



Research Note

An Understanding of Body-Mind Relation Based on Eastern Movement Disciplines and Its Implication in Physical Education

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The body-mind relation has been discussed for centuries in the West. This paper explores the body-mind relation through the conceptual frameworks of Eastern Dao and Yin-Yang theories in order to seek a fuller understanding of holistic approaches to body-mind relations from the Eastern perspective. It argues that the body-mind is a holistic unity. Fundamental Eastern philosophical concepts, including Dao, Qi, and Yin-Yang, were discussed for the sake of assisting the understanding of holism. It seems that the integration of Eastern movement disciplines such as Eastern martial arts (e.g., Karate, Tai Chi) and Eastern meditation practices (e.g., Yoga and Qi Gong) in physical education would benefit Westerners' understanding of body-mind wholeness.

Dans les pays occidentaux, la relation corps-esprit alimente la discussion depuis plusieurs siècles. Cette étude examine la relation corps-esprit en passant par les cadres conceptuels des théories orientales du Dao et du Yin-Yang pour expliquer les approches holistiques face à la relation corps-esprit dans une perspective orientale. Le document explique que le corps-esprit constitue une unité holistique. On s'est penché sur les concepts philosophiques occidentaux de base, y compris le Dao, le Qi et le Yin-Yang, pour faire la lumière sur le holisme. Il semblerait que l'intégration de disciplines orientales axées sur le mouvement comme les arts martiaux (p. ex., le karaté et le tai-chi) et les pratiques de méditation orientales (comme le yoga et le qi gong) en éducation physique aiderait les Occidentaux à mieux saisir le concept d'intégralité corps-esprit.

As an educated Eastern professional, it is strange to encounter the centuries-long discussion of body-mind relation in the West, not only because it is not a big issue in the East, but also I, as well as many Easterners, feel that it is difficult to explain the body-mind relation since we do not feel body-mind separation as many Westerners do. I have been educated and have been teaching in the West for over 6 years. I gradually understand why Westerners interrogate body-mind relation. I also see that many Westerners are running on the road with a walkman and working out in the fitness room with newspapers, music, or TV. To me, their body and mind are doing different things. They cannot hear their breathing or listen to their bodies.

My Western students feel that "Mr. Lu is not teaching physical activities" when I am teaching them Eastern movement disciplines (Eastern martial arts and meditations). Eastern movement disciplines are not physical activities, but rather, are philosophical,

educational, and health activities. To Easterners, body is in mind and mind is in body, just like the Yin-Yang diagram.

I am glad to have this opportunity to share some Eastern thought with respect to body-mind relation, which may facilitate a deeper understanding of this old issue, bridge the gap between the East and the West, and enrich both theories and practice in physical education and other related areas.

The relationship between body and mind has been studied in a variety of academic as well as other professional domains (Desmond, 2000; Dree, 1999; Kleinman, 1986; Nuland, 2001; Pfister, 1995; Scott, 2000; Siegel, 2001). In particular, the body-mind dualism and its binary model of thinking have dominated the world of modern philosophy and science (Nagatomo & Leisman, 1996). There has also been growing interest in this body-mind inquiry using Eastern thought (Brown & Johnson, 2000; Charles, 2001; Clarke, 1997; Hanna, 1994; Kohn, 2001; Nagatomo & Leisman, 1996; Siderits, 2001; Tu, 2000; Ziporyn, 2000). The tendency to separate body and mind in the Western world has created problems and unhealthy practices (Kleinman, 2002). Scholars have attempted to ease the gap between body and mind by drawing on Eastern philosophy (Harman, 1986).

Park (1996) suggests that the meaning of non-duality cannot finally be acquired by objective analysis alone, but only by the existential encounter with non-duality as a living reality. He indicates that the inwardness and oneness of oriental spirituality must be penetrated in order to fully capture the meaning of non-duality and its implications. This paper discusses the body-mind relation based on Eastern movements as a form of Eastern philosophy and the implications for physical education.

