

SPORTSPERSON'S HEALTH AS A PSYCHOLOGICAL PROBLEM

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Abstract: Modern education cultivates society and every single person in it through knowledge not only for the wide world/the universe but also for the body and human's health. This is made possible thanks to the continuous, permanent/incessant education of the specialist – the governing body of the **Panepropsky University "APEIRON"** understands that perfectly well. The endless realm of knowledge itself makes us people of knowledge, and every sportsperson in particular – a **man of knowledge** – a "knowman". Only with the help of this force can we overcome the "contamination" of our life, starting with Nature and reaching the body and soul.

We need one **holistic approach** for the study of human as a complex system of hydrosphere, biosphere, atmosphere, lithosphere, ionosphere, nanosphere and noosphere. Knowing this, it is especially important to know the very complicated psycho-somatic human structure - especially in the world of physical education and sports. This means, we have to understand the **main dualisms** of existence - the two main origins of our life (masculinity-femininity, subject-object, nature-culture, mystics-science, human-God). They are the major bearers of **spiritual and material foundations** of the sportsperson's health.

Key words: knowledge; physical education, sport and health; holistic approach; dualisms in the life of the personality.

Knowledge has organizing power. It is literally healing.

Knowledge affects the body and creates health.

Deepak Chopra

Please, accept my congratulations on the occasion of this scientific forum as traditionally held and where the Renaissance point of view towards the world is established – the infinity of knowledge about the inseparable unity and commitment of human and nature.

The experts, who are here today, have perfected themselves in their professional pathways thanks to the evolution of the society, of the knowledge, of the time, in which we live. Knowledge is out light reflected in the sunny smiles of the people, with whom we communicate, to whom our work is dedicated. More the knowledge is, more attractive our purposes on earth are – the horizons in front of us; more the knowledge is – surer the achievement of star heights is (Pythagoras called man "a walking star"); the new knowledge mastered is often like a mystery, which has created the nanotechnology; knowledge has allowed us even to peer into the space and to wander into unknown areas – our Noosphere has become "the mind-achievable nature of reality, of the virtual reality as a fruit of the endless expansion of the concepts" (wrote I. Kant in "For the Pure Reason"). Human knowledge today reflects the objectively existing "coloured" aura of human presence – the green energy, the star radiance, the cosmic temptation.

Exactly this endless expansion of our ideas and new knowledge make us *knowmen* – men of knowledge! I believe that anyone, who is present here, has turned his natural curiosity into a permanent, stable interest, into a creative rediscovery of the world, including the world of physical education and sports. *The knowmen* – the representatives of the so-called *neophilia* - are the bearers of love of the new, the unknown, and the unseen – of the creative work in the name of development, success and prosperity in life.

These thoughts are provoked by the program of this conference – its contents reveals organizers' holistic approach synthesizing all the contradictions – in the horizontal and vertical lines - in life in the name of the endless

knowledge. The University itself is named after the European Knowledge, which is endless - "APEIRON" (Greek).

But, regardless of our whole knowledge, we endure the mass "pollution" both of nature and spirit: man becomes a victim of intellectual, emotional, functional stresses. Instead of the good, mobilizing eustress, the distress displaces the personal values – "energy of cold" is created: lies, aggression, alcoholism, smoking, drugs destroy the planet, health, life.

