

Heda Festini*

Ethics and sport**

ABSTRACT

The original meaning of the term 'sport', Olympism and elite sports is retrieved (An analytic and Continental approach, McNamee,2008) and in Croatia V. Janković,1967.

The crisis of sports is due to problems of boundaries, sports are no longer autonomous, and they are not healthy. Crumbling sports ethics is conditioned by the mercilessness of economic markets.

Solutions:

- a call for an alignment of moral norms in all sectors of society
- the regulation of free economic markets is a condition for the possibility of sports ' becoming recreational, that is, for sports to help gain physical strength and psychic energy, rather than producing a dangerous mass hysteria.

Key words: Olympism, elitism, crisis of morals, chaotic market.

Naturally, these issues are of interest not only in everyday life and various instances but to the philosophy, as well because they enter the core of its current most significant issue, which is covered by ethics, and they date to the 1970s.

From the etymological aspect, the term 'sport' has the meaning of a free time activity, because as early as in the Middle Ages the English language use the abbreviation of 'desport' or 'disport' which originates from the Old French 'desporter' which literally meant – to move from work.

* Correspondence address: Heda Festini, Ph.D., Tizianova 35, 51000 Rijeka, heda.festini@ri.t-com.hr.

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It is considered that this word means recreation and entertainment with the purpose of finding pleasure, which stimulates generosity.¹

There are two theoretical approaches to the issue. One finds its origin in Greek and Roman history of athletics, and the other the educational sport in Great Britain, so today we clearly differentiate between the analytical and the continental approach.

The analysts have created the conceptual apparatus in that field, which precedes the empirical research. Both Plato and Aristotle required the same, and it has taken the analytical philosophy of our times approximately twenty years to make clear that. A particular polemic was provoked by the Wittgenstein's conception on games which was attempted to be completely devaluated by B. Suit in 1967.²

The real sports research started in 1972 within the "American Philosophical Association" APA, and the credit goes to Warren Fraleigh and Paul Weiss (1969) since when the activity of both the Association and the journal in that line of activity becomes more intense.³

A society for sports science was established in Germany in 1970, in Japan in 1978, in England and Canada in 2002. Sports topics have been covered in their languages within the philosophy of education in Germany, Japan, England, Check Republic, Hungary and Poland and in 2008 also in Slovenia. In 1967 a book on that problem by a Zadar pedagogue V. Janković. In the countries of Soviet influence, that issue appears as the philosophy of physical culture.

We can say that the philosophy of sport became an important discipline in philosophy, naturally, primarily in the USA.

It should be emphasized that since 1990 the ethics of sports in the philosophy of sports has become a dominant topic, but it was also initiated by Fraleigh (1984) by stating the connection of competitor's and coach's obligations. The issue of fair play in the time of spreading of the applied ethics has had a great influence in Great Britain which has increased the importance of ethics in sport. McNamee (2007) believed that 1994 was the year of turning point in the ethics of sport under the influ-

¹ The Concept of a Sport, Webster Dictionary on Line s.v. "sport", <http://www.merriam-webster.com>, last accessed September 13, 2008. The Croatian uses both English and German loan-words. The English loan-word is more justified because it was first used in England and France.

² It is well known that Wittgenstein explains forming of games as 'family resemblance' but this would require a separate article.

³ Warren Fraleigh is the author of *A philosophic Inquiry* which marks the beginning of increased activity in the Association in that respect. Since 1973 regular assemblies take place annually, and since 1974 Journal for the Philosophy of sport is published. From 1988 until 1995 the best articles on the issue of sport are collectively published. Information on that R. Scott Kretchmar, *Practical Philosophy of Sport*, Human Kinetics Pub. 1. ed. 1994; M. McNamee, "Sport, Ethics and Philosophy, Context History, Prospects", *Sport, Ethics and Philosophy*, Vol. 1, No. 1, April 2007.

ence of MacIntyre's work **After Virtue**, particularly regarding fair play. That was the period of spreading of the applied ethics so it was natural that, together with J. Pery, he published *Ethics and Sport* (1998), a work of great influence in Great Britain. However, these issues were not raised in some empty space, but they were related to the philosophy of body, action, epistemology, economy and politics, and even ontology. In this sense, a quarterly publishing of the mentioned American journal was announced so McNamee declared that in 2008 he would publish an article regarding that topic, and we have a similar citation for 2009 (Eichberg). It is clear that the interest for that issue does not decrease which is confirmed by the accepted application for The World Congress of Philosophy (2008, July-September, Seoul) in the contingent of American lectures by Heather Read entitled "Olympic Epistemology: the Athletic Roots of Philosophical Reasoning".

