

Edin Branković (Croatia)

Faculty of Teacher Education, University of Zagreb

edin.brankovic@excellenceacademy.ba

SPORTS, MENTAL HEALTH, AND THE DILEMMAS OF FAME AND SUCCESS: IN A SEARCH OF A HOLISTIC PARADIGM

Abstract

Not only is depression the most widespread disease today, but the broader issue of mental health is an open question in today's sports world. Ensuring mental health is the key to athletes' need too. The main aim of this research is to present a theoretical and practical approach that can possibly restore sports to where it really belongs, namely sports as a tool for the realization of *bioethicity*, a behavior that is in accordance with the primordial nature. This study argues that physical education, sports training, and lifestyle based and realized on a holistic paradigm have a positive effect on self-determination, mindfulness, flow experience, intrinsic motivation, and growth-mindset. The holistic paradigm implies that we should not see human beings only as a body or as a mind but a combination of both body and mind, and also as soul and spirit. A holistic approach in sports and physical exercise that includes a philosophy of sports, educational, developmental and positive psychology, neuroscience, and cultivation of "virtuous character" and "self-transformation"—as explained in Plato's philosophy and the philosophy of nothingness of the Kyoto School respectively—can result in realization of bioethical sports.

Keywords: mindfulness, motivation, bioethics, depression, philosophy of nothingness.

Introduction

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), depression is the most widespread disease in today's world, which is noted year in and year out (World Health Organization, 2017: 5). At the same time, the net earnings of a certain sports industry rose from 600 to 700 billion US dollars in 2017 (Au, 2017), which exceeds the GDP of many countries. Moreover, it is somewhat paradoxical that while in today's world sports and physical exercise appear popular, more like a religious ritual (Parry, 2007: 201-214; Sheldrake, 2019; Twietmeyer, 2015: 238-254), there is hardly enough public discourse about the inner, cultivating and spiritual dimension of the sports experience (Nesti, 2007: 119-134). Yet, when it is admitted that depression and mental health are the main concerns facing many sports heroes (Gr. *athletes*) (Reardon et al., 2019: 667), it can be reasonably asked: What is wrong with sports today? If something is not right – and it seems it isn't – what is, then, missing in sports today? Might one speak of a sport as a special ritual that has the potential to transform the self to something like Nietzsche's *Übermensch* or “superhuman” (Nietzsche, 1995)?

To address these questions, the present investigation explores mental health from the perspective of integrative bioethics and puts forth a holistic paradigm by way of the philosophy of Plato (5th cent. BCE) and the philosophy of nothingness of the Kyoto School (20th cent.) in order to revivify the real meaning of terms mental and sports. The study shall present a possible way to connect traditional, perennial view of these terms with findings in contemporary science. To make such a connection in present time, there is a need to study and apply knowledge from philosophy and philosophy of sports, as well as from findings in developmental and positive psychology, and neuroscience. This study is divided into four chapters. A short history of the term “mental” is discussed in the first chapter. The holistic paradigm, which widens the understanding of the “mental”, is presented in the second chapter. The holistic paradigm is discussed through the prism of Plato's philosophy and the philosophy of nothingness in the third chapter. Lastly, in the fourth chapter, a practical application of attaining mental health through reflection on contemporary scientific findings and the previous three chapters is presented.

A Short History of the Ambiguous Term - “Mental”

The recent example of the Nike Oregon camp that became a court case for the systematic doping of athletes (The Guardian, 2020), the case of Armstrong on the Tour d’ France, the case of more than 300 abused female gymnasts in the twenty year history of the USA gymnastics, or even the cases of Olympic medalists and champions who suffer from identity crisis (Lally, 2007: 85-99) once their careers end, are some of the clearest instances of mental health crisis in modern sports. In the end, a question remains – is it even known what the “mental” is? Athletes who transcend the limits, both physical and mental, in the sports fields, fall into a mental crisis once their active sports engagement ends. Thus, the consequences of such actions lead to another extreme, namely losing the competitive mindset that, paradoxically, earlier on led an athlete to transcend the human limit (Reardon *et al.*, 2019: 670). The research presented under the sponsorship of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) (Reardon *et al.*, 2019: 670) in April 2019 mentions eleven mental health disorders when it comes to elite athletes. These are the following: sleep disorders and sleep concerns, major depressive disorder and depression symptoms, suicide, anxiety, and related disorders, post-traumatic stress disorder and other trauma-related disorders such as eating disorders, attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder, bipolar and psychotic disorders, sports-related concussion, substance use and substance use disorders, gambling disorder, behavioral addictions etc.

To clearly understand the phenomenon of the “mental” and the following chapters of this study, which will present a solution to the athletes’ mental crisis and offer renewed insights (Lat. *revidere*) concerning sports and the human being, it is of utmost importance to clarify what the term “mental” does in fact designate. At the outset, it is worth mentioning and reviewing the “bioethical imperative” of Fritz Jahr (1895-1953) about plants and animals of the 20th century. It can be said that mental health represents the bioethical imperative of the 21st century because it determines the very realization of bioethical existence (Gr. *bios* - life, *ethos* - behavior) as living in accordance with the primordial nature of the human being. As we consider the destruction of nature and even the destruction of the human being, it becomes all the more necessary to offer a new paradigm of knowledge that will invoke a consciousness of perennial inseparability between human beings and nature. Through contemplating Plato’s philosophy of the soul (Gr. *psyche*) and the self-awareness (Jap. *jikaku*) in the Philosophy of nothingness of the Kyoto School, this study will contribute to an understanding of integrative bioethics (Krznar, 2012: 29-40). It, in turn, rests on

a holistic paradigm of knowledge in which the corporeal (material) is only the beginning and a manifestation of the invisible, as is implied in the meaning of the word *skandha*¹ in the Buddhist tradition².

