Overview: Seeking spirituality through physicality

1. Spirituality and subjectivisation
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5. Seeking spirituality through physicality: some common pedagogic principles of self-cultivation
6. Summary and reflections

“Spiritualities” and “religions” might be roughly characterized as the individual and institutional poles within the general domain of “religion”. A religion without spiritualities is impossible to imagine. But, as will be seen, the reverse—a spirituality without a religion—is quite possible in principle. Spiritualities can emerge on the basis of an existing religion, but they can very well do without... (p. 151 )

“‘The massive turn of modern culture’ favours and reinforces those (subjective-life) forms of spirituality which resource unique subjectivities and treat them as a primary source of significance, and undermines those (life-as) forms of religion which do not.” (p. 78)


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What are “Eastern” movement forms and why should we learn from them?

**Self-cultivation**

“Simply stated, this is to ‘learn with the body’, not the brain. Cultivation is a practice that attempts, so to speak, to achieve true knowledge by means of one’s total mind and body” (p. 26)

“Dogen moreover, said that satori culminates with the ‘molting of the body-mind’. This probably means that the dualistic distinction between mind and body is dissolved.” (p. 28)


*In short, self-cultivation “is” seeking spirituality through physicality and as such is a central goal of many of these activities...*
Self-cultivation as refinement (unification) of consciousness through practice

“The purpose of the exercise and refinement of consciousness in martial arts is all a matter of taking the already unbalanced relationship between body and mind, and putting it through training and tuning to restore the unity of Heaven and humanity, a balance in which subject and object are unified.” (p. 25)


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2.1

Fragments of religious spirituality in traditional Asian martial arts

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FRAGMENTS OF (CHAN) BUDDHISM: PHYSICAL CULTIVATION

Bodhidharma, The Ji Jin Jing and The Shaolin Temple

Mahayana Buddhism known as Ch’an Buddhism is distinctive for its being a pragmatic approach which also considered the development of high levels of spiritual, intellectual and physical cultivation were essential for the attainment of enlightenment.

“The USA Shaolin Temple teaches Chan Philosophy through the core Shaolin disciplines of martial arts or action meditation: Gongfu (Kung Fu) Taiji Quan (Tai Chi) and Qigong (Chi Kung).... Students find many paths to get to the Temple; while some students seek to build better health and create a feeling of well-being, others may train for self-defense or flexibility, but there is a singular concept behind Shaolin training: martial arts and Chan Philosophy are one and the same.”

FRAGMENTS OF (ZEN) BUDDHISM: RIGHT MINDFULNESS, MUSHIN NO SHIN, SAMADHI AND BUDO.

The 'Enso' is a Japanese word meaning "circle". This symbol represents Enlightenment, Strength, Harmony, Elegance, and the Universe -- "a vast space, lacking nothing, and nothing in excess"... It is an "expression of the moment". For us, the enso represents our commitment to personal growth by providing quality programs that emphasize discipline, dedicated practice, and balance of body and mind

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THE CASE OF AIKIDO

Through the single example of Aikidō this notion of spiritual cultivation has become elevated to the primary purpose and process whereby most Western people seem to perceive this martial art as a proper way toward a subjective spiritual path. (p. 52)

Three fundamental articulations:

1) A commitment to self development and spiritual achievement.
2) A commitment to peaceful and spiritual resolution of conflict.
3) A commitment to self-improvement through Aikidō training and rituals. (p. 53)


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2.3
Secular religious spirituality:
The example of Wing Chun Kung Fu

A secular religion provides an overarching cosmology, defining who one is (identity) and who belongs (membership), what matters (values) and what is to be done (purpose), how and why things hang together the way they do to constitute “reality” and “truth” (ideology), how one is embedded in that reality and connects to what matters and what is to be done (transcendence), as well as how one’s history—particularly one’s origin—connects to these sacred principles. (pp. 364-5)


**WING CHUN KUNG FU AS SECULAR RELIGION**

“A whole turning point has been made, and the way I am is because of these decisions. Because of Wing Chun, the decision had been made. So that is a spiritual thing because of the power that rules my life. It’s changed my life. Everyday, I might not have the Wing Chun physically... although there’s always something in my mind about Wing Chun, an interaction, conversation, a text message, it doesn’t matter. It’s constantly there beside you, which is what people liken God to... (Sifu Steve, p.255)

“I never knew it, but I’ve been searching for Wing Chun all my life. It’s as if my entire existence was empty without it” (Aidan, fieldnotes, 3 November 2004).


