Transmission, Inheritance, Emulation 15 by Peter Goldsbury

INTERLUDE
VI: The Question of *Kotodama*:
Part 3: Postwar Resurrection: Back to Morihei Ueshiba's Elephant

NOTE. These columns are research-in-progress and a considerable amount of detail is presented. They are not finished essays and I am actually revising previous installments after they have been published on AikiWeb. *If they were finished essays, they would have been peer reviewed and much of what is in the text would be consigned to footnotes or endnotes. Moreover, of all the terms used in aikido, it is* kotodama *that is most in need of a detailed cultural context, so that people can see for themselves just how culture-bound this term is. In other words,* Kotodama *and* kototama gaku *were not invented by Morihei Ueshiba himself. In expressing his view of aikido as* kotodama, *Ueshiba freely borrowed from, and expressed himself in terms of, a cultural tradition going back to the* Man'yoshu *and beyond. The purpose of these last few columns has been to lay bare the details of this tradition.*

The two previous columns discussed in detail the general phenomenon of *kotodama*, from its assumed origins in Sanskrit 'seed' syllables, to the blend of Shinto and Shingon Buddhism seen in the *kotodama* cosmology and the training activities of Morihei Ueshiba. It remains to examine in this column the postwar revival of *kotodama* and also to consider to what extent this revival is a genuine resurrection of Morihei Ueshiba's *kotodama* training methods, or, if it is not, whether it is something that is worthwhile to study and practice, despite this. The three columns are really intended as a general history of *kotodama*, but, of course, one important focus of this general history is Morihei Ueshiba's *kotodama* training, considered in the broad sense of a combination of theory and practice, and how this is interpreted.

Rather like Tolkien's Ring of Power, *kotodama* lay buried for a while after the end of World War II, before being rediscovered. In the Aikikai, the occasion for this was the publication of books about Morihei Ueshiba that went further than technical explanations of postwar *waza*, as he was thought to have practiced them. In Japan, a practitioner of several martial arts, Mutsuro Nakazono, began training with Morihei Ueshiba some time after World War II. Nakazono studied (or 'stole' what he believed was) *kotodama* certainly from Ueshiba himself and also from other exponents. Nakazono moved first to France and then to the US and there concentrated on *kotodama* entirely. In the US, Nakazono created a *Kototama* Institute and published a number of books on *kotodama*. Thus Nakazono published his work on *kotodama* in English and this has some relevance to the issues discussed in this column.

Kisshomaru Ueshiba's biography of the Founder, published in Japanese in 1978, was the first work solely devoted to Ueshiba's life. Another biography appeared a few years later, which was written by Kanemoto Sunadomari, largely from an Omoto standpoint, but containing material that was not in Kisshomaru's 'official' biography. These two biographies were supplemented (and supplanted in some important respects) by the extensive researches of Stanley Pranin at *Aiki News* and *Aikido Journal*. These researches also included interviews with most of O Sensei's *deshi* and some of these *deshi* independently published books about aikido. These books were mainly technical training manuals, which also contained nuggets of information about Morihei Ueshiba's life, but other works were devoted to the examination of Morihei Ueshiba's personal life and training methods. Notable here are two works by Mitsugi Saotome, *Aikido and the Harmony of Nature* (1986), and *The Principles of Aikido* (1989).

An American expatriate resident in Japan, John Stevens published *Aikido: The Way of Harmony* (1984), a book on the training methods of his teacher, Rinjiro Shirata, who came from a family of Omoto believers and who was one of the Founder's earliest disciples. Stevens supplemented this book with two others: *The Essence of Aikido* (1993), and *The Secrets of Aikido* (1995). Coincidentally, another American, named William Gleason, went to Japan and studied for many years with an Aikikai Hombu shihan, Seigo Yamaguchi, and also with a lady named Sanae Odano. In 1995, after his return to the USA, Gleason published *The Spiritual Foundations of Aikido*. Also coincidentally, a student of Odano's named Stephen Earle, who also practiced aikido and knew Gleason, published an account of Odano's thought, entitled *Words, Characters and Transparency: An Introduction to the Art and Science of Kotoha* (2003). This was followed more recently by the sequel to Gleason's earlier book, this time dealing specifically with *kotodama* and entitled, *Aikido and Words of Power* (2009).

The above paragraphs cover works on *kotodama* published in English. However, there is one Japanese shihan resident in Osaka, Seiseki Abe, who is regarded as a major exponent of *kotodama* training, as Morihei Ueshiba allegedly conceived this. Seiseki Abe became a student of Morihei Ueshiba in the 1950s, after he attended the opening of the Osaka dojo of Bansen Tanaka. A calligraphy teacher, Abe also taught Ueshiba calligraphy and this became the focus of a close relationship, which also covered 'aikido as *misogi*'—and as *kotodama*. However, beyond interviews in *Aiki News* / *Aikido Journal* and discussions by his students on various websites,

very little has been published in English concerning Seiseki Abe's own studies with Ueshiba on *kotodama*. As far as I know, Abe Sensei himself has not followed Morihei Ueshiba's example and published discourses. Although one could assume that Abe Sensei's studies of *kotodama* would have followed the usual pattern of *kototama gaku* (for a definition and explanation, see below), since I do not have sufficient knowledge of Abe Sensei's views on *kotodama* to state anything of value, this column will focus principally on the work of Nakazono, Stevens, Odano (via Earle), and Gleason.

It should be emphasized here that the objective in discussing the above writers is not to present a general critique of their views on aikido. The objective, far more specific and directly related to *kotodama*, is to focus on two questions: In their examination of *kotodama*, have these writers discovered, or re-discovered, something about Morihei Ueshiba's own aikido that has been lost? If not, is the *kotodama* discussed by them something that is essential for everyone's general understanding of aikido and training in the art?

Finally, after discussing these authors individually, as a general conclusion I will round off the last few columns that have dealt with language in aikido and *kotodama*, by considering once again the more general questions relating to aikido history and thought that concern the average practitioner: the nature of sources and the handling of evidence; meaning & discourse; belief systems as these govern training regimens. Actually, I have alluded to these issues many times in the previous four columns and perceptive readers will have a good idea of what they are. To be considered here is the question of the sense and reference, to use Frege's terms, of *kotodama*. This issue is of fundamental importance and is so for the reasons presented in the next section.

13. International *Kotodama*

The two previous columns have looked at *kotodama* in its own Japanese cultural setting. Even Kukai explained Sanskrit 'seed' syllables for the benefit of his Japanese compatriots and, right from the *Man'yoshu* onwards, there has been a pronounced (some would say, 'exclusive') Japanese context to *kotodama*. In contemporary culture there is a residue of what Yanagita Kunio studied as folk beliefs—a blend of Shinto and Buddhism, in which *kotodama* has a definite place. (Even my Japanese university students, thoroughly imbued with postwar Japanese values that supposedly have no place for prewar 'folk beliefs', still harbor vague notions about the nature of *kotodama* and many suppose that, whatever it is, it 'really' exists.)

With the postwar resurrection of aikido, however, matters have changed somewhat. *Kotodama* is still known in Japan, but (with a few exceptions) mainly as a relic of prewar or wartime values. Anyone training in aikido here is very unlikely to encounter *kotodama* as an essential training component, except in a very small number of dojos, all associated with certain disciples of Morihei Ueshiba. There are no books about *kotodama* and aikido in Japanese bookstores and the writings of Mutsuru Nakazono, John Stevens and William Gleason represent the thinking either of Japanese who have emigrated, or of non-Japanese who want to introduce and explain to an international readership what they believe is an important element in aikido culture. However, they are doing so outside the 'home' culture, where the complex Japanese connotations of *kotodama* are more likely to be understood. Outside this culture, *kotodama* theory and training are tied to a completely different frame of reference. One of the reasons for this lies in the problem of translation.

Sense and Reference

The problem is that *kotodama* in English masquerades as a proper name, when it is really a description in Japanese. To see what I mean here, take the names *Hiroshima* and *Tokyo*. The former can be written as 広島, 廣島, ひろしま, or ヒロシマ. All have important nuances, considered as the connotations of the name (such that I have seen it written in some of these ways, even on the same page of a Japanese official document), but the meaning of the name is conveyed by the description, '*Wide Island*'. Of course, no one ever refers to the city of Hiroshima as *Wide Island* because it is not the proper name of the city. Similarly with *Tokyo*, which is written as 東京 and means '*Eastern Capital*'. However, every Japanese speaker who uses either name knows immediately that the names are also descriptions, so there is never a conflict in meaning between the proper name and the description.

Kotodama is different. It is not the proper name of any entity, like a city or an individual, but a descriptive common name, a Japanese compound word, meaning, 言葉に養う魂: *soul or spirit residing in word(s)*. It is unfortunate that there is no one accepted English translation for *kotodama*, such as '*the spirit of words*' (the rendering of Ian Hideo Levy, in his translation of Poem 894 in the *Man'yoshu*), or simply '*word-spirit*'. For this reason, like *aikido*, *judo*, *karaoke*, *karate* and *kendo*, the term is usually left untranslated and I have followed this practice in these columns. However, with *aikido* and *judo* etc, which have become anglicized, there is a clear reference to the terms: the respective martial arts or specific activities, and also a sense, which can appear as a definition in a dictionary, like the big *Oxford English Dictionary*.

With *kotodama*, on the other hand, there is no clear sense or reference and so it is not immediately clear, when someone uses '*kotodama*' in English, what exactly is being meant or referred to. The untranslated term functions somewhat like

Holy Spirit would do, but without the capitals. Morihei Ueshiba most certainly believed that '*word-spirits*' existed, that they were holy, and that they play(ed) a fundamental role in the creation and continued existence of the universe. He was not simply using the term as a metaphor. Kisshomaru Ueshiba, on the other hand, did not "entirely" believe in 'word-spirits' and his use of the term *kotodama* shows that he thought that it was an important cultural relic—something that was clearly of great importance for his father, but was not of any relevance to his own aikido training.

Kisshomaru Ueshiba was the first of the 'revisionists & demythologizers', and many have followed in his footsteps. Some, however (I suspect a very small minority), might still believe that the term *kotodama* or '*word-spirit*' specifically refers to something that really exists: that there really are unknown spirits or deities that reside hidden in words or utterances and cause things to happen in accordance with these words or utterances; others think that it refers to an object of semi-ethical belief, or to a magic spell, or to a total figment of the imagination. Others, reluctant to consign *kotodama* to the 'dustbin' of aikido history, 'reduce' it to what they believe are the essential features relevant to aikido training, such as 'vibrations' that issue from uttered sounds or unexpressed 'intentions', on the grounds that these are more easily understandable than Morihei Ueshiba's more arcane explanations, or to a set of training exercises, which, it is claimed, will produce the same effects as those that Ueshiba's *kotodama* training allegedly produced.

This 'reductionist' approach is not without merit. My own aikido teachers (all Japanese, who, with one exception, were direct students of Morihei Ueshiba) treated *kotodama* exactly like Kisshomaru Ueshiba did. It was something that they had heard O Sensei talk about, but it was not of direct concern to them. The fact that aikido actually **was** (identified with) *kotodama* for O Sensei, did not at all mean that aikido was (identified with) *kotodama* for them. So they rationalized this discrepancy in their own respective ways. Making a broad division between the 'physical' and the 'spiritual', they claimed not to understand what O Sensei was talking about and stressed that, in any case, he never expected them to accept his own religious or cosmological beliefs; they realized that aikido—an art with physical and non-physical elements—was also profoundly spiritual, but they also believed that this spiritual aspect was not tied to one particular form and could be accessed in a number of ways; in any case, there could be no return to prewar militaristic ways of thinking. Nevertheless, it would be a complete mistake to assume that these teachers did not in a real sense separate what Ueshiba said about *kototama* from the more mysterious aspects of his own training and attempt to embody what he showed them. Two in particular, Seigo Yamaguchi and Hiroshi Tada, exhibited a kind of training that seemed to exhibit *kotodama* without the '*koto*': the 'spirit' was certainly there, but without the sounds.

業Gyo vs. 学Gaku

There are also two aspects of *kotodama*. In the *Man'yoshi* it was regarded as spiritual power resident in words or formulas, uttered under special conditions. The focus was practical: on the efficacy of the utterances. In the case of Sanskrit 'seed' syllables, Kukai had specified how this was to be achieved in terms of '*sanmitsu*' training, involving utterances, gestures and visualizations. Some of this was later incorporated into 'esoteric' Shinto. On the other hand, in the writings of Shido Yamaguchi and Onisaburo Deguchi, the scope of *kotodama* had been widened to include studies of the complex connections between (1) the 50 syllables, or 75 sounds, represented by Japanese *kana*, and (2) various deities, or the acts of these deities, as recorded in the ancient chronicles like the *Kojiki*. The essential condition here, however, was that these texts had to be interpreted in a special esoteric way (not the way of Motoori Norinaga and traditional philologists). Morihei Ueshiba occasionally states in his discourses that *kotodama* has to be practiced as *gyo* (業), but he also gives lengthy explanations of sounds and utterances based on what he himself calls (言魂学: *kototama gaku*: *kotodama* theory: *kotodama* as an academic subject of study). The works of M Nakazono also display this kind of interpretation. It is hardly necessary to add here that '*kotodama* theory' is not necessarily '*kotodama* fact'; it has not been proven to be true.

Of some importance here is the general looseness in meaning of the Japanese term *-gaku*, when used as a suffix. The presence of the suffix does not entail that *Xxxxx-gaku* is actually a proper subject of study. On the one hand, *Butsuri-gaku* (物理学: commonly translated as *physics*) has well-established credentials as an academic subject of study and research, with its own internal structure and methodology, following the model pioneered by Aristotle in his Lyceum. *Hiroshima-gaku* [広島学: the name of a course taught at the said university], on the other hand, does not. (The course contains a hodge-podge of topics, all coincidentally or peripherally connected with Hiroshima. I myself used to lecture in this particular subject, or pseudo-subject.) The issue then arises about the internal structure and methodology of *kototama-gaku*, for these seem to be as esoteric as the subject matter itself and, in fact, *Kotodama-gaku* is not offered as a subject of study in any mainstream Japanese university.

Nevertheless, a corollary of this general division between *gyo* and *gaku* is that the practice of *kotodama* has to be done in the correct fashion: it has to be done in the light of *kototama gaku*. So it will not do for someone simply to chant sounds and assume that they are somehow maintaining the universe or whatever. Another corollary is that **if** it is practiced

correctly, the assumption has to be that tangible results will accrue. However, it will be impossible to determine whether these results are due to the correct method, or to the power of the spirit, summoned as a result of the correct method: in other words, there is no clear criterion of correctness. A major issue here is what these results actually are, and whether—and how—they can be described, or even measured, in concrete, objective, terms. With respect to the study of *kototama gaku*, an additional corollary is that the texts also have to be studied—or interpreted, in the correct way: a deconstructionist view of *kototama gaku*, for example, according to which one can simply give a 'reading' of a text like the early *Kojiki* will not suffice. Nor will a 'literary' analysis of the *Kojiki*, such as one can find in the scholarly editions published in Japanese from the time of Motoori Norinaga onwards. It might well be the case that the origins of Onisaburo Deguchi's explanations of *kototama gaku* lay in the experiences encountered on Mt. Takakuma in 1898, but he also studied the works of nativist scholars such as Shido Yamaguchi (1765-1842) and borrowed heavily from them. So it would be incorrect to state that his *kototama gaku* originated solely in his mystical experiences in the mountain cave.

A major problem, then, for those who wish to resurrect *kotodama* as an essential component of postwar aikido and make it something more than a historical relic of Japanese culture, is to find a sense and reference that does full justice to the term, but one that is not identified either with spirits, deities or magic spells, or with complex readings of texts written in the Japanese language, or with Morihei Ueshiba's own **private** religious beliefs and cosmology. I have emphasized 'private' here, in order to take account of the fact that Ueshiba himself most definitely had a cosmology and that this was essentially a religious cosmology, involving his own relationship with numerous deities. However, though he described what he himself was doing in terms of this religious cosmology, he never required his students to accept this religious cosmology as a necessary condition for their own individual progress in the art. In this respect, Ueshiba was being a traditional Japanese teacher: he was showing a Way of 修業 (*Shugyo*), a set of practical signposts, but which was based on his view of the world and of his own place within it. Students were free to use these practical signposts as they thought fit, in constructing their own respective views of the world and their own respective places within it.