When Kant speaks about reaching a limit, which can be implicitly applied to sports as well, he speaks of the “conditional”. And “when conditional is given to us, then, the unconditional is given to us as a problem” (Ortega y Gasset, 1960: 110). The “unconditional” or the boundless is *aperion* in Greek and it can only be discovered through the conditional. However, one of the stumbling blocks of modern philosophy and science is the absolutization of reason (Krznar, 2007: 59-78) and conditional, which can be observed in philosophy’s being a spokesperson for science rather than its critic. The ascent of reason as *cogito* or as an absolute subject and a focus on “autonomy” while forgetting “pantomony” (Ortega y Gasset, 1960) leads one towards “being a stranger not among strangers but in his world, where he is at home” (Fromm, 1961: 69). In this way, the term “mental”, as it is used in *cogito*, is a consequence of dualism and designates all that is not corporeal, even though its true meaning remains unclear (Smith, 2001: 182-186). Historically, the usage of the term “mental” as the function of the mind began by the end of the 15th century and the expression “mental health” was first mentioned in the year 1803 (Etymonline, 2019). Also, the mentioned period is the period when the mind lost its meaning of being a mirror to the intellect (Lat. *intellectus*) and the faculty that recognizes the harmony of the Universe, as the very etymological meaning of the word *man* or *men*³ implies. The additional

1 According to Buddhist tradition, the entire universe is made up of different phenomena (Skt. *dharma*). What makes a “person” a person in the Buddhist tradition is to know and realize five aggregates (Skt. *skandha*), which is similar to the original meaning of the word *persona* (Lat.), literally “mask”, which implies different layers and faces of the one primordial entity or self. Therefore, a person is made of: physical body, matter (Skt. *rupa*); sensation, emotion, or feeling (Skt. *vedana*); recognition or perception (Skt. *samjña*); karmic activity, formation, force, or impulse (Skt. *samsara*); and consciousness (Skt. *vijñana*). From all the five aggregates only the first, *rupa* is the visible one, and the other four are known as *nama* (name). Therefore, all changes in the other four are manifested on it and in reverse, through it the other four can be affected (Buswell, 2004: 779).

2 The term “tradition” is used to denote its original meaning in Latin word *traditio* – “received, given, handed down, transmitted”. It denotes truths and principles of the divine origin revealed and displayed to humanity in a perennial sense whereas the one and the same wisdom (Lat. *sophia*) is revealed in different languages (Nasr, 1989: 62-63; Smith, 2001).

3 The root *man* or *men* in the early languages on one side denoted word construction that employs the meaning of reflection as the English word “moon” (Gr. *mene*, Ger. *mond*) and, on the other side, the soul’s capacity for reasoning (Skt. *manas*, Lat. *mens*, Eng. *mind*). Also, the words “measure” and “remembrance” (Gr. *mnesis*) are derived from the same root (Lat. *mensura*). From there, the word *anamnesis* (Gr.) is derived as the highest form of knowledge in Plato. All of this means that the mental is essentially mirroring or resonating with the midst,

confusion of the meaning of “mental” reaches its peak with the advent of the youngest of all the positivistic sciences, i.e., psychology, and Freud’s (1856-1936) introduction of the term soul (Gr. *psyche*) in empirical science. However, such a model of the soul, which is based on libido, could not answer the ultimate quest of human motivation (White, 1959: 297-333), which led to the origin of positive psychology. Throughout this period from the 15th until the 20th century, the term spirit, the equivalent of which in the Eastern traditions may be the void (Skt. *shunyata*) or *chi* (Chi.), was “largely unwillingly accepted as a legitimate area of study” (Nesti, 2007: 119; Sheldrake, 2019). Lastly, the alienation from the spirit/intellect, limiting the invisible as mental to reason in dualism, and approaching the soul as something irrational, in Freud resulted in the great crisis of humanity, namely “the death of god,” which finally manifested in the two World Wars, thereby making known the *Übermensch* who brings about his own self-destruction. In Guenon’s (1886-1951) words, this is the state of drowsiness in the dark age (Skt. *kali yuga*), “the reign of quantity” that tears apart the human being from within (Guenon, 2001: 1, 84, 132, 174). Francis Fukuyama calls it the collective catastrophe of the “end of history” (Fukuyama, 1992).

Towards a Holistic Paradigm

To further understand what the term “mental” means and to transcend the “end of history”, it is important to study the nature of the human being. If the current paradigm does not offer theoretical and practical solutions to individual and collective problems, then certain changes in the ways we understand ourselves are much needed. If making sense of the “mental” within the framework of the dualism of “body and mind” does not offer practical solutions, then it is time we interrogate the prevailing paradigm. As Thomas Kuhn (1922-1996) noted: “Paradigms gain their status because they are more successful than their competitors in solving a few problems that the group of practitioners has come to recognize as acute” (Kuhn, 1962: 23). In the context of the present investigation, that means to study and offer new ways to explain mental health, which also implies a reinterpretation of the term “mental”. Most of all, it means to enable a way towards holistic understanding of nature and to contribute to integrative bioethics with a new paradigm of knowledge (Krznar, 2012: 29). In this way, a revised and holistic bioethical *weltanschauung* of the “mental” includes not only reason or soul, but also mind, soul, and spirit together.

the intellect (spirit) and one’s surrounding, which has an outcome in seeing the thing as it is.

Before the holistic paradigm can be analyzed further as the solution for ongoing acute mental problems of today's sports and society, it is important to note that even the philosophy of sports is a young discipline that started to get more attention only recently (McNamee and Morgan, 2015: 1-8). In addition, when one talks about a philosophy of physical exercise, it is mainly reflected thought through the prism of "oriental philosophy" (Izutsu, 2008). Meanwhile, the idea of sports as a social and individual activity primarily manifests its philosophy or *raison d'être* in Western philosophy during the Victorian age (McNamee and Morgan, 2015: 6). Within the Victorian framework, sports was seen as a means of developing manliness, but also a way to express a form of "joy, playfulness and satisfaction," as the term *desporter* from the 14th century denotes. As the capitalistic society gained more ground, sports became more and more influential, and became an important characteristic of today's collective consciousness. Therefore, sports today are generally characterized by a collective identity and, consequently, a sportsman, mainly professional and often recreational, is challenged to follow "immoral appearances, callings and machiavelistic thrive for results" (Škerbić, 2014: 63).

