

Wojciech J. Cynarski

Chair of Department of Humanistic Sciences,
Faculty of Physical Education, University of Rzeszow (Poland)

TOWARDS THE SOCIOLOGY OF PSYCHOPHYSICAL SYSTEMS OF SELF-REALIZATION

The author has made a reflection on the psychophysical systems of Asian origin and their theoretical recognition - anthropological, cultural and sociological approach. On the basis of long-term participant observation and analysis of the literature on the subject, he defines basic concepts, classifies and explains. The present study contains the introduction to a conceptual language, critical analysis of the research, theoretical reflection and a proposal concerning the adoption of a new approach for research. The summary provides the following conclusion: Psychophysical system of self-realization is an educational program or a *way*. This refers to the spiritual growth through physical and mental exercises, according to the teaching of the master and the lineage. This may be a way of martial arts, yoga school or another form of psycho-physical exercise taught by an authentic master. These systems are for many reasons interesting for socio-cultural research.

In the humanities of sport there are a number of mistakes and misunderstandings concerning the interpretation of psychophysical systems of self-realization. For example, systems of meditation are numbered among movement forms. Similar mistakes can be avoided through adopting a theoretical perspective of the anthropology of psychophysical progress. A paradigm of systemic approaches and integrated approach to a person facilitates understanding of the sense of human ascetic and psychophysical practices.

Key words: theory, psychophysical system, martial arts, new paradigm

*Self-improvement is a source of all
sort of progress and moral development*
Confucius

Introduction

In philosophy, the term **system** means a set of theses and conclusions which constitute a single coherent whole. They also include the principles of organization: a set of principles and rules which govern a particular domain. According to L. von Bertalanffy (1984), **the system is a thing which maintains its existence through mutual interactions which occur between the components of the system.** This does not only concern the world of nature.

Superior systems (supersystems), not entirely defined, include Japanese *budo*, Hindu *yoga* and other systems of meditation and breathing exercises of the Far East. The designation set boundaries are conventionally defined at the most, whereas the criterion of mutual interaction of their components is not met. This results from multiplicity of the forms of their components.

Budo (Japanese *bu* – martial, military, take the spear, *dō* – way, ways) relates, in the strict sense,¹ to a set of martial arts of Japanese origins. It is a part of the culture of the land of samurais (Sasaki 2009). It encompasses a variety of martial arts and the derivative combat sports which, in many cases, are based on mutually contradictory ideal assumptions.

Yoga (Sanskrit *yuj* – combine, bind, control) is defined as a philosophical, medical and pedagogical system. “In colloquial terms, the term *yoga* defines achievement of a state of spiritual perfection in the form of a higher state of consciousness, unity with the Highest Truth, the Absolute” (Szyszko-Bohusz 2005, p. 9). However, the roads to enlightenment are different in different types of *yoga*.

¹ In a broader sense, this is identified by the international environment of martial arts with the entirety of *martial arts*.

Systems of meditation also include a number of psychophysical practices of the countries of South and East Asia (Maliszewski 1996). Some authors also include martial arts, different health-oriented breathing exercises and *yoga* in this capable category.

The proper **psychophysical system of self-realization** is an educational curricula or a 'way' which relates to spiritual development through physical and mental exercise, according to the teaching of a particular master (*sensei, guru*) and in the particular lineage.

The *humanistic theory of martial arts* which has been developed in Poland is oriented towards martial arts as forms of personal and psychophysical development. Martial arts teach self-defence. However, apart from development of technical and tactical skills, they also introduce the disciples into specific axiological, normative and educational systems. Differentiated functions of martial arts bring the necessity of systematic and interdisciplinary approaches. Variety of martial arts and multifaceted nature of practicing martial arts make it necessary for them to describe them and interpret them in a systematic, multifaceted, interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary way. Humanistic theory of martial arts takes into consideration other dimensions: anthropological, cultural, moral, social and pedagogical, psychological and philosophical, religious and health aspects. In this perspective (in line with humanistic theory of martial arts), martial arts are a historical category of perfectionist systems of hand-to-hand fight or using weapons, originated in the cultures of warriors, connected with ethical codes and the elements of metaphysics. Therefore, it is neither rivalry nor direct confrontation but rather its connection to spiritual culture which defines a martial art. **Martial arts are the forms of psychophysical activity linked to a certain tradition of hand-to-hand fight or using weapons, aimed at personal development and merging educational methods with improvement in spiritual dimension** (Cynarski 2004).