14. Mutsuru Nakazono and The *Kototama* Principle: A Postwar Primer of *Kototama Gaku*

M Nakazono followed the example of his teacher and changed his name regularly. His published books, mentioned below, all appear under the name 'Mikoto Masahilo Nakazono'. So I intend Nakazono Sensei no disrespect at all by referring to him in the usual way with academic papers: *Nakazono*, the surname only. My acquaintance with Nakazono and his writings is based on a number of published works in English: (1) *My Past Way of Budo, and Other Essays* [1978], though the first essay, *My Past Way of Budo*, was originally edited in 1972; (2) *Inochi, The Book of Life* [1984], which is a revised edition of an earlier work, *Kototama*, published in 1979; (3) *The Source of the Present Civilization* [1990]; (4) *The Source of the Old Testament* [1974] and *The Source of the New Testament* [1990], which were published together in 2007 as *The Source of the Old and New Testaments*. (They are listed in the order in which, in my opinion, they are best read.)

Nakazono preferred Morihei Ueshiba's pronunciation of the crucial term 言霊, with a 't' rather than a 'd'. He is writing in English and makes his own rules of transcribing *kana* syllables into Roman script. He renders the Japanese ら *ra*, り *ri*, る *ru*, れ *re*, ろ *ro* in Roman script as *la*, *li*, *lu*, *le*, *lo*. There is actually a major issue here. Motoori Norinaga and his *kokugaku* successors were convinced that *kotodama* worked only with the fifty 'pure' sounds of the Yamato (= Japanese) language. A vast amount of phonological research has been expended on the actual number of sounds and on the differences between 'native' and 'non-native' production of these sounds. Given that Nakazono also expects the sounds to be uttered with correct enunciation—all his books come with a set of pronunciation rules, his transcription of the sounds into a system that is not phonologically 'pure' is unusual.

In terms of style, or the 'internal informal logic of written discourse', Nakazono also presents a few problems. He meanders from topic to topic and also writes in full-blown 'guru' mode, mixing the uttering of 'timeless truths' with statements about his own life, and some of the nuances here are lost in translation. So, in spite of a clear sense that Nakazono is struggling to communicate a message that he considers of crucial importance for his readers, he (or his editor) appears to have little regard for the maxims of Grice's 'Cooperative Principle' (Column 12).

Nevertheless, Nakazono's message is very much worth close and detailed study, for it is the most detailed exposition currently available in English of one version of *kototama gaku*. One of my earlier aikido teachers, K Chiba, always spoke of Nakazono with great respect and many older aikido practitioners in the UK and France have fond memories of a formidable martial artist. Nevertheless, Nakazono seems to have occupied a position in the Aikikai that bears comparison with that of Minoru Hirai, of Korindo Aikido. Like Hirai, Nakazono was—and also was not, an '*uchi-deshi*' of Morihei Ueshiba (depending on the source). Nakazono was certainly connected with the postwar Aikikai Hombu closely enough to become the Hombu's 'European Representative', but he does not appear among the close *deshi* of the Founder. My

own, personal, view is that Nakazono, like Morihei Ueshiba himself, was a ‘loner', who came into Morihei Ueshiba's orbit and stayed there long enough to include aikido among the stages of a much wider ‘life-search', that eventually led him to live permanently outside Japan.

Perhaps the best entrance to Nakazono's thinking is through the essays in *My Past Way of Budo*. The first essay has the same title and is in three parts. In the first part Nakazono sketches the first fifty years of his life: his early budo training; his state of mind when serving as a soldier in Indonesia during World War II; his meeting with a *Shugendo* teacher named Sakai, who advised Nakazono to acquire a statue of *Jizo Bosatsu*; his training with Morihei Ueshiba; finally, his meeting with Koji Ogasawara, who taught Nakazono the *Kototama Principle*. It would be fair to infer that up to this point Nakazono was not entirely satisfied with his budo training, or his life in general. At the time he met Sakai, Nakazono was practicing aikido with Morihei Ueshiba. Even with this training, however, there were difficulties:

"*There is only one absolute a priori life-will of beings, **I**, which creates the human body and invests it with physical power, **WI**. Ueshiba O Sensei tried to explain this with the words "Ki" and "Ko-Kyu", but I could not clearly grasp this from his explanation. I remember that he, too, was not fully clear about this because he followed the Ohmoto Shinto sect. Between the a priori human life-will, **I**, and the human body's power, **WI**, there are eight motive powers or vibrations. These he grasped instinctively and wanted to manifest them through budo movement, thus founding Aikido. However, the Ohmoto sect, as with all other Shinto sects, does not purely transmit the Kototama Principle. This is why he could not exactly explain with words what he could grasp in a priori*." (Nakazono, *My Past Way of Budo*, p. 5.)

The problem was that the relationship of "Ki" and "Ko-Kyu" is not a clear explanation of *I* and *WI*

"*from the viewpoint of the Kototama Principle. On this point O Sensei, himself, had some inner confusion. It is at this point that all spiritual and religious seekers finally have difficulty. They can grasp it but without the Kototama Principle they have no way of transmitting it to others*." (Nakazono, ibid.)

Nakazono, however, writes with the confidence and self-assurance that he has seen through the problem and has solved these difficulties. This is not, however, clear from his actual writing. Here, the obvious desire to explain an important message clearly vies with the presence of a mist of obscurity, as if we are reading him through opaque glass.

M & Ms: *Meikoku* 明鏡 and *Muga* 無我

In Part Two of his essay, Nakazono seeks to explain the point of *budo* training. He emphasizes again and again that competition—winning, is not the aim.

"*The original meaning of the competitive system in Budo was to test and clarify one's state of mind by seeing it manifest in one's actual capacity. Today, no one teaches or talks in this way: competition is a test for a grade or prize. O Sensei knew this and didn't allow any competition in aikido practice. This was beautiful, yet the grading system remained to later become a cancer, guiding the Aikido student opposite to O Sensei's wishes*."

"*Getting over the fighting mind is what Budo is all about. To do this we must cleanse our mind of all its negative aspects in order to allow the morality and judgment of a clean mirror. … The state of having a clean mirror is called mei-kyou* [明鏡]." (Nakazono, *My Past Way of Budo*, pp. 9-10.)

The counterpart of *mei-kyo* is *muga* [無我] and this is identified with a void state, or a state of absolute balance.

"*The final objective of Budo exercise is to cultivate the highest human capacity. If we hate someone, our mind is immediately unbalanced; if we have fear, our mind becomes turbulent. Joy and sadness also create imbalance in the mind and spirit for the Budo practicant. If we're sick, mei-kyou cannot exist. Any kind of aggressive or defensive desire causes disharmony and disturbs the mind. To thoroughly explore the very source of this, we must stand outside of the physical senses, which means, "to die". If we decide to die, that resolution in itself is a hindrance and causes an imbalance. The only way is to get into the absolute void, the sense of nothing*." (Nakazono, ibid.)

Nakazono thus spent the greater part of his life searching through *budo* for a way to reach this state. He is certain that exceptional actions are possible from the kind of power and judgment that emerges from the void state. Of course, he sees that such actions occur outside *budo* and need not, therefore, be due to *budo* training

"*One wonders how and what kind of superior power arises through our body, but traditional Budo has no answer.*"

Thus Nakazono asks the same question that Kukai asked during his life as a monk, and that many other *budo* exponents have asked and continue to ask: how can one train the body-mind to reach, enter, achieve, rest in, a certain state of being, such that, in Nakazono's terms, the physical, the mental, and the spiritual are in complete harmony.

We need to look at the way Nakazono sets out the issues here. To begin with, Nakazono sees the goal of *budo* as the ‘achievement of the highest human capacity'. I think there is general agreement that martial arts in general, but especially aikido, set out to make the dedicated practitioner ‘better' and that this ‘better' is a blend of the undifferentiated ‘physical', 'non-physical' and ‘spiritual', but the absolute, transcendental way this is expressed here raises the kind of questions asked of Kukai in Column 13: What does this achievement consist in? Is it similar to sainthood? Does this achievement have a moral dimension, or is it purely a capacity to do whatever the possessor wishes? At what cost is it achievable? How does it

relate to the 'average' *budo* practitioner, who sees *budo* training as a part, albeit an important part, of life as a whole?

The second point is that Nakazono equates this achievement with looking in a mirror and seeing exactly what is reflected there: nothing more, nothing less. (Most fictional mirrors do **not** do this!) Another metaphor is to see the mirror as reflecting a person as a microcosm of the universe, but this is still a metaphor. Some teachers have equated *budo* with polishing the mirror: enabling the mirror to fulfill its function better, but mirrors—even polished mirrors, like shadows, do not add to or subtract anything from their subjects, for this is the whole point of reflection. The question is whether a term like *meikyo* (明鏡) adequately conveys the goal of *budo* training.

Moreover, this is rather different from being in a state of equilibrium. Being in a state of balance is not unique to *budo*, for Aristotle held that a state of balance between the four humors was the key to a sound personality. However, being in a state of balance, again, is different from the state of void (無我 *muga*). In *Terminator 2: Judgment Day*, hero John Connor discusses similar issues with the Terminator. He learns from the Terminator that it has no fear of death, nor feels any other emotion about it; it just has to stay functional until its mission is complete. One can ask how this state is different from the combination of 'highest human capacity', '*mei-kyou*' and '*muga*', that Nakazono believes is the achievement of *budo*. The Terminator is less in a state of total equilibrium than in a state of the total absence of anything that might conceivably upset his equilibrium, if this were present. In fact, the Terminator operates in reverse and learns to create an ego, a self, which then enables it to decide to sacrifice itself in the end. In other words, the Terminator's 'ego' is tied to an action with a moral dimension, which is an action of a different sort from those it undertook before its CPU was reset (in the 'Special Edition' of the film). We feel we know intuitively that there is a fundamental difference between the Terminator, who already appears to be in a state of *meikyo* (明鏡) and *muga* (無我), and a human being, who has to train very hard to attain both. The question is whether *meikyo* and *muga* are correct, or even useful, descriptions of the 'highest human capacity' achievable through *budo* training and, if so, how these states can actually be achieved (always strictly in terms of training).

Grasping the Principle

Nakazono's entire literary output is concerned with what he calls the *Kototama Principle*, for he is convinced that the Kototama Principle is "a perfect answer": the key to achieving this 'highest human capacity'. A brief description of this is given in the following paragraphs.

"*All that exists, manifest and unmanifest, is in our spirit. It exists in our being, both conscious and unconscious, in Naka-ima (here-now). All of the past exists in our memory, which is **O** dimension, in this present life moment. Standing in **O** with **A** dimension's power to expand and imagine is how the future of all beings exists here and now. The true time and place of the existence of the past and future is Naka-ima. **I**, the life-will of beings, creator of time and space, and **WI**, the physical life-power of beings, are both expanding and active in here-now. Human life-will, **I**, transforms to human capacity, **WI**. This gives life to the five physical senses, **U**, the memory or intellectual capacity, **A**, and the judgment and moral capacity, which is **E**. **I-WI** gives power to the four dimensions and their activity gives birth to all human capacity.*

"*We see the world from two different perspectives: **U** dimension senses the limited world, that of form, color, sound, taste, etc., creating the finite world of physical realization, and **A** dimension's capacity grasps that which is infinite. The experiences of these two 'eyes', acting in here-now, are recorded in **O** dimension which then becomes knowledge. All that is grasped is put into order (time and space), separated and judged by **E** dimension. The highest morality is a consequence of **E** dimension. The life-world, that of Kototama-Futomani, can only be grasped with the 'eye' of **A** dimension. It can't be grasped with **U** dimension's capacity; not seen, heard, smelled not touched with the physical senses.*" (Nakazono, *My Past Way of Budo*, pp. 12-13.)

Nakazono's schema here is similar in some respects to Kukai's *Ten Stages in the Development of the Mind* (of which there is a good account by John Krummel in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*: http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/kukai/#TenStaDevMin). Unlike Kukai, who made use of a pre-existing Chinese penchant for using levels specified by numbers, Nakazono uses *kototama gaku* to establish super-ordinate letters. As with Kukai's ten levels, each letter stands for a way in which the world can be perceived. Nakazono's system also combines the order of being (the Kototama Principle, as it really is) with the order of knowledge (the order in which we become aware of the Kototama Principle as it really is).

The Dimensions of *Inochi* 命

Nakazono gives a more detailed explanation of his theories in *Inochi* (1984). Like Deguchi's *Reikai Monogatari*, this work is a typical example of *kototama gaku*. In the way he expresses his theories, Nakazono basically follows a *kototama gakusha* named Koji Ogasawara [小笠原 孝次 1904-1982], who published his theories in a book entitled *Kototama Hyakushin* [言霊百神]. The world of *kototama gaku* is actually quite small, so it should cause no surprise that there is frequent mutual borrowing of ideas and cosmological structures or paradigms.

Basically, human existence is seen in five 'dimensions' [I have used quotation marks because the word is being used as a metaphor and the meaning is not immediately clear], which have the following features: (1) Each 'dimension' is signified by one of the *kana* syllables *A*, *I*, *U*, *E*, *O*. (2) Each 'dimension' corresponds to a spectrum of syllables in the *kana* system, for example, from *A* to *WA*, via *KA*, *SA*, *TA*, *NA*, *HA*, *MA*, *YA*, *LA*. (3) Each 'dimension' is linked to a particular human capacity for apprehending the world in a certain, usually limiting, way. In Nakazono's terms:
"*Human life will and power. **I-WI**, act as eight motive vibrations; it is this action which later creates the human body…*"

"*The eight motive vibrations synchronize with phenomena of a priori universe, catching the life rhythm as separate dimensions, grasping the universe as **U-A-O-E**, the four dimensions of mother sounds.*" (Nakazono, op. cit., p. 2.)
In the rest of the book, Nakazono explains the five 'dimensions'. He begins with an account of the ***U*** 'dimension' (he always prints the letters in bold type). This is the void.
"*It is without light and chaotic. Nothing exists; there is no separate earth, self, others, etc. They are all mixed together, just existing in **U**. To talk about this dimension's world, without the **U** sound, becomes symbolic and, therefore, meaningless.*"(Nakazono, op.cit., p. 14.)
However, this is true only in Nakazono's universe. The first two verses of *Genesis* record no such sound and it is also clear that the writer of these verses drew on a vast literary tradition in the ancient Near East (See J B Pritchard, *ANET*).
Nakazono continues:
"*In this state of no name, no form, no number, phenomena of the total a priori universe manifest with the name or word of **U**. "In the beginning was the Word" (John, Chap. 1) refers to this word.*" (Nakazono, op.cit., p. 6.)
Here Nakazono reveals what amounts to an obsession, shared by all the *kototama gakusha* since Onisaburo Deguchi, with presenting the opening words of John's gospel as an example of *kotodama*. Morihei Ueshiba shared this obsession and even Kisshomaru Ueshiba makes a reference to the '*logos*' statements (though Kisshomaru, correctly, does not identify the '*logos*' statements with *kotodama*). The other point emphasized by Nakazono is that in each 'dimension', the fifty sounds [they are actually Japanese *kana* sounds in Roman script, with anglicized pronunciation] have to be practiced and the reason for this is that only thereby can the practitioner find the "truth" behind the "intellectual" descriptions, given in mere "words". But no indication is given as to how the "truth" is to be found and, if it is, to what degree.

