

## **Spiritual Health in the Context of Sport in Terms of Current Sports Cultural Anthropology**

**Prof. PhDr. Josef Oborný, PhD.**

Faculty of Physical Education and Sport Department of Sport Educology and Sport Humanities  
Comenius University  
Bratislava, Slovakia  
[josef.oborny@fsport.uniba.sk](mailto:josef.oborny@fsport.uniba.sk)

**Mgr. Barbora Vrtiaková**

Faculty of Physical Education and Sport  
Department of Sport Educology and Sport  
Humanities Comenius University  
Bratislava, Slovakia  
[barbora.vrtiakova@fsport.uniba.sk](mailto:barbora.vrtiakova@fsport.uniba.sk)

**Doc. PaedDr. Jiří Michal, PhD.**

Faculty of Humanities  
Department of Physical Education and Sport  
Matej Bel University  
Banská Bystrica, Slovakia  
[Jiri.Michal@umb.sk](mailto:Jiri.Michal@umb.sk)

---

**Abstract:** *This paper presents a theoretical scientific study of movement, sports movement, health and spiritual health in terms of cultural anthropology. It informs on the key aspects of the meaning of human movement and outlines the scope of the term spiritual health. It teleologically approaches the study to ascertain how the cultural anthropology interprets human movement and health along the lines of current human needs and intentions of the current understanding and also to the presentation of findings of cultural anthropology of sports in the human sports motion. It applies the methodological tools of qualitative research which logically comprises contemplation, selective compilation teleological and non-participating observation through electronic media. From the perspective of cultural anthropology it defines fundamental aspects of health. In conclusion, the study highlights the importance of examining non-religious spirituality, which largely, along with other factors, configures the quality of life of a modern human.*

**Keywords:** *Cultural anthropology, Sports movement, Purpose of movement, Health, Spiritual Health.*

---

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

The literature on the subject of health and sports movement has recently noted the need for more accurate detection of health structures, its layers and its impact of the movement on individual segments of health. In this perspective, in particular in our country sports, cultural anthropology begins to develop. More and more gradually the concept of spiritual health seeps into our thinking. We believe that the cultural anthropology of sport as a whole should be paid more attention within the sport and academic places.

The aim of our theoretical research is to find out how cultural anthropology explains human movement and health along the lines of current human needs and also the presentation of findings sports, cultural anthropology of sports of human motion.

### **2. METHODS**

Character of the study is theoretical, we apply here logically consistent creative contemplation and selective compilation of sources of teleological theories of human movement and health; inductive reasoning, excerpting and commenting views on health and movement; non-participating observation through electronic media.

### **3. SUBJECT OF EXAMINATION IN THE CURRENT CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY**

Cultural anthropology as a term refers to the American Anthropological tradition for which the central and typical terms widely understood concept of culture. It was created almost together with social anthropology in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and its research horizon widened by so-called intercultural dimension (Linhart, Petrušek, Vodáková, Maříková, 1996). This orientation of the

cultural anthropology is related to study of "intercultural" medicine and medical practices of so-called foreign cultures. Culture in this concept refers to any specific non-genetic human phenomena, as manifested in artefacts, prescriptive, regulatives and ideas accepted by members of a society (Dohnalová, Malina, 2006). Very often, nickname cultural links with social attributes and therefore in these contexts we encounter often called socio-cultural anthropology. Cultural and social anthropology belong to the group of social sciences studying human culture. Specifically it focuses on the creation, development and comparison of cultures and the importance of culture for humans. Cultural anthropology deals with the problem of how people understand "their" culture and therefore deals with local traditions and regional history.

Cultural anthropology is currently expanding its research to engagement in sport and the diversity of forms of cultural sporting movement. It develops tradition in defining the concept of sport as a cultural phenomenon of modern society. Some studies even examine the basic forms of human movement - walking and running - in historical cultural context. "This means that culture requests from individual rigorously defined using of the body, which is reflected in the human body and the human movement pattern (Mačák, 2007). Retention mechanism of movement behavior in different cultures is relatively simple. Movement pattern is transmitted in every culture from generation to generation and therefore all people in that system develop their ontogenesis, acquire the specific features of movement behaviour in a certain historical period and geo-space.

As well as movement, health can become a natural element of scientific interest in cultural anthropology. From the perspective of social anthropology we define health (according to WHO) as a state of physical, spiritual and social well-being resulting from compliance on the interaction between organism and environment; in this respect therefore it is not a simple absence of disease (Dohnalová, Malina, 2006). Health care at a social level, of any aspect arises of the cultural context in which the individual is located.

