

Kendo Is My Philosophy

Translated from a Book “剣道は私の哲学” by an author, Miyazaki Masataka (宮崎正孝)

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Forward

When someone asks you, “What is Kendo,” I used to say, “Kendo is a good medicine if addicted.” But now I would answer it to say, “Kendo is my Philosophy,” as in the title of this book. Those who capture kendo as a philosophy or religion, aspired to do kendo often from a young age, continue the way through the age of 70, 80, and 90, and participate in the All Japan Kendo Enbukai held at Kyoto Butokuden in May every year. The vigor and strength of these swordsmen (kendoka) do not make you feel that they are that old. Hanshi Ishihara Tadayoshi (範士 石原忠美) sensei is one of them, and support the concept that kendo is philosophy. So are the Hanshi Narasaki Masahiko (範士 檜崎正彦) sensei, Hanshi Mizuno Hitoshi (範士 水野仁) sensei, Hanshi Mochida Seiji (範士 持田盛二) sensei, and Hanshi Ogawa Chūtarō (範士 小川忠太郎) sensei.

They are all training or trained their kendo as a philosophy, the way of life, capturing it as a superb avenue penetrated via the principles of universal nature in life. Kendo is boundless, way of life, and philosophy, deeply rooted with one's heart and soul that is continuously seeking truth, goodness, beauty, and righteousness despite one's adverse circumstances. Narasaki sensei experienced the fear of his death, decades of adversities, and turned it into a hope to live, through virtue of kendo and learning hokeyo (法華經). His courage and endeavor were indispensable to his success, and we respectfully learn his philosophy of kendo. I (author) did not start kendo at an early age but in the thirties. After reached to seventy, I began to capture kendo as a philosophy of life. I tried to reconcile it with classical Japanese hearts of Zeami's Fushi Kaden (世阿弥の風姿花伝) and Takuan's Fudochi (沢庵の不動智), Buddhistic thoughts. Also, I considered the teaching of Jyukyo (儒教) and what the ancient philosophers in Greece (Socrates, Plato, and Seneca) said. I (translator) started kendo in my forties, and believe that kendo is a philosophy.

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1. Let's Make an Aged Flower Bloom

This thought is very philosophical because the idea exists within the word “Aged,” namely, to become an old person. Zeami said in his Fushi Kaden that it takes at least 50 years to bloom a “true flower.” Seneca said, “whitebeard is a flower of life.” Takuan’s Fudochi Shinmyoroku (沢庵の不動智 神妙録) was issued when he was about 65 years old, and Musashi’s Gorinsho (武蔵の五輪書) was published when he was about 60 years old. In Plato’s “The Republic (国家),” Book 1, Socrates speaks to Cephalus (old man) about old age. He provides an argument in defense of the just life and its necessary connection to a happy life. Plato’s philosophical concerns in the dialogue, such as “is the just person happier than the unjust person?” or “what is the relation of justice to happiness?” are ethical and political. Examples of these thoughts of philosophers are said and written as “Quotes” in ancient times. How about a more recent time in the history of kendoka?

Hanshi Mochida Seiji (範士 持田盛二) sensei is a good example. His words, “kendo and kihin (剣道と気品)” was issued when he was about 50 years old. He left us for our kendoka the following famous terms:

“kendo must be studied and trained very hard for the fundamental knowledge and skills to acquire your kendo until you reach 50 years old. It’s mistaken if you think that you have learned the fundamental kendo when you are beginner, for many are putting it away, leaving the basic kendo knowledge and skill in your head. It took me 50 years to learn the basics and let my body memorize the essential skills. My real kendo training started after I reached 50 years old because I started to use my heart/mind for kendo training. The heart/soul compensated for my waist and legs that were weakening when I reached 60 years old. I tried to rejuvenate the heart/spirit to strengthen their weak points. When I reached 70 years old, the whole body became weak. This time I trained not to move the heart/mind. When my heart (mind) stopped moving, I was able to see the opponent’s heart/mind reflected through the mirror of my heart. I tried to keep my heart stay still quiet. When I reached 80 years old, my heart (mind) stopped moving. But sometimes, a miscellaneous mind intruded into my heart. So, I am training now not to let it enter into my heart.” — Let’s find out what he is pursuing; that is what philosophical characteristics are implied in his quotes by analyzing his words in detail.

- 1) The word “old” here is not merely the aged but a continuous age since you’re young, namely, your lifetime.
- 2) The word “dō” in “kendo” means, as we know, the way. It’s the way of training, long, unchanging, and forever lasting. Therefore, it’s impossible to reach the goal without a profound purpose of practicing kendo.
- 3) The word “heart” here is your mind, soul, or spirit. The expression of “because I started to use my heart for kendo training” becomes very philosophical. The ancient philosophers (Socrates, Plato, Aristoteles, and Seneca) captured this soul as the living essence of humanity’s being; it is who we are. Religion says, “the spirit is separable from the soul; it is an aspect of humanity that connects with God. God is Spirit.
- 4) The quotes emphasize the importance of heart and suggest to unify it with the body for collaboration and reconciliation. Philosophy also deals with the problem of unification of the body (体) and mind (気). Ken (剣, sword) is added to it in kendo; therefore, kendo emphasizes a togetherness (一致) of three things, Ki(気), Ken(剣), and Tai(体), well known as “Ki-Ken-Tai itchi (気剣体一致).” Takuan (沢庵) in his Fudochi (不動智) teaches difficulty demanding to unify “thousands of hands” and “thousands of eyes.” Philosophers (Socrates and Plato) adopted the problem of unifying a mutually opposing viewpoint or situation.