The ***U*** 'dimension', according to Nakazono, separates into two.
"*The total a priori universe manifests itself as the world of **U** dimension first. The next moment, this dimension separates into two, as subject—the seer—and object—what is seen. This is a relativistic point of view, since U, separating to two, is still within the one universe of **U**. …*
*At this moment of dimension and time, the manifestation cannot be grasped. It comes out as the sound of **A**, just lighting up the universe of **U** dimension, like a sunrise. With the light of **A**, the world of objective phenomena can make its appearance. That rhythm, at the time of its appearance, is the Mana*" [as in the Old Testament: food for the Israelites wandering in the desert] "*of **WA**.*" (Nakazono, op.cit., p. 18.)
Thus Nakazono switches from the undefined 'dimensions' and describes a dynamic movement, as in a triangle, from *U* to *A* and to *WA* and from *A* to *WA* and, following Onisaburo Deguchi and Omoto monistic doctrine, he identifies this movement with the divinities of established religions.
"*Our ancestors gave them symbolic names as gods—the three gods of creation. In Shinto **U** is called Amenominakanushi; **A** is Takami-musubi and **WA** is Kami-musubi. In Hinduism it is Shiva, Brahma and Vishnu. In Christianity, it is Father, Son and Holy Ghost. In the I Ching, **U** is Tai Chi, **A** is Yang and **WA** is Yin. Lao Tzu said, "One creates two, two creates three, and three creates all." That is, **U** creates **A**, **A** creates **WA** and **U-A-WA** creates all universal phenomena.*" (Nakazono, op.cit., p. 18.)
Having established the universe to his own satisfaction and after further injunctions to his readers to "grasp completely" the "fifty sound rhythms" and "search inside and practice with the Kototama Principle slowly", Nakazono explains the *O-WO* 'dimension'. The a priori universe in the order of *U-A-WA* is the source of the capacity for human life.
"***U** rhythm continuing to manifest **WU** becomes the five physical sense capacity of a posteriori beings. **A** continuing to manifest **WA** becomes the action of a posteriori human capacity. A priori continuing to manifest a posteriori—that action is **O**. …*
*The continuation of **O** becomes a posteriori capacity of memory, **WO**.*"
(Nakazono, op.cit., pp. 26-27.)
Nakazono makes the important point here that the activities of the *WU-WA-WO* 'dimensions' are different for each person and this is especially the case if the *WO* 'dimension' "lacks the truth of the Kototama mirror." This allows him to account for the obvious fact of language differences and to use the Bible story of the Tower of Babel, this tower being the "symbolic name" of the Kototama Principle.
"*Since the loss of the Kototama life principle, human memorial intelligence, **WO**, comes from **U** dimension, the experience of our physical capacity's action, its memory and knowledge: **WU-WO**. It is also from the experience of **A-WA** dimension's spiritual capacity, its memory and knowledge: **WA-WO**. …A posteriori capacities of **WU** and **WA** manifest differently, depending on individual conditions. **WU** and **WA** cause different experiences and memories of **WO**, and that is human memorial intelligence.*" (Nakazono, op.cit., p. 29.)

Nakazono needs to explain two more 'dimensions'. The capacity for knowledge and memory needs to be supplemented by that of judgment, which is *E-WE*.

"*Once we stand on **E-WE** dimension, we can see the objective phenomenal world—**WU-WA-WO-WE** dimensions —continuing to manifest in Naka-Ima in the space of our own physical life. Objective manifestations are like images on a screen, in the space of our body. They are not out there someplace, but here, in our physical space, in Naka-Ima. … Phenomena change from second to second and these changes are perfectly grasped by the subjective side, the activity of **U-A-O-E** dimensions' capacities. Standing on **U-A-O**, we can see only the synchronization of the subjective self with the objective self—those activities occurring in the unlimited space and time of the universe. From **E** dimension, all that activity is seen as occurring within our own physical space—here, and not there*." (Nakazono, op.cit., p. 29.)

Before explaining the final 'dimension', Nakazono considers what he calls the *Eight Father Rhythms*. There were mentioned above and are the sounds lying in between the four 'mother' vowel sounds *U A O E* and the long vowel sounds, *WU*, *WA*, *WO*, *WE*. These are the 'eight motive rhythms of life', expressed in letters as *T-Y-K-M-S-L-H-N*. The 'synchronization' of these rhythms with the four 'mother' sounds yields the universe as we apprehend it.

"*The action of the either father rhythms lets the total a priori universe appear as the a posteriori limited world, the scientific universe. They are as a bridge between a priori and a posteriori. Our ancestors used the symbolic name of **Floating Bridge of Heaven**, **Ame no Uki Hashi**. It has the same meaning as the covenant between God and Noah, symbolized as a rainbow.*" (Nakazono, op.cit., p. 29.)

There is still something missing: the 'life-will' *I*, and the 'life-power' *WI*, which holds everything together and 'animates' the entire scheme. However, this 'dimension' is hidden, in the sense that it is not immediately apparent and needs to be searched for. The *I-WI* 'dimension' in synchronization with the eight sound rhythms, *TI*, *KI*, *SI*, *HI* and *YI*, *MI*, *LI*, *NI*, creates the perfect human person. Nakazono supplies a diagram (p. 62) of the action of *I-WI* with the eight rhythms and shows that human perfection is achieved with perfect balance of the 'expanding' and 'concentrating' energies of these rhythms. Thus, Nakazono sees the I-WI 'dimension' as the final stage in human development or awareness.

"*The first manifestation of **I-WI** is **U** and becomes **A-WA**, **O-WO** and **E-WE**, these separate manifestations. The person searching the truth who can arrive at **U-A-O-E** dimsensions, in that order, and who can stand on the viewpoint of universal spirit, is called, in Buddhism, a bodhisattva. … If one arrives at the final dimension of **I-WI** and can open the life eye of the highest judgment **I-E**, that means he is reborn. This is the re-awakening of Buddha and the King of Kings of the Messianic prophecy. In today's society, the Buddha, or Messiah, is not manifest—he has not yet returned*." (Nakazono, op.cit., p. 67.)

Which Order is the Right Order?

As might be gathered from this account, (1) the order of the sounds within each 'dimension' and also of the 'dimensions' themselves is crucial to the whole scheme and (2) there are various ways of ordering both. Since we are dealing with fifty sounds, basically arranged in five major vowel group of ten sounds, each headed by a consonant, a different ordering will correspond to differing degrees of manifesting the capacities indicated by each lettered 'dimension'. In fact, Nakazono gives three different ways of ordering the sounds and explains that the three ways correspond to three types of civilization that can develop. The ordering and charts appear on p. 101 of *Inochi*.

The first way is called *Amatsu Kanagi* and orders the vowel sounds as *A*, *I*, *U*, *E*, and *O* and the consonant sounds as *KA*, *SA*, *TA*, *NA*, *HA*, *MA*, *YA*, *LA*, and *WA*. In fact this is the order of *kana* syllables in modern Japanese and can be found in any monolingual Japanese dictionary. This order, "results in the creation of the material-scientific civilization" (Nakazono, op.cit., p. 99.) However, Nakazono goes on to explain that this 'principle' cannot "realize the capacities of our ***A*** and ***I*** 'dimensions'. It is the natural life capacity of the first humans dimension and is not so different from the life of other animals." (Nakazono, ibid.) The second order, called *Amatsu Sugaso*, orders the vowel sounds as *A*, *O U*, *E*, and *I* and the consonant sounds as *TA*, *KA*, *SA*, *YA*, *MA*, *MA*, *LA*, *NA*, and *WA*. This order "creates the civilization of religion and art" (Nakazono, ibid.) Nakazono explains that, "from this principle we can consciously realize ***A-O-U-E***, but have not yet wakened to ***I*** dimension." For this, we need the third order, called *Amatsu Futonorito*, which orders the vowel sounds as *A*, *I E*, *O*, and *U* and the consonant sounds as *TA*, *KA*, *MA*, *HA*, *LA*, *NA*, *YA*, *SA*, and *WA*. This, according to Nakazono, "is the final principle of human life of Kototama Futomani" [which is the proper name for the Kototama Principle]. (Nakazono, p.109.) Finally, like other good *kototama gakusha*, Nakazono gives a list of the symbolic names of the fifty sounds as the deities in the *Kojiki*, beginning, of course, with the three creator deities: Ame no minaka nushi no kami (*U*), Taka mi musubi no kami (*A*), and Kami musubi no kami (*WA*). Nakazono adds that using the names of deities was a device for concealing the Kototama Principle.

In the complex explanation, given above, two aspects stand out. (I) Nakazono continually uses the terms '*a priori*' and '*a posteriori*', but gives them a special meaning. He uses them in a different way from Aristotle and Kant, for example. Aristotle and Kant used these terms when discussing the logic of knowledge and propositions. Nakazono seems to mean that the *a priori* state is pre-human, in terms of being: the situation described in *Genesis* on the first day of creation, or in the *Kojiki*, before Izanagi and Izanami were ordered by the deities to stand on the floating bridge of heaven and extend the 'heavenly spear' into the brine. However,

Nakazono also means pre-human in terms of knowledge: the universe in the first chapter of *Genesis* or the second chapter of the *Kojiki* is completely *a priori* until humans recognize it, when it inevitably becomes *a posteriori*: it is seen though the filters of human cognition. There is an arresting scene in the 1956 film of Dino de Laurentis, *The Bible: In the Beginning*. God begins to create Adam. There is a pile of dust and gradually a shape becomes visible. As the shape gradually solidifies, we can see arms, legs, a human body, appear. Adam gets up, looking about 25 years in age and speaking in perfect American English. From this point onwards, everything is inevitably *a posteriori*.

Nakazono is trying to cope with the same problem as that faced by Bible-writers and storytellers. He is narrating happenings in the creation of the universe as if he were a spectator, standing on the edge of the universe and looking on. He is also explaining the universe and our differing capacities for apprehending the universe, in terms of 'dimensions'. With storytellers, like J R Tolkien, J K Rowling and Philip Pullman, it is clear to the reader right from the beginning that it is a story. With *kototama gakusha*, on the other hand, the rules of the 'language game', to use Wittgenstein's phrase, are less clear and Nakazono constantly switches logical categories. Of course, he is probably quite entitled to do this, given the 'internal logic' of *kototama gaku* discourse.

(II) With Nakazono, the other *kototama gaku* theorists like Shido Yamaguchi and Onisaburo Deguchi, and also with Kukai & 'seed' syllables, there is a general assumption that needs to be borne in mind constantly. This is that the world is one. The general monist assumption is that the universe is one basic substance: an undifferentiated mix of matter and spirit. The pantheistic version of this monism is that this basic substance is also divine: the mix is of matter, spirit, and deity. God is not merely in everything: God really is everything.

There is also a preoccupation with the creation and maintenance of the universe in terms of sounds. This preoccupation (which has a very long history) can be seen for what it is when compared with Milton's cosmology in *Paradise Lost*. Milton's poem also draws on a long cultural tradition, which stands comparison with the cosmology of the *Kojiki* and, by extension, that of Onisaburo Deguchi and Morihei Ueshiba. With Milton, there is no sign of 'seed' syllables. Milton depicts the opening stages of the universe in terms that are far more relevant to the martial arts: a major battle between God and his rebel angels. Eventually God sends Satan and the rebels down to Hell, where the latter establishes a fortress, named Pandemonium, and starts planning a strategy to take back Heaven. There is also a rumor flying around the universe that God has created a world with a new race of beings and, in His inscrutable wisdom, has allowed Satan to go to this new world and tempt these human beings to join him—His point being that in this world, as in Heaven, everyone has free will. Up in Milton's counterpart of *Takama no Hara*, there is anguished discussion going on and angels are sent to warn Adam of the dangers—to no avail. Adam and Eve succumb and the rest, as they, say is history. However, there is no sign of the pantheistic monism that allows Kukai to regard everything as a manifestation of the eternal Buddha, sounds & syllables included. The problem with Nakazono's cosmology is that he goes into great detail: he gives a crucial role to sounds and syllables, but no clear indication of how this role is actually discharged—how changing the order of sounds actually affects the perceptions and world view of the person uttering the sounds, other than that the sounds are particular vibrations in the several 'dimensions'.

We need to take a final look at Nakazono's general strategy. Three major aspects need to be considered: (1) *kotodama* as knowledge, and (2) *kotodama* as being, (3) Nakazono as the 'Kototama Prophet'.

(1) First, with respect to knowledge, Nakazono follows his Japanese 'nativist' compatriots, like Motoori Norinaga, Jin'ichi Konishi and Hirata Atsutane, in postulating a Golden Age in the far distant past. In Nakazono's scenario, the people in this pre-Archaic Age understood ("*perfected*") the Kototama Principle. Whilst not appearing to restrict knowledge of the Kototama Principle to the Japanese or their ancestors, Nakazono makes Japan the central location of those in the Golden Age who understood the Principle. According to Nakazono, these people traveled widely outside Japan and both Christ and Mohammed, for example, themselves visited Japan on several occasions.

However, Nakazono adds an extra element: people in the pre-Archaic Age purposely hid the principle, making it possible only for certain individuals to acquire knowledge of it. The mechanics here are somewhat reminiscent of the challenges that heroes have to undergo in adventure movies. The hero, usually towards the end of the film, encounters challenges constructed with such fiendish ingenuity and expertise that one wonders how such construction was possible so many millennia ago. (Nor does the awesome stupidity of the 'primitive' tribesmen who are *de rigeur* in such films add to the general confidence in such pre-historic expertise, such that in the latest examples of the *genre* the challenges were constructed by alien beings of vastly superior intelligence, who visited the earth—and went to the most unlikely places, by the way—in the past.)

An archaic Golden Age is something that Nakaono very often stresses, with frequent references to the Garden of Eden and the Tower of Babel (original text in *Genesis*, Chs 2 and 11, respectively). These references are explained at much greater length in *The Source of the Old and New Testaments*. Here, Nakazono reinterprets the first three books of the Pentateuch,

St Matthew's Gospel and the Gospel & Apocalypse of St John, purely in terms of the three Principles (*Kanagi*, *Sugaso* and *Futonorito*), described earlier. To do this, however, he has to turn everything upside down and postulate a level of esotericism that is based on the existence of (a) a previous hidden civilization, which (b) used a hidden language—which was actually the precursor of the Yamato language, which language had a special writing system and, of course, possessed a unique semantic system yielding a perfect match (in Saussure's terms) between 'signifier' and 'signified', and (c) all evidence of which was deliberately concealed. It follows that the only way of deciphering the 'true' meaning of the Bible is via the Kototama Principle. However, for this to happen, it is necessary to turn things upside down once again and treat human language, not as an established means of natural communication among human beings, but as the residue of a mysterious artificial code (a kind of prehistoric version of Esperanto), used by the hidden civilization. The purpose of the code was to reveal a set of truths leading to something called a 'principle', but which was knowable only in terms of various manipulations of fifty syllables of the original language, again used as a kind of code. This leads on to the next point.

(2) The second aspect of Nakazono's strategy, with respect to being, lies in his treatment of principles. Since Nakazono has discovered—or established to his own satisfaction, the Kotodama Principle, he uses it as one might normally do with a principle: to explain things—in Nakazono's case, everything in the entire universe. This raises two very general questions:
(a) What are principles?
(b) What are principles supposed to do?
The whole tenor of Nakazono's argument is that the function of principles is to explain, but this seems curiously insufficient in the case of the Kototama Principle. The issue here is analogous to that of the Socratic Fallacy. In the early dialogues, Plato depicts Socrates as demanding a definition of some moral virtue. He attacks his Sophist interlocutors for claiming to teach virtue—and it is assumed that the capacity to teach a virtue entails that the teacher possesses the said virtue, but his interlocutors are invariably unable give an acceptable definition of the virtue. The fallacy lies in the assumption (a) that being able to give a definition of *x* is equivalent to possessing knowledge of *x* (for one can know *x* without being able to give a definition of *x*) and (b) that defining *x* is equivalent to knowing *x* (the content of the definition is assumed equal to the content of the knowledge).

With Nakazono's Kototama Principle, the issue is how the principle explains what it is supposed to explain. The analogous fallacy lies in the assumption that (a) merely citing a principle is equivalent to explaining the phenomena that need to be explained and that (b) the mere announcement or exposition of the principle is equivalent to giving the explanation. Aristotle had some inkling of this problem when he responded to the issues raised by the Presocratics and Plato concerning Nature, by invoking four types of *aitiai* (causes, reasons, explanations, principles). He saw that Plato's view of the Forms as Principles did not work.