Eastern Philosophy in Relation to Body-Mind

Dao theory

Prior to the origin of all modern religions, including Daoism (Taoism), Dao (Tao) is one of the oldest philosophical concepts in the East. It is frequently employed in Buddhism, Confucianism, and especially, in Daoism. As one of the most eminent intellectuals in the East and the primary founder of Daoism, Lao Zi (Lao Tzu or Lao Tse) explains that the Dao gives birth to Yin-Yang and eventually to everything in the universe. The Dao is independent of human's will and decides everything fundamentally. He poetically wrote:

Something, in veiled creature, came to be,
Before the earth was formed, or heaven.
In the silence, apart, alone,
It changes not, is ever present, never failing.
Think of it as Mother of everything.

For me it is Nameless.
But call it Dao.
Needing a title, a name,
I call it Great.
Being Great, it is boundless.
It flows; it reaches far,
Then flowing, it returns...

Human obeys the Earth;
Earth obeys heaven;
Heaven obeys the Dao;
Dao is obedient to its own nature.
(Lao Tse, 1991, p. 53-55)

Dao might be deemed as the concept that facilitates the explanation of the origin or the general law of the universe. Nothing can be bigger or smaller than Dao because it has no outside and inside. One who meets Dao may find that it has no front; one who follows it may see that it has no rear (Jou, 1981). Lao Zi advises us to use internal sense organs to attain knowledge and understand the Dao:

Without going out of your door,
You can know the ways of the world.
Without peeping through your window,
You can see the Dao of Heaven.
The further you go,
The less you know.
(Lao Tse, 1991, p. 110)

It is through the internal body that one can understand the Dao and life. The Dao exists in everyone's body as well as in the universe. Lao Zi invites us to question ourselves:

Can you keep body and mind at one with Dao?
Can you concentrate on qi and achieve softness to make yourself like a supple newborn baby?
(Lao Tse 1991, p. 21)

Qi (or *chi*) is a common notion in the East, especially in Asia. Ancient Chinese believe that Qi is the fundamental substance that constructs everything in the universe (Marital Art Administration Center of State Department of Physical Activity, Sport, and Recreation, 1998). It refers to the air, vital energy, or spirit depending upon situations applied.

Huang Di Nei Jing (HDNJ), written approximately 4700 years ago, is regarded as the oldest as well as the greatest, Chinese well-being and medical masterpiece. It is still esteemed as the highest authority in traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) theory and well-being practice (Wang & Wu, 1932). According to HDNJ, the fundamental cause of disease is the violation of the Dao. Therefore, treatment requires that one complies with the Dao and balances the Yin-Yang. The role of TCM and Eastern movement disciplines is destined to circularize, adjust, and balance Yin Qi and Yang Qi. Eastern movement disciplines can actively lead practitioners to a simple, natural, and healthy way of life—oneness, or the oneness—a harmony among all Yin-Yang relations (Sun, 1996). This holistic practice can activate one's maximum potential against diseases as well as other negative factors. It has to be achieved through the understanding of oneness that is articulated in Dao theory and practice. The development of Eastern movement disciplines originates and progresses under the influence of nature.

Cohn (1993) suggests that Eastern movement disciplines are among the first active step taken toward the Dao. Eastern movement disciplines aim to:

make the body healthy, to extend its life span, and to open it up to free flow of Tao. The Tao in its tangible form on earth is cosmic energy or *chi* [qi], a term hard to define and for which 'energy' is no more than a crude approximation. *Chi* [qi] is the vital power of the Tao at work in the world—in nature, in society, in the human body. (p. 133)

Yin-Yang theory

Yin-Yang theory is a philosophy that interprets the law of the unity of Yin-Yang. This theory has played an essential role in unraveling an Eastern understanding of nature, life, and oneness (non-dualism). The Yin and Yang concepts, as well as the Tai Chi circular diagram (see Figure 1), were designed by Fu Xi about 6000-7000 years ago. Yin-Yang theory, working with other theories, has tremendously influenced almost all aspects of Chinese and East Asian culture, including Eastern martial arts and meditations (Marital Art Administrative Center of State Department of Physical Activity, Sport, and Recreation, 1998).

Yin-Yang theory indicates that Yin and Yang exists in everything in the world. In other words, everything in the world can be described, explained, and further divided into the Yin-Yang characteristics as illustrated by the interdependent dialectics such as

mind-body, black-white, stillness-movement, coldness-warmth, inward-outward, downward-upward, backward-forward, closeness-openness, dysfunction-function, earth-heaven, inside-outside, slowness-quickness, moon-sun, and female-male.