To consider the philosophical problems more deeply, let’s examine what Hanshi Mochida (範士持田) sensei presented by the word “kendo and kihin (剣道と気品).” Since long ago, the words, “DaiGouSokuKei (大強速軽),” meaning a “big, strong, quick, and lightly,” were the keywords for the goal of training kendo successfully. The word “kihin (気品)” is also an excellent candidate to be added to this list. But what is “kihin?” Many are having difficulty explaining the meaning. They say, if Ki(気) were likened to a flower or light, then, the kihin (気品) is like its smell or the reflection.

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Mochida sensei added this word *kihin* to the goal of training kendo in conjunction with the terms like virtues and goods as the principles. His humanity reveals that he did indeed acquire it throughout his life of kendo, the way of life. A famous swordsman, Shimada Toranosuke (島田虎之助), said, “the sword (ken) is a heart. If your heart is not righteous, your ken is not right; if you want to learn kendo, you should learn first about your heart.” Ogawa Chūtarō (小川忠太郎) sensei said, “Way of a college schooling is to clarify virtues...” Ogawa sensei, who also had Zen (禅) training, practiced kendo with Mochida sensei at Noma dojo (野間道場), formed a student-teacher relationship, and was deeply moved by Mochida sensei’s way of kendo, humanity, and *kihin* (気品).

The importance of “selection of a good teacher” is also emphasized by the ancient philosophers (Socrates, Plato, and Seneca). Seneca said, “the relationship must be an advanced level that each can freely talk, teach, learn, and admit each other.” Further, he said, “socializing with virtuous persons is indispensable to influence desirable heart/mind/spirit.” Musashi (武蔵) says this relationship as “a needle and the string,” “needle is a teacher/master/mentor who leads and the string is a student/disciple who follows, and they should constantly practice.” Plato said, “an unchanging, the everlasting value must exist as an absolute virtue.” This concept opened up a significant problem in philosophy. Ogawa sensei translated the words “to clarify virtue” to mean “to grasp real/true oneself.” The words “virtue and good” spoken in kendo are necessarily the same as Plato’s words “unchanging, the everlasting value,” which is connected to God or Zen Buddha. Ogawa sensei sought the way of kendo in the form of Zen Buddha and unified them as shown in his words “Ken Zen Ichi Nyo (剣禅一如)” as a harmonized way of living. He saw a perfect example, Mochida sensei, who lived according to this principle. He admired and respected Mochida sensei’s humanity very much, just as Socrates was so as a founder of philosophy among other philosophers in ancient Greece. They mutually studied, searched, and freely exchanged their hearts.

2. Philosophical Problems Demanded by Concept of Kendo

Throughout Mochida sensei’s way of living, engaging kendo, and the principles, there are philosophical problems demanded from the concept. Allow me to arrange them here for further discussions following under these headings per Ch 3-14.

- Aging leads to the way of kendo, everlasting, and straight forward without a doubt.
- Learn the pathway of training
- Learn the way of soul
- Be unified
- Seek supreme virtue and good
- Choose a good leader/sensei
- Learn “Kan no Metsuke (観の目付け)”
- Harmonize opposing will or situation
- Train to change adversity to normal circumstances
- Learn to persevere
- Time to put shinai away
- For kendo to be immortal and everlasting


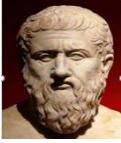

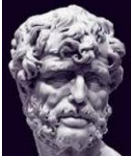




3. Aging Leads to the Way of Kendo, Everlasting and Straight Forward Without a Doubt

Chapter 3 is the continuation of Ch 1 about old age, what brought philosophically, pursuing the life of those who contributed to establishing the concept of kendo, the purpose of practicing kendo, and the principles in philosophical words for the goal of living. Let’s list the people who delineated those words and compare/summarize what they said in the following “Table of Philosophers” and “List of Famous Quotes” after the table.

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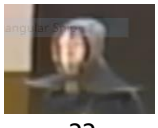
Table of Philosophers

Who	Image/Year	Words/Quotes		Publication/lecture	Remarks
Socrates (ソクラテス) Greek philosopher scholar/teacher Founder of the Western system of logic & philosophy.	 470BC-399BC	“The only true wisdom is in knowing you know nothing.” “There is only one good, knowledge, & one evil, ignorance.”	He referred to God rather than the gods and reported being guided by an inner divine voice.	He wrote nothing. More quotes: “The unexamined life is not worth living.”	He was brought to trial on a charge of heresy and sentenced to death by poisoning.
Plato (プラトン) Greek philosopher and writer. Student of Socrates. father of idealism	 428/7BC-348/7BC	“I am the wisest man alive, for I know one thing, and that is that I know nothing.”	In his written dialogues, he conveyed and expanded on the ideas/techniques of his teacher Socrates.	The Republic (国家)	Student of Aristotle (アリストテレス) 384BC-322BC 
Seneca (セネカ) Roman's Stoic philosopher and playwright	 4 BC – AD 65 1	“Whitebeard is a flower of life.” “Socializing with virtuous persons is indispensable to influence desirable heart/spirit.”	“The supreme virtue is immortal and eternal.” “True wealth is poverty that meets the laws of nature.”	Letters from a Solice, Letters on Ethics	“...Nature demands bread and water only: no one is poor with those necessities.”
Zeami Motokiyo (世阿弥 元清) Noh artist, actor, and playwright	 1363-1443	“true flower,” and “Jo Ha Kyu,” (序破急) for Iaido. Performance of Noh.	Cultivate this follower. Jo= steady move Ha= draw of sword Kyu= quick cut	“Fushi Kaden,” 「風姿 花伝」 or simply called, “Kadensho,” 「花伝書」	Noh is one of the oldest forms of theatre in Japan performed in front of shogun and samurai.
Sen Rikyū (千利休) Japanese tea master	 1522-1591	「稽古とは一より習い十を知り十よりにかえるものその一」	“practicing means to learn from one to ten and know well, then go back to one.”		
Takuan Soho (沢庵 宗彭) Zen master and Swordsman	 1573-1645	Unify “thousands of hands and thousands of eyes.” “Mind of immovable wisdom.”	“mushin” 「無心」	“Fudōchi Shinmyoroku” 「不動智 神妙録」	“Fudōchi” = Wisdom of heart/soul that is never caught in one thing/event while moving the mind freely in all directions, and become mushin 無心
Miyamoto Musashi (宮本 武蔵) Well known Swordsman	 1584-1645	“a needle and the string.” “heijōshin” (平常心)	Relationship of teacher/student/Leader/follower.	“Gorinsho” 「五輪書」	“Kan no Me, 観の目 = eyes of intuitive view.” “Enzan no Metsuke, 遠山の目付け.”