Within the diversity of paradigms in the period from 15th century onwards, which was dominated by the great fragmentation of scientific disciplines, the question of being mentally healthy in both sports and daily life has become all the more urgent. Today's understanding of the "mental" is, therefore, determined by dualism and positivism. However, in recent times, many people are trying to go beyond such a paradigm by questioning dualism and incorporating insights from positive psychology, epigenetics, quantum physics and religiosity. On the one hand, the "mental" is equated with the "intellectual" as it was mentioned above⁴. On the other hand, medieval scholastics and Perennial philosophers have identified the intellectual with the Spirit (Stoddart, 2007: 45-50). Similarly, in the Eastern traditions, the intellect is seen as the reason⁵ that transcends dualities and becomes *empty* of doubts (Skt. *shunyata*) (Heisig, Kasulis and Maraldo, 2011: 51-75, 242-248). The latter worldviews do not see reality in terms of a dualism of the

4 See the end of the first chapter.

5 In the Croatian, Bosnian, and Serbian languages, as well as some other Slavic languages, there are terms *razum* and *um* that may denote one and the same reality and faculty. However, the etymological differentiation contributes to the distinction between the so-called "monkey mind" and the "cultivated mind" in the Eastern traditions, particularly in Buddhism. *Razum* contains the prefix *raz* that means "division, separation, breaking, and breakdown," and it includes meanings "faculty of comprehension, logical thinking, concluding, and discerning". *Um* means literally "mind, intellect, cleverness". Accordingly, *razum* may be subject to fallacy due to bias and desire, and therefore it must be cultivated in order to be realized as *um*.

“body and mind” but in terms of the triad “body-soul-spirit” (Guenon, 2001) or a holistic understanding of the “body-mind” relationship (Yuasa, 1993) (Table 1). Accordingly, the soul is the *locus* of manifesting knowledge, both objective and non-objective. Non-objective is related to its contents, such as mind (reason), imagination, sentiment, memory, and will (Scheme 1), while “intellection” and “intellectual intuition” are qualities of the spirit and, therefore, manifestation of objective knowledge or knowing things as they are (Stoddart, 2007: 45-50).⁶

Despite the radical dualistic separation of the body and mind according to many, there are thinkers such as Jung (1875-1961), who, after studying traditional scriptures, argued for the necessity of understanding the “mental” in terms of the soul and the spirit which ought to be in harmony with the body (Yuasa, 2008: 97-127) in order to be mentally healthy. Understanding the “mental” in this way indicates a much broader perception of things than is usually granted through a dualistic approach to reality.

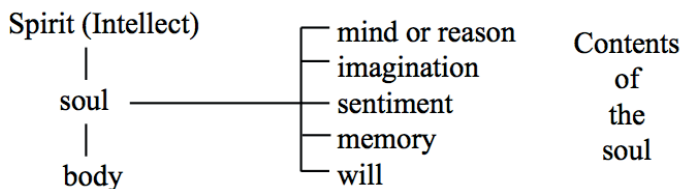
| English | Croatian | Latin | Greek | Chinese | Arabic |
|------------------------|---------------|---|----------------------------------|------------------|----------------------------|
| Spirit* (Intellect) | <i>Duh</i> | <i>Spiritus</i> (<i>Intellectus</i>) | <i>Pneuma</i> (<i>Nous</i>) | <i>Shěn</i> | <i>Ruh</i> (<i>'aql</i>) |
| soul | <i>duša</i> | <i>anima</i> | <i>psyche</i> | <i>ling</i> | <i>nafs</i> |
| body | <i>tijelo</i> | <i>corpus</i> | <i>soma</i> | <i>shēn/hsen</i> | <i>jism</i> |

Table 1 - A comparative view of the traditional hierarchy of the faculties of the human being⁷

* Capital letters denote the faculty. However, in all tradition “spirit” (small “s”) as breath and “intellect” as mind/reason are seen as the outward manifestations of the Invisible faculty or particular and contingent spirit/intellect. For example, in Taoism, *ch'i* manifests *li*, or, in Western traditions, the spirit manifests the Spirit (lit. vital-energy (breath) manifests the principle), or in both the Neo-Confucian and Buddhist traditions, it is *yung* that manifests *t'i* – the functions that are manifested in all things, actually, manifest the substance (Murata, 2000: 36-37).

6 To compare similar examples that can be found in Shinto, Confucian and Buddhist traditions see more in: Heisig, Kasulis and Maraldo (2011: 979-892).

7 See also: Murata (2000: 255-264), Smith (2001: 224) and Stoddart (2007: 45-50).



Scheme 1 - Traditional hierarchy of being (Stoddart, 2007: 46)

According to both Jung and the traditional science of pneumatology⁸, the “mental” is essentially a dimension of the soul (Gr. *psyche*, Lat. *anima*, Ch. *ling*, Ar. *nafs*), as it was mentioned earlier (Scheme 1). The soul is the *connection* between the body (Gr. *soma*, Lat. *corpus*, Ch. *shēn /hsen*, Ar. *jism*) and the Spirit (Gr. *penuma*, Lat. *spiritus*, Ch. *Shěn*, Ar. *Ruh* (*ʿaql*)), whereas the mind (Gr. *dianoa/nous*, Lat. *ratio*, Ch. *hsin*, Ar. *ʿaql/qalb*) is the dimension of the soul. It is often placed as the fourth constituent to the ternary hierarchy as the aspect that mirrors an objective knowledge of the intellect - Spirit (Murata, 2000: 259; Smith, 2001: 224). As it was mentioned before, only at the end of the 20th century, with positive psychology and epigenetics, the hierarchy body-mind-soul⁹-Spirit has been acknowledged, though not yet explicitly and completely in the scientific mainstream. Together with it, religiosity in its perennial sense, as the means of self-cultivation (Jap. *shinshin ichinyo*) and realization of the virtue (Gr. *arête*), have gained currency.