In the *Man'yoshu*, *kotodama* as such is not invoked as a principle. As spirits or deities (powers) residing in words, *kotodama* is thought to be effective, but this is due to the actual presence and powers of the spirits or deities (the words acting as a kind of efficient cause, in Aristotle's sense). The *Man'yoshu* poets did not conceive of *kotodama* as playing any role in the creation of the universe or its continued maintenance. It is only with the application of Kukai's doctrine of 'seed' syllables to *kotodama*, along with an esoteric interpretation of the '*logos*' statements in St John's Gospel, that *kana* syllables assume greater responsibilities, such as being actual entities that create the universe. Morihei Ueshiba gave long explanations of the *kotodama* SU and the ひびき (*hibiki* vibrations) creating the universe, but

Nakazono leaves us in the dark about the actual mechanics of the Kototama Principle. As a principle, it was initially invoked to explain the marvelous things that one can do in *budo*, but its role was extended to include explaining everything else. However, one can ask whether it really is a suitable tool for the tasks it is required to perform, especially since it is something that has been intentionally buried for several millennia.

In short, one can question whether the Kototama Principle really works as a principle. Like Plato's Theory of Forms, it is very attractive as an explanatory device, but has all the same problems as Plato's Forms. Plato never solved the problem of precisely how the Forms in their own private world relate to their instantiations or participation (he hovers between the two poles) of their 'examples' in the world. This is true, of course, regardless of the way in which the principle is grasped. Nakazono spends much time arguing that intellectual apprehension of the Kototama Principle is not the correct approach. However, he still fails to explain how to grasp the principle in any other way. Of course, he can plead that language fails, but this is also because he has a theory of language reminiscent of Plato's *Republic*, according to which the words that we use—and that he also uses—are merely signs, like the shadows projected on the wall of the cave, and never reveal any true meanings. However, this leaves the original problem, of the relationship between the principle and that which it is supposed to explain, unsolved.

(3) Nakazono constantly uses the 'prophet motive' (the phrase used by Nancy Stalker, as the title of her book on Onisaburo Deguchi). In *The Source of the Present Civilization*, he explains how he arrived at the Kototama Principle. Nakazono's discussion here reads much more like a Dan Brown novel, involving 'secret' texts yielding a

parallel history of the world and Nakazono himself receiving revelations from the 'Celtic' stones of Carnac in France.

In *The Source of the Present Civilization*, Nakazono employs literary devices beloved of best-selling novelists like Umberto Eco and J R Tolkien. The first device is a set of secret documents that have lain hidden for centuries until someone, Nakazono, was able to read some of them. The second device is the existence of civilizations prior to and parallel with our own. In this case, the civilization was controlled by Sumela Mikoto, who
"*is the highest of the god-men, a human bring who has completely grasped the Kototama Principle and who embodies the life-will of the universe. In our modern era, this position was held symbolically by the emperors of Japan. The ancient records became their property and, as such, they were held to be sacred. The Takeuchi family itself, guardians of the documents since they were hidden, is not yet allowed to open some of the jars in which they are buried*."
"*The ancient world chronicles and the documents referring to the Kototama Principle were hidden separately. Only a few people in each generation knew of their existence; fewer still studied their contents*." (Nakazono, *The Source of the Present Civilization*, p. 46.)
However, all this changed at the end of World War II, when the Emperor Hirohito broadcast his surrender speech.
"*Until the end of World War II, the Japanese Emperor was considered to be a living god: Alahito Kami. When Japan lost the war, the Emperor Hirohito stepped down from his position and announced, "I am a man". He resigned his divine position of his own free will and the place of Sumela Mikoto was left empty. The Takeuchi documents had belonged to the god-men. They could now be opened to ordinary people*." (Nakazono, ibid.)
Thus, in the remainder of the book, Nakazono restates the conclusions he has reached in his other books about the Kototama Principle, adds more interpretations of the Bible, including translations of the so-called 'Takeuchi documents'. These documents allegedly reveal the bloodline of a people named Sumela Mikoto, the gradual concealment of the 'logically perfect language' that they spoke and also of the Kototama Principle. The reason for the concealment is certainly unusual: they did so, in order to allow for the development of our modern civilization. With the help of this modern civilization, the hidden Takeuchi documents would somehow surface and guide the world's society to the next stage.

I have devoted much space to Nakazono's theory of the Kototama Principle because it is a clear example of *kototama gaku* in English. Similar intricate theories to those of Nakazono can be found in all the *kototama gaku* texts and especially the texts of Shido Yamaguchi, which Onisaburo Deguchi read, and of Onisaburo Deguchi, which Morihei Ueshiba read. Later, we shall encounter precisely the same *kototama gaku* theory, but presented by William Gleason as a series of facts or truths about the universe and the human beings within it. However, *kototama gaku* is precisely what it states: it is theory—and highly speculative theory, not established fact. If the *kototama gaku*—the theory, is shown to lack any robust foundation, the question inevitably arises about any structures built on the theory. Thus the reader must judge not only whether it is possible to reproduce Morihei Ueshiba's *kotodama*, but also whether Ueshiba's *kototama* can be separated from the *kototama gaku* speculations, on which it is based. Thess questions will arise again, when we consider the efforts of John Stevens and William Gleason to explain *kotodama* and to find a place for it in postwar aikido.

With John Stevens, we enter a more reassuring world. In contrast to Nakazono, Stevens seems to have his feet much more firmly planted on the ground and the style of his discussions of *kotodama* is quite straightforward by comparison.

15. John Stevens: Grasping the Essence
The first discussion of *kotodama* can be found on pp.13 -- 15 of *The Essence of Aikido*. Though he does not describe it as such, Stevens there explains the religious significance of Morihei Ueshiba's aikido:
"*Morihei Ueshiba insisted that "Aikido is the study of the spirit." His own life was one long spiritual quest, an intense longing for the Divine, and his search for the deeper truths of religion and philosophy never ceased. Morihei pored over sacred texts, meditated on the mysteries of existence, prayed constantly to the gods, and was ultimately transformed by the most profound visions*." (*The Essence of Aikido*, p. 13.)
Thus, we can easily see why Ueshiba considered Kukai as a role model. Stevens continues:
"*Aikido was revealed to Morihei as an all-embracing path, an eclectic system containing elements of esoteric Shinto, Tantric Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, and even Christianity. He once said:*

'The Aikido I practice has room for each of the world's eight million gods and I cooperate with each one of them. The Great Spirit of Aiki enjoins all that is Divine and enlightened in every land. Unite yourself to the Divine, and then you will be able to perceive the gods wherever you are.'" (ibid.)
The thinking here is very close to that of the syncretistic Omoto religion, which regarded the object of all religions as manifestations of the one Great Universal Deity, which Ueshiba called the Great Spirit of Aiki.

In the bulk of the first chapter, Stevens gives a concise account of "aikido cosmology", which includes explanations of five diagrams drawn by Morihei Ueshiba. The account is simply a detailed statement of what Stevens believes O Sensei stated—and meant, with no further analysis. Stevens begins this account with the rather bald statement that, "*Aikido has its own cosmology*." Thus, it is as if Ueshiba created these concepts for himself, but we know from other

sources that this is not entirely true. For example, on pp. 23-24 of *The Essence of Aikido*, we find two diagrams. The first is entitled '*Futomani*'. Stevens gives an eloquent explanation of what this meant for Morihei Ueshiba and it is part of his discussion of 'Aikido's cosmology'. However, we find precisely the same diagram, entitled '*Futomani no mitama*', and with the same explanations, on pp. 11-12 of Shido Yamaguchi's *Kotodama Hisho* 『言霊秘書』, in the chapter entitled *Mitsu-hono-tsutahe* 「水火伝 火之巻一」.

Since Onisaburo Deguchi read Shido Yamaguchi's works extensively, it is clear that Yamaguchi was a primary source for Morihei Ueshiba's kototama gaku.

Nevertheless, *The Essence of Aikido* is of great interest because of the diagrams and pictures reproduced. There are five of these and Stevens states that all were drawn or commissioned by Morihei Ueshiba himself. However, there is no space to discuss them in detail here. Stevens gives a concise explanation of each and this is a useful supplement to the more arcane orations found in the *Takemusu Aiki* and *Aiki Shinzui* discourses, extracts of which were discussed in earlier columns.

Early in the first chapter, Stevens discusses *kotodama* (or *kototama*, as he follows Ueshiba's preference). According to Stevens, Ueshiba 'set forth his message in terms of *kototama*. Morihei maintained that the seed sounds of *kototama* "*direct and harmonize all things in this world, resulting in the unification of heaven, earth, gods, and humankind*."' As is usual with Stevens, there are no sources or references cited and the discussion, including the statements made by Ueshiba, is presented as a set of 'timeless truths'.

Stevens duly stresses the antecedents of *kotodama*, including the obligatory parallel with the *logos* statements in St John's Gospel, which are also to be found in the Omoto 'cosmo-theogony'. Stevens explains that, "*in Japanese translation, the character* 道 *("way," "path") was used to represent the concept of Logos*." I have to state that this is news to me. Neither the Japanese translations of the Bible in my possession nor the original Japanese text of Kisshomaru Ueshiba's discussion of St. John give 「道」 as the rendering for 'Logos'. In fact, on p. 137 of the Japanese text of his father's biography, Kisshomaru gives a Japanese translation of the opening statements of St John's Prologue. The Greek 'logos' is「言葉」('*kotoba*') and in the subsequent discussion 'Logos' in given in *katakana*, as 「ロゴス」.

This is one major problem with presenting general statements about *kotodama* as 'timeless truths', for just one counterexample can falsify the relevant statement and render all the other statements suspect. A positive interpretation would be that Stevens is doing his best to make Morihei Ueshiba clear and understandable to his readers by omitting useless detail. A more negative interpretation would be that Stevens, like Nakazono, sees himself as Moses coming down from Mt. Sinai and presenting 'timeless truths' about *kotodama* to the Aikido Faithful, who are not deemed capable of evaluating for themselves the evidence for these supposed truths.

Stevens concludes his preliminary discussion of *kotodama* with another 'timeless truth', this time making Ueshiba's *kotodama* 'all things to all men.'
"*Morihei's* kototama *theory derived from his experiences with Shingon ("True Word") Buddhism, from Omoto-kyo mysticism, and from his studies of the Shinto scriptures* Kojiki *and* Nihon shoki, *but he eventually developed his own spiritual language to express the rich texture of Aikido. Although Morihei's presentation of* kototama *philosophy is rooted in a particular tradition and milieu, it relates universal principles that are valid for any time and place. Once the essence of Morihei's* kototama *system is understood, it can be translated into any idiom*." (*The Essence of Aikido*, p. 15.)
This paragraph needs to be 'unpacked' somewhat, so that the sequence of thought is revealed more clearly.

1. Ueshiba's *kototama* theory derives from several sources.
This is incontrovertible and I have presented detailed evidence for this in the previous columns.

2. Ueshiba developed his own spiritual language to express the 'rich texture' of aikido.
This is quite possible, but the spiritual language was tied very closely to that of Omoto-kyo. It is not clear (a) whether Stevens regards Ueshiba's 'spiritual language' as the same as his '*kototama* theory' (probably not), or (b) what Stevens means by, 'the rich texture of aikido'. He gives no help in unpacking this metaphor.

3. Ueshiba's presentation of *kototama* philosophy is rooted in a particular time and tradition.
This is true, but I wonder if Stevens sees a distinction between Ueshiba's complex and intricate *kototama* 'theory' and his *kototama* 'philosophy'. As we shall see below, Odano Sanae's analyses of language are very rigorous in their own way, but are not to be identified with her overall philosophy of language.

4. However, Ueshiba's presentation of *kototama* philosophy 'relates' universal principles.
This is intended as a counter proposition to No. 3. However, the major issue for contemporary aikido practitioners is whether this is true, and, more importantly, whether it is relevant—and in what way—to their own training in 2009.

5. Once the essence of Ueshiba's *kototama* system is understood, it can be translated into any idiom.

This statement harks back to Plato and presents the same problem. Once we grasp the ‘essence' or ‘principle', everything else is easy, but the problem lies here, just as it did for Plato. What exactly is involved in grasping the ‘essence' of *kotodama* and why do we need to do this?

Stevens then goes on to explain Ueshiba's *kotodama* system, but one thing he does not do in *The Essence of Aikido* is actually explain the ‘essence' in an ‘idiom' other than Morihei Ueshiba's own. He does not, for example, consider prospective young readers from the US, very much accustomed to seeing the martial arts as fighting systems—and very much unaccustomed to seeing a martial art like aikido as a set of ‘universal principles that are valid for any time and place'.

Universal *Kotodama*

The discussion of *kotodama* in *The Secrets of Aikido* is more detailed and is closely related to a ‘trans-cultural' or ‘supra-cultural' view. The core statement can be found on p. 19.

"*Since Morihei was able to display incredible powers, it may be assumed that he really did strike the right chord with his* kototama. *But how are students to make use of this vital element of Aikido culture? Although Morihei talked constantly of* kototama*, it was a private practice for him ("I'm the only one in Japan who is still doing real* kotodama," *he used to say), and he gave no real instructions*. Kototama *was something that each person had to explore for himself or herself. Any language can be used, since every human tongue possesses effective word-spirits*.

"*There will be some people who disagree with this last statement (including Morihei, who inherited the culturally conditioned Omoto-kyo conceit that the sound SU occurs only in the Japanese language). This kind of linguistic provincialism—"Our tongue is the best and most beautiful, beyond compare with any other"—was (and still is) common, but as we learn more about the universal dimensions of word-spirit, it will be impossible to maintain such shortsighted views. When confronted with the arguments of linguistic purists, I like to relate this enlightening tale from Tibet:*"

The tale is of an old faith healer, whose healing was effective only when she used her own badly pronounced and grammatically incorrect prayers, in preference to the correct sentence structure and standard pronunciation taught her by her son, who was a formidable scholar-monk. Stevens appears to attempt to neutralize any objections based on language in the next statement:

"*A* kototama *is not a magic abracadabra—it is only effective when accompanied by a sincere attitude, genuine compassion and deep wisdom*."

To which one might respond: "Only effective when ***accompanied***"? If one already has "a sincere attitude, genuine wisdom and deep compassion", what need is there for the additional benefits of *kotodama*? What do these added benefits yield, over and above the obvious improved proficiency in ‘breath power', brought about by the chanting? This is an important issue, for the common postwar assumption is that something is lacking in aikido, which *kotodama* can provide.

The argument of Stevens is that Morihei Ueshiba was too much bound by the narrow confines of his own culture and that what is called *kotodama* in Japanese, is effective in any language. It is curious, therefore, that, apart from an English rendering of the *Hanya Shingyo* (on p. 147), all the chants given by Stevens in the Appendix to *The Secrets of Aikido* are in Japanese. There is even a footnote (on the same page) giving the ‘correct' pronunciation of Japanese vowels. Why should this be necessary, if any language is effective? Another footnote on the same page leads us to an earlier explanation of the significance for Morihei Ueshiba of the phrase, *Masa katsu a gatsu katsu hayabi* (which, of course, is a central example for Stevens of *kotodama*) and Stevens offers a number of interpretations of this phrase. However, the fact remains that the full chant given is in Japanese—and I strongly suggest that this meant much more for Morihei Ueshiba in his daily religious activities than it would do for the average aikido practitioner, whether Japanese or not, living in 2009. There is one *kotodama* (Japanese numbers in sequence) concerning which Stevens makes the disarming comment: "Like most *mantra*, this *kotodama* is best left unexplained, for the meaning will gradually reveal itself to the practitioner." (*Secrets of Aikido*, p. 147.) In fact, Stevens has not gained very much by emphasizing the ‘trans-cultural' aspects of *kototama*, for all the illustrations and examples do is attempt to reinforce an unargued assumption that the declaiming of so-called *kotodama* in Japanese is effective, in some unexplained way, for non-Japanese.

Thus, by way of summarizing Stevens on *kotodama*, I would point to three objections. First, the ‘supra-cultural' or ‘trans-cultural' aspects of *kotodama* have not been shown adequately and I suspect that the reason for this is that what *kotodama* actually meant for Morihei Ueshiba, in terms of being a specifically **religious** activity and also a specifically **Japanese** religious activity, has been downplayed by Stevens, who has been led to emphasize the general linguistic aspects of *kotodama*, at the expense of the religious aspects.