Furthermore, the classification of Yin-Yang theory is relative rather than absolute. There is Yin in Yang and Yang in Yin. For example, the female is a type of Yin. Yet, her left side, surface (skin), and upper body are all Yang. The Tai Chi circular diagram precisely illustrates that there is a white eye (Yang) in the black fish (Yin) and a black eye (Yin) in the white fish (Yang).

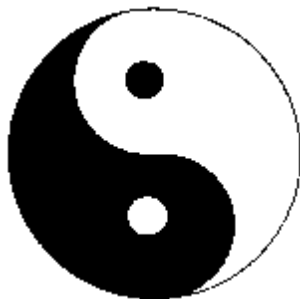


Figure 1. Tai Chi Yin-Yang symbol

The other thing that should be noticed is that to name anything on the Yang side must be based on its opposite side. For instance, naming *left side* (Yang) is based on *right* (Yin) and *male* (Yang) is based on *female* (Yin), and so on. Otherwise, we may refute that the left side as well as the right side in a female's body would be both Yin contradictorily. The Yin and Yang as a pair of mutually complementary forces act continuously without cessation.

There are at least two fundamentals in Yin-Yang theory, opposition and interdependence (Martial Art Administrative Center of State Department of Physical Activity, Sport, and Recreation, 1998).

Opposition. The Yin-Yang theory implies that the two opposite sides exist in everything in the world, such as body-mind, heaven-earth, fire-water, hot-cold, and male-female, and so forth. They restrain and oppose each other. For example, warmth disperses coolness and coldness reduces hotness to allow things including human body and mind to maintain a relative and dynamic balance. An intervention of this balanced relationship of Yin and Yang would result in diseases and death.

Interdependence. Yin and Yang are not only opposite but also interdependent. The interdependence here means the existence of one side (Yin or Yang) relies on its opposite side. One side could not live alone without its opposite side. There will be no Yin if Yang disappears, and vice versa. Namely, there would be no left side without right side; there would be no mind without body. This relationship is also called *co-root* in Chinese culture. Yin and Yang are rooted in each other to nourish, assist, and benefit each other. The co-existence of Yin and Yang brings their function into a full play.

One of the general misapprehensions that the occidental may encounter is the tendency to identify this Yin-Yang symbol dualistically. Yang is only the opposite of Yin; and vice versa. As long as we separate this *oneness* into two, we will miss the fundamental meaning in oriental culture. All things have their complementary part. It is only in the human mind that things are separated into opposites per se. The male is not just the opposite of the female. They are complementary and interdependent of each other. We cannot survive without either of them. By the same token, the mind is the complement of the body. Without the body, how on earth do we know there is mind, or vice versa? The Yin-Yang theory in ancient Chinese philosophy is employed to explain the law of change

in nature, the law of the unity of opposites, and certainly the law of harmonized body-mind oneness in the case of body as Yang and mind as Yin.

East Meets West in Body-Mind Relation and Its implications for Physical Education

J. F. Williams is credited with coining the term physical education a education *through* the physical (Metheny, 1954). As opposed to a more narrow-envisioned phrase: education *of* the physical, Williams implies that physical education curriculum involves educating the total person. Coville (1983) finds that Eastern movement disciplines are outstanding examples of education *through* the physical. Moreover, physical education has begun to borrow from the method and content of the Eastern movement disciplines that aim for the positive realization of the body's capacities for a rich experience (North, 1977). True knowledge cannot be obtained through theoretical reasoning or the brain alone; rather, learning must engage the body— resulting in body/mind unity (Yuasa, 1987).

Abernathy (1995) comments that ancient Eastern cultures view nature as a source of inspiration, or a model of being. Forster (1986) observes that the nature of Eastern movement disciplines is the emphasis on Dao. In Eastern culture, what really matters in life is the way of achieving a goal and not the goal itself (Yang, 1996). As revealed by Becker (1982) and Hyams (1979), most martial arts end with the suffix “Do” (Dao). Here it refers to the philosophical concept of Dao in Eastern martial arts. Dao literally in Chinese means “path, road, or way”. Dao can be understood as a path toward enlightenment or finding truth. This is the path that the martial artist strives to walk. Through this walk (practice), self-actualization, moral, and philosophical values will be fostered.