Ways of martial arts include certain forms of physical (psychophysical) culture, which, based on tradition of warrior cultures **lead, through training of fighting techniques, to psychophysical improvement and self-realization**. At the same time, they are the processes of education and positive ascetics. The positive ascetics combine corporal exercise with conscious self-discipline and is oriented towards moral and spiritual progress (Cynarski 2004, pp. 20-21). Perfect boxer or other athlete do not become an artist in the domain of martial arts, but merely a perfect athlete, whereas sport champion is someone other than martial arts master. Also, technical perfection does not make a master. It is rather a total of knowledge and skills, moral attitude and the heritage of the role of teacher-educator which serves the purpose.

'Both *yoga* and Far East martial arts provide a recipe for achievement of spiritual progress by means of suitable practices. The philosophy of the nations of the Far East is almost identical with the practice of religious character, expression of body movement, active expressing of myself in a particular activity. It is the manifestation of the school of thought and spiritual culture of the ancient East, according to which spiritual development is closely related to corporal exercise' (Cynarski 2004, p. 148). The difficulty of unequivocal categorization of martial arts under the area of physical culture results from the necessity of a more holistic understanding of these arts. It is a domain from the area of psychophysical culture, a derivative of tradition, where no distinct division between what is spiritual and what is physical has been utilized.

An example of psychophysical system of self-realization can be educational program such as *idōkan yōshin-ryū budō*, which combines certain ideal threads of a noble way with European and Japanese origins. This teaching concerns a set of martial arts, knowledge of ethics and health. The way of personal perfection of the practitioners, also in moral and spiritual sense is strongly emphasized (Cynarski 2009).

Yoga conveys moral indications and pedagogical values. It is an esoteric system, i.e. the system oriented towards internal development of a practitioner. The overriding goal can be achieved through different methods of practicing, which is realized under supervision of a

certain guru, a spiritual guide. Individual yoga subsystem, such as relaxation and breathing exercises, are utilized for medical purposes and in mental training of athletes.

Systems of meditation, such as traditional arching *kyudo* (Japanese *way of arch*), the main goal and the motivation for practicing is full personal integration at higher level. Non-competitive arching *kyudo* is connected with *Zen* meditation. Arch and arrows become specific tools, attributes or gadgets, but it is not hitting the goal that matters. The aim of this practice is spiritual development and enlightenment (Herrigel 1987).

In the case of breathing and 'energizing' exercises, such as *qigong* (Włodyka, Cynarski 2000), they include health-oriented behaviours, i.e. those from the domain of physical culture and health culture, whereas meditational *Zen* Buddhism practices, transcendental meditation etc. are connected with the phenomenon of parareligious movements and culture wandering.

The State of the Research

Psychophysical systems of self-realization are connected with sociological interest and manifestations of multifaceted movement of *New Age*. The research encompasses parareligious movements, new cults and sects and the reborn neopaganism. For sociologists, such as Michael York (1995) and Susanne Newcombe (1995; cf.: Doktor 1999), it is more interesting to research expansion of yoga and social relationships of communities which are involved in oriental practices, developing in Great Britain and the USA rather than the sense of these practices.

The systems of breathing exercises can be interesting to sociologists as manifestations of health-oriented behaviours. This opens up the area of interests of medical sociology and health sociology on the one hand and the sociology of physical culture or sport sociology on the other. It is also of much interest to research social reception of these practices in cultural circles which are uncommon for its creation.

