

REVIEWS

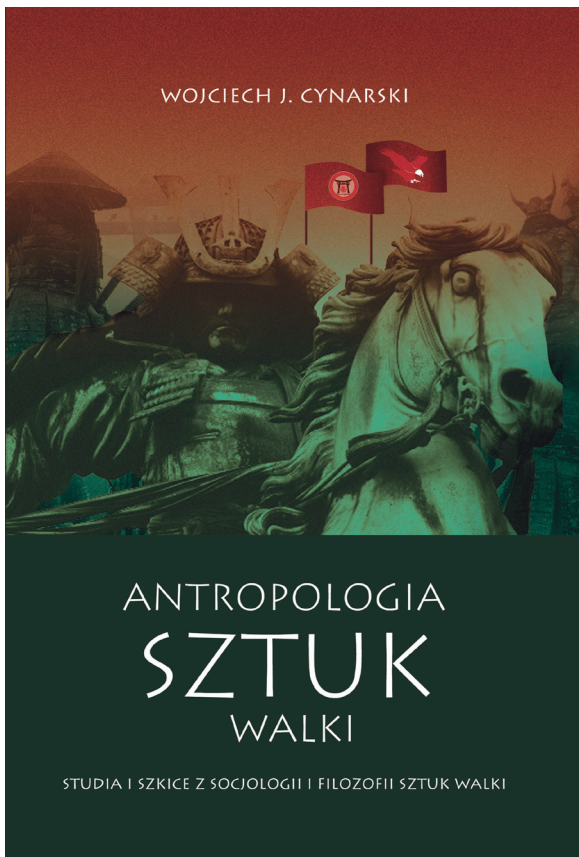
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Homocreative arts and anthropological regression

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Wojciech J. Cynarski (2012), *Antropologia sztuk walki. Studia i szkice z socjologii i filozofii sztuk walki* [in Polish], Rzeszów University Press, Rzeszów, pp. 284.

There are grounds to believe that Far Eastern homocreative and self-realizational arts, known as „martial arts” in the circles of enthusiastic students, practitioners and masters reaching for perfection and which are one of the most characteristic features and also specific traits of the great cultures of the

East in modern times (Chinese, Japanese, Korean) have a major role to play in human improvement, unforeseen by both their classical and Asian creators, as well as most of the theorists from the home countries of these strange skills and activities. More unforeseen by researchers and students of these arts from non-Asian countries (Europe, America, Australia) is a kind of cultural-anthropological mission, a mission of course along with other possible factors and methods, to rescue Western man from the threat of degradation or destruction in the realm of spirituality and humanity, and from negative transformation of his subjectivity that may be labelled “anthropological regression” [cf. Lorenz 1986; Szmyd 2012]. Globalization can facilitate this role and mission – after all the flow of change and achievement should – and can – be multi-directional, not only from the West and North to the East and South, but also from the East and South to the West and North. If globalisation, an irreversible process is, in the future, to balance its negative effects with its positives (and at present most of the world is experiencing its negatives) and maybe even give priority to the positive effects (which is the general expectation), it must be just such a multilateral and multi-directional process. It should (but it is not known whether it will be able to) provide for the free flow of high values in all directions across the globe, to its various cultural, social and geographical areas, for example economic, technical, scientific, medical and environmental, and its partly institutional and functional values from the North to the South, from the West to the East, and these should include the vital recreational, simple life, the psychological and physical as well as the self-realizational values from the East to the West and also to some extent

from the South to the North. Expressing this in a general and simplified way: from the West to the East: – material, instrumental and utilitarian values, and from the East to the West – spiritual, personal and self-improvement and homocreative values. This would give the globalizing world the desired harmony and balance, and a state of recovered social and moral “health” and “correctness”; it would prevent it from developing the plague of many of the current macro-and-micro-pathologies and the mounting of various threats against it. It would provide the world with proper development and genuinely progressive change. This would enable the world to survive, or, at least to extend its old age and remain in the embrace of a technocratic civilisation.

