



## **Fighting and Victory as Basic Terms in Agonistics and Praxeology and the Art of War**

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### **Abstract**

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Questions of how to overcome problems are probably the basic questions of fighters. Answers to them, from a historical perspective, the principles of martial art have been provided. These provisions, often mutually exclusive, raise questions related to the scientific approach to this issue. The scientific specialty dealing with the issue of combat is agonistics. This article is devoted to the presentation of the main concepts of agonistics and the general combat theory. In the first section, the author searches for an answer to the question whether an agonist meets the basic criteria of a scientific theory. The second section is devoted to the presentation of its main category, which is the concept of struggle. The last chapter refers to the purposeful cause of this theory represented by the concept of victory. This article confronts praxeological and sociological content with concepts characteristic of martial arts, and its main idea is to harmonize divergent insights on the phenomenon of struggle and victory, the main categories of agonistics. The research used theoretical (analysis, synthesis, comparison, inference and generalization) and empirical methods have been used. Additionally, a diagnostic survey has included the expert interview technique. The research results are presented in individual subsections of the article.

### **Keywords**

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art of war, fight, praxeology, safety, victory

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## 1. Introduction

In the nineteenth century, research on the art of war was full of analyzes and assessments of Napoleon's art of war. His decisions were debated and considered, which led him to victory. At the same time, in the civil sciences, considerations on the phenomenon of work, functions and activities were conducted. The basic problem that inspired these reflections was the efficiency of action. On the basis of this search, in the 1930s, a science called praxeology was born, the foundations of which were laid out by the Polish philosopher Tadeusz Kotarbiński. According to encyclopedic definitions, it looks for the widest generalizations referring to all forms of conscious and purposeful action considered for reasons of fitness (Pszczolowski, 1978).

In order to better illustrate elements of praxeology, Kotarbiński ordered them into a form of matrix, which he called a three-step ladder of issues (1938a). The basis of this ladder is a variable that is characterized by collective action and is called cooperation or interaction. In general, this variable can have two positive values, positive and negative, and negative. Two entities cooperate if at least one of them helps or hinders the other (Kotarbiński, 1965). If two entities help each other, striving for a common goal, we then talk about positive and positive cooperation. It is one column of a ladder. If we talk about the reverse of this phenomenon, i.e. a situation in which two entities interfere with each other in achieving the goal, then we are dealing with a negative cooperation. The essence of a person's functioning in society is communication with its members, which holds out the prospect of the exchange of thoughts and of joint operations, especially military activities. (Pilarski, 2014). This opposite of cooperation creates the second column of the ladder. The areas of knowledge characteristic of positive cooperation are the science of organization and management. For negative cooperation, one should learn about the concept of fighting.

Let us now consider the individual steps of this ladder. They are related to the degree of phenomena. The three generalizations adopted by the Polish praxiologist combine with the methodological principle of adequacy of Leon Petrażycki (1985). According to this rule, in broad terms, the point is to use judgments that are appropriate only for this class to describe or adjudicate on a given subject-related class (Petrażycki, 1939). Kotarbiński lists three groups of generalizations, which are characteristic both for the area of management knowledge and knowledge about combat. The lowest level of generalizations is associated with individual cases. This collection is the largest set of relations of cooperation, and the applied rulings on the classes of these relations concern specific research subjects. It is difficult to characterize the whole class of positive cooperation or the whole class of negative cooperation.

Let us stop for a moment at this level. Thinking about the theory of struggle, we often associated it with the army and soldiers with its reflection on the subject, and only to a set of military issues. The spell of military combat is so strong that this mistake is also made by specialists in praxeology (Rudniawski, 1938). This is a certain falsification, because for our considerations, negative cooperation is much more important than the fight, or actually, the phenomenon of counteracting each other. We are dealing not only with warfare against the war. This is a common social phenomenon, colloquially known as conflict and dispute. Where there is a dispute between persons, in court, in the parliament, in the class, between the employer and employee, supervisor and a subordinate, there is a conflict that can be analyzed as an example of negative cooperation. However, the conflict between the two sides does not exhaust the problem of the first level of generalizations. If we can talk about disputes of a legal, commercial, family, employee, etc. nature, let us pay attention to the subjects of the dispute. They may be individuals, they may be organizations, but they

could also be corporations, states and alliances. For example, the conflict between Google and the European Union, although it concerns organizations operating in the global arena, is still a unit dispute that belongs to the lowest level of generalizations. The size of the analyzed organization from the perspective of the three-step ladder of generalizations is irrelevant. The same applies to military levels of action: strategy, operational art and tactics. Let us emphasize that the size of a corporation does not matter, but it is important to generalize, and this must be adequate to the class of which it decides.