Sociology of psychophysical practices and 'psychophysical systems of self-realization' remains the only convincing concept so far (Sieber, Cieszkowski 2009; Cynarski, Obodyński 2010), whereas social and cultural reflexion on martial arts alone is developing even further (Obodyński 2009).

Sociological reflexion on martial arts makes first steps for gaining independence as a new subdiscipline of sociology. Main problems and theoretical assumption were determined. The main directions of scientific research and other interesting areas of investigations have been emphasized. Leading directions of social and cultural research encompass: (1) The investigations of the history and evolution of different martial arts; (2) The axiological and cultural investigations and analyses (including the problems of values, lifestyles and descriptive ethics); (3) Biographical studies; (4) Investigations of reception and comprehension of martial arts; (5) The investigations of institution and institutionalization of martial arts and also participation in these arts (with particular focus on women); (6) Investigations in the perspective of the theory of cultural dialogue; (7) Investigations in the perspective of anthropogenic space sociology; (8) Investigations of human relations in groups of people who practice martial arts; (9) Investigations focused on relationships between martial arts and marketing or business; (10) Investigations of martial art tourism movement (Cieszkowski, Sieber 2006; Cynarski, Obodyński 2007).

The a number studies which concern social reception of the phenomenon of *martial arts*, their institutionalization (Cynarski *et al.* 2009; Cynarski, Walczak 2009), classification and scientific interpretation combined with combat sports, according to a keyword of 'fight' are emerging (Kalina 2000; Sieber, Cynarski, Litwiniuk 2007; Figueiredo 2009; Reguli 2009). Internalization of ethical principles of philosophies of martial arts in the environment of practitioners, lifestyles of the students and instructors; the researchers conduct studies on the cases of outstanding martial art masters. There have also been the investigations which approach martial arts and combat sports from historical and sociological perspective as well

as in the aspect of sociology and pedagogy (Szajna 2009; Słopecki 2010). The state of Polish social research on the phenomenon of martial arts was discussed by the author of the present study in plenary papers presented in conferences in Chengdu (China PRC) and Viseu (Portugal) in 2009.

Mistakes and Misunderstandings

Martial arts have been notoriously mistaken by combat sports. However, their goal and essence of practicing differ substantially. Combat sports at the level of *jutsu* (technical perfection) are not aimed at pretended, conventional fight (as in sport) but rather at real fight. At the level of *do* (moral way) they maintain deeper sense of psychophysical practice, as psychophysical systems of perfection. Therefore, it is not competing for a sport result that matters, although sport test can be obviously useful at certain stages, e.g. as a specific test for gaining this type of experience.

Fundamental goals and the means which are used to achieve these goals differ from each other (Tab. 1). Comparison of typical differences reveal that, despite similarities to recreational practicing of sport, it becomes a separate category, which is not necessarily contained in the concept of physical culture (being a rather psychophysical category).

Tab. 1. What makes difference between martial arts and combat sports?

| Criterion | Martial Art | Combat Sport |
|--------------------------------------|---|--|
| Goal of practicing/training | Widely understood perfectionism, self-realization | Winning in competition, sport result |
| Sense of fight | As above or victory in self-defence | As above: fighting the opponent |
| Sense of mastery | Master-level skills, knowledge and moral maturity; state of harmony of body, mind and spirit, formally confirmed high levels. | Winning the title of e.g. world champion, master sport class, medals in the Olympic Games, high level of skills in a particular sport discipline |
| Means and Methods of training | Traditional and modern methods and means, teaching real technical and tactical skills and moral education | Modern training oriented towards sport result |

Source: authors own study

Another misunderstanding is putting martial arts together with oriental dances, yoga, meditation, *taiji quan*, *qigong* etc. termed Eastern movement forms (Brown, Leledaki 2010). Terming the forms of psychophysical practices, with domination of immobility (yoga, meditation, partially *qigong*), as movement forms is a substantial mistake and does not demonstrate logical contradictions. Yet, does it reflect the sense of the practice alone?