**Sacralisation**
THE SACRALISATION OF SELF DEFENCE INTO A WAY OF SELF CULTIVATION

The physical “end” (purpose) of being capable of a rapid deadly response to a physical attack, being too dangerous to practice in “reality”, becomes an experience, ability and purpose that is virtually unobtainable, is very rarely observed and difficult to demonstrate in a peaceful, law abiding society. One consequence of this is the devolution of the ends (real self defence) to the means through which the ends might be achieved (martial skill). Martial skill as demonstrated by master practitioners quickly take on an almost transcendent, ethereal quality; This is sacralisation. (p. 56)


“Sacralised” Codes of conduct

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wing Chun Kung Fu Code of Conduct (Yip Man lineage)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Practice courtesy and righteousness - Serve the society and respect your elders.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Love your fellow students - Be united and avoid conflicts.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Limit your desires and pursuit of bodily pleasures - Preserve the proper spirit.</td>
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<td>4. Train diligently - Maintain your skills.</td>
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<td>5. Learn to develop spiritual tranquility - Abstain from arguments and fights.</td>
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<td>6. Participate in society - Be moderate and gentle in your manners.</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Help the weak and the very young - Use martial skills for the good of humanity.</td>
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<td>8. Remain disciplined - Conduct yourself ethically as a martial artist.</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Pass on the tradition - Preserve this Chinese art and rules of conduct.</td>
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Jennings, G., & Brown, D.H.K., & Sparkes, A.C. (2010). It can be a religion for you if you want it to be: An ethnography of a Wing Chun Kung Fu’s club as a body-self transforming cultural practice. Ethnography, 11 (4), 533 - 557

Sacralisation

“What were once means to an end may become ends in themselves...and the reverence vested in the ends may devolve to the means. This is the process of sacralization, of rendering something sacred. Indeed, the more transcendent and ethereal the ends, the more individuals tend to sacralize the means; the distant glory of the ends is approximated by glorifying the means.” (pp. 364-5)


THE SACRALISED HABITUS

“As soon as we stuck hands, I realized there was nothing I could do. I couldn’t put a hand on him. I couldn’t do anything. He started talking to me about the different energies of chi sau. I had no idea what he was talking about at the time. ‘Do you know the eight energies of chi sau?’ Which I had to proclaim I didn’t. He said, ‘Right. This is the first energy.’ Then he went to the second energy. Not being able to unlink my arms, not being able to step around, not being able to disconnect. Just being backed from one side of the hall right against the wall. I just managed to step around ... It was just unbelievable. Unbelievable ... he smiled and winked, and said I had a lot of work to do, but it was not bad... After that, I was pretty much smitten... I could see that Sifu’s skill was better than anyone’s skill I had ever experienced in any of the schools that I’d been to. Regardless of style...regardless to the length of time the teachers had been training and teaching for. It’s something I hadn’t encountered ... So pretty much from there, I realized I had found correct Sifu.” (Zack, interview transcript, 15 March 2008)
Fragments of or a pathways to religious spirituality in PE
Spiritual Exercise in PE and School sport?
Secular religious spirituality in PE and School “Sport”?

The elaboration of an internally differentiated relationship between human embodiment and the sacred which is tied to the divergent development of banal and sensual forms of sociality . . . That advanced forms of sociality are characterized by a ‘recovered sensuousness’ which reflects a developing consecration of the profane world. (pp. 161-2)


4. Seeking spirituality through physicality: Shared self-cultivation through sensual solidarities

“You’re both in the same zone . . . If one person isn’t, then you can’t achieve that. If you’re actually teaching chi sau to a person who has not reached a level of energy, feel, or competence, then you won’t be in that zone. You won’t be in a meditative state. It’s only when people reach a certain area in their training where you can both train equally, you can feel that meditative state . . .” (Sifu Bridge, interview transcript, 6 March 2008)

Jennings, G., & Brown, D.H.K., & Sparkes, A.C. (2010). It can be a religion for you if you want it to be”: An ethnography of a Wing Chun Kung Fu’s club as a body-self transforming cultural practice. Ethnography, 11 (4), 533 - 557
Shared cultivation and sensual solidarities in PE?

Participating “together” rather than against each other?

Learning “together” rather than alongside each other?

Do we “need” each other to progress to progress ourselves?

Self identity and emotions as ‘barriers’ to self-cultivation

“When we label a thought we step back from it, we remove our identification. There’s a world of difference between saying, ‘She’s impossible’ and ‘having a thought that she’s impossible.’ If we persistently label any thought that the emotional overlay begins to drop out and we are left with an impersonal energy fragment to which we need not attach.” (p. 29)

Prioritising ‘direct’ experience

Changing the body-self through practice
Spirituality through daily practice...

“Taking the view that we are only practicing in order to achieve some imagined goal tends to devalue what is being done. The goal we are striving to reach may not exist or, if we feel we have reached it, may not be at all the way we imagined it. All we really have is our daily practice and living our daily life.” (p. 70)


Cultivation beyond Eastern Movement forms using...

- Walking and Running (including Parkour / free running)
- Surfing, Skateboarding, BMX riding, scooting
- Fitness training
- Dance and gymnastics
Questioning rationalities for inclusion...

“Instrumental rational” motivations driven by material considerations of outcome...e.g. performativity

Vs

“Value rational” motivations driven by the movement towards a cherished (often non-rational) belief...e.g. spiritual growth

A holistic paradigm for physical education must embrace Eastern movement forms which give us new images and new ways of describing our experience as well as new techniques which reveal universal principles of movement.” (p.171)


“Anything is possible when you have inner peace.”
Shifu (Kung Fu Panda 2)
Thank you for listening...
References