The approach to the “mental” as the dimension of the soul that requires cultivation is central to the traditional worldview and, so, every activity, even the physical one, does not have any other purpose but to be a means for its realization or, in other words, to become a *topos* of the objective knowledge. Objective knowledge is a process in which the application of information results in a strong presence of the Pure Good (as in Plato’s philosophy), flourishing of well-being (Gr. *eudaimonia*) or “pure experience” in terms of the philosophy of nothingness, all of which shall be later discussed in chapter three. Sports and physical exercise as a skill were historically seen as “play” and their role

8 Traditional initiatory science in all sacred traditions needed for the realization of the true self (Nasr, 1993: 10-11).

9 It is often found in older languages such as Chinese and Arabic that the “heart” (Ch. *hsin*, Ar. *qalb*) is the synonym for the “soul” or “mind”. In the triad body-soul-spirit, the mind is seen as the soul’s dimension (content). Similarly, in Semitic languages, particularly in Hebrew and Arabic, the words “soul”, “self/ego”, and “breath” come from the same root.

was primarily initiatory, ritual-bound and was about self-cultivation (Ilundain-Agurreza and Hata, 2015: 98-114). In traditional sciences, any activity that is devoid of the cultivation of the self and character, if it takes place without gaining knowledge of the self, was seen as dangerous to be taught. Once a skill is thought and performed without virtue, it destroys itself and its bearer's mental and physical health because it stops to be humble thriving towards the Pure Good, and causes "alienation" (Ger. *Entfremdung*) of man from himself. As Erich Fromm (1900-1980) noted:

"They are man's creations [in this context sports, physical exercise, etc.]; they are valuable aids for life, yet each one of them is also a trap, a temptation to confuse life with things, experience with artifacts, feeling with surrender and submission." (Fromm, 1961: 46)

The Philosophy of Plato and the Philosophy of Nothingness

It was explained earlier that it is more precise to categorize the "mental" as an aspect of the soul (Gr. *psyche*) or mind that ought to be cultivated. Therefore, in order to understand the soul and the mind that ought to be cultivated in the new paradigm or say, to renew a worldview, the following chapters of the philosophy of Plato and the philosophy of nothingness of the Kyoto School are presented. Despite the differences that may be found in their comparison (Heisig, Kasulis and Maraldo, 2011: 750-757), this study focuses on finding a way to go beyond the current issue of mental health through two different perspectives, but notes that their perspective does indicate a common way to live a healthy life through self-cultivation and self-transformation. Let us briefly explain why the two are chosen for this research.

The reason why the philosophy of Plato is chosen lies in our need to further comprehend the mental as an aspect (content) of the soul. According to Plato, the soul is tri-partite, which is not limited to the mere positivistic mind (Lat. *cogito*, from the verb *cogitare*) as it was explained in the previous chapter. Accordingly, Henry Corbin (Corbin, 2008: 19) indicates that one of the main crises of modern civilization and, therefore, our understanding of the mental, lies in forgetting the imagination (see Scheme 1) and imaginal world (Lat. *mundus imaginalis*) or "image-thinking" (Yuasa, 2008: 39-64), which results in rationalism (Yuasa, 2008: 95). The zenith of such an approach was in the 16th century, when a positivistic approach was predominantly adopted in reading Aristotle's work (4th cent. BCE), even though Aristotle's work originally had an initiatory role (Corbin, 1994: 146).

Similarly, the reason why the philosophy of nothingness is chosen is that it faces the “crisis of the meaning” (Suzuki and Fromm, 1973: 202-205) that expresses its loudest scream through nihilism at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century. According to the philosophy of nothingness, nihilism, the “crisis of meaning” or the “Great Doubt” is actually the very beginning of the true philosophizing (Heisig, 2001: 191-193, 219-222). The key figures of the philosophy of nothingness were Nishida Kitaro (1870-1945), Tanabe Hajime (1885-1962) and Nashitani Keiji (1900-1990) (Heisig, 2001). It originated in the contact with the Eastern tradition, predominantly Buddhism, whereas, in a religiously diverse environment, one cannot ignore such living traditions as Confucianism, Daoism, and Shintoism, and the Western tradition including religion and philosophy where they both tackle the challenges of modernity (see Heisig, 2001: 9-21; Heisig, 2019: 80). In the philosophizing of the philosophers of nothingness, the philosophical and the religious are not separate. The disciple of Tanabe, Takeuchi Yoshinori explains the relationship between the two:

“The life of religion includes philosophical thought as its counterpart, a sort of centrifugal force to its own centripetal tendencies. Strictly speaking, Buddhism has nothing like what Saint Paul refers to as the “folly of the cross.” This ... has led it in a different direction from western philosophy and religion.... Philosophy has served Buddhism as an inner principle of religion, not as an outside critic.... That is to say, philosophy in Buddhism is not speculation or metaphysical contemplation, but rather a metanoia of thinking, a conversion within reflective thought that signals a return to the authentic self—the no-self of *anatman*¹⁰.... It is a philosophy that transcends and overcomes the presuppositions of metaphysics.... But how is one to explain this way of doing religious philosophy and reconstruct it in terms suitable to the present world when the very idea of philosophy and meta- physics has been usurped by western models?” (Heisig, 2001: 14)

It can be said that that philosophy of nothingness indicates importance of *that* what may correspond in some way to the unmoved mover in Aristotle’s categories (theory of predication) of the Western tradition. Therefore, correspondence to the unmoved mover could be in a certain way *absolute*

10 The term *anatman* is mostly used in the Buddhist tradition and it means “non-self”. It represents a counterpart to the term *atman* “self” of the Hindu tradition. However, it should not be mistakenly concluded that the two are opposite terms. What Buddhist tradition emphasizes as the non-self is actually transcending any possible image and thought about *that* what the true self is.

nothingness (emptiness/void) (Jap. *mu shin*). Therefore, the realization of ephemeral existence is the *locus*¹¹ (Jap. *basho*) for realizing being (Ger. *das Sein*) and non-being. The absolute nothingness encompasses and makes possible both being and non-being (Heisig, 2013: 20-24). According to this worldview, there is a close connection between the human being and the world, and between the subject and object (See Heisig, 2019: 81). They are in a symbolic play (Skt. *lilla*) if one ought to express the relationship in terms of another Eastern tradition, namely Hinduism. The mutual connection and relationship between the two is also named the “anthropocosmic vision” (Chittick, 2007: 109-128; Tu, 1989: 10). Its main purpose is to understand the world and the self in order to accomplish the fullness of humanity or “to learn how to be human” (Tu, 1989: 10), and not to treat the world and nature as mere resources. Nishida¹², in his *An Inquiry into the Good*, similarly noted: “All people believe that there is a fixed, unchanging principle in the universe and that all things are established according to it.... This principle is creative, so that we can *become* it and work at one with it, but it is not something we can see as an object of consciousness.” (Heisig, 2001: 55-56) Accordingly, sports is - speaking in this context - substantially nothing but a possible way among many others to realize humanness, “to learn how to be human”.