An integral component of the cultures of the East, and in a universal sense, their most valuable, are the different oriental “martial” and sport arts, which are not sufficiently known or appreciated by people in the West. They are not very well-known or appreciated by the “man in the street” in the West, despite clear stimulation in recent decades with interest in the spirituality and thought processes of the East as exemplified by the New Age intellectual movement and by the visible activities of various institutions and associations promoting – and to a certain extent preserving – various “martial arts” and “sports arts” of Far Eastern origin. Included among these, the Institute of Martial Arts and Sciences (IMAS) and the Scientific Association of Martial Arts and Combat Sports (IMACSSS) directed by the author of the book under discussion and the scientific, educational and sporting society, the Idōkan Poland Association occupy a distinguished position.

This “particle” of traditional Far Eastern culture, particular and peculiar from the European point of view, is a “particle” brought closer to us – people who are generally poorly absorbed in the spiritual heritage and existential skills of the Far Orient – and is waiting for a broader and deeper “grafting” into the subsoil of modern Western culture or for professional, farmyard “planting” in areas, as it seems, of fertile ground. This “grafting” or this “sowing” could be made and it is probably possible, in its most vital and fundamental interest, and at the right time. Briefly speaking the modern technological and IT civilization of the West and the neo-liberal socio-economic systems rooted here cause many unfavourable changes in the psychological, mental, personal and medical well-being of people, people of the so called “post-modern world”. A negative impact is particularly marked in the area of spirituality and inner growth, and those features that constitute humanity.

Characteristic manifestations of these changes are, among others: increasing symptoms of a weakening nervous system in many people, especially young people, a peculiar disintegration of their personality, one dimensional mentality, reducing the ability understanding and to understand and comprehend the world in which we live, increasing internal anxieties and frustrations, and the appearance of different new varieties of neuroses and social diseases. Particularly meaningful manifestations of the changes discussed here include among others: depletion of the emotional and empathetic spheres of many human beings, weakening and making human relationships one-dimensional, turning them into self-serving relationships, the weakening of formal and functional ties and moving away from family and relations which is motivated by the need to meet and spend time with others, reducing and simplifying lifestyles, taking away their deeper meaning, falling into irrational consumerism and daily hedonism, leading a life of “have” and “use” and not “being”, enriching oneself personally, internally and existentially.

The main causes of these adverse anthropological transformations taking place in the context of Western civilization and in the circle of contemporary globalization processes include: accelerated and accelerating technological and IT developments whose results – in the form of more and more complex structures, equipment, items in daily use, computer programs, etc. – are so widely used and generally unintelligible, in so far as their internal mechanism and their technical features are concerned (the question, “how is it done?” remains mostly unanswered) and especially from the various, long-term, negative effects on the human psyche. These effects are connected to excessive usability e.g. the definitely immoderate use of mobile phones, the Internet, and tablets, with well-known, scientifically verified, negative effects caused by these in the areas of mentality, emotionality and attitudes to life and health. Further causative factors of the anthropological, social and cultural changes under discussion here, include an all-powerful impact on the mental and emotional state of modern man of different varieties of popular culture. These are very often inferior and spiritually stupefy the recipient (such an example could be the majority of American-“distributed” worldwide film and entertainment productions, which successfully displace products of homocreative high culture from their sphere of influence. Another factor is programmed and aggressively imposed, mainly by massive and socio-technically sophisticated advertising, rampant consumerism and life pragmatism or technological

and IT civilisation-bound axiological and moral relativism. A profound and often negative impact on the attitudes and behaviour of the average media person with his/her (read: inadequate, one-sided and largely deformed) image of reality must not be overlooked. The anthropological, social and cultural changes being discussed are often programme inspired and directed by global economic and financial centres and not only deform and distort the realms of spirituality, conscience and behaviour of "post-modern" man, posing serious threat to the proper development and even survival of the species, but they are also highly likely to have an impact on the longer-term homocreative process i.e. the further social and cultural evolution of human beings and to some extent also on biological evolution. They are already so strong and so deeply destructive "drilling" into the deeper layers of the psycho-somatic structure of human beings that they can be considered as anthropologically negative and undesirable factors and in the long run these processes will be threatening and dangerous to humans. They form a complex syndrome of braking and deceleration even causing, in some cases, a kind of "turning back" to change – in this case the "course" of evolution of the human race, turning from a progressive direction to a regressive direction, and consequently the direction of gradual reduction in adaptability to the living environment of the entity of this evolutionary process. The direction is called "anthropological regression" here (a concept introduced into scientific and philosophical discourses by the author of this text). This process involves deep deformation of the overall and harmoniously understood human being. More specifically, it means the progressive disintegration of the "coherence of the inner life" i.e. increasing the spread between the rate of intellectual, conceptual and rational-emotional development and emotional-spiritual development. Moreover, it signifies a very dangerous gap between the relatively slow pace of phylogenetic development and the accelerated functional and civilized development of man; between stagnation and even regression of deeper human spirituality and the very rapid pace of development of his/her functional and technical skills; between pragmatism and the sphere of life experience and experience of higher values as well as spiritual transcendence: metaphysical, religious and aesthetic, which some people term the "deterioration", "falling" and even "death" of mankind, in any case, a clear regression of humanity.

