

# A Philosophical Examination of Karate's Plausibility in Moral Education

ELVIS OMONDI KAUKA

University of Kabianga, School of Education, EAPF Department, (P.o. Box 2030-Kericho 20200 –Kenya)

---

**Abstract:** This Philosophical Study sought to examine whether Karate as a sport can be reasonably justified as a means towards moral development of students and the public at large. The study infers that indeed Karate is not just a sport but most importantly a *do* (an ethical life style). Karate Practitioners (Karatekas) use their techniques (the *Te*) in the training hall, in tournaments and when in extreme danger, but for most of their ordinary lives they use the *do*. Methods used include Philosophical analysis, Descriptive method and In-depth interview. The Study first outlines Karate history, then exposes the necessity of moral education in learning institutions. An explication of Karate's ethical ramifications, an analysis of the exquisite and explicit moral nexus Karate and the report of an In-depth interview with one of the Sensei's in Kenya a presented successively. The conclusion affirms that Karate is relevant in Moral education.

**Keywords:** Karate, Ethics, Morals, Karatedo, Moral Education, Normativity, Okinawate, Dojokun.

---

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Back ground of Study:

The relevance of Karate in Educational Praxis calls for Philosophical investigation because Karate and other Middle East martial arts are increasingly gaining popularity, not just in Asian schools but also in Occidental and in African Schools. Different persons of different ages join Karate and other martial arts for different reasons, ranging from self -defense, physical fitness and even to pass time. Others join it for sheer love of beauty in pattern movements called *Katas* yet few would from the first sight admit they are joining Karate to acquire some axiological skills.

The critical question that is rarely asked is; “Can Karate be entrusted to moral development of young ones in schools? Are there any aspects of normativity in Karate that would warrant its practice in learning institutions? To answer this question it is first of all imperative to understand meaning and the background of Karate to gain access to a plausible *point de vue*. The concept of Karate can best be understood by analyzing its chronological derivatives because Karate was not at first called Karate (Back, 1979). In its primitive connotation Karate was called *Okinawa te*. It then became *Tode*. *Tode* became *Karate* and of late it is preferably called *Karatedo*.

*Te* is Japanese term referring to hand fighting techniques. *Okinawa Te* refers to the hand techniques used by the *Pechin* class of the inhabitants of Okinawa island between seventh century and fourteenth centuries (Cowie & Dyson, 2016). The *Pechins* were warriors of great repute in Okinawa and the expansive Rukyu Islands found in the south west of mainland Japan. *Tode* or *Tang do* refers to the fusion of Chinese martial arts (*Quangfa*) With *Okinawa te* which gradually took place in the late 14<sup>th</sup> century when Okinawa opened its diplomatic interaction with Fujian province of China.

Karate proper (bear-hand fighting), as we know it today is at least 1400 years old. It has evolved from being simple traditional defense technique of the inhabitants of Rukyu island to a modern cultural sport (Swennen and Cowie & Dyson, 2012). Karate is therefore not a Japanese Martial art (Samurai) as mostly believed. It is linked to the Socio politics of Rukyu Islands. The Islands were divided into castles which had persistent wrangles and inter-castle attacks .These attacks were *effected* without proper weapons due to scarcity of iron and the ban of any use of weapons in Okinawa Islands

(Kuntz, 1979). The three Main principalities in conflicts were Hokuzan (Northern Mountain), Chuzan (Central Mountain) and Nazan (Southern). The peak of conflicts occurred in 14<sup>th</sup> century when the Chuzan fiefdom, having strong military and economic dominance annexed the other two fiefdoms between 1419 and 1429, leading to the creation of a unified Ryukyu Kingdom under Prince Sho Hashi with the capital in being Shuri (Cowie & Dyson, 2016).

After the unification, the Te continued in the southern parts of Rukyu, namely, Okinawa. In Okinawa the Te was exclusively practiced among a special class of people (*The Pechins*) who were mostly officials and warriors who were also stratified into several ranks of seniority and whose responsibility was to maintain law & order and provide military service. A Chinese master and an immigrant; Master Gong Xiangjun, a Qigong expert is one of the first Chinese to impact on Okinawa te after Prince Satto promulgated Commercial ties with Ming Dynasty in 1372 (Back, 1979). He taught Tode (Chinese fist hand) to Chatan Yara (1618- 1756) of Okinawa. Chatan Yara taught Takahara Pechin (1683 -1760) who passed on his techniques to Sakugawa Kanga (1733-1815). Sakugawa is considered sometimes as the father of Okinawan Karate. He in turn taught Masumura Sokon (1809- 1899) who passed the art to Itosu Anko (1831-1915). Itosu Anko was the principal teacher of Gichin Funakoshi (1868-1957) the founder of Shotokan Karate.

Funakoshi made major contributions to Karate alongside other Masters of different strands of Karate. His famous student, still alive to date is Hirokazu Kanazawa (born in 1931). When Japan annexed Okinawa, in late 18<sup>th</sup> century, Okinawate with characteristics of Quanfa became part of Japanese martial arts thanks to the active interaction between Okinawa and Japan. Karate has since evolved, reformed and transformed due to the influence of Key figures or masters.

