

Olympic Education as an Intergenerational Relation of the Third Degree

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ABSTRACT

The 30th anniversary meeting of the Japanese Society for the Philosophy of Sport and Physical Education was held in September 2008. It has been over 30 years since this society was established. Nevertheless the tendency and recent trend in sport philosophy in Japan have not been conveyed abroad. The good reason behind this may be the language barrier between English and Japanese. This makes it difficult to spread the activities on sport philosophy in Japan throughout the world. The question arises as to whether sport philosophy in Japan has the same trend and tendency as sport philosophy in Western countries. We would like to report on sport philosophy in Japan, especially on its characteristics and future perspectives, in order to contribute toward the international development in this field. Sport was introduced into Japan from Western countries in the Meiji period when a national isolation policy in the Shogunate Government of the Edo period finished. The Japanese accepted and have been developing it as a means of school physical education. This fact shows why sport philosophy in Japan has its origins not in sport as culture but in sport in physical education at school. The Japanese philosophy of sport society was not founded by philosophers. It was founded and has been administered by experts in teaching sport and physical education. They recognized several reasons why sport philosophy widened its object from school physical education to sport as the cultural and public phenomenon in the 1960s. Competitive sport was recognized with Japan taking the opportunity of staging the Olympic Games in Tokyo in 1964. This happened because the nation was strongly interested in the competitive sport, and in particular in the Olympic Games. The object of sport philosophy came to be taken for the social meaning of this competitive sport. Also, the change of the Japanese mind structure from common consciousness to self-consciousness, which was affected by the understanding of the human being in the Western culture, made sport a certain action of personal meanings. We would like to suggest a future perspective of the sport philosophy in Japan.

KEYWORDS

sport philosophy, physical education, Japan

Introduction

The International Association for the Philosophy of Sport (IAPS) held its 36th annual conference in Tokyo in September last year. The meeting of the Japanese Society for the Philosophy of Sport and Physical Education (JSPSPE) was also held concurrently with this conference to

commemorate its 30th anniversary. We would like to report on sport philosophy in Japan, especially on its characteristics and future perspectives, in order to contribute toward the international development in this field.

The Japan Society for the Philosophy of Sport and Physical Education has been holding its annual meetings and symposiums every year since it was established. Nevertheless the tendency and recent trend in sport philosophy in Japan have not been conveyed abroad. The good reason behind this may be the language barrier between English and Japanese. It makes it difficult to spread the activities on sport philosophy in Japan throughout the world. The question arises as to whether sport philosophy in Japan has the same trend and tendency as sport philosophy in Western countries. Is it reasonable to assume that sport philosophy in Japan has an original aspect?

Introducing sport into Japan

Sport was introduced into Japan from Western countries in the Meiji period (1868-1912)¹. The Japanese accepted and have been developing it as a means of school physical education. This fact shows why sport philosophy in Japan has its origins not in sport as culture but in physical education at school. To be more precise, the Japanese philosophy of sport society was not founded by philosophers. It was founded and has been administered by experts in teaching sport and physical education in school. It was their interests in philosophy, not philosophers' interests in sport, which made it possible to establish the Japanese philosophy of sport society.

How was sport introduced into Japan? Akio Kataoka, former president of the International Association for the Philosophy of Sport, gave a lecture on how sport was accepted by the Japanese (Kataoka, 2008). It is said, according to him, that sport was introduced into Japan in the 19th century, when a national isolation policy of the Shogunate Government of Edo period (1603-1868) finished and Japan made a new start to become a modern state². Sport was introduced to an elite group of university students. In Japan, sport as a competition or game did not begin to infiltrate into the nation, but university students filled a vital role in playing it at the beginning.

Sport, however, was not considered to be culture. Sport in Japan before World War II, which was played by an elite group of university students, was regarded as of little intellectual value. Not only the students who played sport but also the professors and administrators in the universities had considered it to be conduct that is opposed to studies and scholarly attainments. The manner of considering sport not to be an intellectual conduct is common with a manner of Japanese philosophers towards sport. Paul Weiss, for example, reminds us that:

Yet as a rule philosophers have not looked carefully into the topic. They have neglected sport. Sport, of course, is not the only widespread activity that they have sleighted. Sex, work, play, and worldly success never won the steady attention of eminent philosophers. They have given considerable thought to the nature and desirability of achieving pleasure; they have occupied themselves with the idea of excellence and with desire for it; they have been appreciative of the fact that in many basic

¹ The Meiji period, or Meiji era, denotes the period in Japanese history during the 45-year reign of the Meiji Emperor (from 23 October 1868 to 30 July 1912). During this time, Japan began its modernization and rose to world power status. Meiji means 'Enlightened Rule.'