Before we can say more about the philosophy of nothingness and how nihilism is the *locus* for the realization of absolute nothingness, we deem it important to describe further the soul in Plato in order to understand what it is about the soul that ought to be transcended. Plato described in the *Timaeus* that the soul consists of a ternary, but not in a quantitative division (Gr. *meros*). Rather, it exists as three tendencies and kinds (Gr. *eidos*), classes or sorts (Gr. *genos*) (Hobbs, 2000: 34). The tripartite soul in Plato consists of a mind (Gr. *nous*), life-force/mettle/

11 The term *locus* is a Latin word for the Greek word *topos* and it represents one of the central points in Nishida's work, just as the *mundus imaginalis* is central (see on the next page) to some schools of Western philosophy. However, there are disputes about the meaning of the term *locus*. In any event, it may be summed up by saying that it does not refer to either space or time in a mere quantitative way. Rather, it is an imaginary, “abstract point at which an activity takes place” (Heisig, 2001: 72-75). To study different approaches to this idea, see: Heisig (2001: 299-300). Nishida's immersion in the bottom of “conscious itself” or, a “conversion of the ordinary ego into a nothing” (Heisig, 2001: 74) reminds of *unio mystica as unio sympathetica* (Corbin, 2008, 121-135, 147-148)

12 Nishida Kitaro (1870-1945) is recognized as the most influential philosopher in modern Japan, after the Meiji period (since 1868 until today). The philosophy of nothingness of the Kyoto School is connected with Nishida. Several Nishida's works are translated in English: *A Study of Good, Intelligibility and the Philosophy of Nothingness, Fundamental Problems of Philosophy*. About Nishida, indexation of the mentioned titles, and about the position of Nishida in the Japanese philosophy a substantial summary is available in Hesig, Kasulis and Maraldo (2011).

thriving (Gr. *thumos*), and appetites/desires (Gr. *ephithumetikon*). Moreover, Plato speaks of the path of cultivation (Lat. *cultura animi*), the completion of which is described as excellence and virtuous behavior (Gr. *arête*) through brave and wise acts (Gr. *andreia*). Aristotle continued the approach of his teacher and, in the second book of *Nicomachean ethics*, he noted that realized soul manifests “moral virtue” and “moral excellence” (Gr. *ethikai aretai*), which also denotes an excellence in character. The word “character” means literally to “inscribe, imprint, engrave” a sign onto a coin. However, what is *that* which is engraved and imprinted? According to Plato, the soul is not a separate entity from the body, nor can it be identified with the Good in an absolute sense, which is the Sun in Plato’s symbolic explanation of the hierarchy of the cosmos and which corresponds to the unmoved mover in Aristotle. Rather, the soul *contains* the manifestation of the Good in the intellect/the spirit (Gr. *nous*)¹³. Therefore, the soul is between the visible and invisible and it is influenced and shaped by both, and that is why it is said that its plane of existence is the world of symbols and imagination (Lat. *mundus imaginalis*) (Corbin, 2008: 19; Yuasa, 2008: 39-64). Its visible aspect manifests in the form of appetite/desire (Gr. *ephithumetikon*) and thriving (Gr. *thumos*), while the invisible is in the form of discernment (Lat. *intelligentia*).¹⁴ Therefore, discernment, as a function of the intellect (Gr. *nous*), is an ability to recognize where appetite/desire and thriving may lead to in the end. In the act of balancing appetite/desire and thriving, which is the main role of intelligence led by the idea of the Good, there happens an inscription of good and virtuous character. Consequently, the soul becomes realized, which is also a realization of the self, because it begins to know and experience the reality of existence by knowing appetite/desire and thriving. In Plato’s view, this is to know the forms i.e. the Ideas (Gr. *eidos*). As human beings balance the three powers, they realize virtue (Gr. *arête*), which Aristotle calls *eudaimonia* (Gr.) or flourishing.

Literally, *eudaimonia* is being in accord with the “guiding spirit” that guides toward the good (Gr. *eu*) or the primordial nature because *eu* (Gr.) comes from PIE root **es-* “to be”. Until *eudaimonia* is realized, the human being remains under the “evil spirit” (Gr. *daimon*) that leads one astray from the Good, the One (Gr. *to hen*), the Common/Highest Good (Lat. *summum bonum*), which

13 If Plato’s description of the soul is compared with the earlier description from this essay (Scheme 1), then it can be said that, in Plato’s terms, *nous* corresponds to mind (reason), imagination and memory, *ephithumetikon* to sentiment, and *thumos* to will.

14 The etymology of the word “intelligence” is *intelligentia* (Lat.) that literally means “cut collected” (*inter legare*).

is the philosophical imperative of self-realization. According to Plato, this process of realization is possible only through self-cultivation. In the process of cultivation, reason must exert effort to know and rise to the level of the intellect that knows the Good as the ultimate goal, thereby penetrating into the aims and intentions manifested through appetite/desire and thriving. The vigilance in penetration and discernment can either contribute to man's *eudaimonia* or its absence may lower him to the lowest planes of humanness, which is nothing less than self-destruction or a soul that is dominated by appetites/desires and illusory thriving. Therefore, Plato speaks of the two terms that are related to the human capacity to protect it from the self-destruction – *nous* and *dianoia*¹⁵. On the one hand, *nous* has an attribute of seeing and experiencing the things as they are in their archetypes and true forms or seeing metaphysical purposes through a realization of its causes in Aristotle's philosophy. On the other hand, *dianoia* has an attribute of reasoning, comparing, and doubting. It can be said that *dianoia* and *nous* essentially designate the same realm whereas the *nous* is higher in hierarchy than *dianoia*¹⁶. Eventually, to realize humanness is to bring into balance the soul's contents and to live a eudemonic life, which Plato also names the development of excellence (Gr. *arête*).

