

A novel approach to counteraction of threats: Inspiration for all

Authors' Contribution:

-  **A** Study Design
-  **B** Data Collection
-  **C** Statistical Analysis
-  **D** Manuscript Preparation
-  **E** Funds Collection

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Received: 16 December 2019; **Accepted:** 18 December 2019; **Published online:** 20 December 2019

AoBID: 13941

Abstract

Since the World Health Organization announced the COVID-19 pandemic, the following words have become frequently used in public space, in information and social media programmes in particular: “struggle/fight”, “counteracting”, “defence”, “security” and their synonyms. They are both keywords and empirical terms of agonology. The objective of this scientific essay is to generally reflect upon utilitarian and methodological prospects of using innovative agonology to counteract all threats to health and life from the micro-scale (individual) to the macro scale (people en bloc).

Using journalistic phraseology, we can say that “the entire world is struggling with the COVID-19 pandemic.” Returning to the precise language of science implies, perhaps, the most sensible question: do entities participating in this struggle possess sufficient knowledge about the struggle in the most general sense?

Results: The authors of this scientific essay discuss the following issues: 1) A turning point or alternative to self-destruction. Important statements: Regardless of the fundamental purpose of Rudniański's theory of non-armed struggle and theory of compromise, as well as the way he drafted it, there is no rational reason to believe that he could not have imagined that the world would face the following alternative in the near future: it is necessary either to act to save Earth from an invisible or visible enemy or to deliberately fail to counteract such a situation. 2) Some methodological advantages of innovative agonology in complementing the counteraction of global threats. Important statements: Whether an opponent (enemy) that poses a threat is “invisible”, precisely identified or partially camouflaged, is not the most important point. The following issues are important when considered together: first, whether this opponent (enemy) is so strong that it really puts the survival of Earth and us at risk; second, whether saving Earth from it requires global mobilization, or whether specialized international organisations are sufficient; and third, whether people en bloc are able to change both the plan of action and its way of defeating this enemy at any time.

Conclusions: Wisdom leads to two sensible systemic recommendations: 1) theories, hypotheses, laws, rules, principles and methods of agonology, especially those formulated at a high level of generality, can become a highly effective source of inspiration for experts in each specific science and those dealing with crisis management in a complementary manner (cooperating but at the same time rejecting anger, disputes and selfish ambitions) to overcome this global threat while minimizing the inevitable losses; and 2) a return to the Solidarity ideals, perhaps in a slightly different global dimension, may translate into lasting human relations at different levels of social functioning, with the general rule being to selflessly share what everyone has: either money, knowledge, or distance support, etc.

Key words: agonology • COVID-19 pandemic • defence • struggle • survival

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Conflict of interest: Authors have declared that no competing interest exists

Ethical approval: Not required

Provenance & peer review: Commissioned, based on an idea from the author; not externally peer reviewed

Source of support: Departmental sources

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Contact sport – noun any sport in which physical contact between players is an integral part of the game, e.g. Boxing, rugby or taekwondo [20].

Praxiology – science about good work. A *Treatise on Good Work*, a fundamental lecture of praxiology by T. Kotarbiński (the first edition in 1955) has been translated into majority of the so-called congress languages (English, German, Russian) and as well: Czech, Japanese, and Serbo-Croatian.

Struggle – Kotarbiński in the widest comprehension defines “a struggle” as any activity that is at least a two-subject one (premising that a team can be a subject) where at least one of subjects hinders the other [2, p. 221].

Toxic syndrome of power – is a need experienced by an individual which is related to obtaining egoistic power over possibly greatest or specific number of people, objects and/or nature elements. In order to satisfy it, an individual is not able to refrain even from extreme destructive actions, treating ethical standards, rules of social coexistence and other people in an instrumental manner [10].

INTRODUCTION

Since the World Health Organization announced the COVID-19 pandemic, the following words have become frequently used in public space, in information and social media programmes in particular: “struggle/fight”, “counteracting”, “defence”, “security” and their synonyms [1]. Previously, these terms were used by the authors of works dedicated to the fight against viruses, polio etc. [2, 3]. They are both keywords and empirical terms of agonology.