The continental philosophy of sport has had the greatest development within pedagogy, which is also our case.

V. Janković set the foundation with his book for a new pedagogical branch, the pedagogy of free time. He primarily states that free time is a phenomenon of high work productivity, but which immediately created two opposite possibilities – deepening of human alienation or removal from it.⁴ Furthermore, he believed that this phenomenon attracted great attention, and it was first in that sense noticed by K. Marx. Here it was noticed by a pedagogue Poljak and Janković himself in 1955 and 1966 which reflected on introducing extracurricular activities in school and organizing a section of free time pedagogy in 1963 in order to initiate the cultured way of spending free time (579).

Janković uses sociological approaches of his time for the issue so at first he dedicates his attention to Marx's approach. He claims that Marx considered work inalienable and creative, so as much as it is creative in leisure, it is free outside leisure time. Janković divided sociological approaches in five lines and he leaned towards the one by J. Dumazdier and R. Supek. He believes that the leisure time has three functions (Dumazdier): relaxation, fun, and personality development. Leisure in itself contains a great potential which he makes explicit through six factors which should, in fact, be ensured institutionally (580). Leisure affects: 1) health and correct physical development, 2) intellectual education, 3) art education, 4) work and technical education, 5) social and moral aspect of pedagogical practice, 6) socialization of a person so he concludes that leisure is a predominantly pedagogical, category.⁵

⁴ See H. Festini, "Dr. Janković: Slobodno vrijeme u suvremenoj pedagoškoj teoriji i praksi", *Pedagoško-književni zbor*, Zagreb, 1967", *Zadarska revija*, 16/1967, No. 6, p. 578.

⁵ V. Janković, op. cit., pp. 36-37.

In his sixth chapter, the author explains nine principles of spending of leisure time, among which we particularly emphasize the principle of amateurism,⁶ because it also mentions sport as an important medium of spending leisure time. With this purpose Janković particularly emphasized the need of building appropriate facilities for spending of leisure time without which the antisocial disturbances are normal and unavoidable. He particularly emphasizes the urgency of such care because without a working week becomes a burden and Sunday the most boring day of the week (580).

It is a pity that Janković, despite sufficient indicators, did not unambiguously link sport and leisure time and their define them as recreation, i.e. culture and physical culture in the sense of physical strengthening and stimulating the replenishment of psychological reserves which would result in strengthening of good characteristics or appearance of new ones. Those characteristics should be recognized, and he sensed how – through sociological, psychological and pedagogical research of leisure time. In order to understand that nowadays it has become unavoidable, it is sufficient to follow the empty ways of spending leisure time. There are many example of people spending their time shallowly, women, men or entire families: women follow various radio and TV shows or tabloids which deal with ephemeral events of various stars, giving life advice which have the flavor of previous centuries, which is also done by men who indulge in passion embodied in football and follow shows related to it, and whole families watch trivial shows such as "Big Brother", "Operation Triumph", etc. or going to shopping mall where they waste most of their weekends.