Secondly, because of his lack of emphasis on the religious dimension, Stevens never explains what *kotodama* is supposed to do, especially in aikido training. Given that we have to have "a sincere attitude, genuine wisdom and deep compassion", the necessity, or even the desirability, of *kotodama* is not shown, and I suspect that this, too, is a result of the diminution of the importance of the religious aspects of the practice. For Morihei Ueshiba, *kotodama* was ‘talking to God'—a form of prayer involving the whole person (See comments on *go-tai* (五体) in Column 11). For monks in a

Benedictine monastery, the Christian counterpart of *kotodama* would be a form of contemplation, again, involving the whole person. However, the *kotodama* of the Benedictine monks is based on the clear structure that the Catholic sacramental system—and also the Catholic mystical tradition, rooted in works by people as diverse as Benedict of Nursia, Ignatius of Loyola, John of the Cross and Teresa of Avila, presupposes.

Thirdly, the emphasis placed by Stevens on the need for "a sincere attitude, genuine wisdom and deep compassion" gives a 'western' ethical dimension to *kotodama* that is actually very heavily culture-specific. We might feel some revulsion that some sort of belief in *kotodama* was at the root of the immense bravery shown by Japanese *kamikaze* pilots —as they threw themselves at Allied warships during World War II, and believe that this was a mistaken conception of *kotodama*, which, if we agree with Stevens, is really as American as apple-pie—or would be, if done correctly. However, I do not think that one can slough off the Japanese cultural aspects so easily and these aspects are what made *kotodama* less attractive to a scholar like R A Miller, or to a 'postwar' Japanese like Kisshomaru Ueshiba.

16. Sanae Odano

In the acknowledgements to his first book, *The Spiritual Foundations of Aikido*, William Gleason includes Sanae Odano as one of his teachers. The teachings of Odano have been summarized in Earle's book, cited above. *Words, Characters and Transparency* (hereafter, *WCT*) combines the autobiography of Earle himself with a biography of Odano, which is interspersed with a summary of her teachings. The text is accompanied by diagrams (unfortunately assumed to be self-explanatory—we will consider this point later), which purport to explain aspects of what Odano would call *kotoha*. The writing style is the historic / dramatic present for the biographical parts, coupled with the utterance of 'timeless truths'—the whole being held together with hypotheses, which, it is argued, have to be true because the contrary views are considered to be untenable. There is one page of notes, but there is no way of testing the statements made in the book except by one's own experience and what Earle calls 'common sense', which is often called upon to make do when other explanations fail. Thus the book is something of a cross between Eckhart Tolle's *The Power of Now* (for the timeless truths) and Baigent & Leigh's *Holy Blood and Holy Grail* (for the hypotheses). The structure of the book is also somewhat disconcerting. Rather than 'beginning at the beginning, going on to the end and then stopping,' Earle uses a different method. The core statements about language that underpin the argument of the book are not expanded and defended until near the end of the book.

Creating Associations

The argument of Earle's book rests on statements made about Chinese characters and their associations with the English alphabet or with numbers. As we have seen with *Kototama gaku*, making associations between different Chinese characters is a regular Japanese pastime and the addition of numbers harks back to ancient numerology and theories of the Kabbalah, but the combination of these with the English alphabet is new. The problem is that Earle supplies no linguistic evidence of a scientific nature and we eventually learn that his arguments actually require him to attack the conclusions of mainstream linguistics, as exemplified by researchers like Stephen Pinker, and discount any evidence offered by them. The evidence presented is the anecdotal 'evidence' that Odano herself discovered these connections, especially as a result of a four-hour vision, when certain Chinese characters seemingly miraculously appeared before her. So Odano Sanae conforms to the pattern exemplified by Omoto's Nao Deguchi, of a visionary firmly outside the mainstream.

Basically, Earle states that there is a fundamental connection between the 'space-time continuum' (i.e., the universe), freedom, and language, which is considered in the form of 'absolute' words. Such words, considered as 'absolutes', are the basis of the individual languages / statements uttered by human beings and are analogous to the atomic particles of nuclear physics. According to Odano / Earle, the clearest evidence of the 'absolute' nature of words is afforded by Chinese characters, as these are used in Japanese. (There is even the argument, also used by Nakazono, that *kana* syllables actually **preceded** the adoption of Chinese characters by the Japanese.) No other systems of writing, especially alphabets, are able to manifest this essential quality. The cruces of the argument, therefore, lie in the analysis of Chinese characters

Actually, *WCT* is very much worth reading—critically, of course, but for reasons of space it is possible to give only a brief examination here. Since Steve Earle has kindly become a member of *Aikiweb* and has participated in earlier discussions concerning these columns, I feel I owe it to him to give his book a more detailed examination than there is space for here. Perhaps this can take place in the subsequent discussions about this column. Mr Earle has also stated that Sanae Odano was not at all concerned with *kotodama*. I can see why this may well be true, but what she has done is, in my opinion, fundamentally related to *kotodama*, for the entire purpose of her work is to derive vital meaning—cosmic meaning, in fact, from words and characters themselves—not merely from their own meanings, but also from their forms & shapes.

If we consider the swamp of mud analogy suggested in the previous columns, by comparison with Nakazono, who strips off and dives joyfully into the *kotodama* mud and argues that everyone, everyone, must jump in too—but after him (and with only Nakazono as the guide), or Stevens, who suggests sliding in for a delicate wallow—with the 'wallower'

generally unaware of the depths—but certainly aware of the universally harmonious features of the swamp, Odano sinks in very carefully, step by step, and as the result of supposedly searingly compelling logic, secure in the belief that the ooze is not really *kotodama* mud at all.

The Dynamics of Diagrams

Earle shares with the *kototama gakusha* (Morihei Ueshiba included) a penchant for constructing complex diagrams. In Earle's book, the association between Chinese characters and the alphabet is presented in the form of diagrams. The diagrams appear in the margins and sometimes on whole pages and all serve to illustrate the connections among individual Chinese characters and compounds. The diagrams most directly relating to *kotodama* appear on p. 48 ("Absolute Time-Space"); p. 88 ("Sound and Number"), p. 112 ("Sound of Mind"), p. 140 ("*Ji*"), p. 152 ("The Character *Mu*"), p. 162 ("Words and Languages"), and p. 184 ("A Topographical Map of Heaven"). We will analyze just two of these diagrams. I personally believe that the analysis is crucial for penetrating the relaxed, easy, conversational tone of Earle's book and getting to grips with the real issues. However, since I have purposely refrained from using diagrams myself, readers who know no Japanese might find this section quite hard going and prefer to move on to the discussion of William Gleason's writings on *kotodama*.

Example 1: Now and *Nen* (念)

On p. 48 of *WCT* there is a diagram entitled, "Absolute Time-Space". This diagram is placed opposite the chapter entitled "Time" and some descriptions in the diagram are elaborated in the chapter. (NOTE. In this discussion I will do what Mr Earle does not do in his book, namely, signal the ON and *kun* readings of Chinese characters differently. ON readings will be given in capitals and *kun* readings in italics. Since the explanation will be quite complex, I will number the paragraphs and divide the discussion into Explanation and Commentary.)

1 Explanation

The diagram begins with the character NEN 念, which is defined as ‘idea', ‘thought'.

1 Commentary

An alternative reading is given of 念, the *kun* reading *omou*, but I have not found this in any dictionary. In fact, there is no *kun* reading of NEN. Secondly, the compounds, of which NEN is a part, invariably change the meaning of the parts considerably, so there seems little point in focusing on NEN as a **central** case of *idea*, *thought*. It might well mean this as a Chinese character, but it is not used on its own to mean this.

The first major issue I have with Earle's thesis is this: what is the point of choosing 念 out of all the 50,000 characters in Morohashi's dictionary, if not as a convenient device to ‘prove' Sanae Odano's theory about the ‘time-space continuum'? Why not start with a more appropriate compound, such as 時間 (*jikan*: interval of time) or 空間 (*kukan*: interval of space)?

2 Explanation

An explanation is given: "念 NEN thought, ‘idea' is the address of 心 *kokoro* ‘mind' (where mind dwells) at any point in time 今 *ima* ‘now'".

2 Commentary

This appears to be offered as an explanation of how the constituents of the character 念 (今 and 心) are related. This is clearly a subjective opinion, unsupported by any evidence. The explanation of BU—as ‘stopping spears' and therefore ‘peaceful' and thus highly appropriate to aikido—is notorious, but we have another, similar, example here.

3 Explanation

These constituents are very important, since they are now considered separately.

3 Commentary

This is the second major issue I have with Earle's analysis. The entire analysis seems to rest on the thesis that it is necessary to regard the meaning of the separate constituents of Chinese characters as crucial for their (combined) meanings. However, I believe that this thesis (a) has to be stated clearly and (b) has to be objective, that is, capable of generalization over the entire range of Chinese characters, if it is to be acceptable. It is not enough simply to state that the relation of 今 and 心 in 念 is "the address of mind at any point in time". If the relation is anything more than a coincidence, then it has to be defined in such a way as to be capable of generalization and therefore prediction.

4 Explanation

Earle places 今 and 心side by side in the diagram, but here we will consider the two characters separately.

4 Commentary

It is clear that these two constituents of 念, and their separate analysis, are crucial for what follows. However, the whole is presented as a diagram, wherein the connections are assumed to be self-evident. However, as I stated above, I constantly tell my graduate students when they use graphs and diagrams to illustrate a point, the graphs and diagrams have to make the contents easier to understand, not more difficult. Here, the diagram mode used by Earle makes the specious quasi-logical connections much harder to discover, hence the necessity for a discussion like the present one, here.

5 Explanation

(a) First we will consider 今 *ima*, also read as KON, meaning 'now'. This is on the left side of the diagram. Directly below the 今 character, Earle prints three more characters: 奈, 普, and 負. The first is read as NA (meaning 'what', 'how'), the second is read as FU (meaning 'everywhere', 'widely') and the third is also read as FU (generally meaning 'be defeated', 'carry', negative, but with a wide range of *kun* readings, each with their separate and respective meanings). The point of these three random characters is to represent NA FU FU (NA -- U -- U) as an approximation of the English word *NOW*.

Below these characters appear the *kana* syllables for *nana* (七 and ナ) and for NI (also read as *fu*[*tatsu*]: 二,フ). (b)

Directly below the kana syllables appear the letters N O W (now), below which are printed the numbers 14, 15, and 23. These, of course, represent the order in which the letters N, O, and W appear in the English alphabet and the sum is 52. In Japanese, the number 52 can be read in two ways: 五二 (*go-ni*) and イフ (*i-fu*). However, if we combine these readings differently and read them as *go-i* and *ni-fu*, we can derive the words意 *goi* (incorrectly read as *mind*) and 普負 *nifu* (= pervasive, 'carried throughout').

5 Commentary

I hope the nature of Earle's argument, via the diagram, is becoming clear. The argument hangs on the thinnest of threads, much thinner than that in Akutagawa's story of the spider's web. Readers must judge for themselves the strength of the thread. Basically, the argument rests on noting what at first sight appear to be coincidences and then claiming that these are not coincidences at all.

(a) Why has Earle chosen the characters奈, 普, and 負out of the hundreds of possible combinations of characters with the same sounds? It is clear that the characters are intended to be a rendering of the English word now (NA-U-U = NA FU FU), but why these?

(b) Why is the numerical value of N O W so crucial, other than the fact that all the arguments that are based on it?

(c) It is true that Japanese can be read in a number of ways. However, the supposition that IF they are read downwards, the syllables *go-ni* and *i-fu* CAN become *go-i* and *ni-fu* is a mere coincidence and of no further significance.

6 Explanation

(a) Earle now turns to the other constituent character of 念, which is 心. This is on the right side of the diagram. 心 *kokoro* is also read as SHIN. Earle offers an explanation of *kokoro*. "心 (mind)," he states, "is茲 *koko* 'here', made露 *ro* 'openly apparent' (manifest)." (露 *RO* then passes out of the story and Earle concentrates on 'here'.)

(b) Earle chooses three ways to render the English word 'here' phonetically in Japanese:
日 (*hi*) 矢 (*ya*) [which he terms 'Time's arrow']; 一 (*hi*) 八 (*ya*); and ヒ (*hi*) ヤ (*ya*).

(c) Directly beneath these are the letters H E R E. Based on their order in the English alphabet, the letters yield the numbers, 8, 5, 18, 5, respectively. Adding the combinations of 8 and 5, and 18 and 5, yields 13 and 23, respectively, which, in turn, yields 36. (Earle makes an aside, that 36° is absolute temperature and 360 is the 'arc of here'.)

6 Commentary

It is crucial to Earle's argument that 心 *kokoro* be composed of two elements, *koko*, meaning 'now' and *ro*, meaning, 'here'. If not, he is unable to perform the numerical calculations that yield 'significant' answers. However, there is no evidence at all that 心 is in fact composed of 茲 and 露, in the way that 念 is composed of 今 and 心. So the explanation given: that "心 (mind) is茲 *koko* 'here', made露 *ro* 'openly apparent' (manifest)", is not a genuine explanation, but a mere supposition.

7 Explanation

(a) Earle then adds the numbers generated by 今, via N O W (52), and 心, via H E R E (36), and obtains 88. The number 88 is considered to be of enormous significance.

(b) The significance is obtained in three ways:
First, he deals with the Japanese meaning. The number 88 is 八八, read as *hachi-hachi*.

If the syllables are aligned and read perpendicularly, we obtain *ha-ha* (母 = mother) and *chi-chi* (父 = father).

Earle then examines the constituents of the resulting Chinese characters. 母 yields 口 (spatial enclosure) and the mathematical symbol for division (÷). 父 yields ハ 波 (*ha* = vibration, energy) and the mathematical symbol for multiplication (×). The whole is termed "trans-parental time-space."

7 Commentary

Earle adds another heavy weight to the spider's thread. It is crucial to the entire structure that the result of the mathematical operation is 88. However, it needs to be stressed that this result has been arrived at by mathematical calculations of letters of the **English** alphabet, which are (arbitrary) translations of two parts of a **Chinese** character, used in **Japanese**. This would not be possible in the case of, for example, Urdu, Hebrew and Russian and so the theory actually works only with specific examples from certain languages.

8 Explanation

Secondly, Earle takes the combination: 88, which in Japanese can be written as 八十八. If written vertically and compressed somewhat, with each character superimposed on the others, these characters can be made to yield the character 米, which means *rice*: one of those central 'defining' concepts in Japanese culture. Earle offers this explanation: "米 *kome* radiates in eight directions (up-down, front-back, right-left, diagonal, 'working' in two directions), thus representing the occurrence of time-space round an absolute center."

8 Commentary

The operation carried out here is similar to the operation of reducing Chinese characters to their supposed constituents and deriving significance from the results that are believed to accrue. The fact that *kome* is actually written in this way (two strokes, a cross, then two more strokes) lends specious strength to the hypothesis that the character is actually composed of these elements, which is not the case.

9 Explanation

Finally, Earle considers that shape of the number 8 and the letter H. When written horizontally, 8 yields ∞, whereas H written horizontally yields something like エ.

Earle then considers the significance of the vertical and horizontally written letters in combination (i.e., when superimposed on one another): "The figure 8 is also ∞ 'infinity'. As the number 88 is appearing in the context of now and here, the figure 8 (∞) can appropriately be to vertical and horizontal (time and space) axes. The letter H (eighth letter of the alphabet), when likewise applied forms the character 田 *ta*, representing the "electro-magnetic" ***field*** of the space time continuum, and especially the point at the center of that continuum." ('*Field*' is the meaning of the character 田, read as *ta* or *da*.)

9 Commentary

Again, we have the arbitrary assignment of significance to something fortuitous. We could write 8 and then the symbol for infinity ∞, but it in no way follows that the two are essentially similar in any way, or can be combined to form anything else.

Example 2: A Meditation on *Mu* (無)

The title of the diagram (on p. 152) is, *The Character* 無 *Mu: Pictograph or Ideograph?* The diagram is a dissection of the Chinese character 無, but there is much more discussion in this diagram than in the others. The problem is how 'something' can represent 'nothing': how a sign like an ideograph (which is a 'picture' of something) can represent the absence of anything. The discussion is reminiscent of that in Plato's *Sophist*, where Socrates has to explain how there can be Forms of Negation (he does not succeed). However, like the discussion in Plato's dialogue, Earle's discussion of 無 offers an interesting example of the dangers of neglecting the insights of linguistic science. Earle starts off with a set of propositions (printed here in italics), which I have interspersed with comments / questions.

