Psychology of Sport: The Need for Modernization and the Ways of its Implementation

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Abstract: It is stated that there is a general crisis condition of contemporary culture due to globalization and the resulting weakening of the ideological competence of the person. The peculiarities of this situation in sport are analysed. It is stressed the importance of the psychological component in adequate understanding by a person of the current state of things. It is noted the necessity of modernization of this component in the case of sports psychology, which involves the convergence of sport psychology with philosophy primarily with the philosophical anthropology and ethics. It is justified the possibility of "new psychology" of profound understanding of such fundamental issues in the theory of sports such as the essence of sports activities, nature of competitive relations, the impact of sports on personality, physical action of the athlete, psychological preparation of a person in sport.

Keywords: *modernization of sports psychology; the essence of sports activities; psychology of competitive relations; sports and personality; motor action of the athlete; psychological preparation in sport.*

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The relevance of the task

Sport is a specific activity. Here is a very acute question about the moral content of the activity which is executed by a person. In fact, sport is a test for a person in relation to his/her moral preparedness. There is not a definite assessment of socio-cultural potential of sport in today's literature. There are both the highest and extremely low assessments of this potential. We would like to show that to clarify this issue in such situation, a special role belongs to *the psychological science*, which, however, in order to fulfill its task should be subject to some modernization.

In his time, Nietzsche (2007: 310) stated: "The deficit of individual avenges itself everywhere". Today it is particularly evident – in politics, in business, in art, in science and in sports. Only a person of high *ideological competence* is able to solve the tasks in accordance with requirements of modern life. *Personal maturity* is required everywhere, and it cannot be replaced, in particular, by vocational training itself of any level. The lack of personality is, first of all, impoverishment of *moral* components of human existence, the distortion of psychological processes that constitute the ontological basis of human life. The reason for such situation is the special position of a person in the modern world: on the one hand, the breadth of the picture of the world which is open to human is unprecedented, on the other – the world is given to a person in fragments. There is a loss of sense of unity, integrity of the world. "The world has lost its core," says Baudrillard (2009: 9). This leads to huge negative consequences of spiritual and practical nature.

It should be noted that the aspiration to acquire the specified sense is always inherent in a person, but this is currently particularly problematic and at the same time - is especially important. In respect of modernization of psychological knowledge the resulting situation involves movement in two directions: (1) increasing of the scale of the presence of a psychological component in the perception and understanding of what is happening, (2) the transition of such understanding to a new, higher methodological level. The primary task here is the transformation of the psychological knowledge into *the moral-psychological*. This is what we see as the main way of transition from abstract psychology to vital-practical psychology which we urgently need today. It is essential that the overall tendency of improvement of psychological knowledge that manifests itself most significantly in the last decade is that psychology is increasingly moving closer to philosophy, in particular, to ethics and philosophical anthropology. Psychology is increasingly moving from traditional representation, when a person is treated

as a dual formation as a unity of "a soul" and "a body" to the view when a person is considered as *a triplicity* - "a soul", "a body" and "spirit". The problem of mental transforms from the problem of connection of spiritual and physical, from *psychophysiological problem*, into the problem of the interrelationship of physical, mental and spiritual, into *the philosophical*, in fact - into *the ethical* problem.

It should be noticed that the naturalness of the specified transformation in general for a long time and definitely is enough noted in the special literature. And the premise of this is that the space of the *moral relationship* is, upon closer examination, is an *actual space* for the existence of mental relationship, moreover, it is the authentic space of *human existence* as such: Nietzsche (2007: 176) - "There is no other experiences, except moral, even in the realm of sense perception"; Levinas (2003: 545) - "Ethical space is the space of existence of human beginning"; Merlo-Ponty (1999: 269) - "The psyche grows up only around the presence of conscience, and then there is a world susceptible to judgment in terms of mental qualities of people"; Gehlen (1988: 160-161) - "Our hypothesis on the study of the entire human organization based on actions, involves understanding of a particular morality in the general context of the constitution of a man as a living being".

It should be noted that human existence in general is such that the world inevitably falls apart at the point of bodily presence of a person on the opposites (the most fundamental is the opposite of "self-another one"), and a person invariably manifests and asserts itself as the person *responsible* for the result of their correlation. Turn of sport psychology in the direction of moral philosophy (in fact, in the direction of philosophical anthropology) is a pivotal objective of improving psychological knowledge. It is in this way where the necessary prospects are opened for substantial progress in addressing the most topical issues of the theory and practice of sports.