The holistic approach allows us to examine sportsperson's **health** as achievement of harmony of the personality both with itself and with the surrounding world. According to the "Father" of Medicine – Hippocrates, health is a *dynamic equilibrium* of life in compliance with natural laws: what happens in mind affects the body, the environment, in which one lives and works. This dynamic equilibrium is a result of the continuous, two-way interaction of the complicated system of connections of human/body with the environment. The disturbance of these two-way connections in the "microsphere" of the body itself disturbs the optimum of its functioning and creates numerous health problems. For instance, the reduction of the optimum in the "**hydrosphere**" leads to the problems in the functioning of the circulatory system; the disturbances in the "**biosphere**" cause diseases of the vital internal organs and systems; the respiratory pathways suffer because of the **atmosphere** polluted; in failures of the **lithosphere** (the Earth's crust), we observe mental derangements; the disturbances in the **ionosphere** lead to sleep disturbances, inability to relax; the "**nanosphere**" suffers with the failures of the functions of the smallest constructive elements of the human body, diseases at cellular level occur (tumour formations); man as a bright "**noosphere**", in case of incomplete, insufficient or lacking knowledge, then we observe the destruction of the information connections, disorientation of consciousness occurs, the personality loses its stress-resistance. Exactly such a wider point of view for the understanding of health and the individual manifestations of human activity provide the holistic point of view in the human science. Socrates's words sound like of the present times even today: "*There is only one good, knowledge, and one evil, ignorance*"

The holistic approach (from Greek „*holos*" – *entire, whole, integral*) allows to examine the individual in the inseparable unity of three basic, mutually connected and mutually influencing, mutually determined energy structures – physical, mental, emotional, spiritual ones. Knowing them is especially important in the world of physical education and sports with a view on the overcoming of the main dualisms recognized by the philosophy as the existence of two main origins in our life, bearers of the spiritual/perfect and the material:

- a) **Masculinity – femininity;**
- b/ **Subject – object;**
- c/ **Nature - culture;**
- d/ **Mystics – science;**
- e/ **Human - God.**

a) **Gender-role orientation** in society is a complicated problem although what dominates is the commonly accepted: "there is no man's and woman's job". It is the same with sports. Although interesting, the conception for masculinity – femininity in different cultures has been related to the system of values since ancient times to nowadays, such values being typical and uniform for all the societies around the world, especially in sports. The practical consequence is the ambitiousness, the purposeful competitive orientation for self-perfection with the aspiration for proving oneself, for superiority and victory (metaphorically and literally); professional growth and career are related to the social roles played, which does not question their personal qualities of a man or a woman.

We cannot say that the tenderness and concern about home and children, outbursts of feelings, tenderness, and romantics are a "privilege" only of one of the sexes. While some different trends in this regard in certain countries and cultures can still be observed, education of personality in sports is subordinated to the motivation for superior achievements, being much culturally charged: modesty and self-exigency, mutual aid and readiness to risk, dedication and selflessness reaching heroism. Countless are the examples in this regard. Not to mention the levelling of the problem in the modern practice of APA (Adapted Physical Activity) and Sports. Since being of little age, children are educated in sports with the great examples of the World, Olympic and Paralympic Records, which raise young boys and girls, men and women to the star heights of the super-appreciation by the society.

Of course, we witness some cases of education in super-masculinity which may have negative and disastrous consequences. Sportsperson's morals are one and the same for men and women; they are equal, their behaviour and the expectations from them do not differ essentially.

In his book *“The Archaeology of Knowledge”* (1960), Michel Foucault treats **sexual energy** as *“an element poured on the whole human being, and not as some differentiating function”* (he sees the etymology of the concept from the English „Self” – oneself and the Greek „Exo - outside”). It comes to the levelling of sexual differences; “yang” energy is stimulated, in the elite, Olympic sports, with the maximum load when preparing for important competitions. As Berdyaev says, here we have realized *“the strongest connection with life – two worlds meet in one point of intersection”*.

Such a point of intersection: we are looking for too, in the name of the development of the personality, of its health – mental and physical one. As far as we know ourselves, I think that we all suffer from the incurable complex called *“the Leonardo’s complex”* – the aspiration for perfectionism, the consideration of particularities, the sculpturing of details: *„Knowledge begins with what is insignificant, then it is proceeded from one to another and so on – without end”* (Leonardo Da Vinci).

