

## TOWARDS A GENERAL THEORY OF COMBAT (FIGHTING ARTS)

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### Introduction to Combat Logic – A General Theory

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#### Abstract:

In many discussions of martial arts, participants use different approaches to what to focus on. This fact is reflected in different training approaches, which the instructors use to teach their students. Some try to explain techniques; others try to develop certain abilities. Taking this into consideration, the following study tries to clarify and to simplify all those ideas with the aim of bringing them all together in one model. Based on a concept, which military strategist Edward Luttwak uses to clarify different levels of action, this model contains various ideas that can be built upon in future. Additionally, it contains an approach of aim-purpose-relations in which all different ideas of martial arts can be brought together and therefore can form a perfect base for further discussions of different font formats.

#### Introduction

Based on the strategic opus of the military theorist Clausewitz, Kernspecht wrote the book “On Single Combat” [Kernspecht 1987] in which he tried to identify a general idea of how to fight optimally and efficiently in a pure logical sense. He developed a first theory of Combat Logic based on the principles and the basic concepts of the Chinese martial art *WingTsun*. 2011 “Kampflogik”<sup>1</sup> [Kernspecht 2011] was published and in 2013 “Die Essenz des WingTsun”<sup>2</sup> [Kernspecht 2013] was released as a general theory of Combat Logic with the focus on *WingTsun*.

Talking about theory, Clausewitz had previously mentioned, that it is necessary to get rid of misinterpretations and define all terms needed to have a common base for future communication without misunderstandings [Clausewitz 1999: 91]. Especially in the field of martial arts, there seems to exist a profusion of terms like: techniques, principles, mottoes, abilities, tactics, strategies, concepts and so on. Those expressions are ill-defined and with so many it is no wonder that comparison between martial arts is so difficult.

Therefore, this article proposes a model to define the terms on different levels, which are arranged in a perpendicular hierarchy. In addition it shows a possible matrix to categorize different martial arts and gives an example of how these may be applied.

#### Searching for a theory

When two parties each desire to achieve a common objective, there is a potential conflict situation. Only one can reach the objective by hindering the other one to reach his [Binhack 1998: 38]. Physical and psychological violence seems to still be an instrument to solve such conflicts, following Clausewitz’s postulation that war is just a continuation of politics by other means [Clausewitz 1999: 998]. The question arises whether it is possible to identify certain patterns or rules in those conflicts that allow, through training, a means to prepare for them. This would assume the existence of a kind of order in the apparent chaos of fighting, and thus it would be possible to produce, organise and train in certain procedures: a *modus operandi* a strategy. For certain, impending conflicts between men, Kernspecht discovered different phases in the ritual fight, which differs from a duel which implies

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<sup>1</sup> Engl. CombatLogic

<sup>2</sup> Engl. Essence of WingTsun

a willingness to fight. The aggressor searches for a victim, not an opponent, and reassures himself in several steps, that he has found one who is not dangerous for him to attack [Kernspecht 2000: 31f]. Those steps are:

1. Choosing a victim
2. Staring: The aggressor tries to get in the field of vision of the potential victim to check his reaction, when he threatens him. If the victim looks away insecurely, the aggressor continues.
3. Vocalisation (Questions like: “What are you looking at? Do you need a picture of me?“).
4. Physical approach / contact / push.
5. Attack – e.g. haymaker.
6. Nowadays there exists a further, degenerated ritual fight. When the victim falls to the floor, the attacker won’t stop, but, for example, kicks to the head.

If this order is known, it is possible to intercede at a certain moment. For example, knowing how to react to the stare of the aggressor or on his verbal provocation in order to prevent ensuing steps. Thus, a strategy for dealing with similar situations can be practised, minimizing being surprised by unexpected aggressive actions.