With time the deeper and the more- than- physical aspects were gradually introduced to Karate because thanks to the Zen orientation of Chinese *Quangfa*. Quangfa as has already observed influenced the inception of Karate (Cowie, 2016). Of great interest to this study, however is whether *morals* form part of the more-than-physical aspects that Karate acquired from *Quangfa*. This problem has received favorable and unfavorable, mythical and scientific, subjective and objective responses.

Some Opposers of Karate believe that Karate uses some malignant spiritualism; some believe that Karate promotes violence and aggression. Most of these anti-Karate sentiments are however based on action movies, subjective inclinations and encounters with violent persons. Those not with-standing, sports academicians have attempted to offer somehow logical considerations. Ziff (1974) postulates *blankly* that all sports promote aggressiveness and the spirit of unhealthy competition. He pinpoints martial arts as a major culprit. According Ziff, sports are eventually a manifestation of aggression. He posits that in general "...aggressive and not aesthetics aspects are what loom large in sports" and that "... Judo...Karate.... Wrestling... all offer unmistakable examples of aggressive behavior and therefore our society would be better off without sports" (Ziff, 1974). The sentiments of Ziff can be taken to imply in simple terms that Karate, Martial arts and sports in general are immoral activities. Being immoral, any reasonable person should not defend it or engage in it.

The belief that Karate is a morally flawed activity has led to negative effects such as castigation and suspicion of Karatekas as aggressive and dangerous goons. Very few Karatekas have taken courage to systematically and philosophically engage the aforesaid beliefs. Karatekas tend to keep quiet or simply brush off the belief. This has led to negative profiling of Karate especially in schools and other learning institutions and as such stifling the dreams of Karate founders and proponents like Itosu Anko and Gichin Funakoshi. This philosophical research is therefore purposed to technically and philosophically investigate the moral locus of Karate in educational enterprise.

## 1.2. Objectives of the study:

- i. To trace the history of normative dimension of Karate and its relevance in Education
- ii. To investigate the ethical ramifications of Karate
- iii. To outline the exquisite moral aspects of Karate
- iv. To scrutinize a contemporary Karateka's perception of Karatedo

## 1.3. Methods of Study:

### i. Philosophical Analysis:

Philosophical analysis refers to the logical breakdown of a complex system into bits for purposes of clarity. It has deep roots in logic but also in philosophy of language, which insists that misconceptions result from failure to understand or use language properly (Gay, 2002). The method is justified for this case given that this is a philosophical research.

## ii. Descriptive Method and In-depth Interviews

These methods involve observations and noting what happens either in real life or in the past. They are relevant to this study for providing accurate and diverse points of view.

## 2. NORMATIVITY AND KARATE

### 2.1. Introduction and Clarification of concepts:

The aim of this section is to trace the history of normative dimension of Karate and its relevance in educational Praxis. Karate related concepts will be systematically analyzed for clarity purposes and their applicability to the theory and practice of Karate education will be highlighted. Some of the key terms used in this study include but not limited to morals, moral codes, ethics, *karatedo*, virtues, *kihon*, *kata*, *kumite*, *dojokun*.

The term morals come from Latin word *Mores* which means customs or behavior (Wainaina, 2006). In axiological studies morality extends to criteria or standards used to determine whether a certain voluntary human act is right or wrong. The concept Ethics comes from Greek *ethike* referring to customs or conducts (Mattei, 2007). This definition has etymologic equivalence to *mores* but again in axiological deliberations it has a cognitive connotation, referring to the study of morals, the reasoning behind morals (Gichure, 2015). Codes of ethics refer to the repeated or habitual manner of doing something guided by positively stated moral rules or principles. Virtue, from Latin *Vir* connotes man in ideal state. It thus refers to an excellence as quality that enables individuals to perform roles proper to them. Some of the virtues enunciated by classical philosophers include Prudence, justice, fortitude and Temperance which are considered as cardinal virtues (Aristotle as cited in Gichure, 2015).

Moral education is term derived from two terms- *Mores* , already discussed and Education. Education comes from Latin words Educare(the general upbringing of offspings) and Educere(the process of vleadind out of something from one state to another state(Peters, 1971). Moral education is therfore a normative concept refering to the process instilling and transmittiing of moral values through sociolization process (Kibera, L. W. & Kimokoti, 2007).

The process leads to achievement of normative aims of education; actualization of Man .