"*If the basic architecture of the Chinese ideographs is pictographic, then what is the pictographic significance of the character* 無 *MU 'nothing', 'nothingness', 'void'? As a vessel for abstract content, pictographic representation is grossly inadequate*."

COMMENT: First, the logic should be noticed here. Earle begins with a disjunctive question: If *a*, then what is *b*? This is followed by a statement, *c*, that is negative of *a* in some respects. However, if *a* is not true, then the assumed negative statement does not necessarily hold. The 'logic' here needs to be examined further. Earle is basically asking what 無 is a picture of. In itself, this is a reasonable question, but he neglects to add a crucial point about the 'basic architecture': that Chinese pictographs long since ceased to be used as pictures of the (classes of) objects they 'represented' and became 'logographs', representing concepts and not classes of objects. There is no problem whatever with a character being used as a logograph of the concept of negation, which is like any other concept. Eventually they came to be used as symbols and in Japanese developed into the *kana* syllable system, like an alphabet. Thus the problem of the 'basic architecture' is really a red herring. Earle continues:

"*What, then, of this character's ideographic significance? When observed through the windows provided for us through its formal and phonetic structure,* 無 *reads like an open book. That book can be interpreted in many ways; the interpretations below are examples*."

COMMENT: We then have Earle's announcement of how he will proceed. He will 'interpret' the character's formal and phonetic structure and this basically means freely associating these structures with elements chosen from the entire range of human experience. He begins with the phonetic structure. The character 無 can be read as *mu* ム or *nashi* ナシ.

We then have 無 in the center of the diagram, with explanations to the left and right. On the left is the reading ム (*mu*). Earle immediately identifies 無 with 務, a completely different character, meaning 'duty' or 'function', but read in the same way, as *mu*. Earle explains:

無 mu *'nothingness' is also* 務 *mu (*tsutome*) 'duty' or 'function', implying that presence, purpose, and responsibility are attributes of original emptiness*.

COMMENT: Why, of all the 13 characters read as *mu*, does Earle select 務? He could probably invent a similar story from comparing 無 with all the other homonyms, but it would still be an invention, of a story: a fabrication.

無 is also read as *nashi* ナシ, which as a word can be composed of entirely different characters: (1) ナNA 奈 (meaning, questioning: *'what?'*—which we met earlier, when considering 念NEN) and (2) シ SHI 思, which is read as *omou* and means "sense, intuitive thought".

So the combination of the two yields, "that which causes intuitive questioning (curiosity)". Earle also adds yet another, completely different, character for the combination reading of NA and SHI, which is 為 (*nashi*, meaning, *become*, *cause to occur*). So from this hodge-podge of elements, Earle conjures up something like, 'the occurrence of that which causes questioning or curiosity', all out of one character.

Attention then shifts to the formal elements of the character. Earle distinguishes four elements.

無

(1) The first is the diagonal line, occurring at the upper left as the first stroke of the character. This is ノ read as *no*, but no can also be expressed as 能, which means 'working function'. (Unfortunately, Earle has to ignore the difference between Japanese short vowels [ノ, の, *no*] and long vowels [のう, 能, *nou*], but this clearly not a problem.) Earle explains the diagonal line:
"*Occurring as it does at the top of the character (the first stroke in the character), this line can be interpreted as unaligned (neither vertical nor horizontal) and therefore pre-conditional. Thus it implies pre-conditional workings or functionality (ノ=能), otherwise to be described as universal causality.*"
(2) The second formal element is the three horizontal lines 三, running across the character.

"*Horizontal orientation implies the expansiveness of a lateral plane relative to a vertical axis. Thus the three lines can be interpreted to signify the infinite expanse of three-dimensional (三 = 3) space.*"

(3) The third formal element is the four vertical lines.
"*That which is vertical—as it points either toward or away from a center of gravity—is linear and directional. Thus, the four lines standing relative to three-dimensional space can be interpreted as the universal fourth dimension, absolute time.*"
(4) Finally there are the four 'dots' lying across the base of the character. This is 連火 *renka*,

"*an alternate form of the character 火* ka *'fire' (energy) occurring as a radical (character component). A dot has neither width, breadth, nor direction; only position. Four dots signifies position over time or motion. In this context* renka *can be interpreted as the now-here dimension of absolute energy.*"
Bringing everything together, Earle sums up the 'open book' of the character (I have numbered the four elements in square brackets).
"*Non-physical presence* 無 *MU, is the original dynamic that allows life and consciousness (language) to occur. This is shown in the composition of the character as the pre-conditionally mandated* [1] *working or function of* [4] *absolute energy within the context of* [2] *absolute space and* [3] *absolute time.*"
Of course, the methods used by Odano are not new. Like astrology, the practice of deriving meaning from the shapes of letters (there is no name for such a pastime) and numerology (Kaballah) has been around for a very long time. However, it is significant that neither has ever become part of the science of linguistics—and Earle is led to debunk this science later in the book. Earlier, I mentioned the book, *Holy Blood and Holy Grail*, by Baigent & Leigh, in connection with Odanao's work as summarized by Earle. This book is famous for a supposed new method of historical analysis:
"*The authors used a 'historical technique' they called* synthesis. *Essentially, this meant that if one element in the story could be* imagined *to be connected to another, then it was worth assuming that there was a genuine connection. Working on that (speculative) assumption, they would then move on to another* possible *connection, to see if that led to a third and so on. Using this hopelessly flawed 'technique', Baigent et al were able to construct a vast, elaborate and detailed alternative hidden 'history', where each layer of speculation and wild hypothesis supported the next. In the end they had managed to link Jesus to Plantard, the Templars to the Cathars, the Masons to the European Union, Leonardo to the Essenes and a great deal more besides.*"
http://www.historyversusthedavincicode.com/chaptertwentythree.htm#sion
The parallels between this historical technique and the language analysis of Odano are uncomfortably close. So we need to change the above extract only a little:
The author used an 'analytical technique' she called *Meiha* (命波) or *Kotoha* (光透波). Essentially, this meant that if one reading [of a character, or *kana*] or letter of the alphabet or number, could be imagined to be connected to another, then it was worth assuming that there was a genuine connection. Working on that (speculative) assumption, she would then move on to another possible connection, to see if that led to a third and so on. Using this hopelessly flawed 'technique' Odano was able to construct a vast, elaborate and detailed alternative hidden cosmology, where each layer of speculation and wild hypothesis supported the next.
I leave the reader to judge whether Odano merits such a judgment. In any case, the issue is not really with the contents of the book, so much as with the techniques by

which Odano reaches her conclusions. Odano uses the same homophonic word-play techniques as the *kototama gaku* scholars, but extends them much further, to numbers and the order of the English alphabet. However, the basic method of word association is the same.

I used the term ‘method', but the questions remain: What is the method used by Odano and the *kototama gakusha* and how does it relate to the meaning of the words or utterances? To take a practical example, I have in my wallet my Japanese driving license and insurance certificate, which I am obliged by law to produce if I have a motor accident. The amount for third-party coverage is 無制限 (ムセイゲん MU-SEI-GEN), **unlimited**. In other words, **there is no limit to what the insurance company will pay for death or injury to the other party**: this is what the phrase means. Now I could spend the next twenty pages or so giving a similar analysis of 制 SEI and 限 GEN to that given by Earle and one can see from the shape of the characters that this analysis might be quite interesting and stimulating. However, (1) I do not know how to do this analysis, because Earle has given no methodology that can be applied generally and (2) this will make no difference to the fact that the word and statement in bold type, above, is what the phrase actually means and this is how the police officer and insurance official will understand it, when they read my insurance certificate. ‘*Ah*', one might say, ‘*but what the terms REALLY mean is* x, y, *and* z[including Earle's explanation, given above]. *The meaning in bold is completely superficial and does not exhaust the depths of meaning lying concealed within the characters*.' ‘*Fine*.' one might answer, ‘*Since it makes absolutely no difference to my encounter with the police officer or insurance agent, I will leave the additional depths concealed and get on with my life*.'

17. William Gleason and Sacred Words of Power

The two books by William Gleason, *The Spiritual Foundations of Aikido* [*SFOA*] and *Aikido and Words of Power* [*AWP*] need to be considered together. In terms of content and style, Gleason's writing lies somewhere midway between the density and tortuous logic of Nakazono or Odano and the less demanding style of John Stevens. Like *The Essence of Aikido*, Gleason's first book, *The Spiritual Foundations of Aikido*, is an attempt to present Morihei Ueshiba's cosmology, in terms that are more likely to be understood by the thoughtful non-Japanese aikidoka. On the other hand, Gleason, like Stevens, takes very much for granted. In fact, both make ‘cultural' assumptions that are later validated (it is assumed) by means of a certain type of aikido training. In my opinion, the connections between these ‘cultural' assumptions and the supposed benefits from the aikido training are by no means clear, with the result that it is highly questionable to assume without further ado that these connections and benefits actually exist. I think this is especially true in the case of Gleason's treatment of *kotodama*.

Spiritual Foundations

The Spiritual Foundations of Aikido covers the same ground as *The Essence of Aikido*, but, without wishing at all to denigrate the work of Stevens, there is a clear brilliance about Gleason's book that is striking, and it stands comparison with Mitsugi Saotome's *Aikido and the Harmony of Nature*, published two years before *SFOA*. When I read Gleason's book for the first time, not long after it was published in 1995, I was struck by it in the same way that I was struck by *Aikido and the Dynamic Sphere*, by A Westbrook and O Ratti, when I was a beginner, trying to make sense of the technical repertoire of aikido. (The volumes of Morihiro Saito's *Traditional Aikido* constituted a similar ‘milestone'.) Students who are at a certain stage of their aikido training should find *SFOA* challenging, but extremely worthwhile.

In format, the two volumes are similar to Earle's book on Sanae Odano. There are wide margins and these are filled with words written in Chinese characters (with occasional explanations), which tie in with what is being discussed in the main text. Sometimes these explanations are of some importance for understanding Gleason's argument. In the space of eight chapters, Gleason presents Morihei Ueshiba's cosmology as a blend of Shinto, Taoism, Yin-Yang theory, and Buddhism. The discussion of *kotodama* occurs in Chapter 4, which is the pivotal chapter, "explaining the thread that binds" *SFOA*. We are prepared for this discussion to some extent by the previous chapter, which deals with Shinto, ‘the spiritual roots of aikido'. In his introduction, Gleason has warned the reader that the chapter is not easy reading—and this is quite true. The *kototama* chapter forms the basis for subsequent treatment of *One Spirit*, *Four Souls*, the *Three Origins*, and the *Eight Powers* and the book concludes with the application of all this to aikido and ‘the creation of a better world'. Everything hangs together seamlessly and the book is clearly a manifesto for a certain type of aikido training.

On subsequent reading, after an interval of over ten years, I found *SFOA* rather less satisfactory. This is probably because I returned to the book after becoming more proficient in written Japanese and so had been able to study Morihei Ueshiba's discourses and also Onisaburo Deguchi's writings (especially *Reikai Monogatari*) and other writings on *kotodama* and *kotodama gaku*—but also after more aikido training here in Japan, and with the same teacher, Seigo Yamaguchi Sensei, who taught Gleason. I will return to this point later, after a more detailed discussion of *Aikido and Words of Power* [*AWP*]. (Incidentally, I myself began training with Yamaguchi Sensei soon after my arrival in Japan and trained with him as often as I could for a total of 15 years, until he passed away in 1996. In fact, my own aikido career

is an interesting contrast to Mr Gleason's. He came to Japan in 1969, which is the year I began aikido training in the UK. He left Japan in 1980, which is the year I came to live here.)

What follows is a brief critical summary of *AWP*. There are two very broad divisions: theory and practice. Of course, readers will detect a certain critical bias, but there are reasons for this, one of which is that researching for these articles has led to me study most of the *kototama gaku* sources that Gleason himself has studied—and quite a few more, so I am perhaps in a better position than many *AikiWeb* readers to see how he has used these sources. In any case, this should perhaps compensate for the somewhat uncritical bias already present in Gleason's own treatment of *kotodama* and seen in *SFOA*. Nevertheless, bias or no bias, William Gleason should be very highly commended for having the courage to demonstrate his convictions about aikido training in such an open and sophisticated way. I am sure that some *AikiWeb* members will find his message highly convincing.

Theory: In the Beginning was the Word

Gleason begins with a disarming statement that echoes the treatment of 'universal' *kotodama* by John Stevens, but is quite different in content.

"*Aikido has its roots in Japanese Shinto, the original teaching of which is the* kototama. *It is from the kototama, which translates as "the souls of words," that the innate sensibilities of language and thought are created. The kototama, however, should not be seen as a tool for dividing people or distinguishing one race from another. As the root of thought itself, and therefore of all spoken language, it is a tool for understanding our common origins and ultimate unity. … The kototama is not a theory or even a teaching. It is the life energy, or* ki*, that gives birth to consciousness in all its myriad forms*." (Gleason, *AWP*, p. 7.)

These are fine words, but there appear to be some underlying assumptions here, which need to be seen for what they are. First, Gleason appears to accept the view that Shinto had 'original teachings', including *kotodama*, but this needs to be seen in the context of research by scholars like Toshio Kuroda, who argues that 'Shinto' is actually a much later term: a political 'construct' of miscellaneous folk practices that share a common character merely because they have been designated as 'Shinto'. Secondly, like Stevens, Gleason alludes to the unfortunate effects of *kotodama* in the service of the Japanese military in World War II and stresses the 'universal', potentially beneficial aspects of *kotodama*. Nevertheless, in Gleason's hands *kotodama* still retains its fundamentally Japanese character, tied as it is to the 50 sounds or syllables of the Japanese language. Gleason assumes this Japanese character of *kotodama* right through the book—and it is clear that this is not specifically because *kotodama* is Japanese. Thus Gleason's thinking is not so different from that of Onisaburo Deguchi, who stressed the peaceful and universal mission of Omoto to unite all of humanity, but only so long as it was under Japanese tutelage. I think the main issue here is why Gleason regards *kotodama* as so essential as a required defining characteristic of aikido, especially postwar aikido.

Two Questions…

Gleason's opening statement here should be compared with the theories of philosophers like Henri Bergson and scientists like Irving Schrödinger, who have attempted to define evolution and life. In this connection, one should restate two basic questions posed earlier:

(a) Why is the origin of the universe of such importance for postwar aikido?

(b) Why is there still such need to explain the origin in terms of language?

Clearly, in the past the second question was of great importance for Kukai, the nativists, Onisaburo Deguchi and also Morihei Ueshiba, but there is also a very powerful line of thinking, expressed principally by Kisshomaru Ueshiba, that for Ueshiba this importance was tied very closely to his own religious beliefs, which he never forced on his students. Thus there is a kind of mismatch between Ueshiba's own personal religious practices, which found expression in his own *Daito-ryu* / *aikibudo* & aikido training, and the self-standing art he bequeathed to his students. Kisshomaru attempted to solve this mismatch by quietly abandoning *kotodama* and reducing aikido to a 'generalist' martial art, available for everyone in any culture. In this respect, Gleason's views about aikido are similar to those of Kisshomaru Ueshiba, but Gleason also appears to believe that the account of *kototama* he so ably gives in AWP is also valid for any time or culture.

Furthermore, it is a very interesting account. In this first chapter, Gleason weaves together a story of the creation of the universe. Unlike John Stevens, he is not simply giving an account of Morihei Ueshiba's cosmology. Gleason is using a blend of *kototama gaku*, eclectic Omoto theology, Assyrian/Nestorian Christianity, Esoteric Buddhism, *kotoha* thinking from Odano, to give a general account of what actually happened. With Nakazono, he takes a God's eye view; with Morihei Ueshiba, he starts off the process of creation from the *SU* syllable onwards. Then with Onisaburo Deguchi, he relates the *SU* process to the individual and answers the first question (a), posed above.