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Table of Philosophers (Cont'd)

Shimada Toranosuke (島田虎之助) Swordsman	 <u>1814–1852</u>	“the sword (ken) is a heart. If your heart is not righteous,....” (See page 3)			
Mochida Seiji (持田 盛二) Kendoka called, “Shōwa’s Kensei” 「昭和の剣聖」	 1885-1974	Famous terms about kendoka (See page 2)	“kihin” 「気品」 (See page 2)		Added word “kihin (気品)” to kendo
Saimura Goro (斎村五郎) Kendoka, called “Shōwa’s Kensei” 「昭和の剣聖」	 1887-1969	“You lose when your ‘Hara (肚),’ heart is moved.” 「無一文になる」 「馬鹿になる」 「裸になる」	Risked his life to raise his students “Be penniless.” “Be a fool.” “Be naked.”	“ki-no-ken,” 「気の剣」 by an author 早瀬利之	He spent reading and writing poetry after putting away kendo at 70 years old. Agrees to Seneca’s “True wealth is to obey the law of nature...”
Ogawa Chūtarō (小川忠太郎) Kendoka or Swordsman	 1901-1992	“Way of a college schooling is to clarify virtue.”		“One hundred Keiko” 「百回稽古」 and “ken & zen” 「剣と禅」 “ken & the Pathway.” 「剣と道」 “kendo principles.” 「剣道の理念」	Helped write, “The concept of Kenso.” Relationship of teacher/student with Saimura sensei
Ishihara Tadayoshi (石原忠美) Kendoka or Swordsman	 1916-	“Shin Ki Shin Gan Gi Itchi” (心気身眼技一致) “Tan Den Kokyū” (丹田呼吸)		“Ensō no Fūkō” (円相の風光) Pursuing Life Time Kendo	
Narasaki Masahiko (檜崎正彦) Kendoka or Swordsman	 1922-2000	Have a “heart of Universe.” (宇宙の心)	learned hokeyo (法華経)- meditation		Sutemi no Men-Uchi (捨て身の面). He respected Saimura sensei, and is follower of Okada Tasuku sensei(岡田資中将)
Mizuno Hitoshi (水野仁) Kendoka or Swordsman	 ??				
Miyazaki Masataka (宮崎正孝) Kendoka	1936 - Author of book 剣道は私の哲学			“Kendo is my Philosophy”	

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List of Famous Quotes

By Socrates:

- “All men’s souls are immortal, but the souls of the righteous are immortal and divine.”
- “Be kind; for everyone you meet is fighting a hard battle.”
- “Be slow to fall into friendship, but when you are in, continue firm and constant.”
- “Education is the kindling of a flame, not the filling of a vessel.”
- “Employ your time in improving yourself by other men’s writings so that you shall come easily by what others have labored hard for.”
- “Every action has its pleasures and its price.”
- “False words are not only evil in themselves, but they infect the soul with evil.”
- “He is richest who is content with the least, for content is the wealth of nature.”
- “He who is not contented with what he has, would not be contented with what he would like to have.”
- “I cannot teach anybody anything. I can only make one think.”
- “I know that I am intelligent, because I know that I know nothing.”
- “It is not living that matters, but living rightly.”
- “Know thyself.”
- “Strong minds discuss ideas, average minds discuss events, weak minds discuss people.”
- “The only true wisdom is in knowing you know nothing.”
- “The secret of happiness, you see, is not found in seeking more, but in developing the capacity to enjoy less.”
- “The unexamined life (a life without philosophy) is not worth living.”
- “There is only one good, knowledge, and one evil, ignorance.” (people who do evil things do them because they do not realize that they are evil.)
- “To find yourself, think for yourself.”
- “True knowledge exists in knowing that you know nothing.”
- “Wonder is the beginning of wisdom.”