Kihon refers to the basic techniques in Karate commprised of proper formation and execution of Punches(*tsuki waza*), kick(*geri waza*), blocks(*uke waza*), strikes among others (Swennen, 2000). *Kata* is the patterned formation, movement and application of *kihon*, examples of *Kata* include *Taikyoku shodan* , *Kankusho*, while *kumite* is sparring techniques like arranged *kumite* and freestlye *kumite*. (Hale Karate Club, 2017)

### 2.2. Normative dimension of Education and Normativity of Karate:

Njoroge (2001) enlist four critical dimensoins of education namely, Cognitive dimension(dealing with develoment of mental capacities), Creative dimension (dealing with innovation), dialectical(dealing whith wholism), and normative diemnsion(dealing with values). This research focuses heavily on the fourth aspect, the normattive but in relation to Krate. Peters (1971) insists that one of the criteria of educational goals must be the transmission of that which is worthwhile or that which is thought of as being worthwhile. The transmiision of an education content as such should not only be intetional but also morally plausible. Intentionality in moral education is furthermore to be seen as a *habitus* and skillful process (Gichure, 2015 & Peters, 1971). Perhaps a more explicit view on moral education in schools is propounded by Wainaina (2006) and Sharma (2009). Wainaina postulates “ the development of morals in our sudents....form a substantial part of the school curriculum because every individual in a society must be governed by some social rule and regulations if social life is to be succesfull” . Sharma asserts that the education of the intellect divorced from moral nad emotional perfection is injurious to human nature. *Ipsa facto*, it is inevitable for shoools to take great interest in morality of learners.This is neccessitated by the fact that a learner is metaphysically structured being; this being the case then a Karate learner is also metaphysically structured who all aspects during an educational process-moral growth not withstanding.

### 2.3. Meta-Ethical Justification of Moral Education: Appeal to Karate:

The importance of moralisation in education is directly justifiable by metaphysical perspectives of ethics (Meta-ethics). First of all, natural law indicates that man is naturally a moral agent who always desires to do good atleast to himself (Ochieng Odhiambo, 2009). The basic minimum of doing good and right to the self is a universal phenomenon observable in all normal human beings. This rule applicable even to the Masochists and Saddonists, only that theirs are a case of

*misguided means* of pursuit towards the good. Otherwise they too have the intentions to do good. The stoics for instance find joy in both pain and in pleasure but some pain can be indirect means to pleasure (Ochieng Odhiambo, 2009).

Secondly, Aristotle indicates that man is a *Zoon Politikon* (a social animal) meaning that he is intrinsically wired to relate. This desire leads man to implicitly or explicitly formulate rules that enable them relate efficiently with view of achieving happiness (*Eudaimonia*) (Aristotle as cited in Gichure, 2015). Aristotle's point is further supported by Mbithi's postulates on African philosophy which states "I am because we are, and since we are therefore I am" (Nhundu, 1993).

Thirdly, appeal to Consciousness: Battista Mondin in his "Philosophical Anthropology", asserts that unlike other animals man's inclination is driven by his self-consciousness. He identifies two types of consciousness relevant to morality and typical of human nature. These are, concomitant and reflexive consciousness. Concomitant consciousness is man's cognizance of the object but not of himself while reflexive consciousness is where man concentrates his attention to himself by paying attention to his own operations (Mondin, 2016). In the process man diverts his attention from the world to the self. Reflexive consciousness is by extension the substantiality, the essence, the quiddity of what makes man a man. Only man is gifted with it.

It is worth noting that in as much as man is overly self-conscious, there is what is left for others as in the case of Johari's window for the public which explains why greater part of human acts are public and assessable by the public. As Mondin puts it the "I" exists for itself but in large measures it exists for others who can see it, touch it, perceive it. Consequently man has the duty to act ethically, both deontologically and teleologically. A Karateka, as a Being with Reflexive Self-Consciousness is a *casu ipse* in this deliberation and so seeks to gain ethical maturation both in public and private spheres.

### 3. ETHICAL RAMIFICATIONS OF KARATE: A DIALECTICAL VINTAGE

#### 3.1. Moral Antithesis: Argument Against Karate:

A critical analysis of Karate behooves us to delve deeper into some of the reasonable misgivings against Karate for a balanced discourse. Three most common antitheses of Karate appeal to Militaristic Genesis of Karate, Secrecy and Appeal to Aggression. Each of them shall be presented against their counter-argumentation and dissolved into a synthesis.

##### 3.1.1. Thesis and Antithesis of Militaristic Genesis:

The birth of Karate as an art was a result of necessity. Karate was used in place of weapons to protect different fiefdoms in Okinawa (Swennen, 2000). The original intention therefore was not an ethical art but a war-like art. In fact Cowie and Dyson, 2016 indicate that the pechin warriors were to maintain law and order and defend their Island. The origin of something X forms a major intrinsic component of its nature. To this extent then it might be assumed that Karate cannot escape the military qualities and so it is absurd to conclude that Karate is primordially an ethical art. The logic informing this reasoning is based on the *invalidity* of the argument adduced below:

P: Karate was founded for militaristic reasons, Q: Karate is an ethical art

The symbolic argumentation is thus  $P \rightarrow Q$  (IF P THEN Q), that is IF Karate was founded for militaristic reasons THEN Karate is an ethical art. This is a simple conditional reasoning that is obviously invalid if subjected to the rule of *Reductio Absurdum* (Odhiambo, 2003). The rule calls for assumption of the Truth of the precedent (P) and the Falsity of the consequent (Q) which leads to an automatic T/F situation<sup>1</sup>. T/F situation in a conditional argument is a sign of invalidity. This means that to argue that "If Karate was founded for militaristic reasons Then Karate is an ethical art" is to engage in a fallacious argument. This implies that if Karate was founded for militaristic ends, it is not automatic that it is an ethical activity, in as much as militarism has some moral foundations. This position of invalidity is further demonstrable the rule of Truth Table analysis which ipso facto confirms the existence of T/F scenario as indicated in the table below:

	P	Q	PRECEDENT P	>	CONSEQUENT Q
1	T	T	<b>T</b>		<b>T</b>
2	T	F	<b>T</b>		<b>F</b>
3	F	T	<b>F</b>		<b>T</b>
4	F	F	<b>F</b>		<b>F</b>

<sup>1</sup> An IF...THEN... argument (Conditional argument) is invalid if the antecedent are True (T) and Consequent is False (F) (Odhiambo, 2003).