Kitaro Nishida noted that the realization of the humanness through self-cultivation, cultivating the soul and character, lies in “pure experience” (Jap. *junsui keiken*) that enhances “self-awareness” through the sitting meditation (Masakatsu, 2019). The pure experience does not mean hedonistic experience, but rather “becoming” through the “self-awareness”, which is an insight into the true reality of existence, which may correspond to knowledge of archetypes in the philosophy of Plato and to the intellectual objectivity in the scholastics. As pure-experience and self-awareness are interrelated with each other, they can be summarized in the following three meanings:

- “(1) simple *awakening* is like the fact of pure experience, a unity of words and things (言 and 事, both of which are joined at the roots in the Japanese language by having the same pronunciation but differing Chinese characters: *koto*);
- (2) *self-awakening* points to the fact that pure experience is a dynamic self-unfolding in which all awareness of others is at the same time a self-awareness; and

15 See paragraph in chapter two that tells about Jung's view on the soul and pneumatology.

16 See the note number 5.

- (3) *understanding of the self and world* reflects the fact that pure experience is the principle by which everything can be explained.” (Heisig, 2001: 293)

In the latter Nishida’s work, “pure experience” is expanded with *jikaku* (Jap.) “self-awareness” that he defines as “self-reflecting itself within itself” (NKZ IV, 215) which may be connected with the term that is used in positive psychology, “meta-cognition” (Bandura, 1997). Afterwards, Nishida connects “pure experience” and self-awareness with “pure seeing” (Jap. *tada miru*), which is realized by true emptiness of the soul from illicit appetite/desire and thriving or, in Nishida’s words: “By truly emptying the self, the field of consciousness can reflect an object just as it is” (NKZ IV, 221). Finally, Nishida spoke about the “active intuition” (Jap. *kōi-teki chokkan*) (Masakatsu, 2019) in which the self is in the process of realization in a way “thinking something by *becoming* it—doing something by *becoming* it” (Heisig, 2001: 56). In this situation, the self is not a passive observant of the dialectic process, but it is the very participant, and this interplay of knowing and doing, theory and practice is the most obvious and accessible in the skills training such as arts, sports, and even morality. The reason for this lies in the fact that in these actions unity between thought and act has a tendency to be the highest and one is in a convenient situation to experience absolute nothingness or to be in the state of flow in terms of contemporary psychology. In Plato, the correspondence may be found in the realization of virtue, which is only possible through the control and balancing of appetite/desire and thriving through intellection, as it was mentioned above. When an individual experiences active intuition, his soul is in balance and he goes beyond being “*thrown project*” (Ger. *geworfener Entwurf*) in Heideggerian terms, which is related to the experience of agony and nihilism. Also, an individual goes beyond the being-in-the-world (Ger. *In-der-Welt-Sein*) that is determined by space and time. Therefore, active intuition is a moment of going beyond thrownness and the blind following of the lower tendencies of the soul (appetite/desire, thriving), and it moves away from “depression, suffering and anxiety”, to speak in contemporary terms (Yuasa, 1993: 55). To describe the function of the acting intuition, Nishida shows that it essentially means to be in an awareness of the every-day self, which again evokes Plato’s view on the soul and its cultivation. In other words, the soul, the self becomes *basho* (Jap.) or *locus*, more precisely the *locus* of being and *locus* of nothingness, respectively, *yu no basho* and *mu no basho* (Jap.) (Yuasa, 1993: 57). When an individual transcends thrownness, he transcends experience of nihilism and the state of Great Doubt, and experiences the “place of absolute

nothingness” (Jap. *zettai-mu no basho*), the “field of emptiness/void” (Jap. *kū no ba*, Skt. *shunyata*) and, according to Nishitani¹⁷, the “standpoint of *Zen*”. Once again, the absolute nothingness is understood as the principle that encompasses and makes possible both being and non-being (Heisig, 2013: 20-24).

A comparative view of Plato’s philosophy of the soul and the self as the *locus* for realization in the philosophy of Nothingness motivated us to pursue the perennial task of philosophers that Hegel (1770-1831) summarized in the following way: “*Der Erste der Philosophie aber ist, das absolute Nichts zu erdenken*”¹⁸ [Yet the first task of philosophy is to conceive of *absolute* nothingness]. To contemplate about Nothingness and nothingness, a person ought to admit firstly limitedness of the “mental”, *dianoa* and to recognize the need for the intellect, the spirit, *shunyata*, as we have seen in the etymology of the words “mind”, “soul”, and *razum*. The philosophy of Plato and the philosophy of nothingness may appear different in their outer characteristics, but substantially they both indicate the perennial principle and they are determinations of the non-determinate (Gr. *aperion*). On the practical plane, this means that each success, whether in professional or recreational sports, is nothing but an image of the true achievement, which is self-realization. The other side of success is loss due its determination by space and time. Accordingly, due to thrownness, success is either a mere perishing image or an elevating sign of the *aperion*, depending whether we see sports as the end in itself or as a means for self-realization. To experience sports as a means for the cultivation of the soul and character, self-transformation and self-realization is what we can learn from both philosophy of Plato and philosophy of nothingness.

The Process for Attaining Mental Health

The need for the protection of nature was the reason to establish bioethics as the study of the ethical issues emerging from advances in biology and medicine. Today, it can be said that it is only one side of the coin. It can be argued that the

17 Nishitani Keiji (1900-1990) is another distinguished philosopher of nothingness of the Kyoto School. Numerous Nishitani’s works are translated in English, of which we select the following regarding the topic of the essay: *Towards a Philosophy of Religion with the Concept of Preestablished Harmony as a Guide, Fundamental Problems of Philosophy, Art and Morality, On the Doubt in our Heart, Intuition and Reflection in Self-Consciousness, A Study of Good, On the Doubt in Our Heart*. About Nishitani, indexation of the mentioned titles, and about the position of Nishitani in the Japanese philosophy, a substantial summary is available in Hesig, Kasulis and Maraldo (2011).