By Plato:

- “An empty vessel makes the loudest sound, so they that have the least wit are the greatest babblers.”
- “Be kind; for everyone you meet is fighting a hard battle.”
- “Books give a soul to the universe, wings to the mind, flight to the imagination, and life to everything.”
- “Courage knows what not to fear.”
- “Education is teaching our children to desire the right things.”
- “Excess of liberty, whether it lies in state or individuals, seems only to pass into excess of slavery.”
- “False words are not only evil in themselves, but they infect the soul with evil.”
- “For a man to conquer himself is the first and noblest of all victories.”
- “Good actions give strength to ourselves and inspire good actions in others.”
- “Human behavior flows from three main sources: desire, emotion, and knowledge.”
- “Knowledge becomes evil if the aim is not virtuous.”
- “Knowledge without justice ought to be called cunning rather than wisdom.”
- “Necessity is the mother of invention.”
- “Never discourage anyone who continually makes progress, no matter how slow.”
- “The beginning is the most important part of the work.”
- “The greatest wealth is to live content with little.”
- “There are three classes of men: lovers of wisdom, lovers of honor, and lovers of gain.”
- “There is in every one of us, even those who seem to be most moderate, a type of desire that is terrible, wild, and lawless.”
- “There is no harm in repeating a good thing.”
- “Those who tell the stories rule society.”
- “Truth is the beginning of every good to the gods, and every good to man.”
- “We can easily forgive a child who is afraid of the dark; the real tragedy of life is when men are afraid of the light.”
- “Writing is the geometry of the soul.”

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List of Famous Quotes (Cont'd)

By Aristotle:

- “Character is that which reveals moral purpose, exposing the class of things a man chooses or avoids.”
- “Educating the mind without educating the heart is no education at all.”
- “Education is the best provision for old age.”
- “Equality consists in the same treatment of similar persons.”
- “Excellence is an art won by training and habituation.”
- “Great men are always of a nature originally melancholy.”
- “Happiness is activity.”
- “It is well to be up before daybreak, for such habits contribute to health, wealth, and wisdom.”
- “Knowing yourself is the beginning of all wisdom.”
- “Love is composed of a single soul inhabiting two bodies.”
- “Man is a goal-seeking animal. His life only has meaning if he is reaching out and striving for his goals.”
- “Memory is the scribe of the soul.”
- “Poverty is the parent of revolution and crime.”
- “The educated differ from the uneducated as much as the living from the dead.”
- “The energy of the mind is the essence of life.”
- “The least initial deviation from the truth is multiplied later a thousandfold.”
- “The roots of education are bitter, but the fruit is sweet.”
- “The secret to humor is surprise.”
- “The soul never thinks without a picture. Hope is the dream of a waking man.”
- “The worst form of inequality is to try to make unequal things equal.”
- “We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act but a habit.”
- “What it lies in our power to do, it lies in our power not to do.”

By Seneca:

- “A man should be upright, not be kept upright.”
- “All wickedness is rooted in weakness.”
- “Allow any man who so desires to insult you and work you wrong; but if only virtue dwells with you, you will suffer nothing.”
- “Associate with people who are likely to improve you.”
- “Associate with those who will make a better man of you. Welcome those whom you can improve.”
- “Difficulties strengthen the mind, as labor does the body.”
- “Do every act of your life as if it were your last.”
- “Every night before going sleep, we must ask ourselves what weakness did I overcome today? what virtue did I acquire?”
- “Hang on to your youthful enthusiasm; you’ll be able to use them better when you’re older.”
- “He who indulges in empty fears earns himself real fears.”
- “If it’s not right, don’t do it. If it’s not true, don’t say it.”
- “It does not matter what you bear, but how you bear it.”
- “It is better to conquer our grief than to deceive it.”-
- “It is not because things are difficult that we do not dare; it is because we do not dare that things are difficult.”
- “It is not death that a man should fear, but he should fear never beginning to live.”
- “It is not that we are given a short life, but we make it short, and we are not ill-supplied but wasteful of it.”
- “It is not the man who has too little, but the man who craves more, that is poor.”
- “It takes the whole of life to learn how to live, and it takes the whole of life to learn how to die.”
- “Man is affected not by events but by the view he takes of them.”
- “Nature demands bread and water only: no one is poor with those necessities.”
- “No man is born wise, but wisdom and virtue require a tutor, though we can easily learn to be vicious without a master.”
- “Nothing happens to anyone that he can’t endure.”

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List of Famous Quotes (Cont'd)

By Seneca:

“Our life is what our thoughts make it.”

“Real wealth is poverty adjusted to the law of Nature.”

“Silence is a lesson learned through life’s many sufferings.”

“The man who has anticipated the coming of troubles takes away their power when they arrive.”

“The supreme good is the harmony of the soul.”

“The whole future lies in uncertainty: live immediately.”

“To bear trials with a calm mind, robs misfortune of its strength and burden.”

“Virtue depends partly upon training and partly upon practice; you must learn first, and then strengthen your learning by actions.”

“Virtue needs a director and guide.”

“Waste no more time arguing about what a good man should be. Be one.”

“We should always allow some time to elapse, for time discloses the truth.”

“We should not, like sheep, follow the herd of creatures in front of us, making our way where others go, not where we ought to go.”

“We suffer more in imagination than in reality.”

“Wherever there is a human being, there is an opportunity for a kindness.”

“You can commit injustice by doing nothing.”

“Your greatest difficulty is with yourself, for you are your stumbling-block.”