Cultural anthropology reflects and understands the health and health care as a cultural phenomenon in terms of various aspects. We can speak about personal aspects, which are expressed by health care as an indicator of cultural behaviour patterns of the individual. Furthermore, the social aspect - health is reflected as an irreplaceable social value that the user is each individual in the society. In a global aspect, health is reflected as a universal human value and health care shall take the literally global form, for example in the fight against certain forms of potential global pandemic. In a particular sense, we can speak about national health aspects, as nations, historical and gradually current, are also of interest to cultural anthropology.

The term multiculturalism has appeared in various forms and mutations in the current cultural anthropology during recent decades. From this perspective we can perceive movement towards health and promoting health as a manifestation of the so-called cultural alterity (of lat. alter - other, otherwise, we recall that there is the emergence of the concept of alternative medicine). Cultural alterity expresses, in other words, cultural otherness, diversity. It is one of the central concepts of culturological studies and ethnology, and hence, cultural anthropology.

In the traditional sense it marked the majority of phenomena, superficial cultural differences among rituals and institutions of community life. In modern culturological science it focuses on the detection of deep ethnic differences in the perception of reality and value paradigm of ethnic groups. Historically, we can only remind inspirational power of wisdom of the ancients and the need to "give positive consideration of natural peoples to live in the countryside and ... respect for their values and ideas (Hurych, 2013)." Not old historic nations, but we, the representatives of modern culture we succumb dangerous phenomena, superficial forms of our culture. These internally anchored cultural anthropological cultural differences not only describes but also functionalised in favour of (often artificial) encryption cultural identity (Malina, 2009).

#### **4. THE PERCEPTION OF THE SPORTS MOVEMENT AND HEALTH IN CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY**

The bearer of different forms of sports movement is not only the human body. Sport is a sophisticated operation; some authors also speak of spiritual activities (Hurych et al., 2013). Sports challenges are also directed to the human spirit, sport is also suffused with ethos and aims not only to promote physical health. The movement expresses the (health) status and dynamics of the whole human being. The movement regards all that exists in human and what is leaking from human outside. Movement

therefore also relates to a very intense mental and spiritual health. "Movements bring to the attention all possible forms of human behavior and any of its internal movement (Hodaň, 2000)." The motion is speech of dumb or silent human. Another author goes in this spirit even further. Status of man's physical structure (body, a necessary condition of human existence), ideal (soul, that psychic abilities, thinking, feelings), idealising (spirit inherently personal dimension manifesting itself in existential realization values), relational (social ballast to man as a social and cultural beings). It can be concluded that "spirituality is the manifestation of the spiritual dimension (or expression) of human existence (and thus defines the living area, which is characterized by a recruitment uniqueness), as well as may be considered healthy physical, mental and social, we can also propose our peculiar modus of spiritual health (Jirásek, 2015)." Spiritual health is expressed by the author as the concept of spiritual peace (Jirásek, 2015).

Unless we accept the premise that spirituality is the ideological bedrock of spiritual health, then we have to highlight the existence of diverse forms of spirituality. Just to illustrate the problem, for example, let's list Brugger point of view. He interprets spiritualism (as opposed to materialism and in accordance with the philosophical school the past) as learning about the reality of spirit or spiritual beings. Metaphysical spiritualism is trying to understand the existence of the spirit. Monistic form of spiritualism assumes that all reality is spirit, more specifically, absolute spirit. Psychological spiritualism teaches about spirituality of the human soul (Brugger, 1994). Our concept of spirituality demystifies and demythologizes respectively understands it in neither mystical nor mythological significance. In our concept we can on that basis define the scope of the term spiritual health as follows.

- A man stands on its own feet, not just legs, but also his head.
- It symbolizes the inner life balance, harmony and authenticity (the self).
- Spiritually healthy person has a vision of the current and future life, a vision that it is progressing.
- Natural attitude towards death. The fact that we are all mortal is spontaneous, not a reason to panic and mental understanding of the importance to the mystical winged but ambiguous Memento mori. We do not recommend to live and think of death in the spirit of some of spiritualism, but spirituality intentions. Life and death are in the dyadic relationship: did not die, who has not lived, has not lived, who did not die. Spiritualism and spirituality strictly is distinguished by the Kosiewicz (Spiritualism versus spirituality), adding: spirituality in the popular sense should be associated with the pursuit of the realization of values that are at the top of the value spectrum, makes inner and approves this hierarchy of values (spirituality in the popular sense of the word is supposed to be connected with striving for realisation of values which are at the top of internalized and approved hierarchy of values; Kosiewicz, 2009).
- Intellectual world of man is characterized by internally consistent world view "as a fundamental principle of interpretation, by which a human is managed in life (Dohnalová, Malina, 2006)."
- Inclination to a range of values of material and immaterial nature that support other elements that promotes health and quality of life.
- Acquired personally created and lived moral values that do not contradict the good.
- The unity of physical and non-physical segment of a human person.
- Creative acceptance of the full spectrum of traditional community standards and participation in their cultivation. Bednář in a similar context speaks of homo creator (inveniens) as one of the patterns of humanity, which is not only settled in its environment, but able to construct this environment and transform (Cooper, 2009).
- Man is in all aspects, but especially by the lived spirituality the natural element of relevant culture (such as national or sport).