The most evident manifestation of this and also a factor in "anthropological regression" is what José Luis Sampedro – a well-known contemporary Spanish philosopher and banker and one of the

leading spiritual leaders of the "outraged" – called "dwarfed social outlook" [Sampedro 2012]. This is a global view of the human world in which everything comes down to money; in which money is the total reference for everything, the ultimate criterion of most values and ratings; where the market and economic values are considered as the most important, while business, profit, profitability, assets, possession of material objects, desire for power and influence, domination and rule are the guiding motivation for undertaking any effort or public activity, where economic productivity, and so called "economic progress" is treated as the most crucial and completely indisputable indicator of the development of human beings and civilisation, and in this context the development of man himself. However, it does not occur to anyone to question this truly "dwarfed", one-sided and morally impaired social outlook, nor to reject it in the situation of its almost universal and amazingly effective indoctrination of the majority of human minds (especially by the mass media) – apart from the minority of people who are not quite so submissive to this superindoctrination, i.e. a few intellectuals, prominent thinkers, philosophers, artists, students and the creators of authentic "martial arts" and non-commercial "sport arts" which are widely understood as the arts of self-realization and individual transcendence.

In this indoctrinated, "dwarfed" and intellectually handicapped world-view, people in general are not aware of the obvious fact that this world-view is constantly losing not only its theoretical and moral right, but simply its "coverage" in natural resources and the energy of Nature (Gaia) and the intellectual, ethical and humanistic consent of people who are genuinely concerned for both the immediate and the more distant future of man and his best cultural and civilizational achievements. Let us add that a civilization which creates anthropological regression and which in itself, has for a long time been subject to different crisis situations which put it at a "crossroads" and in a state of specific "ailment" as well as threatening its survival developmental trends, needs – according to the currently diagnosed condition and the possible prediction of its further transformation – relevant support factors and "healing" means; it needs both a reform and therapy [cf. Bauman 2006; Suchodolski 2003; Cynarski 2003; Szmyd 2011]. One of the factors that "repair" and which could at the same time be an effective remedy is to graft civilisation with the homocreative, ethical and existential values of the classical culture of the Far East which would include and are implemented by the culture of "martial" and "Sports" arts in

the region. This solution has been discussed in Polish philosophical literature over the years by i.a. Henryk Skolimowski, Andrzej Szyszko-Bohusz, Beata Szymanska, W. Sztumska and this idea is now appearing in works by Wojciech J. Cynarski, and in particular the work discussed here entitled *Anthropology of martial arts. Studies and sketches of the sociology and philosophy of martial arts* [2012]. And it seems that the weight and importance of this type of cross-civilization transfer of values becomes more important and up-to-date in an age of growing crisis in Western civilization and anthropological regression related to it. It becomes very easy to predict the realisation of this process on a sought-after larger scale, despite the enormous difficulties, or even impossibility of achieving it.

If we manage, after all, either soon or further in the future, to effectively stimulate, functionally instrumentalise and progressively implement the transmission of values from the East to the West, it still will be difficult to believe that all that will lead – because by its nature it cannot lead – to a bigger breakthrough or to a revolutionary turn, in the over-materialistic and commercialized world of Western civilization and culture and consequently to the strong suppression of the accumulation of the negative effects of anthropological regression. But perhaps this bold and unprecedented global project could lead to some invigorating and healing changes in the world or at least contribute, even in a very limited way to a certain spiritual movement and a mental and moral sobering up if even of a small percentage of the population which is indiscriminately and unconsciously submissive to the extreme pressures of consumerism, commercialism and the utilitarianism of life, and which is destructive to human *humanum* and humanity's progress towards the process of spiritual and existential regression.