Such is our methodical work in sports too – in our everyday dedication to the problems, many are the big small things!

b) We frequently observe levelling of the differences in the relations **subject-object** too. The child will unnoticeably turn into a subject of activity from an object of the psychological and pedagogical influence of the sports educator. This can be very clearly seen as recorded in the “Sportsperson’s Register” kept by the competitors: here we can see the moments from the training/competition which are important for the sportsperson in details and diligently recorded, the feelings are “poured out”, the emotional experience is analysed, small matters are evaluated and re-evaluated – there recorded is the active work of conscious and body in harmony. Indicative in this regard is the example with Sergey Bubka: his trainer and psychologist and he have for a long time considered, re-examined, discussed, “re-arranged” the details of their mutual work and as a result, Bubka achieved his famous – over 500 world records (indoors and outdoors!). Jose Ortega y Gasset’s thought sounds live in this sense: *“A life unexamined is a life wasted”*.

Therefore the memories published in a book are a wish for every one of us: to make sense of and present to the others the positives and negatives achieved in our experience – because of science, but also a personal example with a moral. Thus, the trainer will constantly become an object from a subject, and will many times turn into a student from a master. Teaching the others, we are teaching ourselves for a second time. One of our nice proverbs says: *“Man learns as long as he lives, and he lives as long as he learns”*. This exchange of the roles is a strong long-term motivation driving any conscious personality and a base of its health and life activity!

c/ The dualism **“nature – culture”** contains the clearest connection between the material and spiritual world. They are both life. And life is a move – we can see it everywhere! Our body is nature, but also culture, when its proportions are harmonic, the moves are in a proportionate, melodious, orchestral consonance. Move is everywhere, but the movements of the hand of a new-born child are different from those of the training sportsperson– a beginner or a master, and such once again differ from those of the painter, musician, ballet-dancer, gardener or housewife, etc.

Move makes the hand not only an instrument for work, but its product. And what is beneficial for the hand is beneficial for the whole body; it becomes valuable for the whole society. In ancient authors we can read: *„Move is storehouse of life”* (Plutarch), and also *„Move is the healing part of the medicine”* (Plato); yet 2500 years ago, in Ancient Greece there ruled the maxim: *“You want to be healthy – run, you want to be strong – run, you want to be clever – run, you want to be nice – run!”*. There is no clearer illustration of the unity even today, of the unbreakable connection between nature and culture. The Father of the Medicine Hippocrates explains that the doctor is the one who advises, but nature (i.e. the move) cures (*Medicus currens – natura sanat!*)

In the move – our basic instrument, on which we rely – we find both nature and culture included in an unbreakable unity. The great physiologist Sechenov states this punctually and clearly: *„The entire endless diversity of the brain activity, which has created masterpieces for millennia, is a result of only one phenomenon – the moves of the muscles”*. And many are the examples with our Paralympic sportspersons, who have achieved incredible successes, namely thanks to the hard, systematic cultivation of their movements!

d/ **Mystics – science**: I will once again quote the Renaissance man, *“the first scientist”* as Leonardo is called: *„All our knowledge has its origin in what we feel, what we experience – in our emotions”*. Even today, the psychologists state that the only reality in our life is our experience. This is reality, which constantly teaches us, educates us. The positive information motivates our acts (*“If you are invited – catch, if you are chased – run!”*).

Leonardo Da Vinci himself (Freud gives such examples too) describes in his memories a dream from his early childhood: when he was a baby in a cradle, he saw a bird, which was rushing at him, then it went into his mouth and started beating him many times inside his mouth with its tale, and he was uncomplainingly silent. Leonardo started his career of an incomparable genius at 14 years old, but all his life he racked his brains to interpret this dream and decided that he should create without speaking Nowadays, scientists continue discovering some new miracles of artistic and engineering work, which he never shared. Today British Museum keeps his notebook (priced at three million pounds!) with drawings of the skull cavity of a woodpecker – of the beak, the tongue, and the mouth cavity – which structure science did not know! ...

