and Zen selflessness.

Moreover, the vices and virtues of these three traditions complement one another. As with the interplay of *yi* and *li*, I and Me, this involves a series of mutualistic oppositions. If Shintō emphasizes purity and the rejection of all that is extraneous, this can also lead to narrowness and obsessive attention to what is familiar or commonplace. These pitfalls are overcome by the practical wisdom associated with Confucianism, and the Zen Buddhist antipathy toward reification. These allow greater flexibility, and the capacity to see through idols. The selflessness of Zen Buddhism can be rewarding, but it can also lead to cruelty, vulgarity, and thoughtlessness. These can be avoided through attention to the ethical propriety of Confucianism and the Shintō stress on sanctification. They lead to mindfulness of what others are expecting of us, and a greater capacity for reverence. Confucianism allows for civility and education, but it can also be conservative and repressive. It is in light of these that the irreverence of Zen Buddhism and Shintō’s emphasis on the richness of per-

sonal experience are particularly liberating. They allow *budōka* the freedom to transcend stifling expectations and deference to the whims of the crowd. This, in turn, facilitates the brutal courtesies so characteristic of *budō*. As a result of the unification of these traditions in thought and practice, *budōka* are given the chance to freely develop their *ēthos*, to follow the path of *dō*.

No doubt there are many ways to develop the virtues associated with courtesy in the Japanese martial arts. Moreover, we must not assume that Japan has a monopoly on such things. All authentic traditions have their own virtues and their ideas of what virtue is,¹⁶⁵ and see courtesy in all times and places, often wedded to aristocratic nobility and its martial accomplishments. Nonetheless, in *budō* we see a unique combination of gentility and brutality, civility and indifference, rich personal experience and selfless mindlessness. This combination is what exhorts us to treat others with courtesy as they bloody our noses or break our bones. As in *Sanshirō Sugata*, we must learn to bow to our enemies.

Notes

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- 1 – In this article all Japanese personal names are arranged with the given name first, followed by the family name. When a single Japanese name appears, it is the family name. This applies to both modern and historical persons and to authors whose writings are in either English or Japanese.
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- 3 – Alan Fromm and Nicolas Soames, *Judo: The Gentle Way* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1982), p. 30.
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- 6 – Morihei Ueshiba, *The Art of Peace*, ed. and trans. John Stevens (Boston: Shambhala, 2002), p. 92.

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- 8 – Ibid.
- 9 – Ibid.
- 10 – Michael Haugh, “Revisiting the Conceptualisation of Politeness in English and Japanese,” *Multilingua* 23 (2004): 85–109.
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- 14 – Haugh, “Revisiting the Conceptualisation of Politeness in English and Japanese,” p. 95.
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- 16 – Joe Hyams, *Zen in the Martial Arts* (New York: Bantam Books, 1982), p. 2.
- 17 – Martin Heidegger, *Holzwege* (Frankfurt am Main: V. Klostermann, 1950), cited in *Martin Heidegger: Basic Writings*, ed. David Farrell Krell (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 34.
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- 19 – Aristotle *Nicomachean Ethics* 1140a:1–23, trans. W. D. Ross and J. O. Urmson, in *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, vol. 2, ed. Jonathan Barnes (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995).
- 20 – Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (New York: Doubleday Anchor, 1958), pp. 71 ff, 171–178, and passim.
- 21 – Yamamoto, *Hagakure*, p. 41.
- 22 – Shigesuke, *Code of the Samurai*, pp. 6–7.
- 23 – Ibid., pp. 95–98.
- 24 – Stewart McFarlane, “Mushin, Morals, and Martial Arts,” *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 17 (4) (1990): 404 n. 1.