It is obviously easy to agree with W.J. Cynarski when he writes that “It is not possible to fully transform the Japanese, Korean and Chinese mentality to European soil” [Cynarski 2012: 227]. But probably not without a good reason, and following his own beliefs, he treats “(...) Far Eastern martial arts as a factor which brings different cultures and mentalities closer” [*ibidem*]. Therefore he writes that “(...) in the West, especially in Poland, the humanistic theory of martial arts is developing and trying to instil/graft onto a civilization nurtured on Christianity the will to learn the essence of martial arts combined with becoming acquainted with oriental cultures” [*ibidem*].

However, it is possible that there is something more to it: As the global flow of ideas and values, information, and technical achievements of civilization is usually associated with the movement

of specific stimulation and inspiration, agitation and motivation, fashions and inclinations, which are the factors influencing people's attitudes and behaviour, it could be reasonably assumed that the appropriate instrumentalization, e.g. by publishing, education, organization of media and functional “mobilization” of this process would perhaps provide results, probably very limited and weak, but still in some way meaningful and desirable, and mental and behavioural changes in some circles in the West, maybe very narrow, but significant in the overall balance of anthropological transformations, and especially among young people. Thus “martial arts” and “sport arts”, as understood by W.J. Cynarski and an international group of researchers centred around the scientific journal “*Ido Movement for Culture. Journal of Martial Arts Anthropology*” and *Idokan Poland Association* (IPA) published in Rzeszow, “(...) were transformed from murderous weapons into a philosophy and way of life. While American hopology considers martial arts to be an element of battle culture, the developed in Poland of the humanistic theory of martial arts views them as a form of personal development. Martial arts teach self-defense, but in addition to fighting techniques they introduce their students to specific axiological, normative and educational systems” [*ibidem*]. More specifically: “Varieties of martial arts are forms of asceticism i.e. the practice of a psycho-physical character, which is focused on the moral and spiritual development of the practitioner (...) Through training in fighting techniques they lead to multi-dimensional self-improvement and self-realization. At the same time these are processes of educational and positive asceticism combining physical exercise with conscious self-discipline and focused on moral and spiritual progress” [Cynarski 2012: 229]. W.J. Cynarski adds: “The way of martial arts is associated here with the concepts of self-discipline and self-control, of transgression and self-transcendence (...) and the transgressive accomplishments include crossing borders (...), whereas transgression applies to transcending beyond material reality and manifests itself in the implementation of widely- understood principles of perfectionism and crossing the borders of one's own weakness (...) The main objective of martial arts – as W. J. Cynarski writes – is self-perfection” [*ibidem*].

It is quite likely that this concept of “martial arts” which can be called “arts of physical and spiritual fulfilment” or “homocreative arts” could become – if skilfully promoted and presented and translated into widely available realisation programmes – an attractive offer and appealing challenge for part of the younger generation in

many communities in a globalized world, as generations are increasingly resembling one another by way of lifestyle and behaviour, aspirations and goals – regardless of their traditional culture and life ethos and their civilizational training. Thus, it can be expected that in a situation of widespread sterility and shallowness of lifestyle due to aggressive consumerism and callous pragmatism in developed countries, and in other countries – whether through poverty, lack of wider access to education and high culture, or the inability to complete professional and social self-realization (corruption, unemployment, social pathologies, etc.) – young people will perceive the “psycho-physical arts of self-realization” as a challenge and as an opportunity for themselves. Maybe their natural and spontaneous dissent from the new reality and with young people characteristically attempting to find their own way and own place in a reality which they have contested and rejected, will direct at least some young people from different regions of the modern world in the direction of the arts under discussion. Maybe. There is no certainty. But if so, this humanistic theory of martial arts could be practically tested and anthropological regression could be somewhat slowed-down.

As suggested in W.J. Cynarski's book and in the work of other adherents to the humanistic theory of martial arts (S. Tokarski, R.M. Kalina, J. Oździński, W. Jagiełło, J. Harasymowicz, J. Szymankiewicz, T. Gałkowski and others) [Cynarski 2012: 239] the possibility of some (limited for obvious reasons but) very useful and expected change in the neo-liberal and pragmatic axiological and ethical order, obviously requires appropriate programmes and educational instrumentalisation.