² The Edo period, or Tokugawa period, is a division of Japanese history running from 1603 to 1868 and constitutes the premodern era. The period marks the governance of the Edo or Tokugawa shogunate, which was officially established in 1603 by the first Edo shogun Tokugawa Ieyasu. The period ended with the Meiji Restoration, the restoration of imperial rule by the 15th and last shogun Tokugawa Yoshinobu. The Edo period is also known as the beginning of the early modern period of Japan.

ways men everywhere are men, with similar natures and appetites. But this has not led them to devote their time and energy to studying some of the most universal occupations of men. (Weiss 1969, p. 4)

“The structure of my feelings when playing sport” by Shôichi Nakai was the one and only work by a Japanese philosopher which interpreted sport philosophically. In this article he studied phenomenologically his personal aesthetic experiences gained from rowing (Nakai 1981). The same kind of philosophical interpretation of sport, unfortunately, did not spread to other Japanese philosophers. Nakai himself abandoned any further philosophical studies on sport.

On the other hand, physical education was introduced into schools since the establishment of an educational system at the Meiji Restoration (1868)³, and became an essential part of the school curriculum. It was important as a means of making the strong body, or the strong nation, until World War II had finished. Much was made of postwar physical education as a means to improve people’s health and was meant to be character-building. This is why we had a good grounding in Japan in studying physical education philosophically so that the development of philosophic study was easier in the field of physical education than sport. What follows below are the reasons why philosophy on physical education went before sport philosophy in Japan. Physical education was guaranteed in the national education system, so that there existed a constant number of researchers in the field of physical education who studied sport philosophically.

The study on sport philosophy in Japan, like the philosophic study of physical education, became popular and has been often conducted since World War II. We would like to consider, in the next section, the reason why sport philosophy widened its object from physical education to sport.

Philosophy of physical education or sport philosophy?

Several reasons have been recognised for why sport philosophy widened its object from school physical education to sport as the cultural and public phenomenon. One is the Japanese social background in the 1960s. Competitive sport was recognized in Japan, because the nation was strongly interested in it, taking the opportunity of organising the Tokyo Olympic Games in 1964. At this juncture, the object of sport philosophy came to be taken for the social meaning of competitive sport, and an ethical problem appeared when competitive sport had social value. The symbolic meaning of Olympic Games has been interpreted by Naofumi Masumoto, the president of the Japan Society for the Philosophy of Sport and Physical Education, who is famous for his Olympic Studies (Masumoto 1998, 2001, 2004, 2005).

The Tokyo Olympic Games promoted Japanese economic growth. Its influence extended not only to the economy, but also sports culture. As a result, people came to enjoy sport at places other than the school sport facilities, and in addition, it was recognized to be important to play sport after finishing school. The idea of lifetime sport spread quickly in Japan, after the introduction of the idea of lifelong integrated education, on which Paul Lengrand made a speech at one of the meetings held by UNESCO in Paris (Lengrand 1965). In this way, thoughts and conditions of both lifetime sports and lifelong integrated education were introduced into Japan at the same time, and sport was largely accepted and gained a lot of popularity. Thus the requirements for considering sport philosophically were fulfilled.

³ The Meiji Restoration, also known as the Meiji Ishin, Revolution or Renewal, was a chain of events that led to enormous changes in Japan's political and social structure. It occurred in the latter half of the 19th century, a period that spans both the late Edo period (often called Late Tokugawa shogunate) and the beginning of the Meiji Era.