18 Translation of Hegel’s “Glauben und Wissen” in Ōhashi (1984: 203).

other side of the coin is an issue connected with mental health because, ultimately, only a human being can be an agent of making or disrupting the natural order. The crisis that is seen in nature is only the manifestation of the crisis in human beings. Furthermore, if the ongoing natural crisis is not admitted, what can the human being expect but an abyss from which he cannot exit. The work requires activation of all his faculties, as well as a paradigm shift of what mental means and how it should be understood. It can be said that today's man has a choice to survive and live or to die paradoxically as *Übermensch* because god has died before him, as Nietzsche posits the thrownness crisis of the modern humanity.

To transcend thrownness in which the modern human being spins due to ignorance and pride, the human being of today ought to return to the life-attitude in which every single activity, including sports, is primarily meant to accomplish a higher goal, which is displayed in self-transformation, cultivation of the soul and character. This indeed reflects the order of the Universe in the Idea of Good. If this were to be the aim of the holistic paradigm that was evoked throughout this study, then it can be said that such paradigm is in resonance with the paradigm of integrative bioethics too. Bioethics and holism have never been strange to any authentic tradition. Nevertheless, the highest emphasis on bioethics can probably be found in the oriental traditions (Nasr, 1989: 61-83), particularly in Taoism, Confucianism, Shintoism, and Buddhism, where the philosophy of nothingness flourished too¹⁹. For example, according to the Shinto tradition, the world of existence is viewed “in terms of its functions or workings” (Heisig, Kasulis and Marlado, 2011: 546), in Buddhism as relationships, and, in the philosophy of nothingness, pure existence is experienced only in the dynamic process of knowing and being that is named “becoming” (Heisig, 2013: 153).

Plato's mention of knowing the Idea of the Good through the symbolism of the Sun may correspond to the “pure experience” of the philosophy of nothingness. He explains that the psychophysical state of clarity and well-being, or what may be called both well-being and mental health today, happens when the soul's contents become balanced so that it reflects the universal order of existence:

“Understand then, that it is the same with the soul, thus: when it settles itself firmly in that region in which truth and real being brightly shine, it understands and knows it and appears to have reason; but when it has

19 However, this does not exclude Abrahamic traditions (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) at all. For a comprehensive traditional view of the relationship between the human being and nature that emphasizes the need to return to sacredness of the both, it is worth to study *The Encounter of Man and Nature: The Spiritual Crisis of Modern Man* (Nasr, 1968).

nothing to rest on but that which is mingled with darkness—that which becomes and perishes, it opines, it grows dim-sighted, changing opinions up and down, and is like something without reason.” (Plato, 1999: *The Republic*, VI:508d)

According to Plato, the Good is in *that* which brings goodness to human beings in the long run, whereby man experiences true happiness, *eudemonia* (Gr. *eudaimonia*). Further on, *eudemonia* is a virtue, and virtue results from self-cultivation. Also, the soul is cultivated through awareness and mindfulness, and they are practiced through meditative and contemplative practices including *liberal arts* and mindful physical exercise. These are means that are used to cultivate constant awareness of the Good. Such awareness eventually bears fruit in a person’s capability to balance the soul’s tendencies of appetite/desire and thriving. Consequently, in the process of cultivation, knowledge becomes remembrance (Gr. *anamnesis*) and theory becomes a practice (Hsu, 2007: 149-156). Speaking of the way in which cultivation is done through education, Whitehead (1861-1947), an admirer of Plato, realized that education ought to nurture habits that enable a student/athlete to appreciate values whether they are scientific, aesthetic, moral or religious because they are essentially rooted in the Good. Whitehead wrote: “The ultimate motive power, alike in science, in morality, and in religion, is the sense of value, the sense of importance. ... The most penetrating exhibition of this force is the sense of beauty, the aesthetic sense of realized perfection” (Whitehead, 1957: 40). Throughout his life and work, he continued to underscore the importance of religious and moral values through the “education” that he called “mental cultivation”. Here, the religious may be most likely understood in a perennial sense, as a comprehensive and precise methodology of connecting with the higher self that manifests as cultivation of the soul, character, and self-transformation, “pure experience” and “pure intuition”. Whitehead wrote: “The essence of education is that it be religious. Religious education is an education which inculcates duty and reverence” (Whitehead, 1957: 14).

In addition to philosophical insights that can be found in the philosophy of Plato and the philosophy of nothingness related to attaining mental health, contemporary findings in positive psychology (Branković and Badrić, 2020a; 2020b; Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi, 2000) and neuroscience (Goleman and Davidson, 2017) also show that the cultivation of lofty and solemn attributes such as gratefulness, mercy, loving-compassion, empathy through meditation (Goleman and Davidson, 2017), religious practices (Bugari, 2012: 50-54; Kheriaty