4. Learn the Pathway of Training

The pathway of training is desperate and a straight forward without doubt; it’s quickly backtracked if you stop practicing; therefore, you must have a goal and competent teachers who can lead you to reach the goal or goals. It’s essential to learn, contrive, and train diligently following the guidelines of the teacher(s). Zeami, a Noh artist, said, “it takes time, 50 years to make a ‘true flower’ bloom because many ‘unusual/seasonal flowers’ lead us astray. Plato, an ancient philosopher, divided philosophers into two groups, “true philosopher” and “philosopher-like persons,” distinguishing “true” and “not true.” Also, Plato separated “knowledge” into “true knowledge” and “speculation” or “not true knowledge.” It is diversified because one thing, one deed, one implementation, is looked at from different angles connected through many minds, items, and actions. We divide it into the two, “just and unjust,” “right and wrong,” “good and not good,” “sincere and not sincere.” Plato says we often recognize our “not sincere” actions as “sincere” action; he calls it “similar thing,” “speculation,” or “alike image,” and he hates it. Since Plato recognizes “good” as “good” and “just” as “just,” he calls the way of right mind (Spirit), in his word, “knowledge.”

Therefore, “the pathway of training” is the way of seeking true nature, essence, without going astray, and make the old flower (right flower) bloom. Takuan, in his Fudochi, says it takes a great effort to acquire this knowledge or wisdom, because of “mumyo (無明),” meaning it’s not clear, it’s an illusion, which leads us to go astray. These words, “unusual/seasonal flowers” used by Zeami, “not true knowledge/speculation/alike image” used by Plato, “illusion” used by Takuan, seem to apply the same definitions. Takuan, in his Fudochi, teaches wisdom that the heart is not affected by one item, one event, one thing on what you see. It is the way to observe things as a whole, not distracted by the part of the item. Musashi refers to this as “en-zan no metsuke (遠山の目付け),” emphasizing to look at mentally with eyes of the heart first and then look at physically with eyes of flesh. The secret of kendo seems hidden in the Takuan’s words, “go through practice for many years.” The term “practice” seems to correspond to Plato’s principles of “perfect education,” which he means to attain the way of sole “how it should be.” Let’s take a look at Ogawa sensei’s pathway of kendo, how he pursued and achieved it. Ogawa sensei, in his lecture of “Ken & the Pathway,” said, “the pathway is to do normal things normally seeking something new every day by reflection.” He contributed to writing “the concept of kendo,” and the central principles of kendo with the purpose “cultivation of human characters.”

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5. Learn the Way of Soul

Mochida sensei said, “My real kendo training started after I reached 50 years old because I started to use my heart/mind for kendo training. The heart/soul compensated for my waist and legs that were weakening when I reached 60 years old. I tried to rejuvenate the heart (spirit) to strengthen their weak points.” In this way, as you age, you begin to focus on the training of your heart and soul. Takuan’s “Fudōchi” taught us that the heart/soul should never be caught in one thing/event while moving the mind freely in all directions. Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle spent their lives pursuing the problem of the heart/soul. Knowing where you put your heart, how the soul is, and holding the soul correctly and keeping the right direction is the most challenging work. Marcus (マルカス) says, “harmonizing the man’s power and holy might will solve this problem.” Takuan’s “not to focussing on one thing,” and Musashi’s “kan no me (観の目),” or “spiritual eye,” help to solve this problem. As Plato said, “each itself is one thing but connects to various thoughts and deeds, and mutually adhering to appear as many forms to your eyes,” so it is challenging work indeed to keep your heart/soul consistently.

Rikyu expressed the difficulty and meaning of practicing the Japanese tea ceremony as “practicing means to learn from one to ten and know them well, then go back to one.” The “difficulty of practicing” can be said as the “difficulty of how heart/soul should be.” Then, where do you place your heart/soul? If you say, you put it nowhere; then, it is placed in the location called “nowhere.” Takuan explained it to become, “mushin (無心), mindless,” and let your mind to the natural state. It takes practice, he says. Note the “mushin (無心), mindless” is the state of mind of mindless, but the soul exists; it just does not stop one place; it does not move one place to another; it does not shake. He further said, the figure or the image of the mind/spirit that does not do these is called God or Buddha. Musashi introduced the word, “heijōshin (平常心)” as the image of how the mind/soul should be kept. It’s a relaxed and natural state of mind. Ogawa sensei told us to be careful of the word, “munen musou (無念 無想),” which means “nothing exists; no concept, no thought,” and not the same meaning as the “mushin.” There is no such a state in a human’s heart as the “munen musou (無念 無想),” but the “mushin (無心).”

Ogawa sensei defines this word “mushin (無心),” as “to become real water that freely changes its shape,” and teaches us the importance of living with adversity to train the mind/soul. Ancient Greek philosopher, Seneca welcomed the difficulty in his life as a trial given by God, and willingly challenged. “What should I do?” “death is on my way,” “living will pass away,” “teach me how to deal with these problems,” etc., he said and prayed. The circumstance is an excellent chance to gain the virtues of life, he said. Without the trials, you do not know real you, yourself, what you can do or cannot do; moreover, others won’t have a chance to know you. Seneca considered that adversity equals “good enemy” to challenge, and Ogawa sensei thought it is a “pleasant thing” to do. Both welcomed to face the problems. “Endeavor to create something” is when you are facing adversity. The more you will and challenge the problem, the more you mature, know yourself, and gain virtues. God /Buddha will welcome the heart/soul that motivate it and let others know you better. I believe that adversity brings an excellent chance to reach a stage of mental health that is ideal for humanity.