When analytical philosophers examined the categorization of terms used in this area, the difference between Olympism and elitism emerged. Olympism has from its beginning been dedicated to health, unselfish participation in games (P. de Coubertin) which includes fair play, and the main goal was to be the best in the community. The motto of today's elite sport is no longer that it is important to participate but that it is important to win so the main term of elitism is uncompromised fight to be efficient at all costs, even at the cost of health (which is indicated through doping, extreme training which reaches human limits in approximately 20 sports). It has become obvious that earlier sports parameters – joy, health, cultural value, morality, value of social community – particularly health and ethical values, were becoming problematic (Hoberman, 1992). Breivik established (1973, 1987) that when human abilities reach their limits, health problems increase algorithmically.⁷ 19th century British sport was of the opinion that sport

⁶ H. Festini, op. cit., p. 579

⁷ Filled with data R.S.Kretchmar, *Practical Philosophy of Sport* 1994, op. cit., p. 261; G. Breivik, *Limits to Growth in Elite Sport – Some Ethical Considerations*, The PAIDEIA Archive. Available online at <http://www.bu.edu/wcp/Papers/Sport/SporBrei.htm>, last accessed February 12, 2008; M. McNamee, "Sport, Ethics and Philosophy, Context, History, Prospects", op. cit., pp. 1-4.

helps the development of person not only physically, but also strengthens its moral character and entices virtue. Today the ultimate utilitarianism has changed all that but the question that is imposed is what is the elite sport turning into if its aim is not development of virtues. It is obviously degraded to mere fun. According to Breivik many studies have shown that sport is not an autonomous institution, and therefore it is not a healthy organization. It is particularly obvious at the elite level because it has been used by various social institutions, such as the market, business, media and even education and politics (Morgan, 1994). Modern elite sport depends on the entire system which includes the athlete, coach, physician, whole personnel supported by the scientific technology, leaders, organizations, sponsors, marketing, media people, journalists, audience, "fans". Breivik interestingly states that on all fields turned towards the athlete there is a battle, which means that if success is desired, it should not be focused on the athlete. That is why he or she is less and less able to control his or her life and often becomes only a passive observer of his or her own career.

Just like the athlete is the pawn in such apparatus, the sport itself is manipulated – inequality among sports is supported, for example football is given preferential treatment (because of its huge manipulative power), there is no equality in athletics because the most complex and the most difficult discipline – decathlon is depreciated (the reason is the same, it does not have the manipulative strength to attract masses because its length leads to boredom).

That is why it is not strange that at the 1996 Olympics in Atlanta there were rumors that Coca-cola and CNN, whose headquarters in Atlanta, won and not sport itself.

The basic, deepest and most painful difference between past Olympism and today's elitism, is the fact that the barbarism has increased worldwide. During Olympics in ancient Greece wars were prohibited, and during the last 2008 Olympics there were undisturbed wars fought between both small and great peoples who went back to barbarism with the impertinent wish of achieving economic and political power, and some of them have, as we know, given it ill-omened name – imperialism.

Even more tragically, violent antagonism is very much present in non-elite sport, sport which is needed in schools. Children are forced to achieve maximum results, motivated to hate the opponent. So it should not be unusual that fans, which are recruited from these groups, lose all control at important competitions, so they turn into a mass of criminals and faithful Nazi followers. There have been too many examples from football fields to give examples.

So it is not surprising that in sport, as everywhere else, there is a moral crisis, which is indicated by the title of the newest McNamee's *Sports, Virtues, Morality Plays*

(2008). The attempts started in 1989 (Loland) to point out that the liberal heritage of sport does not completely correspond to verified norm and rules and that it should be improved. Breivik thought that modern elite sport should be considered from the aspect of the idea on systematic development which is the basis of the need for a new elite which would establish the level of ethical tolerance in elite sport. He would solve the obvious moral failure of the elite through the development of divided or mutual ethics in life segments. It can be questioned if it is possible to develop a special morality in the elite sport through a combination of various influence factors, including the media and mass hysteria. Sports theoreticians would respond that it is highly unlikely, of course, if morality is understood in a standard way, as a field regulated human interaction and obligations towards others. It seems that the discussion on ethics in the zone of tolerance is imposed. And as for reaching the limits of human abilities, it is thought that this would lead to establishment of new sports, i.e. redirections. That would signify that if the same living conditions remain, the same degradation of sport would be enabled.

Naturally, many remarks of the stated theoreticians can be accepted. One should primarily start from the holistic relation of body and soul⁸ and all other relevant consideration can be extended from that ontological presumption. Without pretensions to be disciplinary or topically extensive, we can suggest several warnings.