The second level clearly shows two sets of generalizations that should form coherent theories. Generalizing claims about management and organization brings us closer to building a general theory of efficient organization of multi-stakeholder activities. The implementation of these activities in the area of negative cooperation should bring us closer to the formulation of a general theory of struggle, which, due to the subject, is our object of interest. The third level of particulars concern the general theory of an effective deed. This is the area of general rights related to praxeology.

Kotarbiński, along with the first theses concerning this area of knowledge, proposed to call it agonist or agonology, drawing from the Greek word *agón* (Latin *agon*) meaning 'fight'. At the same time, he stressed that parallel research in this matter was conducted by the German theoretician Emanuel Lasker, who called his theory a machinology (Lasker, 1907), using the Greek word *mákhē* meaning fight, battle, and struggle. Today, both concepts are rather unknown, although it seems that the term agonist begins to take on a new meaning in contemporary post-Marxian philosophy, represented inter alia by Chantal Mouffe (2015).

## **2. The language and the method in agonistics**

Let us now take a closer look at the general condition of combat theory, focusing our observations on the basic elements of its "science", i.e. on language and method (Heller, 2009). Let us start with language. Language is a system of meaning coded by using a finite set of symbols. Thanks to them, language can perform communication, expression, reference and representation functions. This last activity, also called the cognitive function, allows us to support the processes of perception, memory and cognitive control as well as thinking and reasoning by means of the so-called conceptual thinking, consisting of concepts, judgments and cognitive schemes (Nęcka et al., 2008). To use cognitive functions, a language must use concepts. Concepts are also an inherent feature of a scientific method (Heller, 2013) - they are language symbols representing any object, one of its properties or a behavioral phenomenon, which are important for every science. Concepts are often abstractions reflecting empirical phenomena, and each scientific discipline creates its own uni-conceptual set of concepts. For the researcher, concepts and symbols form the language of a professional and form the basis of communication. They introduce the perspective, or the way of looking at the studied phenomena, define the content and properties of the theory, and enable classification and generalization (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 2001). The set of concepts forming the language of the general theory of struggle, while meeting the adequacy requirement, may constitute a theoretical basis for carrying out practical activities in the processes of preparing and conducting activities characteristic of the art of war.

The language of general combat theory is just one element of theory. It is complemented by the presentation of a research method. Kotarbiński called the method of research in praxeology a general method. Among the philosophers cited by the praxeologist in meth-

odological issues, we can find Aristotle, Alexander of Aphrodisiya, Petrus Ramus, Franciszek Bacon, John Stuart Mill and Leon Petrażycki (Kotarbiński, 1939), which indicates the advantage in this approach induction approach. However, the article devoted to the essence and tasks of general methodology begins with the memory of Descartes (Kotarbiński, 1938b). He emphasizes the praxeological character of these rules, indicating that these are the rules of purposefulness in action. However, these are not the only observations that we can pick out for our analysis. In Rule II and III (Descartes, 2002), in spite of the principle of reversed induction, declared by Descartes, we can see the echoes of Aristotelian methodological systemization developed then into mature forms of the inductive method. Aristotle's thought, alongside with Cartesian logic, is at the heart of the agonistic method, which is also an element of meteorological thought also for Kotarbiński.

Kotarbiński puts the general methodology above the scientific methodology, which he treats as detailed. Descartes' aspiration expressed in the search for proportions that can later be applied to all subjects, is also accompanied by general praxeology - the scientific method of doing anything, a science that considers work from the point of view of effectiveness, and detachment from the specific working conditions in a given only specialties as well as any emotional assessments (Kotarbiński, 1938b). In a similar way, you can explain the general theory of combat. Translating the above definition into agonism can take a form in which it is the science of any methods of fighting for anything. This is, therefore, a detailed science that considers struggle from the point of view of effectiveness, and in isolation from its specific conditions in terms of both specialty and emotional elements. In this case, time and space are an important element needed to consider a fight, but this aspect does not apply to a specific time segment and a specific theater space of activities.