6. To Unify

To strike the opponent’s Men in kendo from “issoku-ittō” distance, what do you need to do with your body, feet, shinai, and spirit? At a conclusion, after some discussion, the answer to this question was to unify the necessary movement/work of Ki (spirit), Ken (shinai), and Tai (body including feet, eyes, etc.). In kendo, the terms used for this principle is “Ki-Ken-Tai itchi (気 剣体一致).” Moreover, the words, “kentai itchi (懸待一致),” or “kōbō itchi (攻防一致),” is trying to unify the two opposing thoughts and actions. Practicing these principles in kendo is the most challenging work, especially when you reach 50 and beyond. Remember, Mochida sensei used his heart/spirit more to compensate for his body weakening due to aging. Then, how does the heart relate to the body movement? The answer becomes very philosophical.

Seneca says, “I think that soul/ spirit must have combined characteristics absorbed from ancient history, the various teachings, arts/science/literature, and modes/deeds, and they must be united in harmony.” Similarly, Takuan teaches, “the hands of thousands and eyes of thousands must be united to function properly.” Further he says uniting “mumyō (無明), beginner’s mind, ignorant/not knowing truth” and “fudōchi (不動智), matured mind knowing the truth,” you become “mushin (無心).” And without bothering your heart, you will experience your body move unconsciously and naturally to defend/attack in kendo. Seneca says, “the universe surrounding us is one; it is God the Father, we are His follower and His citizen.

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Unless Satan defeat us, we are lead to the Farther’s house.” The thought of “the universe is one” is developed to the idea of “nature” and “law of nature.” Our soul obeys the law of nature.

Ogawa sensei explains it with his words, “kōzen no ki (浩然の気).” It is the thought that this universe is filled with ki (spirits) supporting all the sources of lives and energy; this spirit is immensely significant feeling without being enslaved to bad habits and worldly affairs. The theory of a Chinese word, “chūyo (中庸),” explains the profound principle connecting humans to heaven as “right and real mind/heart is a pathway to heaven.” Ogawa sensei continues saying that the right/real mind, namely, the virtue is human’s original character embedded in the law of nature to be acquired through training. Therefore, winning in kendo by force, strength, or techniques is not real winning, but winning by virtue is. His book titled “One hundred Keiko,” his kendo practice (100x) with Mochida sensei, proves how they practice kendo intending to win by virtue. Seneca says that virtuous persons help each other, practice mutual virtue, and work out the wisdom of the right criteria to become one.

7. Seek Supreme Virtue and Good

In teaching of Jyukyō (儒教), one of them called “college (大学)” has three goals to accomplish while in college. They are 1) To clarify virtue, 2) To acquaint with people, 3) To stay in supreme good. “Absolute good” by Plato’s idealism and “absolute wisdom” by Takuan’s “fudōchi” lead to the same philosophy that these ideas become one as you practice. A good example of practicing the virtue and good is written in “one hundred Keiko” by Ogawa sensei. It is about two virtuous persons’ communications by their hearts in practicing kendo; it’s the ultimate goal of practicing kendo, cultivation of human character. Ogawa sensei’s thought, “kōzen no ki (浩然の気)” is illustrated as the role of accomplishing the “supreme virtue and good.” Still, the idea is so difficult not only to understand it, but also as the problem of training the theory because it demands practice in real-life conditions in our nature.

The word “nature” is so close to us today that we don’t see it as ancient philosophers did. They seemed to spend time and effort to find the concept of nature. Let us review how they look at the environment. Cicero (キケロ) insisted that the gods exist and love human beings during and after their lives, and the gods reward or punish according to their conduct in life. He inherited the philosophy of Plato’s idealism, “the universe is one.” They explain that the gods gave us all the wisdom, intelligence, and reason. So are the spirit, faith, virtue, and heart of harmony. The sun, moon, and stars are all unified by holy wisdom and intelligence. Also, they discovered the logic and rationality working on this earth with massive force like a law of gravity, a centrifugal force, and the theory of relativity by Albert Einstein. They learned that nature is controlling the part and entire earth with air, water, plants, insects, animals, etc. sharing nutrition. To obey the natural providence is obeying God. Therefore, the “concept of nature” includes “holy” things, and acknowledge of “sacred heart.” Seneca says, “the right things /deeds must be repeatedly verified, anytime comprehended, and prepared to practice righteousness, because it becomes more clearer by doing so.”

8. Choose a Good Leader/Sensei

In kendo, they say, “choose good leader/sensei even you delay three years.” Seneca says, “keep company with virtuous persons,” because it helps to correct the evil; virtuous persons help each other, practice mutual virtue, and work out the wisdom of the right criteria to become one. He teaches what philosophy do by learning virtues. It forms the right heart, gives life direction, and leads actions on what to do or not to do. When you become supremely virtuous person, Ogawa sensei called the state of mind as “kōzen no ki (浩然の気).” Then, you can live calmly without being afraid of anyone. You, as a supremely virtuous person, will teach your student/follower what the virtue will do, “the work of virtue.”

Seneca says about the relation between body and spirit as follows: “the body should be treated severer than the mind, then, it becomes not disobedience to the soul.” By doing so, the body obeys the spirit. This philosophy is precisely applied to the practicing fundamental kendo skills. By treating the mind more severely, Seneca says, “the soul will improve,” gaining the right and upright spirit. It is tough to find a supremely virtuous person nowadays; Ogawa sensei found Mochida sensei, who was sixteen years older, and I, author of this book Miyazaki Masataka, found Narasaki sensei, who was fourteen years earlier. I agree with Ogawa sensei, who says, “If you cannot find one, it’s not a bad idea to find one from those who lived in the past.” In addition to the reason why one needs to choose a good leader/sensei, as mentioned above, let examine more ideas from a different point of view. Let me introduce advanced kendo terms, which Ogawa sensei explains, in “sanma no kurai (三磨の位).”