Line 2 above exhibits a T F case , True False scenario, an evidence of invalidity.

The implication of the *invalidity* of the afore stated argument means that its validity could be possible with the negation of the consequent( that is, -Q.... Karate is NOT an ethical art ). This would then confirm the view that the militaristic origins of Karate makes it immoral, at leasts from the logical perspective.

On the contrary militarism for most of its part serves noble purposes of protection and defence. Ethics posits that its morally justifiable to defend oneself . It is actually a duty, a Categorical Imperative for a person or a state to wield proportionate power against persons who endanger his /her life or that of a significant others (Oruka, 1997). Moreover, organised military systems have codes of ethics that they adhere to. Lastly, distinction has to be made between militarism and militia. Militias may not have definite codes of ethics, or a constitution to follow as opposed to a legally instituted military organs. Karate from its inception in Ryukyu Islands has never acquired what we would call militia traits. It is therefore inferable that Karate cannot be immoral in view of its militaristic origins.

The simple conditional reasoning above, used by most opposers of Karate who may not be privy to logic is a little bit simplistic because even when the consequent is negated(-Q; Karate is not ethical) it still is invalid as shown in the table below:

	P	Q	PRECEDENT P	>	CONSEQUENT -Q
1	T	T	<b><i>T</i></b>		<b><i>F</i></b>
2	T	F	<b><i>T</i></b>		<b><i>T</i></b>
3	F	T	<b><i>F</i></b>		<b><i>F</i></b>
4	F	F	<b><i>F</i></b>		<b><i>T</i></b>

The first line of the argument is TF case , meaning that to claim that “since Karate has a militaristic origin the its not ethical” is also invalid and therefore not logically tenable.

### 3.1.2. Thesis and Antithesis of Karate Secrecy and Obscurity:

As has been indicated earlier, Okinawa te was practiced in secrecy. As a secret art not evry body trained or practiced it except the few chosen members (Cowie & Dyson, 2016).

It is further observed that the early Karatekas themselves rarely shared their art with others. The emmergent question is “why secrecy? “. Obscurity is actually typical of cult like activities , and cultic activities are likely recipe for suspicion of moral flaws. Today Karate may be a bit open especially tournaments , but the training happens manily in dojos leading to some unresolved feelings of mystery speculations .

On the contrary, secrecy in Karate in its origins had nothing to do with occultism. Neither was it an attempt to hide some immoral activities from the public eye. The deontological intention was to preserve the techniques for military surprises against the enemies, which is a pretty normal strategy in military science (Rothpearl, 1980). An enemy who has knows what you wield, cannot be easily defaeted. In addition Karate’s secrecy is explicable by appealing to the concept of Focus. At the beginning of Karate session, Karatekas are known to meditate, perform the ritual of Moku (Hale, 2017). This enables them establish and maintain focus within the dojo. An open field training with spying and oogling eyes cannot actually provide the ambiance for concentration. Lastly, but not least the ethics of Karate especially in contemporary context requires even more secrecy because of the influence of the media and of persons who would want to practice Karate for wrong reasons, like revenge, or for shear prowess. Karate done for wrong reasons may lead to public danger. The first dojo rule of Karate(Dojo Kun), states “Seek Perfection of Character” (Funakoshi, 1981). This actually should be the first intention of a Karate neophite –character formation. The public imitating Karatekas in session without proper instructions may turn out to very dangerous persons.

We therefore infer that Karate the secret nature of Karate is morally justifiable, and since it is such, the appeal to secrecy as *causa* of immorality is null and void.

### 3.1.3. Thesis and Antithesis of Agression:

The most popular stance used to explain away Karate is the concept of aggression. Karate has been considered as an agressive sport as it is the case with many cambative sports and thus an immoral sport. Ziff (1974) indicates that Karate is one of the major culprits of violence and aggression. He states “ ... sports are evidently manifestations of aggression.

When one looks at sports in general, aggressive and not the aesthetics aspects are what loom large. ....Judo....Karate..... all offer unmistakable examples of aggressive behaviour .... Our society should be better off without them ....“ To an extent Ziff's observation makes sense, given that Karate is a competitive art that requires scoring of points especially in Kumite(Sparring competitions). A non aggressive Karateka may not after all score points . It is observable that social misfits like thugs use styles associated with Karate. It is also observable in movies and TV where actors maim or kill each other using styles similar to Karate. This acts portray nothing but violence. Examples of such movies include Jackn Norris and chinese kungfu movies.