Kotarbiński finishes his reflection on praxeology with the statement "that it is difficult to assume that in the area of general methodology, what important novelties remain to be found". This statement is also true in relation to agonistics and the theory of martial art. This does not mean, however, that everything has already been done in the scientific area. Both in the art of war, the theory of armed struggle, agonistics and praxeology of truth (...) they demand registration, mature formulation and systematization (Kotarbiński, 1938b). Let's try to organize them for concepts such as fighting and victory by Kotarbiński.

### **3. Fighting in agonistics**

The most general category, which fulfills the condition of adequacy of the first level of description of the phenomena of negative cooperation, and combines the general theory of struggle with the commonly understood art of war, is combat. It is a multidimensional concept that includes on the one hand disputes, discussions and verbal debates, including undertakings related to commercial and sport competition. However, on the other hand, it embraces all of the practices that are called military actions in wartime art. For such a wide range of described phenomena, a struggle is defined as a combination of actions of different people or teams of people, when the goals of acting are inconsistent and one tries to hinder the pursuit (Kotarbiński, 1975). Combat two people is a team of actions of unfriendly aggressors, defensive actions of the opposing side and its possible active anti-hostile opposition (Znamierowski, 1947/8).

The definition of a fight as an important sociological concept was developed by Max Weber. He placed it in relation to the wider term selection. In his opinion, a social relationship is a struggle when the intention of the activist is to carry out his own will against the

resistance of one or many partners. It may be part of biological selection. This is the case when the intention of acting is dictated by the desire to preserve a species. A more frequent form of selection is social selection, which is associated with soliciting for life chances. In both cases, the fight can be fought using direct physical violence and peaceful means, while in the latter case, it proposes to use the concept of competition (Weber, 2002).

The obvious feature of such a defined fight is the generalization of a wide range of phenomena that characterize human existence, human bands and societies. However, this factor is not important from the perspective of armed struggle theory. It is much more important that a fight is a conscious and purposeful action, taking into account the activity of the opposite side. Therefore, it should be an action that is rational and effective. Moreover, the concentration of the general theory of struggle on the action within the framework of negative cooperation is also a specific detonation of war as the most general category of martial art and emphasizing the importance of warfare - fulfilling from this perspective the essence of this subdiscipline (Czupryński, 2014; Szulc, 2000).

Sun Tzu in "The Art of War" wrote that war is of the utmost importance to the state, a matter of life or death, a path leading to survival or collapse. Therefore, it should be devoted to serious studies. Everything is better than war every evil, no matter how worst, is better than the highest evil, the greatest evil is war (Sun Tzu, 1994).

According to Karl von Clausewitz, war is therefore an act of violence aimed at forcing the enemy to do our will (Clausewitz, 1958).

The problem mentioned above is important not only from the perspective of distinguishing the most general artifact fulfilling the role of the basic subject of the study of general combat theory. Its importance also applies to the place of struggle as one of the categories of this discipline. The struggle in military sciences, despite the use of various ways of its description, is clearly placed in the collection of concepts characteristic of the lowest level of warfare. Generally speaking, combat can be defined as an armed clash of two opposing sides (from a single soldier to a tactical union) seeking to achieve different, incompatible goals, tasks, intentions, attempting force, above all armed, and trickery to interfere with each other (*Leksykon Wiedzy Wojskowej*, 1979). Contemporary literature of the subject of combat is understood as a series of battles of units and subunits, conducted in accordance with the intention of the tactical commander and under his direct command, to achieve the operational objective (tactical objectives) (Huzarski & Wołęjszo, 2014). Such a definition of fighting places it at the level of tactical actions and is consistent with Stanisław Koziej's thesis. This scientist, despite the awareness of the conflict, which in this case occurs at the interface between understanding the concept of struggle in terms of martial arts and agonism. He additionally states that combining this concept directly with a tactical background has already been accepted so widely that, with the exception of Franciszek Skibiński, who treats combat as an operational category, it does not raise any reservations. In addition, he proposes introducing additional adjectives to distinguish a fight understood in the general sense, which he calls armed combat and for tactical clashes, which he describes as a tactical combat (Koziej, 2011). The search for a general concept in this case coincides with the thesis of Kotarbiński. However, the direction related to the multiplication of concepts seems to be controversial.