The essence of sports activity

As well as any other case of human social activity sport activity is the *triple* phenomenon. Plessner (1988: 120) said: "Man lives both as a soul and a body and as psycho physiologically neutral unity of these spheres". Therefore, the understanding of the essence of sport involves the presence and correlation of three types of knowledge about the sport – as about *external*, *internal* and *transcendental* realities. Apart from the fact that any of these pieces of knowledge is always conditioned by the other two, i.e. does not exist in a sterile variant, it is possible to say that the understanding of the

sport suggests, the presence, respectively, of *sociological*, *psychological* and *philosophical* knowledge as well as their *correlation*. The complexity of this task predetermines the difficulty of definitions of this phenomenon already on the first steps of the analysis, and the lack of adequate progress in resolving the problem stands at present, as a factor of insufficient productivity of many scientific studies, particularly, studies carried out in sports psychology.

The primary understanding of sport is *sociological*. This is its fixation from the part of the content that is open to the researcher in an objective plan, and it is absolutely necessary. But at the same time it *has to be* the fixation of *external process*, as such a process, inclusion of a person in which *produces the subjective, mental*, allows carrying out the process of the *internal* by absorption of the structures of the external action by means of exteriorization. Objective, external should be revealed and comprehended as the external, which *produces internal*. In the case of sport it is a *competitive attitude*. It's not coincidentally that exactly the competitiveness is mentioned as the main feature of sports in its almost all existing definitions. However, in the vast majority of cases competitiveness in further consideration is not treated consistently and full-scaled as *producing internal, mental* (and ultimately - consciousness), and that is especially methodologically important as a *self-sustained activity* that does not give the possibility of revealing of the *transcendental* element in the knowledge about the sport and, as a result, its full understanding. (It should be noted that in the philosophical literature it is widely presented the interpretation of culture in general as a self-sustained phenomenon, and its cases as art, science, religion, law, game, etc.)

We believe that in the basic definition of sport it is necessary to initially specify exactly *self-sufficient* nature of athletic competitiveness, or to indicate that sport is a "purely competitive activity" (Vizitei, 2009: 86). It is significant, that this self-sufficiency is ensured primarily by the *moral principle* – the principle of fair play, which is not only proclaimed in the sport, but is the basis for its practical organization. Fair competition is self-sufficient in that respect that it corresponds to the general logic of human existence, that being present in sport as the main formula in which fits the actual activity of the subject, *recreates human existence*, and therefore allows this subject to be inspired by what is happening, and in motivational plan to be a condition which has the nature of a self-sufficient process, supporting itself.

It should be noted that in the known literature there is, in fact, only one case of such definition, which substantially reflects the *essential characteristic* of sport and the issue of our discussion.. It's the definition of Matveeva (2009: 26) undeservedly left without due attention: "*sport is an actually competitive activity*" and "*only it should be called strictly competitive activity*",

i.e. sport is *self-sufficient* as a competitive activity. It is significant, that the understanding of sport as a self-sufficient competitive activity, in its turn, faces us the question of psychological and moral essence of the competitive relationship itself that inevitably re-introduces us to philosophy.

Competition as a universal social relation

Competitive interaction is universal, it pervades all human existence. The ancient Greek already understood it in such a way, and he was recognized as an *agonal personality*. "Greece is a rivalry of free persons, it is athleticism, elevated to a general principle of agon" - according to Deleuze & Guattari (2009: 40). "It's an amazing concept taken from a source of pure Hellenic epoch, considering the struggle of opposites as a continual manifestation of the common strict justice bound by eternal laws," - said Nietzsche (2007: 36).

The competitive attitude in its deep essence is an act of reflexivity, the act of becoming and supporting of existence. On the one hand, it generates the subject, and on the other – is a manifestation of its essential activity, in which it is naturally directed to the highest being as to its source: Kant (1968: 28) - "Humanity is the comparative self-love"; Looman (1990: 165) - "The meaning of sociality (and sociality of meaning) – in a tense implication of the "other Self" in any individual sense considering"; Lacan (1991: 215): "The fundamental moment of structure of desire – rivalry. Rivalry is equally constitutional and for the formation of Self".

Competitiveness (comparison and evaluation) is a necessary condition for any cognitive act carried out by the human. There is always present the accentuation in it, there is always emphasized the *uniqueness* of the perceived subject and *its identity* to other subjects, the subject relatedness to universe actively asserted by the subject. Heidegger (1998: 88) says: "It is impossible to compare things with no shared grounds on which they are located. Current value of this basis is a necessary condition for opening to me of the "object" in the unity of its individually specific features".