Consider the sports movement and its meaning in relation to the life and meaning of life in relation to the objective needs of a healthy lifestyle and having regard to the subjective human life needs. In other words, we talk about some of the planes of sense of (sports) movement of human and for human. In terms of differentiation of these planes, we want to outline their basic range.

- The plane of satisfaction of a wide range of biological needs of the human body through movement. "Absolutely necessary amount of movement in terms of economically developed countries reduces, causing the need to replace these deficit artificial forms of physical activity (Hurych, 2010)." This plane is particularly relevant to physical health.
- Plane meets the needs of "satisfying" animal instincts of animal joy and anger, where the need subliming animosities pulsates. It's elementary, authentically anthropological and often subconscious layer sense of movement in the sport.
- The plane of satisfying of psychological needs and in lower "version" comprises also movement, whose meaning we cannot explain, yet we do it. They are spontaneous expressions of joy and frustration, overcoming of anxiety, physical activity and consolidating the elemental feeling of confidence.
- Plain hedonistic satisfaction of human needs that present as the need for a sense of happiness endorphins perceptions, needs, filled with level of, the need for a sense of bliss, a sense of psychological health. Among recreational athletes who participate in demanding sports events is a lot of a practical joke, experimenters, but the adventurous who are involved in these events, particularly in terms of satisfying their hedonistic needs, but not in terms of their health needs.
- Eudaimonistic plane of satisfying the needs - the need to calculate happiness by force of the own will, the admiration of spectators, friends, colleagues, parents, classmates, competitors.
- Plain satisfaction of existentialist need to know the answer to the question "who am I", "what are my highest possibilities", "where is existential boundary preserving health and life" in sports physical activities. From personal experience we can give testimony of the marathon, which are common dilemma situations for athlete in the state of factual physiological and mental exhaustion. Border poles of this situation are waiving or walking (tottering) to the finish, or in other words, senseless continuation of the run accompanied by gambling and danger to life and health or sensible (meaningful), but humiliating withdrawal from the race.
- The plane of satisfying philosophical needs - merging with nature during physical activities in nature, the acquisition of a sense of unity with the whole natural environment, learn the health potential of this environment.
- Metaphysical satisfying needs plane - merging with the cosmic environment, achieve a peaceful state of mind sports, the acquisition of (reaching) ataraxy and sports nirvana, make, rather, making catharsis. Thus, Jirásek writes, "Spirituality is one of the factors that tend to be associated with good health. This connection, however, needs be assumed at two levels: we examine the phenomenon of spirituality and its impact on health or we constitute a separate component of health, spiritual health (Jirásek, 2015).

As an example we can mention the dance, which in prehistoric times meant for human more than a soulless motion. Murániová (2008) argues that a sense of dance in the past was the emotional survivals, the joy of surplus energy, a feeling of relaxation and wellbeing. Also in the development of contemporary dance the search for new forms of self-expression of man, even finding certain forms of spirituality is evident. Research carried out by a team of Czech authors (Hurych et al., 2013) in the relevance of dance based on "the assumption that dance may not be seen only as a sport but also as a dancer self-expression as a means to relax and as a ritual, or even spiritual activity. In response to this and in accordance with Jirásek (2013) we can say that in the dance form "human movement is a movement not only of the body but of personality, not only *fysis*, but existence is not a material substance, but the human way of being."

The problem of meaning of sports movement for human quality of life can be determined primarily by means of qualitative research methodology. In response to this sense of plane of movement of a human in relation to its needs, we can apply the same "formula" that we talk about such forms of movement that comes with the attribute of consciousness (and awared) sense of motion (CSM). In that case:  $CSM = f(VOH, SV, RMOP, RMS)$ , in words the level of awareness of the sense of movement is a function of many variables: VOH - value orientation of human; SV - scale of values; RMOP - relevance of movement for satisfying the needs of the outlined plane (in everyday life, it is the most common movement relevance to human health, as a the athlete person subjectively perceives); RMS - relevance of movement for self-expression and self-realisation. Of course, we can consider additional variables in this equation. Our sense of movement in the service of health and

quality of life cannot be expressed exactly by any algebraic functions and equations. Sense binds to the target, sometimes in order to even identify. It is good if this aim health.