One can wonder to whom an appeal to adhere to ethical values in sport can be addressed. If the answer is social community, new questions arise: who can do something about that and what, and finally, what community is it? Who forms it?! If the answer is that those are sports-economic instances, another question is immediately raised: who caress for ethical values when millions are in question for engagement of some athletes (engagement of their legs, arms, etc.? If the answer is that it is the state, the question is which state – the one that agrees with all the forces of economic liberalism in the most negative sense (J. Dewey thought of a completely dif-

⁸ Holism in the mind-body relation should refer to interconnectivity of body and mind. However, it is not about the oneway reductionism nor the understanding of the body as the sum of its parts. It is about physical, chemical and physiological processes of the body as one functional level and psychical as another level. These are two level of development, and the physical one is, definitely, original. The interconnection consists of partially mutual influences, partly from the stronger influence of material substrate (some traffic accidents have resulted in completely lost mental functions due to the damages of some parts of the brain) or under the influence of psychical processes (some emotions can cause physical illness). So the complete reduction to either only body or only spirit is not. Putnam has at the time supported computational functionalism (materialistic identity theory), but in 1988 he refuted it (*Representation and Reality*), many famous philosophers are holists, such as Quine, Davidson, Dennett, but new holism, holomaterial holism (higher levels develop from lower) is much more widespread today. no novi holizam, holomaterijalistički holizam (više razine su nastale iz niže) (M. A. Kozlev, 1999, uploaded, <http://www.kheper.net/topics/worldviews/holism.html> last accessed June 9, 2008, p. 3, also Cara Katrina *On the Continuum of Self– Matter and Mind*, J. L. Wells, uploaded, <http://www.bellaonline.com/articles/art43437.asp>, last accessed June 9, 2008, pp. 1-2). The role of sport is a very good example of the most productive holism, it indicates to interaction of the physical and psychical.

ferent new liberalism)⁹ or is that a state which is trying to introduced some kind of order into the liberal market because in that way, eo ipso, it would prevent sport from being on the free market.

Moral behavior is not simply given by nature, neither is it determined in a specific way by some internal or external elements. In order to even enable moral behavior, some preconditions need to be met (a regulated economic market is a precondition). In those cases, possibilities open for both groups and individuals to learn moral behavior (for example the first level of learning is the imitation of the persons close to oneself), to develop through self-education and be persistent in it through forming habit. If the market does not balance itself in some way, but it remains free, and that is contained in its motto – the law of supply and demand- then the relation, which is in itself chaotic and exposed to various coincidences, and today it is in the service of perfidious calculations of particular groups, which shamelessly manipulate it in this way, and this decreases the possibility of a successful battle moral relations in all fields, including sport.

If we accept that it is obvious that ethical requirements on from the chaotic market of sports communities and individuals depend on so-called free market which does not know ethics par excellence, the only way out is confronting that uncompromising economic market, the destroyer of entire communities and usurper of unconditional authority over sport.

The only answer to the question *who can do that* is (at least for now) the community, i.e. the state, or in other words, state capitalism – however, Lenin once stated that the state capitalism is the entrance to socialism!

It is clear that advantages and disadvantages of capitalism and socialism should be reconsidered, which is, naturally, primarily a theoretical interdisciplinary problem of various sciences, such as education, sociology, anthropology, psychology, pedagogy, etc.

⁹ New liberalism, which has until recently been devoutly mentioned, is actually in its characteristics early liberalism which was criticized by T. H. Green (1886) i H. Kelsen (1933), i.e. the violent liberalism of capitalism which has reappeared today with its global pretensions. In his booklet *Liberalism and Action*, Dewey (1935) answered question of that time but of our time, as well. A new liberalism should primarily deal with education, which affects the habits of mind and character and moral patterns (see H. Festini "Pogovor" in: J. Dewey, *Liberalizam i društvena akcija*, KruZak, Zagreb, 2004, o. 95). That is why the intelligence is the main force in resolving conflicts in relationships between individuals, society, institutions and a state (96). Dewey's book states that the task of the intelligence is to motivate the positive actualization of the ideas of democracy and liberalism (97).