## Methodology

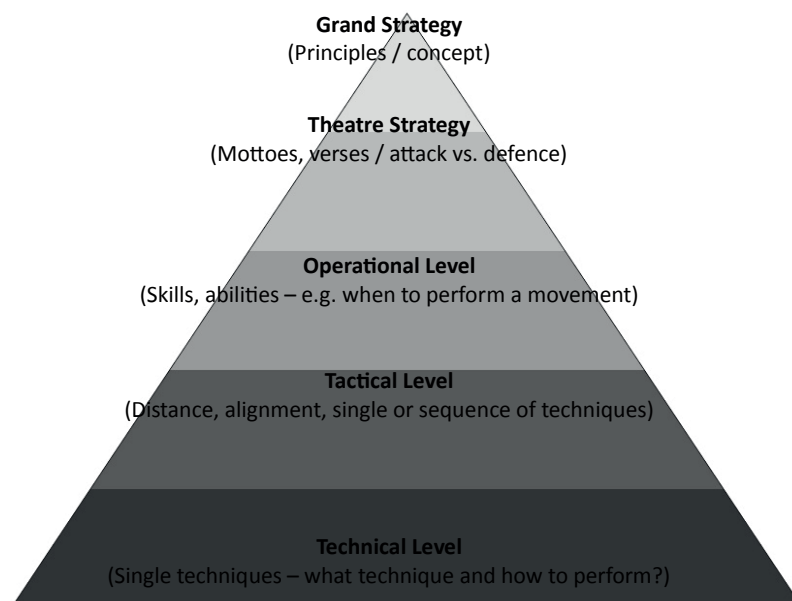
To define a theory of logical structures in martial arts, it is necessary to clarify the essentials and the motivation for each interpretation of the martial art individually. The field is too large and diversified to allow identification of a common aim in the

different combat arts [Wiethäuper 2011; Cynarski 2012]. Even in the same style, there are many different interpretations, and therefore the logic for its aims and the means by which they are achieved vary considerably. Therefore, this paper will present a horizontal structure of aim-purpose-relations [Luhmann, 1973; Jäger, Beckmann 2011], which allows the comparison of the different approaches in a logical manner. Within every martial art there is a logic connected to the purpose and the means which the martial art uses to attain certain individual objectives (motivation). This can be a philosophical background, the idea of healing oneself with the art, defending oneself, achieving honour and fame, and so on.

To classify and sort the different martial arts further it is useful to apply a vertical [Luttwak 1987] structure – splitting the field of the different kinds of martial arts into portions that can be examined and consequently making it possible to compare the different styles and to explain the reason for their different physical realizations. The paper shows a vertical architecture, the apex being the concept descending to techniques at the base, revealing all possible decision procedures in an act of fighting (see figure 1). How to solve a given task in different ways. Additionally it submits a horizontal construction, including the complex of purpose and means, categorizing all different kind of martial arts.

In a second step, this matrix will be applied to the example of self-defence.

In conflict situations, people are confronted with a sudden act of aggression and violence, and the main questions are: how to react to and how



**Figure 1.** Vertical hierarchy of Martial Arts concepts

to prepare for those situations? [Kernspecht 1987; Kernspecht 2011; Kernspecht 2013]. On that basis, the authors show the different generic vertical steps for realistic self-defence – from the principles and the aims, considering the specific situation and the necessary behaviour in question [Schelling 1980] – down to the basic techniques, which help to fulfil the purpose best, according to the idea “form follows function” [Göhner 1993].

## Vertical Concept in Martial Arts

Luttwak [2001: 87f] defined and implemented in 1987 this five level hierarchic strategy model of the international politic system to reveal the different approaches to solving a military conflict, starting from a politician’s view down to the field commander and further down to the soldiers and the technique they use. Understanding all those different *action levels* facilitates the use of more degrees of freedom in the decision process. This model shall be applied therefore to the field of Martial Arts to enable the integration of all approaches of understanding and teaching in Martial Arts and to allow a comparison of different styles or ideas.

At the top is the *Grand Strategy*, which embraces the main concept of a Martial Art, often formulated in principles. Every Martial Arts has its own concept about how to perform, how to act using it – but sometimes they are not yet clearly described.

Principles are often simple to remember and include the general modus operandi, somehow catchily formulated<sup>3</sup>.

On the way to the bottom next is the *theatre strategy* in which the principles are unfolded into mottoes and verses.

They help to apply the often vague formulated principles and serve to concretize a special movement, which is typical for the particular Art. It is like adding flesh or muscles to the skeleton to get a functional body. Already on the highest level contained, the distinction between attack and defence is more specifically defined at the theatre strategy level. It is necessary to know when the user is able to wait for a defence and when it is better to attack first. The theatre also includes different kind of scenario training to develop an idea of when to react and how. This leads to the third, the *operational*

*level*, describing the necessary skills and abilities to fulfil the wanted behaviour, including timing, focus, power, etc.