And after carefully reading the “Anthropology of martial arts” by W.J. Cynarski and some of the previously released books and minor works of this eminent theorist and practitioner “of martial arts and sport,” the reader comes to the overwhelming conclusion that what this author has written is, or could be a good starting point for the axiological strategy proposed in the text or at least an effective stimulus for “steering out” the “arts” discussed in his work from their esoteric and elite circle.

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Sztuki homokreatywne a regresja antropologiczna

Słowa kluczowe: sztuki walki, regresja, antropologia, globalizacja, duchowość

Streszczenie

Jak pisze autor: istnieją podstawy do stwierdzenia, że dalekowschodnie sztuki homokreatywne i samorealizacyjne, zwane w kręgach ich entuzjastycznych adeptów, praktyków oraz w gronach szczyty perfekcji osiągających mistrzów „sztukami walki”; sztuk będących jedną z najbardziej charakterystycznych cech i zarazem szczególnych wyróżników wielkich kultur Wschodu (chińskiej, japońskiej, koreańskiej), mają w czasach współczesnych do odegrania wielką rolę, a nawet swego rodzaju misję kulturowo-antropologiczną, misję w akcie ratowania człowieka cywilizacji Zachodu przed realnie grożącą mu obecnie degradacją czy destrukcją sfery jego duchowości i człowieczeństwa, przed negatywną przemianą jego podmiotowości, którą nazwać można mianem „regresji antropologicznej”.

Charakterystycznymi przejawami owych zmian są m.in.: nasilające się symptomy osłabienia nerwowego u wielu ludzi, zwłaszcza ludzi młodych, swoista dezintegracja ich osobowości, ujednostrobnienie mentalności, obniżenie zdolności rozumienia i pojmowania świata w którym się żyje, nasilające się niepokoje i frustracje wewnętrzne, pojawianie się różnych odmian nowych neuroz i chorób społecznych. Do szczególnie wymownych przejawów omawianych tu zmian zaliczyć m.in. można: ubożenie sfery emocjonalnej i empatycznej wielu jednostek ludzkich, osłabienie i ujednostrobnienie relacji międzyludzkich, przekształcanie ich w relacje interesowne, formalne i funkcjonalne a odchodzenie od więzi motywowanych potrzebą spotkania i współbycia z innym, spłykanie i upraszczanie stylów życia, pozbawianie ich głębszego sensu, popadanie w irracjonalny konsumpcjonizm oraz w powszedni hedonizm, w życie głównie spod znaku „mieć” i „użyć”, a nie według intencji „być”, wzbogacać się wewnętrznie, samorealizować i egzystencjalnie spełniać.

Globalizacja może ułatwiać tę rolę czy misję, a przepływ jej przemian i dokonań winien być wielokierunkowy. Dałoby to globalizującemu się światu pożądaną harmonię i równowagę. Jednym z czynników tej „naprawy” i zarazem skutecznego

remedium mogłyby być, na co, w polskiej literaturze filozoficznej od lat zwracają uwagę m.in. Henryk Skolimowski, Andrzej Szyszko-Bohusz, Beata Szymańska, Wiesław Sztumski i inni, a obecnie ideę tę podnoszą liczne prace Wojciecha J. Cynarskiego, w szczególności zaś omawiane tu jego dzieł pt. *Antropologia sztuk walki. Studia i szkice z socjologii i filozofii sztuk walki* (2012), szersze i głębsze niż dotąd zaszczerpiecie tej cywilizacji homokreatywnych, etycznych i egzystencjalnych wartości klasycznych kultur Dalekiego Wschodu, w tym wartości, których nośnikiem i zarazem instrumentem

realizacyjnym są „sztuki walki” i „sztuki sportu” tego regionu kulturowego. I wydaje się, że waga i znaczenie tego rodzaju międzycywilizacyjnego transferu wartości nabiera w dobie coraz widoczniej pogłębiającego się kryzysu cywilizacji zachodniej i związanej z nią regresji antropologicznej dużego znaczenia i szczególnej aktualności. Staje się tak mimo łatwego do przewidzenia ogromu nasuwających się tu trudności, czy wręcz niemożliwości w urzeczywistnieniu tego procesu na pożądaną szerszą skalę.