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The words simply mean to polish three ranks, namely, “learning,” “practicing,” and “contriving.” Seneca says, “nature is our teacher/sample.” We thank life because nature allows us to cultivate virtue and teaches us to obey nature. Narasaki sensei, who is my teacher, respected Saimura sensei, and learned from his teacher, Okada Tasuku sensei how to live. He mastered the kendo eye, “kan no me,” and beyond it, called, “eye of the universe,” clarifying the “heart of the universe.”

9. Learn “Kan no Metsuke (観の目付け)”

Musashi introduced the kendo terms, “kan-ken no metsuke (観見の目付け),” two ways of looking, namely, one to look physically with the eye, ken (見), and the other to look intuitively with heart, kan (観). The important one is to look at things/persons/deeds with your mind using the “eye of the heart.” It takes time and effort to gain this eye; you must learn, contrive, practice, and train very hard. I would like to capture the thought of “kan no metsuke” as “eye of gods.” Seneca says, “nothing is separated from God’s eye. God is an eyewitness of our souls, and enters into our center of thoughts.” He says, “do not depend on your visual eye when evaluating people, but use the “eye of light.”

10. Harmonize Opposing Will or Situations

In practicing kendo, we begin to feel it is getting harder from going 3 to 4 dan rank. It’s the principle of “ki ken tai itchi,” that we must meet this requirement. First of all, properly handling one shinai with two hands and swinging it is not easy. The restricted area/location to aim and strike is also tricky. Use of ki (気, mind), control of it, and unifying it with ken (剣, shinai /skill) and tai (体, body) is the most difficult one to learn and train. Kendo reveals the way of harmonizing mutually opposing will or situations, and it proves that kendo is indeed a philosophy. You confront your opponent (enemy) face to face, if you attack, he/she defends, and vice-versa. There is no win-win situation! You win when the enemy yields it to you unconsciously. The “yūkō datotsu (valid strike)” occurs when the two are harmonized.

11. Train to Change Adversity to Normal Circumstances

What makes you push your heart forward any time when you are confronted with adversity? Marcus and Seneca say, there is such a thing as “promoting pills” or “philter.” In kendo, it is practicing. I would like to use the word “shugyō (修行)” as specialized training. Shugyō has a pathway of life and a big goal. Ogawa sensei calls this goal as a “man’s pathway” or a “pathway of heaven and earth.” Seneca calls it “to obey nature.”

Further, he says, “I do not ask my funeral to anyone, nor my death to anyone; no one passes away without buried, because nature provides it. It’s time that soul is the most satisfied.” “Real wealth” is within a “little things,” and within a “great/courageous soul.” Are you satisfied with nothing else to eat, but water and oatmeal? No, you are not; it takes a man of a great soul as the result of training hard under the abnormal circumstances. Kendo practice provides excellent training to gain this soul and to cultivate human character, because the way of kendo is the way of life.

12. Learn to Persevere (gaman, 我慢) - Endeavor to Produce Something

Seneca takes good care of adversity because, he believes, it is given by God as a trial to test his faith. Teaching perseverance is the most important for practicing kendo, and so is our lives. In kendo, if you merely put up with seme (attack) to find opponent’s opening, sensei will say to you that you need more “seme,” “your shoulder is too stiff,” or “too much seme.” More experienced kendoka is calm and controls the “seme” by adding defense and mixing the two in such a way to withdraw the opponent by confusing him. The “attack/seme” is also called “kakari (懸り)” and the “defense/fusegu (防ぐ)” is often considered as a “wait/matsu (待つ).” So, you control and harmonize between “attack (攻め)” and “defense (防ぐ),” or between “kakari (懸り)” and “wait (待つ).” These terms are put together and called “kōbō itchi (攻防一致)” or “kentai itchi (懸待一致)” as you know. Note when the two Chinese characters are put together, the phonetic sound changes from “kun” to “on” reading... The words “Persevere” in kendo has various philosophical meaning to comprehend. Some may say, “it makes you to see opponent’s intention,” or “it makes you grow to polish your mirror, and acquire so-called ‘tame (溜め).’” It produces something, the power to see the opponent. For example, the “gaman kurabe (我慢比べ),” competing with your opponent for perseverance, will lead to training how you react under pressures of Kyo (驚, Surprise), Fu (怖, Fear), Gi (疑, Doubt) and Waku (惑, Perplexity) in mutual mind.

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Some of you would use the tip of the shinai, letting it touch the opponent's shinai to help detect the opponent's mind during this match of “gaman kurabe (我慢比べ).” This state of mind is, Takuan says, a quite high level of training of the heart that without proper use of hands, footwork, waist movement, fingertips, and eyes, you cannot execute “Yūkō-Datotsu” in kendo. I like the expression, “kendo is gaman kurabe (我慢比べ).” I understand it as “kendo is mental kneading.” I experienced, when practiced kendo with Ishihara Tadayoshi (石原忠美) sensei that my calf muscles became bursting to open, because I tried practicing “not to hit” kendo. Later I met Sato Hikoshirou sensei, who was practicing “not to hit” kendo, and learned that this philosophy leads to the concept of “harmonize mutually opposing thoughts.” Learning to persevere (gaman suru, 我慢する), the endeavor to produce something, is to build tame (溜め) and is tough shugyō, essential to kendo training, because it is a problem of the heart. Seneca says, “a virtuous person follows his fate and harmonize keeping pace with the fate.” Fate can be your enemy, opponent in kendo. Ogawa sensei says, “turn your heart to yourself, not to the other, and overcome yourself. Namely, it is the shugyō that you return your heart to the body.”