On the contrary , in as much as Karate might involve some aggression, it may as well be argued that Karate's aggression is a means to an end but not an end in itself, it is a controlled aggression because of the numerous rules that govern it and that contemporary life is filled with many beneficial aggressions that we cannot do without. It is to be noted that Ziff's argument is subject to scrutiny because he does not back up his claim with empirical and factual research. Secondly common researches done by sports researchers indicate that respondents, who are mostly Karatekas report that Karate had led them to be more non violent, more peaceful and less aggressive (Becker 1982). A research do by Burris (1995) posit that the sports of direct bodily contact produce athletes who are least aggressive outside the tournaments. Becker (1982) raises a very important point, that in Karate the intention of the Karateka is neither to maim nor to maul the opponent but to score points.

Apart from empirical evidence against Ziff's stance, the concept of aggression can also be misconstrued when discussing Karate. This has to do with hermeneutics of ethics ; the use, abuse and misuse of concept. Ziff's case may be an example of misuse of the concept of Aggression .Aggression is any psychological or physical attempt to take territory from another or to catch a rival offguard (Becker, 1982). Violence (closely related to aggression ) refers to any rapid , unexpected striking motion (Gleeson, 1976). From the outset, the definitions outrightly sound ominous, perhaps until when someone is ambushed by a thug, and realises that to save his/her life s/he needed to be aggressive as well, perhaps more than the attacker. This should then lead us to distinctions.

There is a clear distinction between morally acceptable aggression and immoral aggression. Morally defensible aggression is pegged on teleological and deontological theories of ethics. From Teleological perspectives, an act is right “if and only if it will produce atleast as great a balance of good over evil as any available alternative” (Ochieng Odhiambo, 2009)). Outside the Karate dojo, this principle insinuates that it is more ethically justifiable to defend oneself using Karate against persons who explicitly pose serious danger to your life or to your loved ones' life than not to let oneself be injured or killed despite being able to defend self. In tournaments Karatekas have to score points because the *telos*, the goal of dojo competition is winning. Tournament competition is however filled with rules and regulations. The presence of judges and referees in a Karate competition serves as a serious measure against immoral aggression. Karate scoring has to be done in a specific way and injuries are highly checked. In several cases whoever injures a rival in competition instead of being rewarded end up losing the game. It is also important to note that both in Kata and Kumite decisions on who wins is not done just by referee alone but in consultation with four other judges , and this promotes the spirit of justice and transparency which are moral virtues (Hale, 2017).

Nonetheless, Deontological perspective indicates that the intention of aggression can merit its morality. If for instance fighting is purely intended to win points and not to maim or kill then karate aggression may be justified regardless of the accidental injuries which after all are mitigated by dojo fighting rules. Thirdly Karate explicitly teaches non aggression by association . Morals in general and in our case non aggression are learnt through observation, association and conditioning. This phenomenon is clear in Karate because Karate is a highly relational and structural sport in which both vertical relationships(hierarchical) and horizontal relationships (colleagiate) take place. Vertical relationship that is most common in Karate is master student relationship (Kuntz, 1979). A master or even simple Sensei is not just an expert in Kicking, punching and striking but most importantly moral models to students. Masters are by design expected to be highly moral persons with self control and patience. They must have mastered to some degree the inner dimension of Karate. Such individuals would not normally be unnecessarily violent and aggressive . They thus act as role model to Karate learners who proudly associate with him /her. Back and Kim(1979) posit that morality is learnt by witnessing and copying the models of moral men and that moral men who abound in dojos are then copied by juniors who become more moral men in turn . This view is further supported by Conditioning theory, in which Sensei 's behaviour is a stimulant and younger Karatekas learn through responding and imitating.

Forthly aggression can be refuted by appealing to the theory of Fundamentality of self control. One of the fundamental dojo rules (Dojo kun) in Karate formulated by Gichin Funakoshi states “ Refrain from violent behavior”. This explains the role of incalcation of self control as a mitigatory state of mind against aggression. Martial arts incalcate self control as a fundamnetal principle not just at artificial level but at will level. A karateka therefore does not just refrain from violence but commits not to participate in immoral aggression.

John(1976) observes that “ in advanced Karate all blows stop within a centimeter or two of opponents face or body”. It can be inferred that philosophy of eastern martial arts is to avoid contacts as much as possible and as tactfully as possible. This practice makes it valid to state that Karate’s scope does not include negative violence.

Lastly, appeal to Carthasis: Carthasis refers to a set of psychosomatic processes that enable human beings to resolve distress caused by cumulative frustrations of basic human needs (Heron, 1998). The frustrations lead to acute disabling psychosomatic tension which if remains unresolved produces convulsive grief, fear and anger. Grief, fear and anger are recipes for aggression. The carthasis process leads to release of the tensions and consequently engender the positive antithetical capacities of Love(countering grief), understanding(countering fear) and Self direction (countering anger) (Lear, 1992).

