

# Why Pluralism, Relativism, and Panthareism: An Ethical Landscape with Sport in the Background\*

## Authors' contribution:

- A) conception and design of the study
- B) acquisition of data
- C) analysis and interpretation of data
- D) manuscript preparation
- E) obtaining funding

Jerzy Kosiewicz

*Josef Pilsudski University of Physical Education in Warsaw, Poland*

## ABSTRACT

In reference to the monograph entitled "Sports and Ethics: Philosophical Studies", published in the "Physical Culture and Sport. Studies and Research" quarterly (2014, vol. 62), and in particular in reference to the paper entitled "The Normative Ethics and Sport" (Kosiewicz, 2014, pp. 5-22), the article presents new and at the same time supplementary views on the relationships between sports and normative ethics. The main objective of the paper is to provide a rationale as to why these relationships may be viewed in the context of the assumptions of ethical pluralism, ethical relativism, ethical panthareism, and axionormative negationism.

The text is of a strictly cognitive and extra-ideological nature and it attempts to avoid **moral valuation**, **moralism**, and **moralizing**. The view it postulates is also labeled as **ethical negationism**, which rejects the necessity for external support and enhancement of sports rivalry rules with moral principles. It assumes that regulations, book rules, and game rules as well as the principles of sports rivalry ought to be of an entirely amoral character, independent of ethics.

The article suggests minimizing the impact of moral postulates on sport. It postulates a need for widespread propagation of this point of view in competitive, professional, spectator, and Olympic sport disciplines, as well as in *top-level sports* or *elite sports*. The views presented in the paper point to the need to separate **normative ethics** from sports as far as it is at all possible in contemporary sports indoctrinated with obligations or attitudes of a moral tenor. This is because **normative ethics** – according to the author - is **relative ethics**, depending on an unlimited number of variables, e.g., various social contexts or individual points of view.

The text engages in a polemic with colloquial and evaluative opinions of those sports fans who by all means strive to bolster its formal, functional, and axiological status. A significant part of them erroneously attributes sports to an extraordinary moral mission related to promoting an intuitively understood good with a religious and extra-confessional tenor.

## KEYWORDS

professional and spectator sports, normative ethics, ethical pluralism, ethical relativism, ethical panthareism, ethical negationism

\* This paper was prepared within the framework of the statutory research Ds. 209 financed by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education.

## Ethical Rigorism or Relativism

Before beginning my deliberations, I wish to indicate that despite the suggestion the subheading presented above contains, no disjunctive alternative occurs here. While the notion of **moral rigorism** excludes **ethical relativism** from within its scope, the notion of **ethical relativism** does not exclude from its scope any form of **moral rigorism**. Therefore, I would like to announce that this section of the paper does not so much aim to juxtapose specific notions, as it does to signal the superiority, or axiological advantage, of applying **moral freedom** or **moral democracy** over realizing assumptions of **ethical rigorism**, both in its more or less radical versions, regardless of more or less “noble” justification contexts and metaethical provenience (philosophical, sociological, psychological, or confessional).

As far as texts on **moral norms** are concerned, Protagoras’ **individualistic relativism**<sup>1</sup> (the idea of the man as the measure of all things) holds more appeal for me than Socrates’ **virtue philosophy**. I prefer the moral concepts of Friedrich Nietzsche<sup>2</sup> to those of Immanuel Kant. Kant’s categorical imperative:

<sup>1</sup> In his most important work, *Truth*, Protagoras wrote that “Man [...] is the measure of all things, of the existence of things that are, and of the non-existence of things that are not” (frg. B 1). In relation thereto, taking into account epistemological and ethical issues, one may pronounce that everyone has the right to have their current impressions, imaginings, beliefs, and moral views. Therefore, there exist innumerable individual and subjective “truths” and concepts, postulates, and moral norms that emerge and dissipate; there is no moral truth, no irrefutable concept of the good, objective and general, that is the same for all and always the same. All ethical judgments remain part of an inseparable relationship to the consciousness of a given specific human, which is why the human is the measure of all things. It is the human and his own – individual and subjective – intuition of good that become the most important moral criterion for them (cf. Krokiewicz, 1995, s. 234-235).

<sup>2</sup> Nota bene, as a prominent classical philologist and outstanding expert on ancient culture and philosophy, Friedrich Nietzsche expressly referred to Protagoras’ views, and in particular to his epistemological and axiological relativism. This pertains also to moral pluralism and relativism. He was an advocate of the reevaluation of social values, particularly religious, educational, and moral. The variability of ethical norms – that is moral panthareism – can be attributed more to Heraclitus and Plato rather than to Protagoras and Nietzsche. Nevertheless, the postulate of reevaluating values contains a suggestion of variability of moral norms.

Frederic Copleston confirms this point of view to some degree (not fully) by indicating that, according to Nietzsche – that “what we see, therefore, in the history of morals is the conflict of two moral attitudes and outlooks” (Copleston, 1963, p. 401). Firstly, he refers to morality stemming from the herd behavior characteristic of slaves and the herd behavior characteristic of the democratic and socialist movements, “which Nietzsche interprets as derivatives of Christianity” (Copleston, 1963, p. 402); and secondly, to “Übermensch morality”, i.e., “morality of masters”, that is “aristocratic morality”.

Therefore, in Nietzsche’s philosophy one may detect the presence of a permanent dialectic fundament, resting at the bases (obviously diachronic) of the history of morals. It contains the two abovementioned permanent elements, mutually impacting each other in metaphysical and dialectic terms. The confrontation of oppositions contained within this dialectic configuration results, among others, in the variability of moral norms, i.e., ethical panthareism, e.g., pertaining to variable forms of herd or slave morality (e.g., bourgeois or socialist morality).