The concept of armed warfare has always been perceived as the organized actions taken by armed forces of opposing parties striving for the adversary's defeat. Conclusions drawn from the evolution of armed warfare prove that in order to discuss the term in contrast with combating crime it is justifiable to identify the conditions of its occurrence. The conditions necessary for the occurrence of armed warfare include:

- the existence of at least two opposing entities presenting hostile intents to each other;
- opposing parties have armed warfare capabilities;

- opposing parties intending to achieve an armed warfare objective by physical, electronic, and psychological neutralization or elimination of their adversaries;
- the crux of armed warfare is the armed confrontation which results in one party's victory;
- armed warfare takes place between/among armed forces of opposing parties/entities in the international arena or against an armed organization of unrecognized entity presenting political objectives that indicate recognition aspirations;
- armed warfare is conducted in accordance with the rules of international law of armed conflicts;
- armed warfare is always directed against entities of a given organization representing armed force, not against civilians and public service institutions (Wolejszo, 2009).

Fighting, if it is an activity, must have its dynamics determined by the initial stage, the team of actions, the goal and the final stage. Czesław Znamierowski combines the fight with the state of balance. This condition may be compromised or may change, and changes may be perceived or may occur imperceptibly. The ability to counteract imbalances, while they are being formed, is an extremely important condition for the sustainability of social balance. In order to counteract them, they must be perceived and evaluated.

A fight is preceded by conflict. Znamierowski believes that while a fight is a set of various activities, conflict is a state of affairs, tension, a pre-fight situation. As a state of affairs it is a function of the assessment made by entities. This does not mean only entities that are parties to a conflict. The independent situation can also be used to assess the situation described as conflict (Znamierowski, 1947/8). Conflict becomes conscious when one of the parties becomes aware of the growing tension between the parties. At the moment when an unfriendly attitude changes into a hostile reaction, the action may take the form of a punitive reaction, in the absence of opposition from the other side, or it may be the beginning of a fight when the adversary resists. Let us emphasize that a fight begins when the first unpleasant action is taken and the adversary resists.

Combat is a set of actions performed in the action - opposition system, which can take place in various periods of time. They can follow one after the other or at the same time. They are the release of energy by entities of action, and therefore are economically expensive. The natural desire to reduce costs, visible especially when the time of struggling is prolonged, forces the parties to look for effective ways of fighting. Life provides us with information that their number is unlimited and depends on the ingenuity of the fighting parties. The awareness of their multiplicity leads to questions about their classification. Considering their content, they can be arranged, among others, in terms of size, frequency of occurrence, duration, and the number and composition of participants.

These natural and certainly controversial classifications are reflected in the typologies that occur in the theory and practice of martial art, which even take as a starting point the force used or insights into the behavior of the soldiers. For the theory of the problem, creating a classification is an important issue. However, without considering the best criterion for creating a network of concepts of martial art, let us now consider the question. Which criterion, from the perspective of general combat theory, is the most important?

#### **4. Victory in agonistics**

Agonistics, being embedded in praxeology, must have the basic criterion associated with the efficiency of action. This feature, and fighting theory in general, takes the form of

success or victory. Of course, efficiency, success and victory are not meanings alien to the art of war, but it seems that in the current paradigm of this specialty, achieving the goal of struggle plays leading role. What is more, the cursory analysis of textbooks and available doctrines indicates that reaching the goal of the fight can be considered a synonym of victory and success, and as a consequence of the efficiency presented by the army. This raises the need, on the one hand, to properly translate these words, while on the other hand, to fill them with logical content ordering their meaning in the theory of martial art. These needs can satisfy the concepts of general combat theory.

Explaining the term victory, in the way professor Kotarbiński proposes, is not an easy task. The author himself, before going on to define this concept, first carried out an analysis of phenomena that certainly do not fulfill the conditions testifying to victory. As the creator of praxeology indicates: to kill, destroy, break the will of the opponent does not mean to win at all. If we consider a fight at the general level of consideration, taking into account the cases characteristic of the lowest level of adequacy, activities such as killing, destruction and breaking the will do not concern negative cooperation occurring in the relations of athletes, politicians, traders, etc. Therefore, what is victory? Perhaps it is related to achieving the goal of an action?