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- 27 – Aristotle *Nicomachean Ethics* 1129a:1–1130a:13.
- 28 – Ibid., 1098a:18, 1129b:30–1130a:18, 1151a–1152a, 1141a:31–1144b.
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- 30 – Trevor Leggett, *The Spirit of Budo* (London: Kegan Paul International, 1998), p. 103.
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- 38 – Jigoro Kanō, *Mind Over Muscle: Writings From The Founder Of Judo*, ed. Naoki Murata, trans. Nancy H. Ross (Tokyo: Kodansha, 2005), pp. 18–19, 65, 70–71, 75–77, 90–119, and passim.
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- 75 – Lebra, *Japanese Patterns of Behavior*, pp. 161–163.
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- 77 – Roger T. Ames, “*Bushidō*: Mode or Ethic?” in *Japanese Aesthetics and Culture*, ed. Nancy G. Hume (New York: State University of New York Press, 1995), pp. 279–294.
- 78 – Ueshiba, *The Art of Peace*, p. 78.
- 79 – Paul Reasoner, “Sincerity and Japanese Values,” *Philosophy East and West* 40 (4) (1990): 471–488. While Reasoner notes that this union between artistic character and artistic value is problematic for Western thinkers like Monroe Beardsley, the seminal work of aestheticians like Collingwood and Dewey—the latter influential on Beardsley—makes it clear that a certain sincerity of consciousness is necessary to transform experience into art. See John Dewey, *Art as Experience* (New York: Capricorn Books, 1958), pp. 52–54 and passim, and R. G. Collingwood, *The Principles of Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1958), pp. 280–285.
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- 98 – Ibid., p. 14.
- 99 – Ibid., *Analects* XVII.2.
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- 101 – Ibid., *Analects* II.24.
- 102 – Ibid., *Analects* I.2.
- 103 – Ibid., *Analects* IV.25.
- 104 – Ibid., *Analects* XV.10.
- 105 – As *ren* is homophonous with the Chinese character for 'man,' 'humaneness' suggests the ethical and anthropocentric nuances of the word. Of course, we should be careful to distinguish 'humaneness' from 'humanism' and 'humanitarian,' which relate more directly to modern China and to a variety of internal and external influences. On this, see Leo Ou-Fan Lee, "Some Notes on 'Culture,' 'Humanism,' and the Humanities in Modern Chinese Cultural Dis-

courses," *Surfaces* 5 (207) (1995): 1–29. For some uses of ‘humaneness’ as *ren*, see Lee, p. 6; Xinzhong Yao, “Who Is a Confucian Today? A Critical Reflection on the Issues Concerning Confucian Identity in Modern Times,” *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 16 (3) (2001): 313–328; Brooke A. Ackerley, “Is Liberalism the Only Way toward Democracy?” *Political Theory* 33 (4) (2005): 547–575; Julia Tao and Andrew Brennan, “Confucian and Liberal Ethics for Public Policy: Holistic or Atomistic?” *Journal of Social Philosophy* 34 (4) (2003): 572–558; Bryan W. Van Norden, “The *Dao* of Kongzi,” *Asian Philosophy* 12 (13) (2003): 157–171.

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- 108 – *Analects* XII.1–3, XV.37.
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- 111 – *Analects* XIV.30, XV.19.
- 112 – *Analects* IV.10, XV.37.
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- 120 – See, for example, the opinions of Nagauji Hojo, Yoshimasa Shiba, Sadaya Imagawa, and Nobushige Takeda, in Wilson, *Ideals of the Samurai*, pp. 38–39, 49, 60, 102.
- 121 – Varley, *Japanese Culture*, p. 182.
- 122 – See, for example, Toshikage Asakura, “The Seventeen Articles of Toshikage Asakura,” in Wilson, *Ideals of the Samurai*, p. 71. Asakura stresses the necessity for actions and intentions to ‘fit’ the occasion.
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- 147 – Daisetz Teitarō Suzuki, “Reason and Intuition in Buddhist Philosophy,” in Moore, *The Japanese Mind*, p. 104.

- 148 – Yamamoto, *Hagakure*, p. 95, pp. 167 ff.
- 149 – Ibid., pp. 37, 44, 60–61, 68, 78, 146.
- 150 – Ibid., p. 158.
- 151 – Friday, *Legacies of the Sword*, pp. 104–108.
- 152 – John B. Will, “Budo Kumite,” *Best of Blitz: 1987–1990* (Melbourne: Blitz Publications, 2006), p. 58.
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