"*First of all there is Su (hochi). Using all of your powers you must make that great origin clear. Possessing this wisdom deep within your hara, your physical and psychic center, you will be able to bring your mind into a state of peace, even within demanding activity. The wisdom that lies undiscovered at the center of your being must become the means through which you actually hear the teaching of Su.*

"*Within the infinite void, the kototama of Su ringing out brings us the great origin. Using this light of wisdom as your tool, you will come to hear the true teaching of the creator spirit of Ame no Minaka Nushi. When one awakens the desire to clearly understand this infinite origin, one should proceed*

with great caution and humility and perform purification both morning and evening.
"Fully receiving the truth and fullness of Su, swallow it completely; bring it into your hara and become one with the universe. Thereafter, nurture this feeling for three days, both day and night. Listen to the voice of the great void and smell the ki of vast emptiness. If you continue to train in this way, regardless of the degree of genius or lack of it, you will inevitably receive the appropriate light of wisdom." (Deguchi, quoted by Gleason, *AWP*, pp. 9-10.)
Gleason adds the comment that, "In the original Shinto, this process was called *kamigakari*, to be possessed by the divine presence." (There are obvious links here with Onisaburo Deguchi's practice of *chinkon-kishin*: calming the soul in preparation for possession by the divine.) Gleason then gives his own *kototama gaku* explanation of the text (to be discussed below).

***Kototama Gaku*: An Example**
I have quoted the above passage at length because it offers a clear view of the workings of *kototama gaku*, which dominates the first two chapters of *AWP*. Anyone reading the *Kojiki* will see that Ame-no-Minaka-Nushi is the first deity to come into existence in the creation of the universe, as recorded in the opening chapter. First, the *kundoku* (訓読) text is given, in *kanji*, *kana* and Roman script (names of places and deities are capitalized):
天地初めて発けし時、高天原に成れる神の名は、天之御中主神、次に高御産巣日神、次に神御産巣日神。此の三柱の神は並独神と成り坐して、身を隠したまひき。

Ame-tsuchi haji-me-te hira-ke-shi toki, Takama (no) hara ni na-re-ru kami no na wa, Ame-no-mi-naka-nushi (no) kami, tsu(gi) ni Taka-mi-mu-su-hi (no) kami, tsu(gi) ni Kamu-mu-su-hi (no) kami. ko-no mi-hashira no kami wa mina-hitori-gami to nari-ma-shi-te, mi wo kaku-shi-ta ma-hi-ki.
As stated in Column 14 in connection with Motoori Norinaga, the *kundoku* text is a reworking of Chinese *kanbun* text as Japanese. It was part of Motoori's quest to find the pristine Yamato language, lying concealed beneath the Chinese text. This *kundoku* reading is a halfway point between the *kanbun* text and modern Japanese, into which scholarly editions 'translate' the text.

Secondly, the English translation by Donald Philippi is given (including his transcription of names):
"*At the time of the beginning of heaven and earth, there came into existence in TAKAMA NO PARA a deity named AME NO MINAKA NUSHI NO KAMI* [Heavenly Center Lord Deity]*; next, TAKA MI MUSUBI NO KAMI* [High Generative Force Deity]*; next, KAMI MUSUBI NO KAMI* [Divine Generative Force Deity]. *These deities all came into existence as single deities, and their forms were not visible*." (Philippi, *Kojiki*, p. 47.)
In his Appendix, Philippi notes that
"*Among the first triad of deities, Ame-no-mi-naka-nusi-no-kami appears to be the embodiment of an abstract concept rather than an object of religious worship. Kami-musubi-no-kami seems to be the counterpart, perhaps the female counterpart, of Taka-mi-musubi-no-kami, the only one of the three to play an active role in the mythology outside of Chapter 1.*
"It is clear that the accounts…had little basis in popular tradition and that they were the intellectual products of the literati familiar with Chinese culture who were charged with editing a national mythology."
(In support of the last statement, Philippi cites Tsuda Sokichi and his *Nihon Koten no Kenkyu*. In 1942 Tsuda was convicted of lese-majesty for casting doubt on the historical accuracy of Japan's ancient chronicles. The full story is told by John S Brownlee, 1997, Ch. 13. Among Tsuda's targets were the *kototama* theories of the nativists, and the whole edifice of *kototama gaku*, exemplified by *gakusha* like Shido Yamaguchi.)
"*The native mythology must have begun with Izanagi and Izanami. Since the compilers of the* Kojiki *were more interested in justifying the political supremacy of the ruling family than in supplying lucid accounts of the beginning of the universe, these early chapters were apparently brought in to supply a background for Izanagi, whose offspring Ama-terasu-opo-mikami was the heavenly progenetrix of the imperial line, and to establish a setting for the activities of these deities.*

"The Nihon shoki *includes a number of variant versions, some of which show even more marked Chinese influence than the* Kojiki *chapters. But in neither case can we be justified in looking to the Japanese official mythology—compiled for political purposes—for a satisfactory and lucid cosmogony."* (Philippi, *Kojiki*, p. 397.)
Gleason makes no reference either to Tsuda or to Philippi and gives a commentary on the individual syllables of the name of the deity that is quite different from Philippi's (which is really a development of Motoori's philological, exoteric analysis in his *Kojiki-den*, discussed in Column 14).
"**Ama**, *or* **ame**, *is heaven.* **Ama** *is the infinite expansion of consciousness, from which* mana, *"word souls," are born. The* ki *of* **me** *causes the cycling of that consciousness.* **No** *is the consciousness of* Su, *the five senses, extending down into the small brain to become* honno, *or instinct. This is the beginning of memory, and therefore movement of individual species.* **Minaka** *is the exact center, here and now, the axis of time and space. The axis of consciousness is the life-will, the volition of the life force and its endless evolution. …***Nu** *is the materialization of* no, *and* **shi** *is our spiritual antennae, that which makes thought possible and thereby leads us to spiritual awakening*." (Gleason, *AWP*, p. 10, names of deity in bold.)

…Two Questions Answered?

Thus Ame-no-minaka-nushi is no longer a deity, but an esoteric statement of powers latent in the individual. A similar analysis by Morihei Ueshiba was discussed briefly in Column 14. There, Ueshiba further analyzed *ame* into *a* (吾 self) and *me* (巡 spirals). Thus, Gleason's answer, via *kototama gaku*, to the question (a), posed earlier, is that the process of creation & evolution of the cosmos is 'reflected' and 'instantiated' in the process of creation and evolution of each individual. Inevitably, Plato's problem arises here, of the relation between the cosmic, dynamic Form, and its instantiation in the origin, growth, education, moral & spiritual development of each individual. Moreover, the internal logical structure of *kototama gaku*, as utilized by Gleason here, is left unexplained.

Later on in the book, Gleason attempts to answer the second question (b), mentioned above. Like John Stevens, he has to paint with a very broad brush here and make some sizeable leaps of imagination. (Comments are given in square brackets, followed by more general comments at the end.)

"*O Sensei created Aikido as a means of realizing the* kototama*, yet the magical power of sound has long has been a medium of spiritual practice since the dawn of human civilization*."

[Gleason cites Lama Anagarika Govinda, author of *Foundations of Tibetan Mysticism*, who includes the Rishis, the Magi of Iran, the adepts of Mesopotamia, the priests of Egypt, and the mystics of Greece 'to mention only those of whom tradition has left some traces'—the assumption being that there have to be many others, of whom tradition has left no traces. Of course, no one would dispute Gleason's general statement, but, as they, 'The devil in the details.' Both Govinda and Gleason seem to ignore the crucial distinction between mere sounds and meaningful words.] ...

"*The Biblical logos, "In the Beginning was the Word," was passed down in India as early as 400 BCE. In the Vedas, the holy book of India, we find this same teaching*."

[Gleason makes a huge leap from the previous general statement. He also needs to define the 'Biblical logos' rather more closely, since St John himself identifies it with Jesus Christ, who lived somewhat later than when the Vedas was composed. In addition, there is large body of evidence that equates *logos* in Greek with thought, logical organization, rather than with words expressed in sound, which is expressed by a completely different word.] …

"*The origins of Christianity are a great deal older than is commonly assumed*."

[What Gleason is doing here is similar to what he does with Shinto. He takes a modern concept 'Christianity' and assumes that this is identified merely by propositions that are similar in style to the opening lines of St John's Gospel. The much closer parallel, with the first verse of the *Book of Genesis*, for which there is some evidence, is ignored. The origins of Christianity, of course, go back beyond the Old Testament, as Pritchard suggests in *ANET* (Bibliographic details in Column 14).]

"*The original teachings of the human race on this planet are long since lost in the division between human history and mythology*."

[The sense of this statement is obscure. Even if the division referred to is completely water-tight and even if it has been imposed on the available data or evidence, nothing has been lost in the process. The original teachings might be one or the other. If they are in a third category—say, 'Timeless Truths', they still exist. Of course, Gleason could be referring to the so-called Takeuchi documents, the authenticity of which has never been accepted.]

"*Jesus Christ was a member of the Essenes. "The Essene people spread out among the river of Jordan, were studying a synthesis of Greek philosophy, especially Pythagorean thought, traditional Judaism, and, according to many opinions, the philosophy and cosmology of the East. … These people were called, 'Followers of the way of Krishna. The name 'Christian' may have developed as a result of this*.'"

[Gleason's source here is Michio Kushi, but this has to be considered in the context of the lack of evidence for either John the Baptist or Jesus being a member of the sect.]

According to Gleason, the teaching of the Logos spread to China and Japan and passed down to the Shingon sect as the practice of *ajikan*, meditation on the sacred syllable of A. Gleason summarizes his findings.

"*If these profound teachings, which were about to link up Christianity with Gnostic philosophy and the traditions of the East, had been able to maintain their influence, the universal message of Christ would have been saved from the pitfalls of intolerance and narrow-mindedness*." (Gleason, AWP, pp. 17-18.)

[Again, Gleason cites Govinda, but does not quote him. In fact both authors slide over the equally profound reasons why the so-called 'teachings of the Logos' were not able to maintain their influence and the fact that Gleason merely presents 'profound teachings' on one side and 'pitfalls of intolerance and narrow-mindedness' on the other, considerably lessens the value of what he writes here. The Japanese doctrine of *kotodama*, especially as it appears in the *Kokutai no Hongi* text, discussed in the previous column, also caused a fair amount of 'intolerance and narrow-mindedness', which, incidentally, neither Christians nor Buddhists took much action to dispel.]

Dimensions Revisited

In the rest of this chapter, Gleason makes explicit mention of the Takeuchi documents (which were the focus of Nakazono's entire treatment of *kotodama*), but then moves on without further clarification. He explains in detail established *kototama gaku* doctrine, as generally expounded by Shido Yamaguchi and Koji Ogasawara (which was discussed in detail above, with reference to Nakazono's Kototama Principle). Gleason occasionally quotes from these authors,

but does not give any page references. Thus is it not possible to find the original quotations and check the translations, for example. The explanations are interspersed with quotations from Morihei Ueshiba's discourses, in English translation, and also with no means of identifying the Japanese source of the quotations. (In one case, Gleason is mistaken about the source of Ueshiba's statement.) Thus those who have no acquaintance at all with *kototama gaku* might believe Gleason's explanations to be his own original thinking. The same is true of the detailed explanations of the vowel dimensions and the various deities to which they can refer. Unlike, Nakazono, Gleason supplements those aspects of these vowel / sound dimensions that are strictly 'Shinto' (as Gleason understands this term) with observations from Buddhism and even Christianity.

"*The religious expression "one spirit, four souls" refers to the five dimensions of nature and the universe. In Shinto these dimensions of ki are referred to as Hitori gami, which means "individual deity". Hitori gami is an entity that occupies the whole universe by itself and is omnipresent in it. That universe is called a dimension.*" (Gleason, *AWP*, p. 26.)

Hitori gami (独神) was encountered above, as a description for the three deities that appear at the very beginning of the *Kojiki*. They are regarded as individuals, in contrast to the other deities, including Izanagi and Izanami, whose origins are recorded in the following chapter. These other deities are all paired together, as couples. The explanation given by Gleason is a new, esoteric explanation, based on Ogasawara's *kototama gaku*. Gleason then makes a highly general statement about the vowel dimensions and established religions.

"*The classification of the five vowel dimensions is at the basis of practically every major religious and philosophical tradition that has survived to the present day.*" (Gleason, *AWP*, p. 27.)

Of course, Gleason immediately cites Buddhism and the Chinese classics. However, the above statement is certainly not true of the Christian tradition, especially as this has developed in the West, influenced as it has been by philological, logical, philosophical and linguistic assumptions that are primarily Platonic, then Aristotelian, and secondarily Cartesian and Empiricist. Apart from the Logos doctrine (which I believe is a doctrine of thought, rather than of words), the only preoccupation with vowel dimensions in the Christian tradition has been about Christ as *Alpha* and *Omega*. A French Jesuit, named Teilhard de Chardin, following Bergson, once wrote a number of books about evolution becoming conscious of itself and resulting in a *noosphere*, of thought, above the biosphere, with evolution possibly reaching a point that Teilhard called the *Omega Point*, which he identified with God. Rather like *kotodama* and *kototama gaku*, Teilhard's theories fell into general abeyance

As I explained in previous columns, Aristotle answered the questions posed by Plato in his *Cratylus* in a certain way and it was Aristotle's answers that determined the future course of Western rhetoric, linguistic and philological thinking and also the core concepts in which Christian religious beliefs were grounded. We might regret this development, but we cannot ignore it. Thus, one might argue that to see the world purely in terms of (a) undefined 'dimensions', (b) identified by vowel sounds, which (c) are only five in number and which (d) are identified with a supposed mythical civilization believed to exist in prehistoric Japan, is already a major cultural anachronism.

Practice: How does it all work in the Dojo?

After giving the *kotodama* theory, Gleason attempts to relate the theory to practice. Since I myself was taught by the same aikido teacher as Gleason, I found these discussions of great interest. However, they reveal, in my opinion, one of the serious weaknesses of the book. I will examine a few examples and then explain the reasons for this opinion.

The third chapter of Gleason's book, entitled "*Iki*: The Breath of Life", is a sustained explanation of 呼吸 *kokyu*. He begins by explaining the title of the chapter.

"*The kototama of I is water ki and the kototama of Ki is fire ki. The substance of ki is kokyu, the pulse of the universe. All things that live do so by breath. The sun, the earth, and all things on the earth live first of all by breath. … Becoming consciously aware of breath, ki and mind as our true body, the illusion of separation disappears and it becomes possible to manifest power far beyond that of physical muscle. If you realize this basic truth, you will be able to relax your body completely and still produce immovable power.*" (Gleason, *AWP*, p. 75.)

After more *kototama gaku* explanation from Shido Yamaguchi, on the difference between water *ki* and fire *ki*, Gleason launches into discussion of *kokyu*, which combines the usual 'timeless truths' with much practical advice. From this point in the book onwards, Gleason supplements his explanations with connected illustrations of particular exercises and *waza*. These illustrations are in black and white and are usually comprehensible, given the general limitations of presenting 'static' photographs of something that is essentially tied to movement. After more explanation of *kokyu* as power and timing, Gleason finally explains the nature of *ki*. The explanation is not without mystery.