The mystics in the World Olympic Records achieved by sportspersons and trainers is in their inspiration, in their intuition while taking decisions, but it is also related to the years of hard creative work, the accumulation of answers, but also the continuous search for new discovery approaches during the sleepless nights. It may be mystic for someone the creation of for instance Finsbury's Style in high jump, if one is not familiar with the Heuristic guesses of its author.

e/ **Human - God:** Human anthropomorphism today has started forming since Leibniz's organological model for the world (1600 – 1700 AD) who discovered microbes under microscope in the drop of water and built the model of the Monad as world unity: "*Everything is one and the same*". We often repeat: "*Everyone carries God inside*", as well as "*He has wonderful character – he is not human, he is just God!*"

The reference in Foucault's book indicates the origin of the word "character": „*charaseo*” (in Greek means “to draw, to mark, to leave a trace”) and “*tera*” (from Latin “land”). Therefore, a man of character leaves behind him (where he shall pass on earth/in the world) a trail, his imprint, mark, signs. Exactly like the sportsperson, the trainer, the educator models himself, but also the others by transforming life in a new, non-standard, inimitable manner. Such a personality turns into a great example – into a creator, who inspires, contributes to the transformation of the soma too, of the body - matter, and of the ideas - spirit. There is no doubt about the inseparability of their unity - vis vitalis! Research definitely shows that any sportsman, who can clearly imagine, see, visualize his purpose and who believes in his potentialities, will succeed. The long-term motivation for the important, vital purposes activates the personal growth, enhances the self-criticism and control over the particular situations, circumstances and events, improves the quality of life stimulating the belief in the own potentialities, to accept oneself. And to believe in yourself is like believing in God – to unite with God.

Typical for such sportspersons-creators is the avoidance of any risky behaviour (like smoking, alcoholism, and aggression), the high level of satisfaction from the quality and way of life, and also of their own mental and physical health.

Yet in ancient times Plato wrote: „*Cosmos is an animal – a living organism - Zoon*”; the Middle Ages burned at the stake Giordano Bruno because of his words: „*The world is a living being and all its parts (sense) enjoy living together*” (*Mundo esse animal totum senties*). Today, Jose de Silva and his passionate, numerous followers teach: “The world is a sense organ – life - body – soul – a statue of the supreme God”.

Such is the **holistic approach**, thanks to which we understand how the educators-trainers take into their hands the little sportsmen like soft, shapeless clay and gradually – with the joint, mutual efforts, the masterpieces – “*God-like heroes*” will be sculptured.

The word – the speech, the instructions, the directions, the explanations of trainers, instructors, judges, teammates, friends, spectators and so on, which word is variously shaped according to the intonation makes the background sounds and gives the images of ideas, schemes, concepts. This word allows to “see”, “sense” and “feel” the world of sports – as variously coloured in each event. This verbal richness irradiates at receptor level into the ganglia, the muscles, the bones, the soft tissues, and embraces them in the energy flow as naturally generated. Thus, sports unlock the personal potentialities (the root of the term *sport* is “*port*” – *door*; which *opens*, „*S*” has left from the Latin *desporte*, in Spanish it drops off - *deporte*).

The Renaissance point of view towards nature and human in an organic unity is nowadays passionately supported by the environmentalists too. I think that today the world wisdom is in the evolution of the sports sciences too: Theory of Physical Education (TPE), Theory of Sports Training (TST), Sports Psychology, Kinesitherapy, Adapted Physical Activity and Sports (APAS) and so on, in order to solve the health problems. In all of them, the effect is achieved through the simplest instrument – **the move**, in order to achieve the necessary high-frequency field with the functioning of the various energy generators.

In this way, energies deeply hidden in the sub-consciousness are activated which makes our life a real artistic work, a bright experience of happiness. This is of what the humanism is made – the fourth dimension of life – ethics and aesthetics in sports too. As inheritors of an ancient civilization, we understand how this fact motivated Baron Pierre De Coubertin to revive the ancient Olympic Games, which continue to amaze the world even today.

I would like to thank the esteemed hosts for the invitation and the possibility to join this feast of the Spirit. I know that every man, who has appeared even for a moment, becomes our teacher. These days are a new experience for me which does not come by chance. I have already started to generously obtain power, wisdom, joy and expectation for new meetings from this experience. I would like to wish you having the same wealth!

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The authors have contributed equally.

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