There are several Carthatic techniques but this study focuses on two which are related to Karate namely **Internal Ideation** and **Self directed Mobilization**. Internal ideation encompasses repetition of emotionally charged words and active imaginations, guided imaginations and conscious dreaming. Emotionally charged words used in Karate are mostly the words *Kiai* shout and even the *oss*. The Kiai of Karate is not just a normal shout. It involves inhaling air, contracting the abdomen sharp release through the voice box leading to release of tension (Funakoshi, 1981). This leads to resolution of aggressive anger which naturally is solved through shouting and high frequency and storming movements as observed in most angry persons (Heron, 1998). In other words, what aggressive people do in streets is already done by a Karateka in Karate dojo in a more organized way. This is further proved by the second carthatic technic, self directional mobilization of body energy. In this technique the client engages in a diversity of vigorous bodily movements and breathing rhythms vocalizations (Heron, 1998).

These movements are fully present and embedded in Kihon, Kata and Kumite. Anger thus subdued leads to its antithesis, self direction which in turn is an antithesis of aggression. The grief aspect which normally resolves itself instinctively through tears and convulsive sobbing, trembling and cold perspiration (Lear, 1992) is carthatically resolved through internal ideation whose Karate equivalent is *moksu*(japanese for meditation). A resolved grief leads to love and peace which are ethical virtues.

## 4. EXQUISITENESS AND EXPLICITENESS OF MORAL EDUCATION IN KARATE

### 4.1. A History of Karate Ethics:

The first Karateka to have laid emphasis on the ethical dimensions of Karate is said to have been Takahara Peichin(1683-1760). Takahara, a student of Chatan Yara, emphasized that the virtues of compassion, humility and love alongside the technical aspects (Cowie & Dyson, 2016). With Takahara’s intervention, Karate began to be a morally infused activity. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century Matsumura Sokon(1809- 1899) insisted that a well trained Karateka should aim at self development, discipline, virtue, sincerity, peace and harmony. Later on Itosu Anko(1831-1915) is said to not only have laid emphasis on ethical aspects of Karate but most importantly, he was the first to transform Karate from its traditional set up of secrecy and One-Teacher-one student system. He brought Karate to the public arena especially shuri te version taught to him by Matsumura. The most relevant twist to Itosu’s project was that he introduced Karate to Okinawa Secondary schools and teacher Colleges as part of Physical education. The fact that Itosu’s project of teaching Karate to students was accepted by Okinawan educators is a clear sign that Karate is not a morally flawed activity. Most of the Karate Masters after Itosu Anko did not deviate from tradition of moralization of Karate. One of the most renowned figures in Karate’s moral education was Gichin Funakoshi

### 4.2. Gichin Funakoshi’s ethical conception of Karate:

Gichin Funakoshi(1868-) was born in Yamakawa district of Shuri. He studied Karate under Asato Anko(1827-1906). He later became a student of Itosu Anko(1831-1915) whom he regarded as his principle teacher. Funakoshi had intentions of joining medical school but having qualified was denied entry due to his pre-meiji birth. He then opted to become a school

master (Funakoshi, 1981). As a school master Funakoshi taught Karate to his students and founded a new branch of Karate called Shoto Kan Kartae. Funakoshi formalized both Karate techniques but also institutionalized Karate as a way of ethical living. He came up with precepts and rules some of which have been passed on to the current generation of Karatekas. In Gichin Funakoshi's project Karate was therefore not just a karate but Karatedo (the way of karate) (Cowie and Dyson, 2016). In fact Swennen asserts that Gichin was the first to attach the suffix *do* to Karate.

In the intent of Funakoshi, the ultimate and true aim of Karate is not only the defeat of the self but also the defeat of the demands, dissonance of the ego and transformation of oneself into a person of integrity and virtue. Funakoshi further indicates that "unless Karate is fought with certain ideals of behaviour, humility, compassion, self restraint, public spirit, it might be nothing but skilled application of violence and dishonorable purposes (Funakoshi, 1981) Funakoshi opines that the founders of Karate selected students with great care and devoted as much time for formation of character as the cultivation of the physical progress. The selection is an evidence that Original Karatekas aimed at the best of moral perfection.

A very critical philosophical analysis that can be made from Funakoshi is the metaphysics of holism in which reality is composite. It is made up of matter and form (Mattei, 2007)). In the same fashion Karate as reality is made up matter (the *te* aspect) and the form (the *do* aspect). So Funakoshi's Karate is a *tedo*, an amalgam of technique and ethics so substantially intertwined that without either, it is no longer Karate. Funakoshi did not stop at wishful and theoretical thinking, he made things happen. He further deliberately formulated rules which he called Dojokun, or Karate rules

#### 4.3. Moral education in Karatedo rituals:

Another striking feature of Karate in regards to moral education is its ritualism. It is plausible to posit that Karate is actually a ritual laden activity. As a ritual laden activity, it is *ipso facto* a value laden activity. There are myriads of rituals in Karate ranging from bows to meditations to profound squats that a Karate engages in, inside and outside the Karate dojo. A Karateka so well trained gets so engrossed that the ritual habits, all of which are morally embedded, become his second nature. It is because of this that serious Karatekas have no problems with respect, peaceful coexistence, patience and love.