Coming next is the *tactical level* - often mixed up with the higher strategic sphere. Questions to ask on that level are: how to solve certain tasks and functions, concerning alignment (adjustment) to the opponent. What is the reason for certain techniques and sequences (asking for the *why*)?

On the broad base of the pyramid there is the *technical level* with its single techniques of arms and legs, which are practices solo or with a partner, but it is still important to understand that they serve a higher objective. It is about *what* technique should be practised and *how* to perform the movement.

## Horizontal reflection (The connecting element of the concept)

With a top-down pyramid structure, concepts and methods become more plastic and graspable. While the main principle is still difficult to apprehend and to realize physically, it becomes more concrete at the lower level. Therefore it is important to practise techniques: They are the vehicle used to explain higher ideas. But it would be unwise to teach and learn them just for their own sake – they serve as examples to explain the higher concepts.

The Grand Strategy contains certain instructions and basic thoughts of how to attain a certain *objective*, let’s say how it defines a *function*, containing a *purpose* or motivation [Wiethäuper 2011]. Through the purpose result the means or the methods (the form), which are realized on the deeper levels. *Form follows function* – which bases on a *horizontal reflection*:

In that context, three questions should be asked for each Martial Art system, to emphasize the scientific approach to it and to conform to tradition:

1. What does the student have to learn (*purpose - function*)? For which situation does he need certain abilities or skills? This determines the *means* (the training method or *form*).
2. If there is an existing Martial Arts system in use, the second step is to ask whether a training method fulfils the demand; does it develop the required abilities (*means*)? The scientific approach questions the system and teaching.
3. In case the abilities aren’t developed optimally in the required manner: how can new, scientifically based training methods be implemented?

These questions leads to different categories like the following:

If the purpose is to support health, the performance will be adjusted to that objective and

<sup>3</sup> E.g. in WingTsun, the principle is formulated as follows [Leung 2000: 189]: “Stay with it when it comes, follow right after it when it withdraws, if your arm is freed, just thrust it outwards“, or for the Muay Thai [formulated by Gomaratut 2011: 130]: “When the opponent comes strong, you go soft, when he relaxes, tease him, when he’s in trouble, attack, and when he’s backing off, chase him and beat him.”

the fundamental principles will mirror that: The Martial Art style will focus itself on slow movements with concentration on breathing for example. Other purposes could be self-defence, competition, sports-character, emphasizing the art (philosophical regards, striving for perfection), leisure time, lifestyle and so on. The motivation totally changes and therefore the vehicle - the physical appearance of the Martial Art - will be different. Often there is a mixture to observe and undoubtedly there are still more categories that could be mentioned.

Summarising, it can be said that a Martial Arts system, or better a “style” is determined through its approach of its motivation (purpose). It is always individual and dependent on the performer. Without knowing why the practitioner is practising the Martial Art, there is no right or wrong style.

### Example: Self-defence

To examine the different martial arts for their content and assess their potential benefit in a realistic self-defence situation, it is important to separate the different martial arts from their cultural and regional influence and character. It is about the pure cognitive logic and the biomechanics – and the manner in which their principles are implemented in a direct confrontation. Only by adopting this premise is it possible to compare the different solutions for the same criteria.

This example points to the different abilities, which are necessary to learn the adequate response to a variety of situations. Techniques and sequences of techniques used in training are the examples (vehicle) used to emphasize and explain patterns of movement.

### Grand strategy

Starting with the *Grand Strategy*, the *preconditions* (or the rules) have to be defined. These preconditions are identified from the situation. As we have seen before in the example of the ritual fight, it helps to know the different stages to minimize chaos and coincidence. A strategy can be determined and with it the concept (which takes place on the Grand Strategy and defines the objective).

Possible preconditions:

1. The chosen victim is physically inferior to the attacker, that is physical inferiority is not an issue.
2. The situation will be unexpected, so preparations such as those in a competition aren't possible: the time, place and abilities of the opponent are unknown.