The other reason is the change of the Japanese mental structure. It changed from common consciousness to self-consciousness, to put it concretely. This made sport a certain action of personal meanings that was, of course, affected by the understanding of the human being in the West. Originally there was no Japanese word corresponding with the English concept of the individual. Establishment of the subject has been at the core of modern Japanese thoughts since the Japanese word 'kojin' was established and used for the English concept of the individual after around 1850. Sport has come to be thought of as creative individual activities in Japan. The Japanese have established their character and have come to discover pleasure of living through sport. There may be the personal discovery through sport like this. This is the reason why the Western modern sport is prevalent in Japan, which is formally and spiritually different from Japanese martial arts.

The body as the important theme

The characteristics of sport philosophy in Japan may be that there are a lot of researchers who are interested in theories of the body. Articles concerning the body have been published constantly in several journals. In the 1980s two articles on the body were accepted by the Journal of the Philosophy of Sport and Physical Education. Yasuki Kato considered the concept of subject and clarified the concept of identity as a methodology of studying human movement (Kato 1983). Fumio Takizawa studied the problem of consciousness in physical activities, and clarified a the work of our consciousness in action by depending on phenomenology (Takizawa 1983).

Since the 1990s studies concerning theories of the body have developed with the establishment of their methods of phenomenology to the present day. Takizawa presented a paper entitled "A process of forming one's view of the human body" and clarified its difference between Japan and the Western countries (Takizawa 2005). He presented a paper on the human body from a phenomenological standpoint in 2006, the title of which is "The present state of one's view of the human body in Japan," and not only showed clearly what our view of the human body in Japan was but also considered how the view of the human body was constructed (Takizawa 2006). He also developed a comparative cultural study in "Formation process of one's view of the human body through a comparison between Japan, Germany and England." In this paper the result of questionnaires on one's view of the human body was compared, and it clarified that the formation process depended on one's culture (Takizawa, *et al.* 2007). Masahiro Takamatsu discussed in "A study on the mode of existence on the body in sport," whether the moving human body, which is the medium of expression in sport, retreats behind the expressed meanings and described the mode of existence of the body through comparison with the mediums of language and art. It was described that the moving human body does not retreat behind the expressed meanings and shows sensuous characteristics of its existence, and that the meanings expressed in sport were not tightly combined with the human moving body (Takamatsu 2004). Thus the characteristics of the Japanese journal articles are that a lot of them take the human body as an object of study.

On the other hand, what kind of tendency do these articles have – especially those from the Journal of the Philosophy of Sport? During these 10 years, several articles have been published laying the stress on an ethical problem, and the ethical study on doping in particular has continuously been considered to be an important theme. When we turn our attention to the Japanese journal articles, ethical studies on sport have been carried out by Yoshitaka Kondo and other researchers. Kondo considered ethically the gender verification regulation in order to propose an ethically rational means (Kondo 1997). He clarified, in one of his papers written in 1998, the issue of an individual's sovereignty over his/her own body and person in the field of professional boxing (Kondo 1998). In the Journal of the Philosophy of Sport and Physical Education, however, such papers on ethical problems

concerning sport are few beyond our expectation. The difference of percentage as regards the ethical studies on sport between these two journals may be caused by the respective editorial policy.

Pursuit of others and community

We would like to suggest a future perspective of the sport philosophy in Japan. In recent years the recurrence of Japanese original spirituality has been spreading in Japan. This is the recurrence from the modern self called 'me' to communities called 'us'. Japanese sport philosophers have been dealing with this theme as a problem of communication. The theories of communication have been developed in relation to the body theory and its relationship to mind. One of the examples is the theory that enables us to communicate with each other by playing sport or by enjoying physical activities. It is not too much to say that this is the research to investigate our mutual consciousness in terms of sport.

Several articles studied solidarity or communication with others in the scene of sport. Kenji Ishigaki emphasized that it is important for the person who performs physical activities to be able to sympathize with other performer, in order to reproduce the performance. He tried to clarify the structure of sympathy, and to indicate the method of performance reproduction (Ishigaki 1995). Koyo Fukasawa considered the possibility of understanding the human being in sport. He discussed the mutual understanding by sport between different communities (Fukasawa, *et al.* 1999).