This also indicates that Nietzsche maintains “that the concept of a uniform, universal and absolute moral system is to be rejected. For it is the fruit of resentment and represents inferior life, descending life, degeneracy, whereas the aristocratic morality represents the movement of ascending life. And in place of the concept of one universal and absolute moral system (or indeed of different sets of values, relative to different societies, if each set is regarded as binding all members of the society) we must put a concept of gradation of rank among different types of morality. The herd is welcome to its own set of values, provided that it is deprived of the power of imposing them on the higher type of man who is called upon to create his own values which will enable man to transcend his present condition” (Copleston, 1963, p. 403).

Copleston indicates therefore that Nietzsche consequently rejects ethical universalism or absolutism. He confirms the existence of ethical pluralism and relativism. It is possible to detect in this philosophy not only assumptions related to moral reorientation or moral chaos stemming from the multiform nature of normative ethics. It is also possible to notice within it – i.e., within the moral reorientation – characteristics of ethical panthereism. If the morality of masters is mainly characterized by the rejection of existing bourgeois (religious – including Christian – democratic, socialist) moral norms: namely socialist views manifested in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century), this means that this moral reorientation is approximate to or even becomes moral crypto-negationism. Therefore, it constitutes a peculiar form of amorism, as it is situated outside of the existing morality, beyond good and evil, beyond the nobleness and wickedness related to it: it reevaluates the values towards amorality.

universality and necessity or ethical relativism” - Kosiewicz, 2014, pp. 12-13)<sup>3</sup>. This is because I have more trust towards **moral relativism** rather than the fixed determinants of Socrates’ **ethical intellectualism** and

This is not the case of getting rid of all limitations and self-limitations in terms of conduct. The main limitations to social life are legal codes of criminal, civil, and administrative procedure (while in sport – rulebooks, rules of competition, or game rules – derivatives of the Code of Civil Procedure). Sanctions related to them, i.e., penalizing behavior non-compliant with legal regulations, are more effective in a democratic society than moral sanctions. Moral norms, i.e., established and applied normative ethics, are neither common nor indispensable: they are of a discretionary, relative, and pantheist nature.

In Nietzsche’s case, the reevaluation of values towards the amoral constitutes “a means of enabling man to transcend himself in the direction of Superman, a higher level of human existence” (Copleston, 1963, p. 403). This means that the *Übermensch* must emancipate himself, from influences of individual normative ethics and universal values, among others, but also from conventional, colloquial, commonsensical, or average norms (having adverse impacts, imposing limitations on his breeding and self-formation) to be able to create original, exceptional, and outstanding values that make attaining a higher level of cultural existence possible.

<sup>3</sup> Kant’s categorical imperative: universality and necessity or ethical relativism Philosophers attempt to overcome ethical pluralism and relativism (as well as the potential ethical chaos and ethical anarchism) using rigorous solutions that do not accept other moral viewpoints. This concerns the aforementioned religious philosophy (that uses, e.g., the ethics of Catholic personalism to a greater or lesser extent related to theology or not at all related to it) as well as non-religious philosophy that refers to, e.g., ethical assumptions described in Kant’s *Critique of Practical Reason* and *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*.

Kant’s categorical imperative is in this case wrongly given as an example of reliable foundations that formally and axiologically eliminate the ambiguity of normative ethics. The imperative is as follows: “Act so that you use humanity, as much in your own person as in the person of every other, always at the same time as end and never merely as means” (Kant, 2002, p. 151). However, Kant himself unexpectedly introduces a giant breach in this rule: he disputes its universality and necessity by relativizing it and negating its absolute character in the case of criminals who break criminal, administrative, and civil laws. In a footnote to his second commentary about the imperative in question, he states that a criminal could implore representatives of law to not act in a way they find repulsive, i.e., to not treat the criminal as means to achieving ends pertaining to their profession and accepted by the society. Kant also writes that “the criminal would argue on this ground against the judge who punishes him, etc.” (Kant, 2002, p. 48).

Kant assumes that if a criminal (regardless of how serious the crimes he or she commits) does not, during his evil acts, treat others, i.e., his or her victim, in an autotelic manner (as an end in itself), but rather only as a means of realizing own needs, then the categorical imperative no longer applies to himself or herself.

Thus, Kant establishes a clearly indisputable primacy of law over normative ethics, i.e., over the form of ethics that he himself claims is necessary and universal.

From this point of view, criminals should always be treated as a means to achieving social ends (grounded in law), never as an end in itself. The metaphysical justification of morality and the corresponding categorical imperative that stem from God and pure intelligences are less important than human law that exists in different forms throughout the society.

If the categorical imperative cannot be used in a state of ethical ends in an absolute manner, then, in fact, we are dealing with moral relativism. The imperative depends not only on a single, universal set of criminal, civil, and administrative laws (as this would be impossible), but also on numerous legal codices, including extremely undemocratic ones, that differ greatly between themselves (this was especially true in Kant’s times). The categorical imperative may or may not include a given moral norm depending on the law in force in a given state of amoral legislation. A given moral norm (e.g., prohibition against incest) may be treated as universal and necessary, and breaking it may be penalized by criminal law. A different moral norm may allow incest from both the moral and the legal standpoints. The state authorities and the laws they issued are the deciding factors here, while the moral postulate (the categorical imperative) is secondary to the law and relies on opposing points of view. Suspending the imperative depending on various legal arrangements leads not only to ethical relativism, but also to potential moral chaos. Something considered moral in one country may be a crime in a different country and a virtue to be emulated in yet another country. For instance, in Catholicism, having only one wife is the legal norm as well as an ethical categorical imperative. In contrast, polygamy is allowed both legally and morally in Islam, but is not and cannot be a categorical imperative because not everyone can afford multiple wives.

