

## **Somapower and microphysics of emancipation: toward a culture of liberation**

In 1999, the Chinese Communist Government started a crackdown on Falun Gong, a cross between a religious sect and a corporeal practices healing movement. What was characteristic of Falun Gong was that the movement never questioned existing power, presenting itself instead as promoting well-being through bodily practices and spiritual meditations. Such movements have been by no means specific to the East only. Similar tendencies have been easily observable also in the West. They become popular with the oppressed, giving them a chance to convert their lives and achieve some level of independence from their oppressors or at least an illusion of it. In my research project, I will focus on how such movements can be conceptualized in the humanities and social sciences. The difficulty is that they are located at the intersection of two important, but never adequately researched, theoretical fields: the body as a vehicle of social critique and the relation between everydayness and politics. I would like to address these two issues by discussing the debates on them unfolding in the contemporary social sciences and humanities. This will enable me to identify the existing gaps and suggest how they could be bridged. My main argument is that we need an adequate concept of the relations between the body and power, which can emerge from the pragmatist tradition, developed and improved in this respect by Richard Shusterman's neo-pragmatism. I will concentrate on the following detailed questions:

- 1) The relationships between politics and everyday life, where a main concept is *critique from everyday life*. It means that people criticize not big ideologies or political programs but rather how they function in everyday life. In terms of Luc Boltanski's sociological theory they do an "existential test" of social reality. If a result is negative, then such feeling is a basis for a social activity directed toward a change.
- 2) The possibility of emancipation in everyday life. In this aspect of my research project I refer to Michel Foucault's concept of microphysics of power. I think however that he did not appreciate the other side of social equation and I propose to introduce a notion of *microphysics of emancipation* which denotes the actions in everyday life directed toward the transformation of the cultural status of an individual. Such "politics of small things" does not change a political shape of society but it can lead to gradual changes in mentality and in consequences to radical political transformation.
- 3) The relationships between the body and power in the context of possibilities of bodily emancipatory practices. I refer here again to Michel Foucault's theory of biopower and docile bodies. My suggestion is that he overlooked an emancipatory potential of corporeality. Therefore, in this part of the project I discuss Richard Shusterman's idea of somaesthetics that is bodily practices aimed at amelioration of human existence by the improvement of bodily capacities from cognitive function through emotions to social functioning. Drawing on this theory I introduce the notion of *somapower* that is bodily practices directed at emancipation. I will use this notion to investigate how in various cultures and social movements this aim has been achieved.

In the concluding stage of my research I aim to reflect on emancipation in everyday life understood as a cultural experience which precedes any political movement oriented at the transformation of social and political relations. I will show how microphysics of emancipation can emerge from everyday cultural practices, especially corporeal performs and in turn how they would transform cultural landscape of a society which can lead to political changes in the direction of liberation