Agonology (innovative agonology) is a science of struggle based on five original detailed theories, all of which were published in Polish [4-8]. The first, a general theory of struggle, was created by Tadeusz Kotarbiński in 1938 and named agonology (from the Greek *agon* – struggle, *logos* – science) [4]. The last two – the theory of defensive struggle (1991) and the combat sports theory (2000) – were authored by Roman Maciej Kalina [7, 8]. Both of these theories are primarily applied in studies of various sports belong to the direct confrontations (like combat sports and other contact sports) and non-sports confrontations that use one’s own body and different tools, and in the self-defence dimension, when an opponent uses a means of violence or psychological aggression. In the global sciences, agonology is promoted (primarily in papers published in *Archives of Budo*) as innovative agonology, or an applied science that pertains to cognitive and behavioural prevention and therapy of numerous threats to health and life [9, 10].

However, nowadays, when we need not only to understand how pathogens **kill** many people in the world [1, 11-16] but also to develop effective **methods of defence** against real global annihilation, an esoteric (as it is not globally disseminated) innovative agonology may prove useful. Few experts in innovative agonology are not able to learn, in a limited time, microbiology and other kinds of science necessary to construct

a reliable and complementary **defence** system “against an invisible enemy”. If science, the main subject of which is to study the **struggle** (a phenomenon named with many synonyms: fight, combat, etc.), the following seemingly unrelated questions arise: is **the science about struggle** ignored mainly because of language barriers? [17]; is the slogan “there is only one science” an effective digression and reason for selective monitoring of knowledge in traditional and social media?; does the preference for fashionable (useful) directions of scientific studies and training of experts lie in the mentality of those who are in power and benefit from macro-economic advantages?

The objective of this scientific essay is to generally reflect upon utilitarian and methodological prospects of using innovative agonology to counteract all threats to health and life from the micro-scale (individual) to the macro scale (people *en bloc*).

A turning point or alternative to self-destruction

Perhaps the global threat posed by COVID-19 will become a turning point. This process requires switching from a selective treatment of science and scientific achievements to a generally accepted principle of referring to individual disciplines of science and achievements, even of those scientists who are commonly perceived to represent insignificant detailed types of science in a responsible manner (i.e. with due attention and in a balanced manner). Using journalistic phraseology, we can say that “the entire world is **struggling** with the COVID-19 pandemic.” Returning to the precise language of science implies, perhaps, the most sensible question: do entities participating in this struggle possess sufficient knowledge about **struggle** in the most general sense?

When he published a fundamental theory of non-armed struggle along with the theory of compromise in 1989, Jarosław Rudniański (a student of

Tadeusz Kotarbiński) emphasised that actions referred to as a **struggle**, which consider counteractions taken by an opponent, fall within a very vast class of actions. This class of actions is characterised as “reckoning with a strong and varied resistance throughout the duration of the action; the resistance being constant and independent of the acting entity, material or surroundings, collectively or individually” [6, p. 24].

Rudniański was developing both these theories at a time of momentous social changes around the world: the establishment of the *Solidarity* [*Solidarność*] movement in Poland on 31 August 1980, with over 10 million participants, in order to defend workers’ rights (by 1989, it was one of the main centres of opposition against the government of the People’s Republic of Poland and communism) and the beginning of martial law (1981–1983); the fall of the Berlin Wall (9 November 1989); and the official dissolution of the Soviet Union (26 December 1991).

Rudniański knew that he could not refer to the examples of the struggle against the communist regime while depicting actions called **struggle**, the most specific feature of which is reckoning with the counteraction of an opponent. Furthermore, the Russian army left Poland only on 17 September 1993. Thus, he skilfully skipped the strand of reckoning with counteraction of the forces of the total regime and transferred the argumentation to the legitimate use of common expressions, such as “fight with fire”, “fight with tuberculosis”, “fight with the storm”, etc. When he points to extreme cases of counteraction, which becomes a paradox from today’s perspective, he refers to **bacteria or viruses undergoing mutations** to adapt to vaccines and antibiotics [6]. Although he emphasises that these organisms do not have human awareness, and this fact is not important for those who fight with them, he does not elaborate on this topic because, in his theory, he primarily focuses on struggles and compromises between people. At that time, the camouflaged aim of his theory was to educate the society about how to effectively fight against the communist regime.

Rudniański’s **rule** of the highest degree of generality for extremely difficult countermeasures proved to be helpful in effective camouflage of this main aim: “in an action, in which the material

or environment is in a movement that is independent of the actor, while at the same time creating strong and varied resistance, act as if you can change both the plan of action and its manner as quickly as possible at any time” [6, p. 25]. Incidentally, in the language of agonology, the “material” is the opponent (who does not necessarily have to be human), and the “environment” does not have to refer to humans or only humans in specific circumstances.