Another dependency of law manifests itself here. The categorical imperative in the narrow definition may involve only moral norms and behaviors that are not legally prohibited in a given country. The imperative is universal and necessary to a limited extent (as was the case for, e.g., doping of athletes in the German Democratic Republic and in the Soviet Union). The categorical imperative in the broad definition involves, from Kant’s point of view, only ethical norms that

Kant's **ethical rigorism** (based, among others, on the concept of the **categorical imperative**) as well as thinkers more or less directly drawing on their views.

In my opinion, relativists' argumentation (explanatory rather than evaluative in nature) appears to be more sensible and rational (even in the case of Nietzsche who, after all, was not a eulogist of rationalism), and their knowledge of morality seems more convincing.

After all, justification contexts (**metaethical arguments**) referring to, for example, some axionormatively irrefutable supernatural transcendental being, i.e., in the case of Socrates, referring to *daimon* (*daimonion*, demon, also identified with Eros<sup>4</sup>, or, in the case of Kant, to the noumenal world, god, and pure intelligences, are insufficient. This is because demonstrating the certainty of their existence in an unassailable manner and, therefore, providing an undeniable proof of the irrefutability (in the ontological and axiological sense) of the source of values and norms established by or derived from them, is possible neither from the point of view of philosophy nor from the point of view of exact science<sup>5</sup>.

*Nota bene*, Protagoras confirmed this point of view to some extent in his treatise *On the Gods* where he wrote "Whether there are gods or not, I cannot tell, or what form they may have; for to know, there are numerous obstacles: lack of clarity and brevity of human life" (Protagoras, frg. B 4; cf. Plato, Theaet. 162 d.; cf. Krokiewicz, 1995, p. 233). If we do not know whether gods exist or not, we are unable to state whether they set some moral values or not. Nor can we say whether or not such values are permanent, invariable, irrefutable, or universal. Any values, including ethical norms, set by gods, are as uncertain as the existence of gods themselves, for "there are numerous obstacles" (ibidem), not limited to "lack of clarity and brevity of human life" (ibidem).

Admittedly, suggestions and convictions as well as premises and implications related to existence of supernatural beings – this pertains also to all theories seeking to persuade us about the existence of perfect beings of religious provenience (e.g., assumptions with a theogonic or theological tenor) – are based on cognitive intuition – varied, hugely diversified, sophisticated, and substantiated in a number of ways, yet impossible to confirm. **Normative ethics** related to them in terms of sources is of an exclusively

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do not conflict with the laws of all democratic and non-democratic countries during his time. This indicates that Kant understands and interprets these norms in a positivistic manner.

A suspension of this kind may lead to neutralization, i.e., to foregoing any use of the imperative, as crime can be relativized and understood differently and have varying forms and implications depending on culture, civilization, needs, situation, and social circumstances. On the one hand, killing a person may be treated as a violation of the categorical imperative, and on the other, totalitarian legislators may deem it a necessary act that brings desired and expected outcomes. Consequently, one may conclude that anyone who suspends this imperative in relation to another human at the same time suspends it in relation to himself or herself and can thus be treated instrumentally and punished.

In fact, treating others as a means to the desired ends does not have to be morally reprehensible at all. This phenomenon is common in almost all production processes and in professional sports, Olympic sports, or show sports.

Another of Kant's "justifications" of the imperative in his *Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals* comes from a strong belief that a noumenal world exists. The justification is insufficient, as it is based on the need to prove the existence of higher, i.e., pure, intelligences (including the Christian God). Doing so is impossible from both the scientific (including empirical) and philosophical viewpoints.

Imbuing praxeological rules, including rules of competition in sport, with moral norms would be a factual and formal error because normative ethics is completely external in relation to formal rules. This is because formal rules involve instrumental (rather than autotelic) criteria of the effectiveness of actions. Moral considerations are an external interpretation in relation to what is autonomous. Moral interpretations may vary depending on the individual, such as a review of a play written by theater critic (Kosiewicz, 2014, pp. 12-13).

<sup>4</sup> Władysław Stróżewski identifies Socrates' daimonion with Eros (Stróżewski, 1981, pp. 176 -179).

<sup>5</sup> This issue is characterized by H. Benisz in *Edukacja Filozoficzna* [Philosophical Education] (Benisz, 1997, p. 151), among others. I also mentioned this issue in several papers (e.g., Kosiewicz, 20014, pp. 13-14). It is also possible to draw attention to the text on a peculiar similarity of justification contexts of certainty of cognition which can be found both in the views of Socrates and Kant (Kosiewicz, 2009, pp. 111-112).

discretionary nature, placing its inherent rules outside of truth and falsity in the logical sense, despite appearing sensible and justified to the individuals and social groups that apply and propagate it.

*Nota bene*, any emotional utterance of evaluative or autotelic nature and concerning moral, aesthetic, or religious norms is situated beyond the reach of truth and falsity in the logical sense (i.e., it is neither true nor false), similarly as myths and mythologies and various ethical rules and soteriological procedures related to them. Obviously, this also pertains to other sentences with discretionary content, and to potential criteria with discretionary characteristics, since pronouncing on logical value of specific sentences on their basis is impossible as well.

