

Kaźmierczak Arkadiusz. Hellenic model of education and its axioms in modern sport. *Journal of Education, Health and Sport*. 2018;8(10):501-509 eISSN 2391-8306. DOI <http://dx.doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.3490569>  
<http://ojs.ukw.edu.pl/index.php/johs/article/view/7584>

The journal has had 7 points in Ministry of Science and Higher Education parametric evaluation. Part b item 1223 (26/01/2017).  
1223 Journal of Education, Health and Sport eissn 2391-8306 7

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The authors declare that there is no conflict of interests regarding the publication of this paper.

Received: 02.10.2018. Revised: 18.10.2018. Accepted: 31.10.2018.

## Hellenic model of education and its axioms in modern sport

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### Summary

Ancient Greece of modern civilization has left an extremely valuable heritage in the form of sports games. The ideals of ancient Hellas - a cornerstone of European culture - accompanied the great games organized for many centuries in Olympia. Contemporary sport originating from the Greek ancient culture in its axiological aspirations constantly refers to Kalos kagathos, which is an ideal combining truth, good and beauty. The inspiring starting point for the founder of the Olympic movement was the ancient Greek philosophy, which the educator and reformer of the education and school system wanted to include in the European education system. However, the basic elements on which the French aristocrat built the ideology of Olympism were the ideas and intellectual currents of the age of enlightenment, such as: equality, progress, individuality, respect and understanding of cultural diversity, freedom and tolerance of human behavior.

**Keywords:** sport, Kalos kagathos, Hellenic model brought up, the Olympic Games

## **Introduction**

The concept of Kalos kagathos was useful for determining belonging to a higher social class, educated people with an above average level of knowledge and personal culture, and for showing an unquestioned moral level and significant ethical values. In addition, the term in the military context referred to the expression for a brave soldier, while in the aesthetic context it meant physical beauty. The word Kalos kagathos is a composition of two Greek words καλός καὶ ἀγαθός meaning beautiful and good. Beauty referred to the qualities of the body, while good referred to intellectual perfection and high human morality. These words were the leading term for Hellenic culture and Greek and Christian paideia, dating back to the time of Homer.

## **Selected contexts of the Hellenic model of education**

Ancient thinkers noticed in the Kalos kagathos a system of educational treatments, which in a specific pursuit of perfection led to a comprehensive human education, that is, to a harmonious symbiosis of a beautiful and trained body along with a well-educated mind and good sides of moral personality (modesty, moderation, respect for others, restraint in attitude and gestures) [1]. In the Hellenic model of education, the fusion of moral perfection with bravery and nobility during a fight, when the citizen could sacrifice his life for glory and honor, was defined by the Greek term arete (bravery, virtue). Arete was a basic and inseparable element of Greek pedagogy (paideia), which included both physical exercise and musical education (singing and dancing), learning to write and read.

The Greeks were convinced that it was possible to shape the body in accordance with their intentions and set an ideal. In Hellenic doctrine, a person could fight the imperfections of his body thanks to well-planned training, courage and perseverance in action. The passion for sports was one of the basic attributes of the Greek lifestyle. In regions where Hellenic ideology prevailed, there were: stadiums, gymnasiums, equipment for sports exercises, which were run by teachers (with *pajdotryba*) properly prepared to carry out this common activity. *Pajdotryba* was not only a teacher-trainer, who had extensive knowledge of the methodology of teaching movements, hygiene and medicine, but also successfully carried out general task [2, p. 103]. In such circumstances, physical activity has become an important element of the philosophy of upbringing in the work of Greek thinkers, who within the framework of *paideia* appreciated the importance of sport in the education of full citizens. Wisdom as a fruit of intellectual and moral values and beauty as a result of difficult and painful physical exertion became parallel and complementary features that characterized a noble man.

Paideia, including upbringing and general education, was an important factor that was considered a condition of belonging to Kalos kagathos, which - as the ideal of balance of body and spirit - was to be sought by a conscious citizen. Therefore, in achieving Kalos kagathos, a paideia was necessary, which had not only cultural but also pedagogical values.

The term arete probably underwent specific semantic changes in the space of historical development. In Homer's work, he meant the universal nature of values, which were the subject of widespread interest in the dimension of physical beauty, speed, wisdom, military or sports fitness, and was also a synonym of all prosperity and success given by the gods. All skill was praised for the highest recognition, while it particularly discouraged and repelled all misery and awkwardness [3, p. 13].

In archaic Greece, the noble birth of a man meant the qualities of the body (strength and dexterity) and character (bravery) on the battlefield. However, the indicated advantages could also be expressed in sports combat - in the form of noble struggles and a symbolic assignment of own perfection. Thus, sport in those times - Z. Krawczyk wrote on this subject - was a natural extension of the agon of war during peaceful rivalry in sports competitions, music or literary competitions. Therefore, the peace of God (ekecheira) proved to be the supreme value for the existence of sport as a socially useful phenomenon [4, pp. 1-3].

An analogous feature of the Greek paideia, changing under the influence of social changes and philosophical thought, has become the ideal of a man with the highest physical and spiritual perfection – Kalos kagathos. Probably the timeless spirit of the Greek ideal of Kalos kagathos referred to ancient humanistic thought, i.e. the formation of proper social attitudes along with the authentic formation of humanity understood as the pursuit of the ideal of perfection.