It turns out that the sense of each movement is primary in itself and health as the final effect is the added cultural value. The sense of movement is the objective. Sports movement, however, is a cultural movement. Now we have available scientific parameters for its personal quantification. Sporting sense of human motion has multiple planes, is stored in several layers. Health, however, is not represented as an effect of motion in each of these layers. As it regards personal inner plane, it is often hidden and even has taboo form.

### 5. CONCLUSION

Cultural anthropology always has examined its existence, the historical types of spirituality, and their links to human movement and health. In the past (in the history of human) it was usually the religious type of spirituality and this spirit contingent approaches to movement and to health. Mostly it was a polytheistic or animistic religions and pragmatically motivated movement. Now task of examination of nonreligious spirituality which largely, along with other factors face the role of cultural anthropology, they configure the quality of life of modern man. These "other" factors include culturally directed sports movement. On this basis the contours of sports cultural anthropology grow. Health is structured phenomenon of human life. In terms of cultural anthropology, we pay more attention to spiritual health, because it is in our country less studied scientific problem. Man that is characterized by spiritual health stands on its own feet, not just legs, but also his head. It symbolizes the inner life balance, harmony and authenticity (the self). Spiritually healthy person has a vision of their current and future life, a vision that it is progressing.

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This article is sponsored by Grant for PhD. students and young scientists of Comenius University (UK/51/2015).

### REFERENCES

- Bednář, M. 2009. *Pohyb člověka na biodromu. Cesta životem (nejen) z pohledu kinantropologie*. Prague: Karolinum. 190 p.
- Brugger, W. 1994. *Filosofický slovník*. Prague: Naše vojsko. 1<sup>st</sup> edition, 640 p.
- Dohnalová, M., Malina, J. 2006. *Slovník antropologie občanské společnosti*. Brno: CERM. 778 p.
- Hodaň, B. 2000. *Tělesná kultura – sociokulturní fenomén - východiska a vztahy*. Olomouc: Univerzita Palackého. 235 p.
- Hurych, E. 2010. Možnosti transferu od teorie k praxi v některých oblastech filosofické kinantropologie. In *Tělesná kultura*, 2010, 33 (3), pp. 7-26.
- Hurych, E. 2013. Pobyt a pohyb v přírodě a jejich duchovní rozměr. In Hurych, E. et al. 2013. *Spiritualita pohybových aktivit*. Brno: Masaryk University. 251 p.
- Hurych, E. et al. 2013. *Spiritualita pohybových aktivit*. Brno: Masaryk University. 251 p.
- Jirásek, I. 2015. Spiritualita a zdraví: ideové podloží pro zkoumání empirických dat. In *Československá psychologie*. 2015, year LIX, number 2, pp. 174-186.
- Jirásek, I. 2013. Specifikace filosofické antropologie prostřednictvím tematiky lidského pohybu. In *Filosofický časopis*, year 61, 2013, no. 1.
- Kosiewicz, J. 2009. *Sport and Philosophy. From methodology to Ethics*. Warsaw: Wydawnictwo BK. 316 p.
- Linhart, J., Petrussek, M., Vodáková, A., Maříková, H. 1996. *Velký sociologický slovník*. Prague: Karolinum. 747 p.
- Mačák, J. 2007. *Chůdza a beh v kultúrnom kontexte*. Bratislava: Comenius University, Faculty of Physical Education and Sport. 135 p. Dissertation thesis.
- Malina, J. et al. 2009. *Antropologický slovník (aneb co by mohl o člověku vědět každý člověk)*. Brno: Akademické nakladatelství CERM. 4736 p.
- Murániová, A. 2008. *Výchova tancom (metodika ako vychovávať deti tancom)*. Bratislava: CS Profi-Public, 2008, 270 p.

## AUTHORS' BIOGRAPHY



**Josef Oborný (1949)** is a professor in the Department of Sport Educology and Sport Humanities, Faculty of Physical Education and Sport, Comenius University, Bratislava. In his research, he focuses on the philosophy, ethics of sport and also on motives of sport performing. In his free time, he is also a long-distance runner (110 classic marathons).



**Barbora Vrťáková (1988)** is a PhD. student in the Department of Sport Educology and Sport Humanities, Faculty of Physical Education and Sport, Comenius University, Bratislava. She focuses on ethos and esthetics of dance in her research. She works also as a dance coach.



**Doc. PaedDr. Jiří Michal, PhD.** works at University since 1985. He lectures subjects: the theory and methodology of skiing and snowboarding, didactics of physical education and sport, theory and methodology of sport for all, tennis, sports economics. In the scientific and publishing activities, he is focused mainly on the area of Sports Humanities and Educology.