3. The attacker will use unfair means (assault, weapons, or multiple attackers).

The preconditions lead to the *objectives* of the Martial Art:

1. To resolve conflict situation as fast as possible and establish personal security.
2. To attain the greatest effect with the less possible effort (force, time, energy) - a realistic self-defence can be realized in a limited time frame and can be learned by everybody.
3. Not to offer a vulnerable target: Possibilities, to transform e.g. a punch into a push or to prevent being pushed; to stay capable of fighting.
4. To eliminate the danger: Possibilities to prevent the opponent to continuing his attacks.

### Theatre strategy

Switching to the next level of the *theatre strategy*, it is now possible to determine the *means*, which result from the objectives (*form follows function*):

Solving the conflict situation (1) can be interpreted here as to practise in typical situations, in which the roles are clearly defined and the environment is replicated. It should avoid typical sparring training, in which both participants attack each other and both try to practice their martial arts, because this is not what happens on the street. For this, it is necessary to practice proper street fighting attacks – techniques the students will be confronted with. If the students want to learn to have the greatest effect with the less possible effort (2), an intelligent use of the unity of the body for punches, kicks, throws is important rather than gaining physical strength. Also it makes more sense to practice timing in a training method than speed, because with timing it is possible to “borrow”<sup>4</sup> the speed of the attacker – but of course it is not unreasonable to try to achieve more speed bearing in mind that it is of secondary importance for self-defence. The third objective, avoiding being hit (3) can be realized through different approaches: Styles like Boxing, Karate or WingTsun use visual body-movement identification to anticipate the attack and to react to it; others use a tactile-kinaesthetic recognition, in which they get in contact with the opponent to feel what he is doing (e.g. TaiChi, Wrestling, WingTsun, Sumo). As soon as the user knows where the attack

<sup>4</sup>As Kernspecht explains in “Die Essenz des WingTsuns“ [2013], the carrot does not have to be faster than the donkey, which pushes the carrot forward on a stick (*linkage model*). The idea here is to stick to the arms of the attacker and when he tries to hit the defender, the defender's arms first meet his body and he can evade this contact through proprioceptive information.



is directed, he has different possibilities to act again and to stay capable of fighting: Or he parries, blocks or deflects the attack to protect the target, or he removes the body through adaptation and a slight manipulation<sup>5</sup>, evading resistance. Whatever solution he prefers, it has to follow the last step / objective, the elimination of the danger (4). This can be achieved through a combination of the joints to get a strong attack, or through using the gravity or a body rotation to strengthen the punch or kick to produce power for counterattacks. Throws or joint locks are possible to prevent the opponent from continuing his attack and vital spots can be attacked, for which minimal strength is needed.

Additionally there is a psychological moment in the consideration of the theatre strategy: Is it better to attack or to defend? The answer also depends on the moral and emotional condition of the practitioner [Van Crefeld 2009: 17f]. If he is emotionally calm he is maybe able to wait for the opponent to attack, if not, it is better to attack, before biochemical processes paralyse him [Kernspecht 2000: 49f]. Anyway, can defence be successful, without a (counter-) attack at some point?

Three concepts can be considered: The first is that attack is the best defence. The second one is a little bit more elegant and can be called provocation or temptation: The opponent is tempted to attack so the practitioner can use his counterattacks. The third concept would describe the term "defence", which various realizations contains. Simplified it could be subdivided into two extreme positions: a *preclusive defence* on the one hand, where the attacked target (body) is more immobile, static and therefore the defence has to be strong and able to neutralise the attack, and an *elastic defence* on the other hand, with an agile, movable target (body) and therefore the attack doesn't need to be stopped and can be lead into emptiness, because the body as a target is moved away. The two concepts don't exclude each other. A user will need both of them and is normally somewhere between them, so they have the full spectrum of possibilities: If the body is stiff or the practitioner uses closed body postures, or they are restricted in their movement, the arm-techniques will be very manipulative (blocking). More efficient would be a "supportive manipulation" like a deflecting movement in the direction of the attack, changing slightly its movement. Another way here would be to overextend the attack by pulling or pushing in its direction, intensifying it. And finally it is possible with a more agile, elastic, adaptable body to use the arm-techniques as sensors or directly for a counter-attack, because the opponent's attack won't hit the target.