There are several pieces of research about the possibilities of forming relations with others not only through the language, but also the body. Ai Tanaka, for example, in her paper entitled "Education for 'consideration to others' in physical education," reconsidered a general idea of "consideration to others," in order to clarify one's relation to others in physical education. She concluded that "consideration to others" is not just a feeling, but an ability to interpret a situation from certain viewpoint, as well as producing the necessary action (Tanaka 2005). Koji Takahashi clarified how we understand and practise "connection as action" with other players in movement. He concluded that "connection as action" is the practical ability to make an inter-subjective communication, and that movement should be grasped not from "mental connection," but from "connection as action" (Takahashi 2005).

Why have the studies of such tendencies increased in Japan recently? The recent social background is pointed out as one of the reasons. We Japanese have the culture which has characteristics of harmony with others and community, as had been pointed out by the past Japanese culture theory. We have developed a solidarity awareness for those like ourselves rather than that of oneself or the individual in the West. However, recently, consciousness and the culture of such a community are becoming extinct at a social level. Sport and physical education play an important role in respect for others, and in recovering such a community, in which it is expected that the issues of ethics develop not as personal ethics, but as group ethics or ethics of mutual relations. The rebuilding of the community becomes the issues across various areas in modern Japanese society such as education, administration and medical care, and sport is expected to be one of the important elements for this community rebuilding.

The merit of translation

Translation of the Western books in any areas helped Japan become a modern industrial state since the Meiji period. The field of sport philosophy is no exception. Several books written by the Western sport philosophers continue to be translated into Japanese (Fraleigh 1984, Lenk 1990, 1997,

Lenk & Pilz 1989, Meinberg 1995, Thomas 1983, Weiss 1969, Ziegler 1964, 1977). They exerted a great influence on the development of sport philosophy in Japan. However, in recent years it has seldom been the case that books on sport philosophy are translated as they were. The role of translation is relatively decreasing in the field of sport philosophy in Japan. As one of the reasons, we can point out that the evaluation of translating books becomes lower and lower in the academic world, and that translation is not considered to be a creative work by the administrator of universities. Generally the Japanese researchers have actively interested themselves in writing an original article rather than a translation. This will apply to sport philosophy.

A market of sport philosophy in Japan

As far as English is an international official language, if we do not write an article in English, it will not be read worldwide. The author in non-English countries must write his/her work in English for readers in the world. If that is the case, whatever is the meaning of journals and books published in a non-English language like Japanese? There is a market for sport philosophy even in non-English countries. For example, the Japan Society for the Philosophy of Sport and Physical Education has about 170 members, and the potential demands for sport philosophy can be recognized among those who belong to the Japan Society of Physical Education, Health and Sport Sciences (JSPE), which has a membership of over 6,000. Some of them arouse their interests in sport philosophy, just as others give thought to the different areas of sport sciences. It might not be a continuous interest by any means, but it may possibly be the potential demands to sport philosophy. Thus, in Japan, there are a lot of people concerned with physical education who are connected to the market of sport philosophy.

On the other hand, for the present, the Japanese philosophers do not exert such a great influence on sport philosophy. Not many of them take an interest in sport philosophy and they write their article in Japanese whenever they present their work. Information is seldom available on their work in English from abroad. The articles on sport philosophy will be published in Japanese in many cases from now on in Japan. However, it is desirable for them to be written in English if universalities as scientific research are pursued. The Japanese researchers may choose either to accept the demands in the country, or to publish their work in English to pursue universalities as scientific research.

Conclusion

The study of sport philosophy in Japan has many relations with the theme about others and communication with them. The study of sport ethics adopts the viewpoint of asking about interpersonal relations rather than personal ethics. This is the characteristic of sport philosophy and ethics in Japan. It is thought that in the background is a social request to demand the sense of community. Sport philosophy in Japan may develop in this direction to spread this sense of community.

Up to now Japanese sport philosophy has developed from translating the foreign documents and gaining new knowledge. Although it is uncertain in future whether this will be maintained in the same way, the translations into Japanese will have an important meaning in the future. The reasons are as follows: It is important and effective for anyone who has an interest in sport philosophy to read documents in Japanese rather than a foreign language as far as Japanese is taught as an official language and, in consequence, the Japanese market on sport philosophy is maintained. It can be considered that the translations into Japanese from foreign languages will play an important role in future particularly for young researchers on sport philosophy.

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