"*Ki is perception, beginning with the level of feeling. Ki is the energy that is always hidden yet ever present. It only appears as feeling and sensitivity, yet we are never apart from it. Without air we can survive for several minutes, yet without ki we would perish instantly.*

"*Through the practice of kokyu, we come to realize that our spiritual body or kitai*" [気体, usually translated as 'gas'] "*is much more substantial than our physical body, and more difficult to destroy. This creates an entirely different*

perspective on reality. We are not mainly physical beings, but rather beings of light and ki. It changes the way we feel and move and also how we relate to our partner's body.
"Through the practice of kokyu, ki can be developed to the point where it cannot be moved. Drawing in ki with the breath, it is possible to create a kind of spiritual skeleton that unifies the body. The human body is extremely fragile. Even the bones, which are the hardest and strongest parts of the body, are broken quite easily. The ki is like a skeleton within the muscle and bones, yet it is more durable and longer lasting." (Gleason, *AWP*, pp. 83-84.)
Correct breathing is the focus of Gleason's explanations of *funakogi* and *furitama* exercises. For both exercises, Gleason quotes Onisaburo Deguchi, who adds more elements and advice to the latter.
"*Bring all the power of your being together, and shake your entire body while chanting the name of Ame no Minaka Nushi. In this way, strive to awaken to your true nature. This process must be repeated twice daily for several hours. Your food at this time should be one bowl of rice with umeboshi (pickled plums) and gomasio (sesame salt), twice daily. In this way, you will return to the age of the gods*." (Gleason, *AWP*, pp. 87-88.)
Though Gleason does not mention this, presumably the way described above was the way in which Morihei Ueshiba practiced when he was a student of Deguchi's in Ayabe. In the subsequent breathing exercises, Gleason mentions *mudra* for the first time, each corresponding to fire ki, water ki and heaven ki. These are subsequently explained in terms of *kototama gaku* theory, but one can ask how necessary is the explanation and to what extent the triple classification is evident from the illustrations. In the illustrated explanations that follow (Gleason goes through a whole repertoire of *kokyu*-based *waza*), the *mudra* seem to have taken the place of *kototama gaku*.

In the fourth chapter of Gleason's book, entitled *Shugyo: The Spiritual Training of Technique*, explanations of *waza* take center place. However, Gleason precedes these explanations with an account of *kotai* [個体], *jutai* [柔体], *ryutai* [流体], and *kitai* [気体] training. Gleason associates the first three of these with the three ways of organizing the vowel dimensions, discussed earlier in connection with Nakazono's Kototama Principle. Accordingly, Amatsu Kanagi 'manifests' *kotai* (solid body) training, Amatsu Sugaso 'manifests' *jutai* (flexible body) training, and Amatsu Futonorito 'manifests' *ryutai* (flowing body) training, whereas *kitai* (ki body) training receives a very brief mention at the end. In fact, this is not quite so strange is it might appear. Though he did not succeed in giving a very clear explanation, Nakazono insisted that the order of the vowel 'dimensions' represents different —and limiting—ways in which we actually experience the world. What Gleason has done is to use these 'dimensions' as a pointer to the fact that the way in which one trains in aikido can actually limit one's entire perception of training and the training environment. In other words, the four categories of training are not simply four different ways in which one can choose to train; they are four different ways in which one's whole 'aikido life' can progress and Gleason cautions that the first three, at least, are necessary stages.

Gleason's account of the four categories of training can profitably be compared with that given by the late Morihiro Saito in his *Traditional Aikido* volumes. There are relevant discussions throughout the five volumes, but an explanation is given of all four together, with copious examples, on pp. 50-78 of Volume V. Of course, Saito Sensei gives his explanations without mentioning *kotodama* or *kototama gaku* theory at all.

The remainder of the fourth chapter contains detailed explanations of core *waza*: *ikkyo*, *irimi-nage* and *shiho nage*. Again, there are copious illustrations, some of which are not so clear (especially when Gleason uses two different ukes to show different stages of the same *waza*: the sequence is upset). Generally, Gleason gives a prior explanation in terms of *kototama gaku* vowel sounds and vowel dimensions, but the actual *waza* are explained in very clear, practical, concrete terms. There is no space to examine Gleason's explanation of each core *waza* in detail, but the fact that I had the same teacher as William Gleason, in Seigo Yamaguchi Sensei, allows me to make an immediate connection with the way Gleason appears to perform the *waza* (judging from the photographs) and the way Yamaguchi Sensei himself performed the *waza* (based on my own recollections as his uke).

If there is a weakness in the book (always in my opinion), it lies with the way the aikido *waza* and the *kototama gaku* are connected. The connection seems too loose to be of much practical use. There is a videotape of Seigo Yamaguchi Sensei demonstrating a vast range of aikido *waza*, with university students as his ukes. The tape was not made for commercial use, but copies were made available to Yamaguchi Sensei's own students. There are no explanations on the tape at all, just repeated *waza*, all performed in Yamaguchi Sensei's unique way. Thus one suggested practical test might be for one to practice all the aikido exercises and *waza* illustrated in Gleason's book, but ignoring all the prior cosmological explanations and separating the exercises and *waza* from any explanation relying on *kototama gaku*. Clearly, aikido students need to visualize what they are doing and so the metaphors they use are of great importance—as Kukai showed. In this connection, I think that Morihiro Saito's volumes offer a very important means of comparing one view of aikido training with the view explained in Gleason's book.

General Conclusions on Gleason's *Kototama Gaku*
In *AWP*, Gleason makes extensive use of *kototama gaku* and of the word association techniques beloved of the *kototama*

gakusha scholars and Sanae Odano. In the margins we find examples of this wordplay in the alternative readings of important concepts. Gleason acknowledges extensive use of the version of *kototama gaku* promoted by Koji Ogasawara, (小笠原孝次) whose book appears in Gleason's bibliography.

As we have seen, M Nakazono, also, relied heavily on Ogasawara's *kototama gaku* and so we encounter in *SFOA* and *AWP* the same explanations of word-sound 'dimensions' and the *Amatsu* sound charts that appeared in Nakazono's *Inochi* and *The Source of the Present Civilization*. However, Gleason enriches his presentation of a supposed 'ancient Shinto' with elements from other major religious cultures and this is firmly in the eclectic tradition of Omoto.

Nevertheless, the version of Shinto that Gleason does present is one that is wholly *omote* in character, with no trace of *ura* allowed to appear. In fact, Gleason's view of Shinto seems to be similar to the very traditionalist views found in books like Jean Herbert's *Shinto: The Fountainhead of Japan* and J W T Mason's *The Meaning of Shinto: The Primaeval Foundation of Creative Spirit in Modern Japan*. Thus, like Nakazono, Gleason relies on a version of Shinto that is highly romantic in character and one of the issues that one might have with the book is that Gleason presents a view of aikido that is the embodiment of Shinto (and *kotodama*) seen in exclusively and excessively religious terms.

So, if we think of Gleason as a guide through the sacred swamp that is *kotodama*, he certainly plunges headlong into the mud and he appears to be a more reasonable guide than Nakazono, who has almost vanished without trace in a deep pocket of ooze known as the Kototama Principle, along with all the lost tribes of *Sumela Mikoto*, who were clearly overwhelmed by the Power of the Principle and gave up trying to get through the swamp (their whereabouts are still unknown). Gleason also assumes that all aikido swamps and non-aikido swamps are *kotodama* swamps and that all routes through the swamp are largely the same. The problem for me is that he also seems unintentionally to offer a way round the swamp, without anybody having to get into the mud at all.

18. A Discourse on the Method: Aikido, *Kotodama*, and the Web of Belief

This column is the last of five interconnected essays exploring the links between language and aikido. Column 11 presented some case studies: four examples of Morihei Ueshiba's discourses in Japanese (one of which was on *kotodama*), together with translations of the said discourses. In Column 12, general discussion of contemporary language theory and practice balanced more complex and detailed examinations of particular language use, especially by some speakers of Japanese. In Column 13, I examined the *kotodama* 'foundation texts' of Kukai and the *Man'yoshu* in some detail. In Column 14, I examined the work of a traditional 'nativist', Motoori Norinaga, as well as of a more contemporary 'nativist', Jin'ichi Konishi. I also looked at Ueshiba's own writings on *kotodama*, albeit through the words of a popular translation, and rounded off this examination with a look at how Ueshiba's son Kisshomaru viewed *kotodama*. In this column, I have examined the writings on *kotodama* of three major postwar practitioners of aikido. Thus the above approach, an examination of several types of *kotodama* discourse on *kotodama* and its analogues, has been a largely chronologically ordered blend of the historical and the cross-cultural.

Another approach would be to start from the individual, on the threshold of the dojo, and see if and how perception and use of language changes with increased proficiency in training. Initially at least, the language reflects the culture and this is especially clear in Internet discussions forums like *Aikiweb*. In my own case, this had been clear long before the Internet became an essential aspect of modern discourse. In my 'non-aikido' life as an academic, I had always specialized in language analysis or language production in some form or other. On the other hand, beginning aikido training with Japanese language proficiency on the far side of zero, under the guidance of a Japanese teacher whose English language proficiency was only just on this side of zero, effectively removed language as a means of teaching/learning based communication in the dojo. With further training under Japanese teachers whose English skills were better, language as a means of teaching/learning based communication in training became increasingly important, but this was always seen in the light of my own private studies in language and linguistics. In fact, I practiced aikido at the hands of Japanese teachers who never saw the need to use terms like *ki* or *kotodama*, in the meager explanations they gave of the art.

Coming to Japan effectively removed language as a means of teaching/learning based communication once more, but coincidentally with increasing proficiency in the Japanese language, I learned that Morihei Ueshiba had stated in many places that aikido was *kotodama*, which implied a completely different view of language and approach to language study. However, on studying *kotodama* more deeply, I also came to realize how very difficult it was to relate Ueshiba's view of aikido-as-*kotodama* to my previous language studies, the validity of which I was not at all prepared to deny. In my opinion, *kotodama*, and especially *kototama gaku* (as exemplified by Shido Yamaguchi and Onisaburo Deguchi) are not based on a convincing model of how language works and they make assumptions that are no longer entertained with respect to the abstract scientific study of language as a whole (as theoretical and practical linguistics & pragmatics), or to particular living languages, like English and Japanese. Of course, *kotodama* and *kototama gaku* might be relevant to Japanese literary criticism, especially of the type that Jin'ichi Konishi undertook, or might be expressed as a set of sociolinguistic practices, such as casting spells or making/breaking taboos. However, if *kotodama* and *kototama gaku*

are supposed to have an essential place in the general understanding and practice of postwar aikido, this supposition needs to be supported by arguments, which closely connect the two concepts to specific training procedures, rather than by speculative observations that go counter to actual language use.

19. Some General Conclusions: Aikido, Language, *Kotodama*

One way of summarizing this discussion about *kotodama* is to ask the same kind of questions that have been asked about 'internal' training and its relation with *aiki*, which actually underlie this series of columns: Morihei Ueshiba is no longer alive, so how does one study and practice aikido as he did? Does this training involve practicing *kotodama* as he did? Is this possible? If so, how? If it is not possible, what are the substitutes and to what extent are these substitutes 'authentic' (in the sense of being a genuine modern replica of O Sensei's own psycho-physical / spiritual practices)? I leave the reader to judge whether the three authors discussed in this column offer a convincing view of *kotodama* and *kototama gaku*, that either renders O Sensei's own psycho-physical / spiritual practices available to modern aikidoka, or supplies an essential element that is lacking in postwar aikido.

Reading

Since this is a column about language and is written in English, I have often used the *Oxford English Dictionary*. The version I have is the CD-ROM Version 4 of the Second Edition, published in 2009. Of course, the CD-ROM version is far more 'user-friendly' than the 20-volume printed version, with all the various supplements. It is regrettable that there is no counterpart in Japanese. The massive 『日本国語大辞典』is very good, but does not set out to trace the history of a word, with adequate evidence of how the meanings have evolved.

M Nakazono's books on *kotodama* used for this column are: *The Source of the Old and New Testaments*, 1974, 1990; *My Past Way of Budo*, 1978; *Inochi: The Book of Life*, 1984; and *The Source of the Present Civilization*, 1990. They are all published by Kototama Books.

For those who wish to compare Nakazono's handling of the myths in the *Book of Genesis*: the Garden of Eden and the Tower of Babel with 'orthodox' accounts and commentaries, I found the following very useful: (1) Annotated Bible Texts: E A Spicer, *Genesis*, 1962, Doubleday (The Anchor Bible); *The New Jerusalem Bible*, 1985, Doubleday; D E Gowan, *Genesis 1-11*, 1988, Eerdmans (International Theological Commentary); *The New Interpreter's Bible*, Volume I, 1994, Abingdon Press; (2) Essential Cultural Background: J B Pritchard, Ed, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament* [*ANET*], Third Edition with Supplement, 1969, Princeton U P (especially the Akkadian Creation Epic [pp. 60 onwards]).

Four essays by Carmen Blacker are also relevant to Nakazono's treatment of *kotodama*: "The Language of Birds"; "Paradise at the Beginning of Time: an Intimation of the Enlightened State"; "Two Shinto Myths: the Golden Age and the Chosen People"; "Shinto: the Fountainhead of Japan," in *Collected Writings of Carmen Blacker*, 2000, Routledge Curzon, pp. 1-39, 333-337.

Kisshomaru Ueshiba's biography of his father has become accessible to non-Japanese readers, now that an English translation has appeared: Kisshomaru Ueshiba, *A Life in Aikido: The Biography of Founder, Morihei Ueshiba*, 2008, Kodansha International.

R A Miller's scathing views about *kotodama* need to be compared with the works of two writers, who have done more than anyone to popularize the notion of *kotodama* in English, especially for aikido practitioners. I mean, of course, John Stevens and William Gleason. There are four books that need to be considered: John Stevens, *The Essence of Aikido: The Secret Teachings of Morihei Ueshiba*, 1993, Kodansha International; *The Secrets of Aikido*, 1995, Shambala; William Gleason, *The Spiritual Foundations of Aikido*, 1995, Destiny Books; *Aikido and Words of Power: The Sacred Sounds of Kototama*, 2009, Destiny Books.

Gleason's discussion of Shinto should be compared with other treatments. The collection of essays edited by Nobutaka Inoue would be a good place to begin: Nobutaka Inoue Ed., *Shinto—A Short History*, 2003, Routledge-Curzon. This book is a translation of a Japanese work: 『神道日本生まれた宗教システム』, 1998, 新曜社. The views of Toshio Kuroda, that what Gleason called 'ancient Shinto' is largely an eighteenth century invention, are also of importance: "Shinto in the History of Japanese Religions," *Journal of Japanese Studies*, 1981.

Gleason's discussions of the ancient chronicles should be compared with the discussion in a central text on the politics of Japanese history writing: J S Brownlee, *Japanese Historians and the National Myths, 1600-1945: The Age of the Gods and Emperor Jinmu*, 1997, Toronto U P.

An interesting book, which is highly sympathetic to *kotodama*, is Stephen Earle's biography of Osano Sanae and his explanation of her theories of *kotoha*: Stephen Earle, *Words, Characters, and Transparency - An Introduction to the Art and Science of Kotoha*, 2003, ASNeX. To balance the easy, conversational style of Earle, readers should look at the similar style used by Stephen Pinker in his books on language: *Words and Rules: The Ingredients of Language*, 1999, Basic Books; *The Stuff of Thought: Language as a Window into Human Nature*, 2007, Viking.

Apart from the Japanese originals of the discourses of Morihei Ueshiba and some of the writings of Kisshomaru Ueshiba, mentioned above or in previous columns, other Japanese works that I have consulted in writing this column are:

川村湊, 『言霊と他界』, 2002, 講談社学術分庫 1575.

出口王仁三郎, 『大本言霊学』, 解説: 大宮司朗, 2004, 八幡書店.

出口王仁三郎, 『大本言霊学　梅花篇』, undated, 八幡書店.

豊田国夫, 『日本人の言霊思想』, 1980, 講談社学術分庫 483.

豊田国夫, 『言霊信仰』, 1985, 八幡書店.

文部省, 『國體の本義』, 文部省出版 1935.

山口志道, 『言霊秘書　山口志道霊学全集』, 1992, 八幡書店.

Peter Goldsbury (b. 28 April 1944). Aikido 6th dan Aikikai, Professor at Hiroshima University, teaching philosophy and comparative culture. B. in UK. Began aikido as a student and practiced at various dojo. Became a student of Mitsunari Kanai at the New England Aikikai in 1973. After moving back to the UK in 1975, trained in the Ryushinkan Dojo under Minoru Kanetsuka. Also trained with K Chiba on his frequent visits to the UK. Moved to Hiroshima, Japan, in 1980 and continued training with the resident Shihan, Mazakazu Kitahira, 7th dan Also trained regularly with Seigo Yamaguchi, Hiroshi Tada, Sadateru Arikawa and Masatake Fujita, both in Hiroshima and at the Aikikai Hombu. Was elected Chairman of the IAF in 1998. With two German colleagues, opened a small dojo in Higashi-Hiroshima City in 2001. Instructed at Aiki Expo 2002 in Las Vegas, Nevada.