<sup>5</sup> For example as explained in the linkage model in (4)

## Operational level

The ideas above lead to the *abilities*, which the student has to learn, if he wants to realize the means (the training methods or the forms as explained earlier). For the self-defence-situation, Kernspecht [2013: 295ff] defines them as follows: (1) Timing, (2) Agility, (3) Unity of the body, (4) Scale of the different senses (visual, kinaesthetically), (5) Balance, (6) Attentiveness, (7) Spirit of fighting. These seven Abilities are an important requirement to stay "combatible" in a conflict situation.

As explained above, another orientation or motivation requires different abilities.

And again on the operational level it is possible to develop a purpose-means-relationship, which radiates to the levels below. Focusing on the balance for example, the purpose would be to have a good structure, relating to the motto: "who can't stand, can't fight". As a consequence, the objectives would be two: maintaining one's own balance and trying to break the balance of the opponent, which creates the means: staying in balance with the help of flexibility, coordination, timing undo awareness and trying to attack the centreline of the opponent or provoking or pulling him until he reaches the culmination point / point of no return. And here, it becomes clear, that there exists an interdependence of the different abilities: to achieve one, the others are necessary.

## Tactical level

Resulting from the discussion of the previous levels there emerge various tasks and functions which require physical realisation. That is, the moment when it becomes more practical and sequences of techniques and body-movement for one alone or training partners are considered. Which distance should be used? How can the own distant be reached? Which hand-foot-body techniques and combinations enable the user to get to the side or behind the opponent?

## Technical level

Last but not least there are the single techniques, practised solo or with a partner. They are absolutely necessary to realize all conceptual ideas described previously and therefore, they constitute the foundation of the architecture. But as a foundation, they are the base upon which everything is build, the instrument that serves a higher objective: the understanding of all other ideas.

## Conclusion

In the future, the general logic behind the structure of the vertical and horizontal architecture can be applied to the different Martial Arts and their interpretations. As the aims will differ, so will the purpose, focusing on different styles. According to this combat logic model it becomes clear that the principles of a Martial Art should be defined first, then the other steps can follow.

Thus, it is obvious that the method of delivery will change and the physical realization of the martial art will adapt to the change on a technical level. The complexity results through interdependence of the abilities – initial point of a teaching concept for every Martial Art.

This general introduction to combat logic can help to give a good overview of the diverse types of martial arts and explain their different realizations. Maybe it will serve in the future as a basic model for specialists to talk about Martial Arts, so that their discussions can occur without excessive ambiguity. It is an initial attempt to integrate a range of concepts, a task that undoubtedly will be aided by constructive feedback.<sup>6</sup>

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## Wprowadzenie do logiki walki – ogólna teoria

**Słowa kluczowe:** logika walki, pojęcie, zasady, umiejętności, strategia, technika

### Abstrakt:

Wydaje się, że w dziedzinie sztuk walki istnieje obfitość pojęć takich jak: techniki, zasady, motta, umiejętności, taktyki, strategie, koncepcje itp. Wyrażenia te są źle zdefiniowane, w związku z tym nic dziwnego, że porównanie sztuk walki jest tak trudne. W artykule zaproponowano więc model definiujący te pojęcia na różnych poziomach, które są rozmieszczone w hierarchii pionowej. W drugim etapie ten sam schemat został zanalizowany na przykładzie samoobrony.

<sup>6</sup> Maybe it could serve as a guiding idea for discussions about APEL [Lee-Barron 2012] or similar programmes, too.

Model stratega wojskowego Luttwaka stosuje się w dziedzinie sztuk walki, aby umożliwić integrację wszystkich metod zrozumienia i nauczania sztuk walki oraz aby pozwolić na porównanie różnych stylów i koncepcji. Składa się on z pięciu poziomów. Począwszy od góry są to: Wielka Strategia (*Grand Strategy*), która obejmuje główną koncepcję sztuki walki; następnie strategia teatru walki (*theatre strategy*), w której zasady są wyjaśniane w mottach i strofach.