### Universalism Versus Moral Relativism and Panthareism

In my opinion, **normative ethics**, in an uncountable number of its forms, contains no premises that irrefutably point to existence of universal values. Even if they suggest their existence, then it refers exclusively to metaethical assumptions (adopted more or less consciously and openly) with particular, limited, and frequently almost peripheral range, related to socio-cultural context of a given **normative ethics**.

This also pertains to **the Platonic idea of the good**, commonly and recklessly treated as a testament to **ethical universalism**. I am of the opinion that, in substance, it is a manifestation and legitimization of **moral relativism**, since it accepts and encourages all possible interpretations and concretizations of the good and their inherent **sets of ethical norms** (among others: the good postulated by pickpockets, anarchists, fundamentalists, or terrorists – e.g., Irish, once fighting to liberate their country). **The Platonic concept of the good** (also pertaining to uncountable concretizations of the **idea of the good**), in reality constitutes a negation of possibilities of emergence of some universal normative ethics acceptable for everyone, yet in its substance, it is a negation of postulates advocating **rigorism, universalism, and an invariability of moral principles** (*nota bene* the **idea of good** in Plato's view is invariable in itself). Yet, I presume that neither from the point of view of the Platonic idea of the good nor from the point of view of its possible objectifications would any general unification and acceptability and application of ethical values, norms, or moral codes ever occur, among others due to their inevitable (and common) variability, which I define in this text and this book with the name of **ethical panthareism**<sup>6</sup>.

<sup>6</sup> The notion of ethical panthareism (from *panta rhei*: everything flows – the words of Heraclitus of Ephesus) indicates that moral norms, principles, and values are not subject to petrification: they are liquid, they do not stay in one place, they are in a constant social flux, they appear and dissipate, and they are characterized by constant and uninhibited, at times violent while at times decelerated, variability. Their factographic reconstructions and descriptions are only a paused and permanently fixed record of a specific moral situation, are removed from further historical context freeze frames, images, photographs of moral assumptions and relationships existing in a given place (and a community connected with it), just a reflection of such moral assumptions and relationships to have emerged at a given time.

Referring to Heraclitean notions, ethical panthareism can also be defined as ethical variabilism or ethical Heraclitism. I treat these three terms as analogical utterances. The first, i.e., the term of panthareism, is a neologism; in turn, the other two – variabilism and Heraclitism – originate from the Ephesian theory of being and point to its variability – one of the most essential qualities of nature. Heraclitus undertook to prove that everything flows. If everything flows, then ethical norms are also liquid. For this reason, I found that the notion of panthareism – to a degree anchored in ontology – may prove equally useful to define and determine liquidity, reorientation, transformation, transfer, and diffusion of diverse moral rules. These changes occur both calmly and impetuously, just as in nature, without interference of any abstract and controlling efficient cause, purposefulness and development directions and contents of ethical norms set a priori, without any superordinate mind, any absolute deciding on the form of morality. In this case, the subject of cognition is the cause and manifestation of the variability in moral values within the context of ontological and axiological assumptions of morality philosophy (i.e., metaethics). Moreover, the Heraclitean saying *panta rhei*, widely-known from high school and academic textbooks, is an expression that outside of philosophical circles is a lot more well-known and hence – a lot more communicative.

*Nota bene*, the Heraclitean concept of being, i.e., its variability, does not stem from, nor does it depend on discretion of the cognizing and assessing entity; it does not depend on the human: it is an objective phenomenon. The human may only perceive this variability and, possibly, formulate an inductive recording law or rule on this basis that is an effect of



In reality, the Platonic concept of the good is also a sophisticated dialectic construction, in a given case permanently associating **moral universalism** with **ethical pluralism**:

*Moral pluralism has always been and continues to be a common (universal) phenomenon. It constantly changes its faces, increasing their number and range of impact.*

Plato must have, as I tend to think, been aware of the relationship existing between **moral universalism** and **ethical pluralism** since he had assumed that the ideas – these hailing from the world of eternal ideas – allow for a possibility of uncountable concretizations in the form of material or abstract beings (e.g., assessments, norms, patterns, standards, codes, models, or moral conduct schemata). On the other hand, he wanted to preserve (and not to undermine) the **Socratic virtue ethics** – his mentor's **philosophy of the moral good**. All in all, he made this moral good the highest idea in his own hierarchy of eternal ideas. In connection therewith, he took good care both with Socrates' legacy (refraining from openly undermining the latter's ethics) and originality of his own ideas among others encompassing ontological<sup>7</sup>, axiological<sup>8</sup>, and moral pluralism. In my opinion, Plato's **moral pluralism** is simultaneously hidden

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the activity of the mind operating in the Universe. In turn, the moral norms are, as was emphasized above, of a discretionary nature – that is, situational and relative among others. Their liquidity depends on the human and social environment as well as variable qualities related to them, but also on diverse factors impacting them. Despite that, on the basis of research intuition and empirical investigations of sociological, psychological or ethnographic tenor, or investigations in the realm of scientific study of religion – it is possible to formulate a recording law pertaining to ethics as well, the law ruling on impermanence and constant and inevitable variability of moral norms – impermanence which constitutes a fundamental assumption of ethical pantheism. All of them – both the individual and the collective – are liquid. We will never enter the same moral environment again, each time we will be faced with a different environment, i.e., surroundings that have been more or less altered in the axionormative sense.