Scholars such as Hanna and Kleinman have been inspired by Eastern movement disciplines. They passionately promote somatics that focuses on body-mind oneness in the area of physical education and sport. Hanna (1986) asserts:

[r]ather than being held down by the crippling structures of an either/or, black and white, mind/body schism, the Asians have always seen shades of gray between mind and body. This is to say that the Asian viewpoint wisely and correctly sees the human being as single unity with many gradations, whereas the Western viewpoint has seen the human as a phantasmagoria of matter and spirit with no real connection. The Asians have been blessed with a unitary, holistic conception of human nature; the occidentals have been cursed with a Hellenic-Christian conception of human nature. The former sees the human as an integrated unity, the latter as a disintegrated duality. (p. 180)

Hanna (1986) explains that Eastern movement disciplines are a special gift to Western culture because Eastern movement disciplines reinstate to human beings their depth. He continues,

[t]he ethics and science of self-responsibility combine with the religious and martial disciplines of Asia to teach us that our physical well-being and our emotional and intellectual well-being are far more in our own hands than our medical and therapeutic and academic traditions might wish us believe. (p. 180)

He warns that the transformation will not be effortless. “After spending thousands of years to hop around on one leg, it feels awkward and unnatural to walk on two” (Hanna, 1970, p. 207).

Brunner (1986) states that Western cultural beliefs shape our experiences and cause us to place limitations on ourselves. However, the wholeness of the Eastern concepts and attitudes has begun to draw the attention of Western practitioners. Many of us can catch a glimpse of ourselves in Eastern ideas and practices. Brunner suggests that a holistic paradigm for physical education must borrow movement forms, images, experiences, and new techniques from the East. He explains,

Eastern concepts and attitudes toward the moving self shape an experience of wholeness that Westerners are beginning to value and to incorporate into their lives. For many of us who shared the Eastern approach of moving with its natural flow of energy and in harmony with the universe, meeting the East meant waking up as we recognized ourselves in their ideas and their ideas in us. Herein lies the confluence. A wholistic 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. (1986, p. 171)

Hanh (1988) also warns that, for some Westerners, to practice Eastern movement disciplines, especially yoga and Qi Gong, is to separate oneself from the world of thoughts and feelings and go to a kind of pure state where the mind contemplates itself and becomes *true mind*. This misrepresents the practice of Eastern movement disciplines because mind is not separate from the world of thoughts and feelings. Rather, “[o]ne is all, all is one” (Hanh, 1988, p. 66). Moreover, Eastern concepts of body-mind unity may be exemplified in almost all of life’s activities. “It is especially apparent in the Eastern movement forms, the martial arts, yoga, and dance” (Kleinman, 2002, p. 4). Kleinman believes that Eastern cultures display an attitude towards the artistic and aesthetic that permeates one’s entire life. Therefore, art becomes a part of every thing human does—life itself becomes artistic. Kleinman (2002) states:

[t]here is much Western educators can learn from such an approach. It enables us to move beyond the theoretical...Eastern techniques and practices can help us become reacquainted with the other dimension of existence and reality, which are just as important. (p. 4)

Conclusion

The body-mind relation has been discussed for centuries in the West. There is still much to be explored in the areas of Eastern movement disciplines for the sake of overcoming the body-mind dichotomy. Furthermore, Eastern movement disciplines, in the exploration of body-mind relation, can function as the bridge, between the East and the West, and may open up a *third space* that Homi Bhabha (1994) proposes. There are tremendous benefits of integrating Eastern philosophy and movement disciplines such as Zen, Qi Gong, Yoga, Tai Chi, and other martial arts into Western health, physical education, and sport. This East-West integration would help to maintain a reciprocal dialogue between the East and the West. In so doing, cross-cultural seeds are planted in order to cultivate a more hybridized and holistic view, and eventually a new understanding of body-mind in which physical education will find fertile ground to take root and thrive in the shared horizons (MacPherson, 2001; Smith, 2002).

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