and Cihak, 2012), virtuous and unconditional goodness (Kindness Curricula, 2018) bring a human being into the awareness of a deeper and higher state of consciousness that transcends mere states of survival and emotionality such as competition, greed, hate, anger etc. It may be noted that the task to transcend the latter states and to be in the former is the ultimate task of both philosophies researched in this study, the philosophy of Plato and the philosophy of nothingness. In terms of positive psychology, the “becoming” of the philosophy of nothingness and the “state of virtue”, or the soul in the balance, in Plato’s philosophy may evoke what is known as the positive mood, positive thoughts, and positive emotions (see Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Consequently, the states of “becoming” and “virtue” are the foundation for self-determination, mindfulness, flow experience, intrinsic motivation, and growth-mindset in terms of contemporary positive psychology. In addition, in the terms of contemporary findings in neuroscience, the mentioned descriptions may resemble states of alpha, theta or even gamma brain wave frequencies. To extend a bit further the understanding of the mentioned states, it is worth mentioning that, in the terms of philosophy of nothingness, this may mean to experience “intellectual intuition” (Jap. *chiteki chokkan*; Ger. *intelktuelle Anschauung*), which is again the “real religious awakening” (Nishida, 1990: 30-34). In the words of Nishida: “True religious awakening is neither an abstract knowledge-based in thinking nor a blind feeling. ... It is a kind of intellectual intuition, a deep grasp of life” (Nishida, 1990: 14). When Nishida mentions self-realization, he emphasizes that it is impossible to achieve it without connecting thought with action: “Action has the significance of denying our intellectual²⁰ self. Our self cannot know the bottom of our own action... We find our true self by working; therein obtains our true *jikaku* (in Jap. self-awareness)” (Nishida 1987: 54). Equally, when the works of Plato and Whitehead are contemplated, there is a possibility to note an emphasis on self-cultivation that is manifested in a cultivated character. A cultivated character is further along in the process of “education” and “religion” in the original meanings of the two terms, i.e. “bring out/lead forth” and “again bind”, respectively. Both of those two terms indicate transcending from one to the other state, from ignorance towards the knowledge of the Good, from illicit

20 Here the usage of the word “intellectual” may bring to mind a connotation between reason and rationalization. However, intellection is here in a meaning of reason (Gr. *dianoia*). See previous chapters to understand the distinction between the two, i.e. the reason and the intellect. Unfortunately, in today’s scientific and philosophical *Weltanschauung* the two are often confused.

and risky behaviors to behaviors, which are manifestations of virtues through which both the individual and society flourish (Hsu, 2007: 154).

Examples of transforming education and religiosity can be found in all traditions (Nasr, 1968). In the Eastern culture, which is still strongly rooted in sacred tradition, movement and physical exercise have been primarily seen as a skill and a means for self-transformation and service to the community, not as a mere game or leisure time (Herrigel, 1953). Each improvement in physical skill implied at the same time improvement in self-transformation and cultivation of one's character, and a social responsibility to be an agent of goodness (Herrigel, 1953; Nagatamo, 1992). Accordingly, each act ought to be embroidered with a "religious awakening" and "mental cultivation", which are manifested in cultivated character. It can be concluded that each person and sportsman have a task to bear in mind Plato's cultivation of the soul and act upon knowledge in order to experience "becoming" of the philosophy of nothingness, which is an attainment of "intellectual intuition" and experience of the one, underlying reality. In a holistic paradigm, the underlying reality is manifested on all the planes: body, mind, soul, spirit. Therefore, to remain in the "intellectual intuition", to be aware of the underlying reality, one ought to pay attention to all these four planes and to give a right to each of them. Rights of the body are: movement, healthy food, and a safe living place; rights of mind are: creativity, insight, contemplation; rights of the soul are: noble attributes and positive emotions; rights of the spirit are: a sense of purpose and connection with something higher than ego.

Holistic and bioethical sports signify becoming aware of the self and physical exercise through movement and rising consciousness about its purpose. Through a mindful approach such as this, an athlete may aim to train and take care of all four aspects of being with a general aim to find an individual answer to the question of how sports has a positive effect on himself, on his surrounding, and on the world. As a concluding note, it can be said that in order to reach the higher awareness and heal the afflicted mind an athlete ought to train all four domains equally well. A supportive argument for the note are the results of studies in the field of positive psychology, neuroscience, and epigenetics (see Goleman and Davidson, 2017; Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Studies also show that experience of purpose, as a common characteristic of mental health and holistic experience of motivation, can be motivated and trained through a holistic approach in education and training (see Branković and Badrić, 2020b; Mulhearn, Kullina and Lorenz, 2017). The holistic approach includes following practices that contribute to the realization of above-mentioned rights: physical

exercise, formal and informal education, such as critical thinking and speaking skills, volunteering, meditation, and prayer. Devoted application of these practices supports the cultivation of the four domains, and manifests in physical and mental (psychological) health as well-being and eudemonia. Overall, this approach to training and education emphasizes the importance of physical training, cognitive and meta-cognitive learning, healthy diet and spiritual development. Eventually, through mindful practices, an athlete becomes more purpose-driven in his life endeavors because they enable him to interpret and know what he does well/wrong, and enable him to eventually go beyond winning or losing, towards the *aperion* and the primordial state, which is regarded as the true estate of the human being.

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Edin Branković (Hrvatska)

Učiteljski fakultet, Sveučilište u Zagrebu
edin.brankovic@excellenceacademy.ba

SPORT, MENTALNO ZDRAVLJE I DILEME O SLAVI I USPJEHU - U POTRAZI ZA CJELOVITOM PARADIGMOM

Sažetak

Depresija ne samo da je najrasprostranjenija bolest današnjice već je mentalno zdravlje ujedno i otvoreno pitanje čak i u današnjem sportu. Cilj ovog istraživanja je prikazati teorijske i praktične pristupe koji bi mogli vratiti sport na mjesto koje mu i pripada - sport kao sredstvo za realizaciju *bioetičnosti*, to jest ponašanja koje je u suglasju s primordijalnom prirodom. Ovim istraživanjem je pokazano da kineziološka edukacija, sportski trening te način života koji su zasnovani i realizirani na cjelovitoj paradigmi pozitivno utječu na samoodređenje, usredotočenu svijest, doživljaj zanesenosti, intrinzičnu motivaciju, rastuće razmišljanje. Cjelovita paradigma znači pristup čovjeku ne samo kao tijelu ili umu, već zajedno tijelu i umu te kao duši i duhu. Cjeloviti pristup sportu i tjelovježbi koji uključuje filozofiju sporta, edukativnu, razvojnu i pozitivnu psihologiju, neuroznanost te kultivaciju «kreposnog karaktera» i «samotransformaciju», kako o tome govore Platonova filozofija i Filozofija ništavila Kyoto Škole, može rezultirati *bioetičkim sportom*.

Ključne riječi: usredotočena svijest, motivacija, bioetika, depresija,
Filozofija ništavila