Even in the environment saturated with rigorous ethical principles – consistently emphasizing the need for them to be durable and permanent – evaluations and contexts of their axionormative justifications will be subject to changes depending on the current mental (emotional, cognitive, volitional) disposition of given individuals, which can be influenced, among others, by current weather conditions, fatigue, health conditions (a possible somatic, relative, or psychiatric disorder – e.g., depression), financial, family, religious, political, or professional worries).

<sup>7</sup> This pluralism (not just dualism) is obvious, for example, when we take into consideration the qualities of:

a) Primary matter – an abstract being which upon actualizing its evident sensory properties (i.e., upon becoming transformed into nature) must deteriorate, deviating from its ideal prototypes. This is why primary matter is not an ideal being, i.e., it is not a perfect being unlike eternal ideas or the Demiurge;

b) Human souls that are not and cannot be perfect, unlike other ideas or the Demiurge. They are not perfect since they are burdened with a stigma of sin (originating from orphic anthropogony) and the need to adhere to soteriological (redemptive) assumptions, cognitive perfection, i.e., extending one's resources of philosophical knowledge. Even when they attain this level of wisdom and, therefore, of knowledge that will make redemption possible for them, that is, liberation from the fetters of corporeality, then their knowledge will stem from and reflect only the human's limited and negligible cognitive abilities. It will never be the wisdom, that is, full or absolute knowledge on par with divine knowledge. Nota bene, Socrates, proclaimed as the most sagacious of men by Diotima, a woman from the prophetic city, stated that he knew that he knew nothing. Therefore, the human soul will never attain the level of perfection characteristic of gods. Hence, there is not a perfect or ideal being, despite staying permanently in the world of eternal ideas. The Platonic supernatural world is therefore diversified and pluralistic. Moreover, Plato's ontology – also assuming the existence of metaphysical matter (devoid of quantitative and qualitative qualities) and matter perceived through the senses – has a fully pluralistic tenor.

c) Eternal ideas.

In the Platonic world of supernatural beings, there are abstract beings of diverse qualities, among others such as: the Demiurge, religious gods that are different from the Demiurge, the primary matter, ideas dwelling in the world of eternal ideas, diverse human souls. It also features animal and plant souls that are different from those of humans, as well as souls related to various larger or smaller fragments of the Cosmos (investigated from the point of view of hylozoism and panpsychism) and, moreover, a diversified material world. Nota bene, the matter occurs in at least two forms: the metaphysical (abstract) one and the one accessible via the senses, that is qualitative and quantitative. Considering the reasoning above, one may state that Platonic ontology is of a pluralistic rather than a dualistic nature.

<sup>8</sup> I discussed the sense, source, and manifestation of values, among others, in the *Człowiek i Światopogląd* /The Human and the Worldview/ magazine (Kosiewicz, 1989, pp. 83-94).

(implicit) **ethical relativism** – i.e., **crypto-relativism** – because **the notion of the good** applies to various groups and individuals who feel the good intuitively and in their own way to a degree in which it is possible for a specific group and a human to be connected with it.

Moreover, one may add that – if according to Plato the Cosmos (as nature and perfect order, i.e., the Pythagorean order) is subject to permanent change as well as inevitable and incessant degradation (*nota bene*: at the beginning, the Cosmos was perfect since it was created by the Demiurge in the likeness of eternal ideas), it is constantly changing for the worse, then it is possible to attribute – although it is a risky yet acceptable supposition (hypothesis) – a similar characteristic, i.e., the quality of variability, to social life. Is it, in connection therewith, possible to assume that also social transformations are, according to Plato, subject to permanent degradation? I think not. However, it is possible to assume that social relations are also variable, that various forms of **normative ethics** related therewith are also subject to transformations, permanently striving for **the idea of the good** understood intuitively and in manifold ways. The concept of the world, society, and **the moral good** in Plato's philosophy therefore assumes incessant **panthareism** – a necessity and commonness of changes in nature, society, and **normative ethics**.

*Nota bene*, in conceptual terms **ethical relativism** of Protagoras and his adherents corresponds with Heraclitus' theory of variability of nature, known also as variabilism or even Heraclitism. Referring to this theory and Heraclitus' of Ephesus' sentence, which offers some substantiation to it in indicating that *panta rhei* (that everything flows), one might rule that since everything flows, then also societies and **moral norms** connected with them are also liquid, i.e., variable. What follows is that not only do we deal with social panthareism (i.e., instability of (not only) the contemporary world; Bauman, 2006), but also with **ethical panthareism**, corresponding to and justifying also the meaningfulness and multiformity of **ethical pluralism**.

This is confirmed in the Cartesian mode, obviously, clearly, and expressly through empirical research and colloquial experience. Furthermore, **ethical panthareism, moral pluralism, and ethical relativism** alike are connected with such moral notions and phenomena such as: **ethical subjectivism** and **moral situationism, moral relationism, and ethical re-orientation, moral evolutionism, and ethical revolutionism, moral chaos and ethical anarchism** (Kosiewicz, 2014, pp. 16-20). This pertains also to **ethical amoralism and negationism**, which, admittedly, recognize the possibility of existence of **multiform normative ethics** (an undefined number of its forms, manifestations, and transformations), but at the same time they reject the need and exigency of its – or their – application.