Becker (1982) affirms this point by asserting that "skill in Karate does not come naturally. It is developed through a long and painful process of discipline and ritual." This implies that both mental, physical and emotional training take place in Karate. The mental infuses with physical to accentuate the *TE* while the emotional infuses with physical to build moral stamina. As such it is usual for Japanese athletes when asked why they study martial arts generally respond with the statement "Lukunren dakara"- for simple reason that it's a valuable activity (Hutton, 1955)

Atypical Karate session is filled with rituals. At the beginning of a Karate training session, a Karateka performs a *Rei*. *Rei* is a respectful bow with hands open and touching on the sides of the hip and bending from the waist at an angle of 90 degrees with the eyes facing forward. The bow is mostly accompanied by the word *oss*- a statement meaning Yes, I submit, I focus, I respect, I obey. The aspect of bowing is a show of deep respect that characterizes a Karateka's life and spirit.

The Karateka bows to the Sensei or Master and to colleagues because in every human being dwells the divine. Special note is made to the effect that even during competitions Karatekas bow to each other again in respect...meaning that competitors are not enemies (Sekida, 1975).

Alongside bowing, the Karatekas also meditate or perform what we call *Moksu*, either with absolute squat or while standing and forming a folded fist right in front of his face. Meditation prior to action and taking oath of loyalty to one's master creates a covenant with the invisible relationships that is so connected to man's inner spirit and values which man can come to know only via his own involvement and commitment to them. This implies that Karate also espouses spiritual relationship, an aspect that should not be narrowly construed to negative spiritualism or occultism but to general disposition of submersion and submission to the unknown benevolence as ultimately expressed in the existence of God. It's no wonder most Karate devotees are also committed religious people. Sensei Fredrick Kenyatta of Nairobi, Kenya reports that 40 percent of his trainees are either born-again Protestants or Roman Catholic priest or seminarians, or religious men and women, from colleges like Tangaza College, Hekima College, Sacred heart brothers, Augustinian friary....The fact that religious people can also become Karatekas means that Karate does not corrupt moral values.



#### 4.4. Ethical foundations of Karate Cosmology:

Cosmology, otherwise referred to as philosophy of nature is “the philosophical study of the nature and origin of the universe in as far as the universe is considered to be a unity and an ordered system per excellence” (Nyasani, 2012). Two aspects of cosmology that glare out in this definition are Order and Unity. The concept of order appeals to the metaphysical principle of Identity which states that every being is self-determined, is one with itself and is self-consistent (Mattei, 2007). This means that nature is so ordered and intelligently engineered such that the aesthetical conception of it is difficult to ignore. This consistency is also envisaged in Karatedo by virtue of the existence of different but closely knit levels of *Kihon*, *Katas*, and *kumite*. *Kihon* (Basic *technique*) logically leads to good *Katas* (Forms) which when applied forms *Kumite*(sparring). Thus someone doing *Kihon* is not doing a non-karate activity as opposed to one doing *Kumite*. This arrangement instils in the Karateka the spirit of duty and responsibility as espoused in deontological ethics and Kantian categorical imperatives (Ochieng Odhiambo, 2009).

The aspect of unity in the cosmos is yet another phenomenon that heavily weighs in on Karate. Unity is a metaphysical transcendental property of being that connotes oneness, inseparableness, and the impossibility of dismembering parts of a whole (Jacquette, 2002). The student of Karate is constantly reminded to remember his place, not only spatial but also hierarchical in connection to his Master, seniors, competitors and family (Becker, 1982).

#### 5. INDUCTIVE INFERENCE: IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW WITH SENSEI FREDRICK KENYATTA

On the 24<sup>th</sup> December 2017, an in depth interview on ethical dimensions of Karate in which Sensei Frederick Kenyatta (born 1966) was chief interviewee was conducted. The aim of the interview was to attempt an inductive foundation to this research. Kenyatta indicated that he has practiced Karate for 40 years and has taught Karate in several clubs and institutions in Nairobi, Kenya. He exhibited clear knowledge of the history of Karate, but most importantly affirmed that Karate is a way of life that requires consistent alertness and discipline (Kenyatta, 2017). The interviewee reported that in as much as discipline levels in his class may not be absolute, Kenyatta observed that most of his students can be authoritatively considered to morally upright persons by virtue of Karate. When asked to define Karate, sensei said “Karate is a *do(way)*, it is logic and since logic is part of philosophy, therefore Karate is a philosophy” (Kenyatta, 2017).

The responses of Kenyatta echo the views of founders of Karate. The fact he teaches Karate in learning institutions (Dagoretti Mixed Secondary School, Hekima College, Tangaza College) means that he spreads the spirit and intention of Master Itosu Anko. It also means that Karate is not ethically contradictory to the moral aspirations of the afore stated institutions. In addition, teaching Karate in religious institutions among priests, seminarians, nuns and catholic laity is evidence that Karate and Christianity can converge at the level of ethics. Secondly, that Kenyatta holds the view that Karate is a way of life, a life he has followed for forty years, confirms the views of Gichin Funakoshi that Karate is more than a Te.