Teatr obejmuje również innego rodzaju scenariusz szkolenia, pokazujący kiedy i jak reagować. Prowadzi to do trzeciego poziomu - operacyjnego (*operational level*), opisującego niezbędne zdolności i umiejętności wymagane do spełnienia oczekiwanych zachowań np. wycucia czasu, koncentracji, siły itp. Następny jest poziom taktyczny (*tactical level*), w którym zadawane są pytania: jak rozwiązać pewne zadania i funkcje, dotyczące wyrównania do poziomu przeciwnika, a także: co jest powodem pewnych technik i sekwencji? U podstawy piramidy znajduje się poziom techniczny (*technical level*) z pojedynczymi technikami rąk i nóg, które są ćwiczone w pojedynkę lub z partnerem.

Wielka Strategia zawiera pewne wskazówki i podstawowe idee służące osiągnięciu danego celu (funkcję), zawierające cel lub motywację. Środki lub metody (formy), które są realizowane na głębszych poziomach, prowadzą do celu. System, lub lepiej „styl” sztuk walki jest określany przez jego podejście do motywacji (celu). Jest to zawsze indywidualna sprawa i zależy od wykonawcy. Bez wiedzy o przyczynach praktykowania sztuki walki nie ma dobrego ani złego stylu.

Analiza na przykładzie sztuki samoobrony

Aby zbadać różne sztuki walki pod względem ich treści i ocenić ich potencjalne korzyści w realistycznej sytuacji samoobrony, ważne jest oddzielenie różnych sztuk walki od ich wpływu kulturowego i regionalnego oraz charakteru. Chodzi o czystą logikę poznawczą i biomechanikę oraz sposób, w jaki ich zasady są realizowane w bezpośredniej konfrontacji. Tylko przyjmując to założenie możliwe jest porównanie różnych rozwiązań dla tych samych kryteriów.

Warunki (lub zasady) muszą być zdefiniowane począwszy od Wielkiej Strategii. Warunki te są identyfikowane z sytuacją.

Strategia ta może być określona. Przechodząc do następnego poziomu teatru strategii, możliwe jest obecnie określenie środków, które wynikają z realizacji celów. Dodatkowo istnieje moment psychologiczny w rozpatrywaniu teatru strategii: Czy lepiej atakować czy bronić się? Odpowiedź zależy także od moralnej i emocjonalnej kondycji ćwiczącego. Jeśli jest on emocjonalnie spokojny, może być w stanie czekać na atak przeciwnika, jeśli nie, to lepiej, aby zaatakował, zanim zachodzące w jego ciele procesy biochemiczne go sparaliżują. Powyższe idee prowadzą do zdolności (na poziomie operacyjnym), które uczeń musi sobie przyswoić, jeśli chce realizować środki (metody szkolenia lub formy, które wyjaśniono wcześniej). Dla sytuacji samoobrony Kernspecht definiuje je w następujący sposób: (1) Wycucie czasu (2), Sprawność (3), Jedność ciała, (4) Skala różnych zmysłów (wzrok, kinestetyczny), (5) Równowaga (6), Czujność, (7) Duch walki. Te siedem umiejętności jest ważne w byciu zdolnym do walki w sytuacji konfliktu. Wynikające z omówienia poprzednich poziomów wyłaniają się różne zadania i funkcje, które wymagają fizycznej realizacji (poziom taktyczny). Oznacza to, że w danej chwili stają się bardziej praktyczne, a sekwencje technik i ruchów ciała są brane pod uwagę wyłącznie dla jednego ćwiczącego lub partnerów.

Istnieją także pojedyncze techniki, praktykowane solo lub z partnerem. Są absolutnie niezbędne do realizacji wszystkich opisanych wcześniej koncepcyjnych idei; stanowią podstawę, na której wszystko jest budowane, instrument, który służy wyższemu celowi: zrozumieniu wszystkich innych idei. W przyszłości ogólna logika konstrukcji architektury pionowej i poziomej może być stosowana do interpretacji różnych sztuk walki. Będą się różniły cele, skupiając się na różnych stylach walki. Według tego modelu logiki walki staje się jasne, że zasady sztuki walki powinny najpierw zostać zdefiniowane, a dopiero potem można podjąć inne kroki.

To ogólne wprowadzenie do logiki walki może pomóc w przeglądzie różnych rodzajów sztuk walki i wyjaśnić ich różne realizacje. Może to w przyszłości służyć jako podstawowy model dla specjalistów do rozmów o sztukach walki, aby w ich dyskusjach nie wystąpiły nadmierne niejasności.