### In the Circle of Determinants of Ethical Relativism, Pluralism, and Panthareism

**Moral relativism, ethical pluralism, and moral panthareism** allow for the possibility of:

1. Such a **revaluation of ethical values**, which leads to rejecting them in full as norms of little applicability both in terms of society and culture, as is the case in, for example, broadly understood sport. This breeds consequences in the form of **ethical negationism** and **amoralism** (Kosiewicz, 2014, pp. 13-15) which assume that book rules, principles, game rules, and provisions of the Code of Administrative Procedure (CAP (Pl: KPA)), the Code of Civil Procedure (CCP (Pl: KPC)), and the Code of Criminal Procedure (CCP (Pl: KPP)) are sufficient to regulate behavior in sport.

2. Rejecting **universalism, general unification**, and potential **ethical globalism**, here understood as a global impact (aided by "global control or global power" (translated from Polish, Bauman, 2007, p. 70) – e.g., allegedly **universal moral norms**<sup>9</sup>. These forms in which normative ethics manifests itself are deprived of a possibility for their full, i.e., global, realization. The procedure of realization of **normative ethics**, for example in the form of a consistent and relentless imposition, in its extreme form is treated as a manifestation of **ethical totalitarianism**. A procedure of this type – even in the approach of **ethical**

<sup>9</sup> Cf.: Z. Bauman (2007). Szanse etyki w globalnym świecie /Chances of Ethics in the Global World/. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Znak

**totalitarianism** – may be commenced and continued, yet it will never be generally finished (it will not be manifested in its final, that is absolutely complete, form, complete in global terms) despite persistent endeavors of its proponents and functionaries (e.g., the Holy Inquisition of the Soviet NKVD). It will not encompass the society in the total, world-wide, global approach.

In this case, an exception comes as **ethical totalitarianism** having a particular tenor, with smaller or larger, at times peripheral, range, e.g., as in Cuba or North Korea. The armed systemic revolution that has occurred there has resulted in all-encompassing and ruthless **ethical totalitarianism**. Penalizing dissenters who more or less openly contest its postulates has taken on a consistent and anti-humanitarian form, even including a capital punishment sanctioned by “inhumane” legal provisions. The same applies also to other states who draw upon ideologies with a communist or theocratic tenor.

**Ethical totalitarianism** extended and continues to extend in a total global manner, on one hand, to the population of a given state and other “satellite countries” that depend on this state in political, economic, and military terms; on the other hand, it has been a manifestation of a peculiar **ethical particularism**, i.e., it has been something distinct and separate in relation to other societies, including democratic societies. It was and continues to be simply isolated by them and their democratic institutions, favoring values that are characteristic of **moral democracy**. They created conditions conducive to propagating independent **moral postulates**, which, admittedly, assume a potential environmental **ethical sanction** (constituting a lesser or greater nuisance or being more or less effective), yet never a legal penalization.

*Nota bene*, **moral democracy** may be first and foremost understood as a contradistinction of **ethical totalitarianism**. This aforementioned totalitarianism stems mostly from the system of government, the political system and ideology related to it, which indisputably impose **moral rigorism**. Proponents of **ethical totalitarianism** usually have global ambitions – i.e., they seek its maximum globalization, to make the **normative ethics** inherent within it the basis of moral conduct for all societies and individuals, inhabiting the entire global community. Yet, as Zygmunt Bauman emphasizes – “*Globalization in its current form signifies a progressive weakening of power of nation-states and (to date) there is not any effective substitute for them*” (Bauman, 2007, p. 68). This points to the fact that globalization, in general – including **moral globalization**:

- a) Does not abolish legal regulations in the form of codes of criminal, administrative, and civil procedure characteristic for and binding in a given country;
- b) But is conducive to propagation of **democracy, flexibility, and moral freedom, reinterpretation, re-evaluation, and deregulation of ossified moral norms existing in a given society**, supports **proliferation of premises of pluralism, relativism, and ethical panthareism**, yet also contributes to **confusion and moral chaos**.

3. **Ethical pluralism, moral relativism, ethical panthareism, and moral globalization** do not limit creation, formation, and potential application of further diverse particular ethics if there is social demand for and favorable environmental disposition towards them. It does not stand in formal contradiction with democratically-established legal codes.

**Pluralism, relativism, and ethical panthareism** (as well as the **knowledge of morality** related thereto), are notions and stances which occupy an important place in the dispute on the source, sense, significance, and a potential social function of **normative ethics** – in this book understood analogically as **moral norms** occurring in general as single postulates or specific and compound sets of them (connected with an intentional guiding thought). These notions and stances may be examined from the point of view of, among others, philosophy, sociology, psychology, scientific study of religion (taking into account axionormative postulates of diverse religions) or colloquial and commonsensical thinking.



### Normative Ethics in Sport as a Manifestation of Commonsensical Thinking

On the grounds of sport sciences in general, also including social sciences dealing with sport and the philosophy of sport included therein, moral convictions with colloquial undertones are propagated. In relation thereto, striving for unnecessary and exaggerated valorization of sport, it is indicated that sport possesses:

1. Immanent ethical qualities, “organic” links to morality. This conviction happens to be conditioned by religious inclinations and needs or inspirations stemming from extra-confessional sources. *Nota bene*, it may lead to a conclusion that morality is a substantial quality of sport, manifested in action – i.e., among others in the course of rivalry connected with sport. This may mean that morality is an inseparable component of sport – both in terms of its essence and existence. It is possible to note here a certain reference to an anthropological premise resting at the foundations of the Christian-oriented existentialism;
2. A capacity to significantly impact moral attitudes and behavior in general – not only those sport-related, but also those located outside of the strictly sporting context: i.e., the total of social life and individual implications related to it;
3. An extremely important – inscribed in its sense and content – allegedly momentous and inalienable social mission, indicating that sport exists mainly to popularize ethical norms, and not to expose strictly sport-related qualities connected with pursuing specific sport disciplines. In relation to the above, it is emphasized that the *fair play* principle is the highest sport value in general, also in Olympic competition. Strictly sport goals are of secondary significance because in social life the superior values are allegedly goals and moral needs of universal tenor, as well as postulates from the scope of **soteriological ethics** (i.e., **ethics of redemption**) most closely related to religious beliefs of particular ethnic groups and nations. *Nota bene*, people affiliated with the Catholic denomination purport that sportsmen should popularize personalism and the **soteriological ethics** stemming from it, disregarding the fact that the perfect majority of the human population has little to do with Catholicism and presents very diverse, different, and mutually exclusive views in the scope of **normative ethics**.

I emphasize (yet again) that the moral views indicated above are based on emotional, ideological, and subjective qualities; being discretionary in nature, they stem from personal convictions. At their bases there are exclusively subjective ‘criteria’, assumptions of intuitive and relative nature, messages of occasional, situational, fleeting, and irrational undertones, characteristic of commonsensical and colloquial thinking. *Nota bene*, commonsensical thinking is treated, and this is also how I understand it, as a manifestation of colloquial thinking, that is entirely removed from the scientific context. In both of the aforementioned forms of thinking, no principles of either exact scientific methodology or general methodology apply. This undermines their rational and logical character<sup>10</sup>. Implicitly and involuntarily, they refer, among others, to pseudo-epistemological and pseudo-scientific assumptions of the 17<sup>th</sup> century Scottish philosophy of common sense known as the Scottish School of Common Sense<sup>11</sup>.

<sup>10</sup> According to Teresa Hołowko, colloquial thinking (French: sens commun) and common sense (or ability to pass judgments, French: bon sens) may be treated as identical notions and, as Marcin Czerwiński indicates, as notions of different meanings. Incidentally, the latter author discusses this topic in the Przedmowa [Preface] to the book of the former scholar — *nota bene*, an exquisite habilitation dissertation entitled *Myślenie potoczne* [Colloquial Thinking] (1986).

<sup>11</sup> Philosophy is – to approach its qualities from a single direction and in an overly concise manner – a fully rational discipline of knowledge or science (excluding normative ethics and aesthetics) in relation to which, i.e., in relation to statements formulated within it (similarly as in relation to statements from exact sciences and disciplines) the logical criterion of truth and falsity applies. In connection thereto, philosophy as such (i.e., as indicated above) is systemically opposed – with the exception of historical, neutralized, and already falsified assumptions, issues, concepts, or theories, e.g., from the circles of the so-called Scottish Philosophy of Common Sense, also known as the Scottish School, initiated by Thomas Reid (1764 and 1975), and characterized, among others, in *The Scottish Philosophy of Common*

Another proof of yielding to the influence of colloquial thinking, among others, comes as a statement on ethics made, after all, by an outstanding sociologist, Zygmunt Bauman. For example, writing on moral responsibility, he finds that:

“Moral responsibility is the most personal and unalienable of human freedoms and the most precious of human rights. It cannot be taken away, it cannot be shared with another, it cannot be transferred to another, or given in pledge or for storage. Moral responsibility is unconditional and infinite, and it is manifested in constant anxiety – it is manifested insufficiently. Moral responsibility seeks no insurance; it needs no assurance that it is right, nor justifications for being what it is. Moral responsibility *is* – and it is before evidence for its rationale is presented, and long after manufacturers of excuses have sent it to retire” (Bauman, 1996, p. 341).

The citation above has precious little to do with data stemming from both empirical and theoretical sociology as it contains only intuitive discretionary content: placing the statements included therein outside of truth or falsity in the logical sense, i.e., it is impossible to either confirm or falsify them. Therefore, the cited statement is a manifestation of a pseudo-scientific and pseudo-metaethical activity. The fragment above could be equally well transformed as to its merits into an entirely contradictory statement and it would sound equally ‘probable’ and ‘convincing’.

Bauman’s statement on **moral responsibility** has a colloquial tenor also because:

1. It does not refer to any specific detailed methodology. The substantiation of the sense of its content is based solely on author’s persuasion and scientific authority of the mentioned sociologist (the authority which implicitly assumes that statements from a given author are meaningful and that the author is a carrier of reliable and certain knowledge).
2. In the statement at issue, the indicated author refers, entirely openly, to the colloquial mode of thinking. Commenting shortly on his statement, Bauman writes that:

“*In any case, this is how much we can see while looking back on the history of contemporary struggle to prove – in theory and practice – an antithesis*” (Bauman, 1996, p. 341), i.e., the thesis contradictory to the content and sense of the citation defining **moral responsibility**.

Moreover, in my opinion, the fragment dedicated to **moral responsibility** has a more or less visible poetic coloring. **Moral responsibility** is only *being defined* in it, or it is *being specified in greater detail*. In connection to the above, I would like to draw attention to the imperfective aspect of both utterances related to the transpiring process of defining. It seems to me that a fully conscious *underdetermination* occurred, i.e., the underdetermination of that which Bauman labels as **moral responsibility**. It seems (I am using the emphatic method in this case) that Bauman understands, that he knows – in the hermeneutical sense – what **moral responsibility** is, yet he does not present and explain this concept sufficiently. It is a procedure, an approach that is consciously insufficient since, in my opinion, this notion can be never fully defined.