In this regard, competitiveness is a *naturally presented philosophical act*. "Metaphysics is a fundamental event in human existence," says Heidegger (2007: 460); "One does not become a human, if there are not made certain philosophical acts, the person knows about it or not," says Mamardashvili (1993: 11). The judgment of Deleuze & Guattari (2009: 14) is interesting in this regard: "If philosophy is indeed, as claimed, originated in Greece, it is because in the Greek polis, in contrast to empires and states, there was invented the agon as a rule of the society of "friends" - people who are free,

as are competing (citizens)". Thus, the human being is a philosophical act, and the philosophy arises and exists in the context of competitive relation.

In view of the foregoing, it is legitimate to assert that sport, emphasizing competitiveness as the basic moment of human existence, in a special way actualizes this very existence. Sport creates the precondition that a person can deeply experience the general formula of the process of self-realization, gain access to an experience that is constitutionally inherent in him as a reflexive and moral subject. The fact that the constituent part of the sport agonality is universal, allows us to conclude that the socio-cultural potential of sport is extremely large. This was well understood by the ancient Greeks, for whom sports competition was the highest form of all-round agonality.

The motor action of an athlete

The initial cognitive attitude here in the light of the above is as follows: "The physical action of a person must be understood as an act," and "the act in its entirety is more than rational, it is responsible" (Bakhtin, 1986: 99). This immediately indicates to us the insufficiency of an exclusively positivistic approach to the consideration of action, turns us to the necessity of its *philosophical and psychological* analysis, which, again, presupposes, first of all, the perception of the phenomenon that interests us as an essentially tripartite reality. The world, according to the ideas of philosophical anthropology, is open to a person as external, internal and transcendental, and accordingly, *action* is a sphere of interrelations, correlation of three coexisting realities that are given to a person in *the sense of the environment*, in *the sense of the body* and in *the transcendental sense* (sense of Self) forming a dynamic unity.

Such kind of approach is conceptually fruitful. It makes it possible to place in the center of research attention the question of the essential, moral content of the action and to understand its mechanism more deeply than it is in the case with the traditional psychological approach. Here, in particular, the phenomenon of the *technique of motor action* itself is more adequately comprehended: it is a way of coordination of the sense of the environment and the sense of the body, ideally it is the fulfillment of the action with reliance on the transcendental - on integral, meditative experiences (like "sense of water" in swimmer).

Sportive motor action possesses an essential moral potential, it already *in itself* educates, because its implementation involves the correlation of opposing realities, their harmonious unity, which takes place with the

responsible active participation of the human Self, acts as the basic formula for its existence. Philosophical anthropology sheds light on the mechanism of such correlation: "the body itself interprets, 'visual data' appears in it through the prism of its tactile sense, and tactile data through the prism of visual meaning" (Merlo-Ponty, 1999: 200-201).

It is also stated that "action, like the psyche, is self-building and self-developing," (Zinchenko & Mamardashvili, 1987: 43), that external influences and internal experiences in themselves do not produce motor activity in response, but only modulate it - "for a new action there are no ready mechanisms inside the organism, nor ready-made stimuli in the external environment" (Galperin, 1985: 4). The motor action is controlled (more precisely - recreated) from *the point of contact*, from the zone of confrontation and correlation of the outer and inner worlds. "Consciousness is not an external force that controls the action of a man from without; being a prerequisite of activity, consciousness at the same time is also its result, consciousness and activity form a genuine unity" (Rubinstein, 1995: 175). Finally, the motor action is both *an action and a reaction, at the same time*: the subject already purely spontaneously strives to such a situation as to the optimal one when its behavior is formed under the influence of, first of all, those external and (or) internal events *that are conditioned by its own active presence in the world*. Scheler (1988: 41) notes that during the development of a living organism the efferents are formed earlier than the afferents, that is, the motor act precedes the perceptive one.

Sports and Personality

The reorientation of the psychology of sports to the necessity of which we point out allows us to approach the problem of the influence of sport on the individual in a new way. Human self-assertion, self-realization takes place in the context of competitive communication. Sport creates a situation where this communication is presented especially acute, when it *is emphasized the internal contradiction* between the person's desire for personal distinctiveness, *individualization*, on the one hand, and his/her desire for actual experience of *his/her involvement* in social co-existence with other people, the desire for *co-participation*, - on the other hand. And at the same time, sport places a person in front of the need to correlate these opposites, in front of the necessity of fulfilling his/her own duty determined by the whole essence of human being: to act as a factor in the movement, the formation of the world, a factor in the assertion of the agonial principle of his/her life. Tillich (1995: 26) says: "Self-affirmation of the Self as an individual Self always

assumes the assertion of that power of existence in which the Self co-participates. The Self asserts itself as participating in the power of some group, some movement, the world of essences, existence as such". Sports competition is a test, this is *an honest athletic rivalry* and this is an *athletic* (requiring maximum intensity of physical and mental strength) *rivalry in honesty*. This competition is multifaceted and involves certain risks.