Regardless of the fundamental purpose of Rudniański’s theory of non-armed struggle and theory of compromise, as well as the way he drafted it, there is no rational reason to believe that he could not have imagined that the world would face the following alternative in the near future: it is necessary either to act to save Earth from an invisible or visible enemy or to deliberately fail to counteract such a situation.

Some methodological advantages of innovative agonology in complementing the counteraction of global threats

Whether an opponent (enemy) that poses a threat is “invisible”, precisely identified or partially camouflaged, is not the most important point. The following issues are important when considered together: first, whether this opponent (enemy) is so strong that it really puts the survival of Earth and us at risk; second, whether saving Earth from it requires global mobilization, or whether specialized international organisations are sufficient; and third, whether people *en bloc* are able to change both the plan of action and its way of defeating this enemy at any time.

The prognosis is not simple because such mobilization does not involve only possible intellectual, material, spiritual, cultural and other resources – which are nowadays difficult to define – nor is it simply a catch-all notion. It comprises the aroused needs and attitudes of people enslaved by the toxic syndrome of power, unlimited hedonism, extreme egoism, ignorance, pathologies, and many human vices that prevent compromise and rational cooperation.

These conclusions give more sense to a thorough ordering of the achievements of science, medicine, technology, and education in relation to philosophical psychology provided for in the holy books and works of the most eminent artists; in

other words, there is a need for global reflection and respect for the overriding criteria of ethical values in everyday life.

Even if Rudniański did not imagine such a situation, being guided nowadays by the “rule for extremely difficult countermeasures” [6], it is possible to distinguish a class of necessary countermeasures addressed solely to aware entities, the goal of struggle and possible difficulties to be overcome to make the defence effective. The addressee cannot therefore also be an “opponent” who is not capable of abstract thinking. Since this rule involves the greatest degree of generality [6], this means that all other rules, directives, principles and methods of innovative agonology are subordinate to this most general rule. Thus, they can be applied to necessary countermeasures, of which COVID-19 is a model example in this dramatic situation.

As a formality, it should be added that numerous general rules, directives, principles and methods of agonology prove useful for those who represent each side – those who have initiated an attack and those who counteract an attack (defend themselves).

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, these very broad reflections about innovative agonology guide us to the following question: what are the most substantial methodological implications and utilitarian forecasts?

It would be naive to expect that experts in agonology will suggest a specific way to **struggle** with COVID-19, but one needs a lack of imagination, goodwill and responsibility to a priori ignore innovative agonology, even if there is a strong awareness that countermeasures should include a complementary approach in numerous cases from the micro to the macro scale. Although complementarity is not a simple synonym for an interdisciplinary approach, in the fight against COVID-19, and in many other threats to health and life, it is necessary to use languages of numerous specific types of science. Language (conceptual apparatus) of agonology is by no means a methodological barrier; in other words, it does not make effective communication with specialists in even the most distant fields of knowledge more difficult. On the contrary, one of the most important advantages of the language

of agonology is that it is suitable for connotations on the borderline between different fields of knowledge and specific types of science.

Furthermore, being based on the principles of praxeology [18], innovative agonology recommends a simple methodology of using mixed (efficiency and ethical, or in other words, praxeological and ethical) evaluations of all human activities [19]. Primarily, activities aimed at defending health or life, the goal of which is not only to make the action effective, but also to meet the highest ethical and moral standards. If these criteria are met, the risk of replicating errors, the effects of which may prove irreversible, is reduced.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations below are based on an elementary truth that COVID-19 poses a real threat to every human being regardless of his or her social status, knowledge, power, influence and wealth, religion, popularity, etc. If this is the case, it seems true that science treated as a method needed by people in power and supranational financiers will turn out to be counterproductive for humanity. This means that as a knowledge-based civilisation, for which permanent development and survival in an undegenerated form should be an obvious goal, we will achieve its negation – self-destruction. Therefore, wisdom leads to two sensible systemic recommendations:

- theories, hypotheses, laws, rules, principles and methods of agonology, especially those formulated at a high level of generality, can become a highly effective source of inspiration for experts in each specific science and those dealing with crisis management in a complementary manner (cooperating but at the same time rejecting anger, disputes and selfish ambitions) to overcome this global threat while minimizing the inevitable losses; and
- a return to the *Solidarity* ideals, perhaps in a slightly different global dimension, may translate into lasting human relations at different levels of social functioning, with the general rule being to selflessly share what everyone has: either money, knowledge or distance support, etc.

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Cite this article as: Kalina RM, Barczyński BJ. A novel approach to counteraction of threats: Inspiration for all. *Arch Budo Sci Martial Art Extreme Sport* 2019; 15: 159-163