This approach (i.e., the **moral responsibility** approach) is and remains *indeterminate* (it is not very accurate and transparent, it is implicit, ambiguous, and multidimensional) in the cognitive sense. It is *indeterminate* also due to the poetic values contained therein. It is such because it evokes associations of spirituality-related (metaphysical and spiritualistic) as well as aesthetic undertones. They, i.e., the

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Sense (1960) – to the introduction of views into the realm of philosophy that have an intuitive tenor and at the same time, in keeping with their authors’ assumptions, an undertone that cannot be tested, i.e., unverifiable in the scope of the earlier indicated logical values. This is such because authors of such views – in keeping with modern assessment of the significance of cognition based on colloquial thinking and common sense – do not strive to determine a content-related value of their statements from the point of view of logical criteria of truth and falsity. They indicate that there exist “*first principles of the mind*”, which are inseparable features of our psycho-physical constitution, of whose action we are not aware despite our assuming them a priori in all our thoughts and actions (Hołówska, 1986, p. 27). They also think that they cannot be refuted and “*are no sooner understood than they are believed*” (Reid, 2010-2015, p. 242). They also emphasize that the light of truth, obvious and understandable in itself, is contained in judgment related to them and “*is not inferred from another*” (Reid, 2010-2015, p. 243).

associations, are ethereal, volatile – rather metaphorical than content-related. It is as if the process of definition became a pretext for presenting the beauty of words, emotions, and intriguing associations. This can be noticed when Bauman undertakes to persuade the reader, with extremely sophisticated and poignant simplicity:

*“Moral responsibility is unconditional and infinite and it is manifest in constant anxiety, it is manifested insufficiently. Moral responsibility seeks no insurance; it needs no assurance that it is right, nor justifications for being what it is [...]. before evidence for its rationale is presented, and long after manufacturers of excuses sent it to retire”* (Bauman, 1996, p. 341).

In light of methodological assumptions, neither the poetry of language (its elaborate imprecision), nor poetry in general, are treated as reliable and objective scientific cognitive tools and one should steer clear of these emotional means of expression while strictly engaging in research activities.

The above-mentioned indeterminacy consists also of the fact that in lack of referring or situating the notion of **moral responsibility** in the context of specific **normative ethics**, it is difficult to define such responsibility in a reliable manner. It is such because **moral responsibility** must always be concretized, i.e., it must refer to actual **normative ethics**, similarly as the **notion of the moral good**. Proponents of **various normative ethics** – religious and non-confessional – each time will have something else in mind, while being convinced that the most sensible concept of responsibility is the one they feel and immanently “understand”, and then postulate. **Moral responsibility** is a notion of a subjective and relational (relating to other people) and – in consequence – pluralist, relative, and pantheist tenor.

Conclusions presented in the paragraph above are, to some degree, reminiscent of scenes from a feature film entitled *Nashville*, which I watched in a movie theater in 1975. The film tells the story of a country music festival held annually in Nashville, the genre’s capital. One of the film’s protagonists, performing in a pub, sang a love song about the love of his heart. Each of the ladies he had seduced, and the room was brimming with them, considered his discrete and subtle confession of love to have been addressed to her, convinced that she was the only subject of the song that was dedicated to no one else but her. In the case of **moral responsibility**, **moral good** is not much different: one refers them, first and foremost (above all else) to themselves, i.e., to how they feel.

### Against Commonplace Opinions on Sport

In many texts, I have come forth against commonplace opinions on sport, against the presence of **normative ethics** in sport, among others, because of its **pluralism, relativism, and pantheism** (permanent variability, diversity, multi-aspect nature, lack of interpretation that would be unambiguous and acceptable for all). They intensify the interpretational ambiguity of postulates, moral norms related to their application (i.e., using them) and reception (individual and social reception). They are and can be a source of, among others, deep misunderstandings on the level of emotions, culture, and environment: local and national, religious, political, or ideological: axionormative conflicts. They led and continue to lead to a distortion of needs, expectations, and the reception of sporting events where their fundamental mainstay is the rules, regulations, and rulebooks of individual sport disciplines defining their principles and course of rivalry. Increasing numbers of normative solutions are emerging: **moral chaos, postulative chaos** is intensifying and deepening. No moral progress can be seen against the background of **normative ethics**, (*“each time moral choices seem to start from point zero [...] there are serious reasons to doubt the reality of moral progress”* Bauman, 1996, p. 311). Large or small, long- and short-lived **moral enclaves** adhere to their own, yet constantly changing – at times faster, at others more slowly – more or less volatile moral rules. Everyone, more or less heroically, will attempt to solve individual and social problems, being aware of lower or higher **moral responsibility**, potential environmental sanctions, **ethical penalization**. Yet it will not constitute evidence for **moral progress** or the introduction of an order or hierarchy of **moral postulates**.

Incidentally speaking, on the grounds of philosophy, psychology, pedagogy, and other types of humanist and social research reflection concerning the axionormative qualities of sport, in my opinion, no

context that would fully justify the exceptional importance of morality, indispensability of normative ethics in sporting activities has appeared so far. None of the arguments used seem to me to be either fully sufficient or fully convincing.

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**AUTHOR'S ADDRESS:**

Jerzy Kosiewicz  
Department of Philosophy, Chair of the Social Sciences  
Josef Pilsudski University of Physical Education in Warsaw  
34 Marymoncka str., 00-968 Warsaw, Poland  
Email: jerzy.kosiewicz@awf.edu.pl