Sport places a person in front of fatal contradiction, and there is an emphasized danger here that a person can find him/her self in the power of one of the conflicting tendencies, to act and become the implementer of the manifestations, first of all, of one of these aspirations. to be the first - at any cost, in particular, at the cost of the need to realize oneself as the subject of the implementation of a common cause, at the cost of losing the orientation to constructive complicity, and to be a co-participant in the common cause, but without actualizing the desire to have the highest status among all individuals united together in the community by their co-participation. The first tendency potentially gives *aggressiveness*, the second one - *infantilism*. Sport in principle opens a possibility for a person and even often pushes him/her to either one or the other extreme. But it also (and moreover - primarily) involves the development of a person's striving and ability to correlate the opposites. And when the orientation on correlation is maintained, a person gets the opportunity to gain a deep understanding of the inner dynamics of life, to realize his/her role in the actualization of this dynamic and, ultimately, the possibility of an inspired fulfillment of his/her destination.

Here it is reproduced the situation of *the complete adequacy of the presence of a person in the world*, the awareness of the appropriateness and necessity of his/her existence, which is fulfilled here-and-now. Sport deepens the foundation on which unity arises, it *immerses a person in the highest being*, opens to him his deeper and deeper horizons, he reveals the basic contradictions of human existence and at the same time, implementing their correlation, improves the basis on which it takes place.

Sport assumes the development of a person's ability to transform the strength of opposition into the power of unity and formation. A human establishes him/herself as a factor of strengthening the unity of the community, in which he/she is included together with that person whom he/she opposes in rivalry. This "training" is in full-scale, true self-affirmation, is the development of *ideological competence*. Nissiotis (1979: 175) says: "The Olympic idea (the basic idea of sport) reflects the striving of a person to comprehend the deeply hidden higher reality of life ... Sport renews a person, encouraging him/her to try to achieve the highest goal of existence".

Psychological training of an athlete

This, first of all, is his/her *personal training*, the development of universal ideological competence - both on the spiritual and practical, and on the rational-theoretical levels. It is the personal meaning that determines, in the final analysis, the content of the athlete's mental states. Correspondingly, the *correction* of these states is fully effective only when it is a moral-psychological, *personal correction*. Only in this case, the corresponding transformation is the *real self-affirmation* of a person in the face of those problems that arise before him/her in particular life circumstances. In a different situation, this is only a case of self-manipulation and self-alienation which today most often happens. This is not self-realization, only which, as it is obvious, is the necessary result.

Sport requires from a person to manifest certain psychological qualities. In general case, most often are indicate such qualities as purposefulness, determination, perseverance, courage, etc., calling them volitional. However, under volitional qualities, in the light of aforesaid, one should understand the *moral-volitional* qualities of a person. In fact, there are no just volitional qualities in humans. Any quality of a person exists in the space of interpersonal relationships, and it implements itself in full as it is *personal*, that is, when it emphasizes the moral meaning. It should be noted that the *physical qualities* traditionally understood in the theory of physical education and sports are not actually interpreted here as personal ones. At the same time, of course, they, like any other manifestations of a person, have a moral component. However, today in sport, most often, this component arises and is present in these qualities purely spontaneously, and not as a result of purposeful pedagogical efforts, and this usually leads to significant educational losses. If a person is characterized as single-minded and determined (and also as strong, enduring, etc.), then in itself it does not yet reveal to us the main thing, what he is as a person. It is necessary to clarify on what is actually directed his activity, his "volition".

The will is, of course, the desire for success, to victory, which is indispensable. But it is of fundamental importance here, *how the victory itself is understood*. And this, in turn, requires consideration of the question of the moral sense of sport rivalry, more broadly - the question of the meaning of the competitive relationship as such, a relationship in the context of which this or that quality only shows itself. *The true will is morally creative*. Here, *personal training* is necessary, the shortage of which, once again remember Nietzsche (1994: 310), "avenges itself everywhere". Facilitating the

implementation of this training is the main task of modernizing the psychology of sports.

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