Kotarbiński claims that there is a certain connection between achieving a goal and winning, but they are not the same. Achieving a goal is called success. However, success, understood in this way, is not necessarily a consequence of a fight, but it is concerned with participation in various activities (Kotarbiński, 1938a). When fighting, success may have two dimensions. The first is connected with reaching the assumed goal and then takes the shape of a victory. The second one combines success with the state in which our actions effectively stop one's opponents from reaching their goal. In the form of an elemental fight in which the achievement of a goal by one party requires a simple act, we can say that victory is the same, but such cases do not occur in the actual fight. Fighting practice is linked to the management of complex and multi-stakeholder activities. Even the incapacitation of the warrior, consisting in the liquidation of the shot by the marksman, is a complex activity. The act of giving a shot that meets the criteria of reaching the sniper's goal by the commander is preceded by an assessment of the situation, a concealed approach to the object, taking a fire station, etc. Each of these elementary activities has its own goals that determine the performance of the whole task. Achieving each of these goals, i.e. a correct assessment of the situation taking into account the distance, wind speed, location of the sun or moon, concealed approach to the object so as to avoid detection and take the best possible fire position, and finally adopting a shooting posture to ensure proper firing is essential for success. Furthermore, a good shot means completing the task, achieving the goal of the mission and the victory from the shooter's perspective. Are you sure? Imagine that at the moment of a successful shot, the shooter is detected by an opponent, encircled and killed. Can we also speak of the victory of such a sniper in this case?

Achieving the goal of a fight does not testify to victory (Kotarbiński, 1975), although as a success it plays a very important role in the path to victory. When achieving a goal, we can say that we are successful, but victory defies individual acts. It is a dynamic phenomenon, a state that should be constantly pursued, achieving successive goals, that is, ensuring success. Victory is a state in which the one who won has become independent of the activity of the opposing party, and above all, has reached the conditions in which he made the subsequent goal of the fight independent of further actions of the opponent and maintained the ability to conduct his own actions in achieving later combat goals or activated the apparatus (system), the functioning of which will automatically ensure the achievement of later personal goals. From the perspective of the general theory of combat, we can say that the one who retained the possibility of pursuing his battle goal (later) was victorious, achieving this fight goal is independent of the opponent's actions, and reaching the goal of the fight

depends on the victorious actions. In addition, the victor may also achieve the goal of battle by automatically launching a specific apparatus enabled to achieve this objective.

An analysis of the above determinants of victory indicates that we must consider this concept as a dynamic phenomenon consisting in striving to achieve the desired state of affairs (environment) or turning on the automatic dynamics of phenomena leading us to these states, while becoming independent of the opposite party. If it is dynamic, then it can take various forms depending on the interpretation of the environment in which we are. On the one hand, it can take on the dimension of achieving the dream state, while on the other hand, it can only be a satisfying or acceptable state. Often, as shown by the practice of modern operations, it takes the form of a desired state expressed in planning documents and an acceptable state that finishes the final phase of the operation - the so-called transition phase.

## 5. Conclusion

The main assumptions of the general theory are laid out in a booklet entitled *Z zagadnień ogólnej teorii walki* (The Issues of General Fighting Theory) (Kotarbiński, 1938a). In 1968, the author wrote that the existence of a general theory of struggle can be compared to living in the embryonic stage, in the stage of preparation, as it were, to come into the world (Kotarbiński, 1975). Despite the fact that this theory has existed for about 100 years, its achievements boil down to the researchers noticing some general issues that still require proper formulation and ordering, and thus develop them into a mature form (Delorme, 1974). This article serves this purpose.

Agonistics is a relatively young and rather forgotten scientific specialty. Refreshing its content shows that as a theory, it has an inspirational methodology and a small but exceptionally precisely designed set of concepts that creates the subject of research. In agonistics, struggle is a series of actions, where we can only talk about action in the context of purposeful human behavior. Only people work as opposed to bands, machines, etc. that function. On the other hand, the purposefulness of the action is conditioned by the act of making a decision. The combination of activities creates a structure shaped intentionally, consciously, in accordance with the purpose adopted by someone (Delorme, 1974). Such a combination of actions as a certain system of actions, having the same intention and one intended effect, Znamierowski calls a function system. The decisive role in this system is fulfilled by the intention of the perpetrator and the realization of this intent, which is the pursuit of the subsequent goals of the final result, which we can call a victory.

The outline of the two concepts of general combat theory does not exhaust the problems of the language area of this theory and, of course, does not create a logical-deductive system characteristic of mature science. At this point, we come to one of the fundamental questions that stand before the theory, that is, questions about the relationship between these concepts, that is, the general law of combat theory. This topic, however, is material for a completely different article, expanding the conceptual resource and explaining the relationships that follow in the fight.

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