According to Klaus Moegling, the term corporal experience (German *Körpererfahrung*) sounds better. However, movement therapies (*Bewegungstherapien*) and movement meditations (*Bewegungsmeditationen*), encompassed by this author in the spectrum of 'movement culture' raise serious doubts (cf.: Moegling 2006). Are relaxation exercises a movement therapy? Theorists are frequently the slaves of their own concepts and the fundamental terms adopted within these concepts. But, firstly, it is not exclusively body culture since its goal is spiritual development. Secondly, it is not movement culture since physical movement does not always occurs but rather a mental effort. Thirdly, it is not sport culture, since the goal is neither sport result nor entertainment or pleasure.

Psychophysical practices involve human holistically and are practiced in a serious manner, either if the aim is to prepare them for fighting for their lives or if the only opponent is their own weakness.

Sergio Raimondo, Italian humanist and expert on Chinese psychophysical practices (*qigong*, *taiji quan*) in book (Raimondo 2007) termed different Asian 'disciplines', from yoga, *feng shui* and *shiatsu* to *kendō*, *taekwondo* and *vietvodao* briefly as oriental disciplines.

According to the author, the term 'oriental disciplines' does not provide a good, unequivocal term for the sphere of reality and human activity. It is psychophysical reality and activity, thus it seems to be proper to utilize the term 'psychophysical practices' or 'psychophysical systems' defined before.

Perspective of Anthropology of Psychophysical Progress

It is not only sociological reflection but humanities and social sciences which call for a new, systematic paradigm which would merge individual scientific domains of metatheories. Furthermore, this overriding theory is necessary not only for the science but, to even a higher degree, for the culture and civilization, Europe and world on global scale.

The author postulates that this metatheory should be the new anthropology which approaches human holistically. Human is a psychophysical being, with the needs of both physical and spiritual nature. In particular in the case of development of humanity, psychophysical human progress is capable of merging the areas of interests of explication sciences and expressing duty-based judgements (pedagogy). The new theory of human (Cynarski 2000) can become what will bridge the gap between the sciences of human activity separated by 19th-century pattern. In particular, it provides a perspective for interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary research. It is human who should remain in the centre of scientific reflexion. Human, as conscious being, which strives for higher, supertemporal and extra-physical values. Negligence of spiritual reality is a form of reductionism and partially a depersonalization of human being.

Humanist theory of martial arts provides, according to anthropology of psychophysical progress, a wide outlook on the phenomenon of psychophysical practices and human who practices martial arts. From this standpoint, the Warrior Way means transgressing your own limits through continuous effort of working with yourself; it is a moral way, improving personality traits and character through fighting with weaknesses and the most difficult of fights (Sieber, Cynarski, Litwiniuk 2007). If it is also in line with the Heaven's Way and leads to learning the Absolute, one can also mention its transcendent dimension. This concept does not have to concern only the domain of East Asian martial arts since it is combined with a more universal knight and soldier ethos.

Analogically, the perspective of anthropology of psychophysical progress can provide explanation for a number of areas of practicing of psychophysical systems of self-realization.

Summary

Psychophysical system of self-realization is an educational program or a *way* which relates to spiritual development through physical and mental exercise, according to teaching by a particular master (*sensei, guru*) and in a particular lineage. This can include the way of martial arts, school of yoga or teaching of another form of psychophysical exercise taught by an actual master. For many reasons, these systems are interesting for social and cultural research.

In humanities of sport, mistakes and misunderstandings might arise about interpretation of psychophysical systems of self-realization. For example, traditional understanding of martial arts is mixed with combat sports or systems of meditation are numbered among movement forms. The opportunity to avoid similar mistakes is to adopt a theoretical perspective of the anthropology of psychophysical progress. Paradigm of systematic approach and integral outlook on the human allow for understanding of the sense of being involved in ascetic and psychophysical practices.

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