13. Time to Put Shinai Away

I know how difficult it is for a kendoka to put away the shinai, knowing the time will come to quit kendo because our body is weakened as the result of old age. I do not think putting away the shinai is not necessarily stopping kendo training. Hanshi Saimura (範士 齋村) sensei put his shinai away at the age of 70, and spent rest of his life for reading and writing poetry, pursuing the proper way of kendo match, how mind and heart should work. Hanshi Mochida (範士 持田) sensei and Hanshi Ogawa (範士 小川) sensei put away the shinai after reaching 85 years old, and Hanshi Ishihara (範士 石原) sensei is after reaching to 90 years old. Hanshi Mizuno (範士 水野) sensei who is still active looked up Hanshi Narasaki (範士 榎崎) sensei as a master whose kendo life was like what Ogawa sensei said, “life is kendo, and kendo is life.”

The eyes of Narasaki (榎崎) sensei were always the “eyes of heart, intuitive view” that Musashi (武蔵) taught us. Whenever, wherever he goes, his figure told everything; it's reflecting from his master, Saimura (齋村) sensei's humanity. His heart reminds us of an image of Buddha, the universal spirit, and a sincere soul. Saimura sensei left us famous words, “Become penniless,” “Become fool,” and “Become naked.” The quotes are saying in effect to follow the law of nature, “bread and water” are sufficient, and return to the environment, which agrees with Seneca's famous quote, “True wealth is to obey the laws of nature...,” or “True wealth is poverty that meets the laws of nature.” Miyamoto Musashi (宮本武蔵) wrote a famous book called, “Gorin-sho (五輪書),” spending two years secluding himself in “reikendou (霊巖洞),” just before his passing at the age of 62. So, he must have put the sword away at the age of 60. He was known as an independent person, no master to serve, walking his way without depending on God/Buddha, but he says in the final book, “He heads up for Heaven and Bodhisattva, and worships.” He put hands together and prayed to God/Buddha, keeping Heaven and Bodhisattva as his ultimate goal, and stood in awe of it.

Those who reached the Saimura sensei's state of mind, are called “Shōwa's Kensei (昭和の剣聖),” but I prefer to call them using the word “philosopher.” Mizuno sensei, and I believe that kendo is indeed a philosophy. Saimura sensei was training his heart/mind after putting the shinai away. It is an excellent chance to polish it when placing the shinai away according to Ogawa sensei's quotes, “Turn the heart to oneself, not to others.” Because philosophy studies and trains the state of mind, it should be when one is close to death. It makes our soul strong, courageous, and joyful regardless of weakening the physical body with declining health. Death inevitably comes, if it's a time when the soul is most satisfied, let's welcome the end. Seneca said, what's most needed at this moment is “courage to die,” “wisdom of death,” and “strong will.”

It's impossible to separate the soul free from the body without the strong will. Saimura sensei must have trained and acquired this strong will. He must have obeyed nature, returned into himself, learned oneself, and prepared to welcome the death. In doing these, you learn the absolute virtues and goods which, Seneca says, are immortal and eternal.

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In practicing these, you are following the will of nature and will of God in away. Mochida sensei, Ogawa sensei, Saimura sensei, and Narasaki sensei must have reached to the state of mind. I don't know how many more years I can hold the shinai, but I'm finally able to understand the Saimura sensei's state of mind. In the future, I am prepared to pursue the pathway of the sword and the way as a human being, taking care of my health by the natural life given to me.

14. For kendo to Be Immortal and Everlasting

The swordsmen and senior sensei described in the table of philosophers spent their lives searching for true kendo, which makes it immortal and everlasting. Some keywords they said are listed in the table of philosophers and under the philosopher's quotes. It's essential that you choose the right character-driven masters, whether they alive or not, to pursue everlasting kendo. For their endeavors teaching the way of kendo, we must appreciate and hand down the meaning of concept and purpose of practicing kendo to our new and young students.

The core principle is to learn the “right mind”; the founder of the western philosopher, Socrates, also taught that philosophy began from the concept of “right mind”; Aristotle taught about “soul” and a “problem of mind,” and handed down the idea to Seneca and other philosophers as tradition. There are so many things we can learn from these philosophers, including the swordsmen. I want to consider it as a problem of how we can hand down proper kendo, which is immortal and everlasting.

The philosophy of kendo is deeply rooted in the classical Japanese culture in Shinto and Buddhism under the era of Emperor/shōgun/samurai and various clans. However amazingly, it reconciled to the philosophy of ancient Greece and Rome, what Socrates, Plato, and Seneca said. Philosophy may begin with a “right mind,” meditating on questions like 1) where did we come from?, 2) why are we here on earth?, 3) where are we going?. A Christian can answer these questions as 1) I came from my ancestry Adam and Eve, the first man and woman God created 2) I live here to know God and myself, to train and fight for what I can do for the freedom given by God, and to please God 3) I am going to heaven with my Lord Jesus, the second man God sent on earth to save us from our sins on the cross.

It's essential to find and choose a good sensei/leader/mentor/advisor. Jesus can be the one, Christians may say, you have this choice. It to be immortal and everlasting, your heart must also be timeless and eternal. Proper kendo training, considering “eye of intuitive view,” “immovable wisdom,” “eye of heart,” “eye of God,” etc., will lead us to expand toward world and universe, I think. Originally, God's heart in heaven entered into man's heart; therefore, this time, man's soul returns to the universe/heaven, I promise.