#### 6. CONCLUSION

Having noted that Karate(formerly Okinawate), is a martial arts skill that involves techniques and moral training, and that some of the great Masters like Masumura Sokon insisted on moral obligations of Karate, we can infer that Karate practice is highly recommendable in education sector, for its role in moral education and curbing of indiscipline. Karate is also beneficial in promoting physical fitness but most important as Kenyatta (2017) opines, Karate is for body, mind and spirit. Furthermore, it is substantially<sup>2</sup> free from ethical misnomers.

#### REFERENCES

- [1] Back, A. &. (1979). Towards a Western Philosophy of Martial Arts. *Journal of Philosophy of Sport*, VI, 19-28.
- [2] Becker, C. (1982). Philosophical Perspectives of Martial Arts in America. *Journal of The Philosophy of Sports*, 9, 19-29.
- [3] Cowie, M. &. (2016). *A Short History of Karate*. Kyenko-ha Goju Karate Kempo Kai.
- [4] Funakoshi, G. (1981). *My Way of Life*. Kodansha.

<sup>2</sup> Substantially free means that the intent of Karate is basically positive development. This does not mean ALL Karatekas abide by the rules of Karate.

- [5] Gay, L. (2002). *Educational Research: Competencies for analysis and application*. London: Mairill publishi.
- [6] Gichure, C. W. (2015). *Basic Concepts in Ethics*. Nairobi: Focus Publishers.
- [7] Gleeson, G. (1976). *The Complete Book of Judo*. Toronto: Coles.
- [8] Hale, K. C. (2017). Retrieved December 11, 2017, from Hale Karate Club: [www.halekarate Club.co.uk](http://www.halekarate Club.co.uk)
- [9] Heron, J. (1998). Carthasis in human Development.
- [10] Husman, B. (1955). Agression in Boxers and Wrestlers. *Resaerch Quarterly*, 521.
- [11] Hutton, D. &. (1955). Effects of Combative Sport Upon Personality Dynamics. *Research Quarterly*.
- [12] Jacquette, D. (2002). *Ontology*. Chesham: Acumen.
- [13] Johnston, R. W. (1976, October 18). Dangerous Delusion. *Sports Illustrated*, 91-92.
- [14] Kenyatta. (2017, Decembeer 24). Shotokan Karate in Kenya: Discipline and Moral Education. (E. Kauka, Interviewer)
- [15] Kibera, L. W. & Kimokoti. (2007). *Fundamentals of Sociology*. Nairobi: University of Nairobi Press.
- [16] Kuntz, P. (1979). From Ziff to Zen: A Defence of the Aesthetics of Sports. *Philosophy in Context*, IX, 22-32.
- [17] Lear, J. (1992). *Karthasis*. Oxford: Princeton University Press.
- [18] Mattei, L. (2007). *Introduction to Philosophy*. Nairobi: Consolata Institute of Philosophy.
- [19] Mondin, B. (2016). *Philosophical Anthropology*. Bangalore: Thelological Publications.
- [20] Nachmias, F. (2000). *Research methods in social science oaks*. Sage publications.
- [21] Nhundu, T. J. (1993). *An Evaluation Report on The State of Art and Practice of Education With Production(EWP) in Zimbabwe: A researcvh Study Sponsored by Zimfep*. Harare: Zimpfep.
- [22] Njoroge, R. J. (2001). *Philosophy And Education In Africa*. Nairobi: Transafrica Press.
- [23] Nyarwath, O. (2010). *Traditional Logic*. Nairobi: Consolata Institute of Philosophy.
- [24] Ochieng Odhiambo, F. (2009). *A Companion to Philosophy*. Nairobi: Consolata Institute of Philosophy.
- [25] Odhiambo, F. O. (2003). *Introductory Symbolic Logic*. Nairobi: Consolata Institute of Philosophy.
- [26] Oruka, H. O. (1997). *Practical Philosophy In Searcch of Ethical Minimum*. Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers.
- [27] Peters, R. S. (1971). *Ethics and Education*. London: Unwin Publishers.
- [28] Riga, P. (1969). Violence: A Christian Perspective. *Philosophy East and West*, XIX, 145.
- [29] Rothpearl, A. (1980). Personality Traits in Martila Arts. *Perceptual and Motor Skills*, 395-401.
- [30] Sekida, K. (1975). *Zen Training: Methods and PhilosopOhy*. NewYork: John Weatherhill.
- [31] Sharma, P. (2009). *The Aims of Education*. New Delhi: APH Publishing Cooperation.
- [32] Swennen, F. (2000). *The Evolution of Karate: From Secret Martial Art to Worldwide Cultural Sport*. Tokyo: International Budo University, Japan.
- [33] Thomas, C. (1979). The Tragic Dimension of Sport. *Philosophy In Context*, IX, 35-42.
- [34] Todd, W. (1979). Some Aesthetic Aspects of Sport. *Philosophy in Context*, IX, 8-21.
- [35] Wainaina, P. K. (2006). Axiology and Education. In D. N. Sifuna, F. N. Chege, & I. O. Oanda (Eds.), *Themes inn The Study of The Foundations of Education* (pp. 138- 145). Nairobi: The Jomo Kenyatta Foundation.
- [36] Ziff, P. (1974). A Fine Forehand. *Journal of Philosophy of Sport*, 1, 92-109.