The term Kalos kagathos in a wide semantic range appeared as an axiological concept or as a concept in generally accepted political terminology. At present, due to the ambiguity of the term, it is not always possible to properly interpret it due to the possibility of the term occurring in many contexts. A visible example of the above doubts is the common belief that the Hellenic ideal of man in the light of Plato's idealistic philosophy meant an equal treatment of the physical and mental sphere on the way to achieving internal order and harmony. The perversity of this dogma is pointed out by B. Kunicki, proving that the dominance of the soul - as a manifestation of good and beauty - in education is ruthless and steadfast, so a fit body will not create a more beautiful soul, but a beautiful soul can improve the human body [5]. Similarly, P. Jaroszyński emphasizes that the view that Kalos kagathos seems primarily to express the harmony of the physical and spiritual spheres, although this approach to the phenomenon is most often described in the encyclopedic and dictionary interpretation. In his opinion, the creators of

ancient philosophy claimed that the moral order dominates the sensual and aesthetic, while the spiritual order has primacy over the physical [6].

The concept of Kalos kagathos as defined in the Dictionary of Philosophy means the aristocratic ideal of Hellenic education, which combines physical perfection with spiritual virtue. Only a perfect citizen (aristos) can achieve this state, whose bodily beauty allows his personality to be expressed and realized. The ideal of Kalos kagathos is accompanied by useful leisure time, consisting in indulging in sports exercises that also have an impact on the moral side of the personality [7, p. 267]. However, the ideal of Kalos kagathos - according to Ł. Kurdybacha - was an alliance of the former upbringing of royal sons and singers. Based on his canons, every boy of aristocratic origin should be characterized by the beauty and fitness of his body, as well as exhibit the features of a former brave knight, resistant to the hardships of fighting, refined in every movement (kalos). On the other hand, he achieved good (agathos) thanks to mental, moral and musical education, modeled on the former education of traveling singers, which was later the privilege of all free Athenians. Kalos kagathos combined the advantages of an excellent athlete with the virtues of a zealous citizen. He identifies beauty with a perfectly physically shaped, athletic participant in the Olympic competitions, presenting impeccable physique, while good associates with the ideal of morally and mentally perfect man. From an etymological perspective W. Lipoński writes that kalos kaj agathos refers to the adjective term for valued personality traits resulting from the spirit of Kalos kagathos[...] The adjective kalos meant literally beautiful and was a synonym of body qualities achieved, among others with the help of sports exercises. The adjective agathos, literally good, symbolized the virtues of the spirit, such as virtue and nobility (arete), and moderation and restraint achieved by force of will (sofrozyne) [8, p. 142].

Contrary to different claims, J. Lipiec notices the harmony of undoubted spheres, describing the ideal of Hellenic education as a manifestation of the integrity of reason, heart and body, i.e. the spiritual and physical side of human personality [9, p. 7]. In the common understanding, bodily beauty and spiritual good set the boundaries of human behavior, which were reflected by the careful and deliberate acquisition of ethical virtues in the process of knowing reality.

### **Hellenic Olympic Games**

The Greeks expressed their passion for the idea of Kalos kagathos and sporting competition in the form of the Olympic Games, which have left a lasting mark in the education of many generations over the centuries. There is currently no clear answer to the question of when and what conditions accompanied the emergence of the ancient Olympic Games. Known from

historical records is the name of the first victorious Olympic Koroibos of Elida, who in 776 B.C.E. won the short run (dromos) at a distance of one stadium. Since then, this year has become the first year of the Olympic calendar, and the four-year period between the Games has become the basis for measuring historical time. The practice of dating events according to the Olympic Games was probably initiated by the Greek historian Timajos, changing the measure of historical chronology which was the year of the capture of Troy (1184 B.C.).

Presumably, the competition was held many years earlier, but it was not as common as the Pan-Hellenic Olympic Games organized during the greatest flourishing of Ancient Greek culture. They had the nature of religious ceremonies in honor of the gods and took place in Olympia on the Peloponnesian Peninsula on the holy river Alfaceos, in which players made sacrifices and swore to play according to the rules in front of the statue of Zeus, by the Greek sculptor Fidias. For secure participation of all free Greeks in the Games, universal ekechejriya peace was established for the duration of the Games. By virtue of its provisions, Olimpia was recognized as a city of God, to which players from all over Greece and Greek colonies could travel safely at the designated time. Entry with a weapon into the city was allowed, provided that it was sacrificed to Zeus, who was looked after by every participant in the games. Therefore, no citizen or state could break peace provisions under pain of severe punishment [10, p. 45]. During the truce established in the time of the Games, death sentences were suspended and amnesty was granted to those who committed minor offences. In this way, Olympic peace was not only a symbol of people's search for the good will of universal agreement, but also became a tangible sign of universal respect and joy. The class nature of the Hellenic Games was evidenced by the fact that only Greek citizens who had an impeccable opinion and who did not conflict with established law had the right to participate in the competition. Ancient tradition also forbade women to participate in the Games, including the ban on being a spectator. The exception was the chariot races, in which the winner did not have to take part in the competition directly, and the team won the Olympic laurels, who were also women in the Hellenic democracy [11, p. 7]. The proper course of the Games was due to the referees (helanodiks), who checked the origin of the players, took their oath from them, and ruled on victory and thus awarded prizes. Ancient Greek games marked by enormous social support were above all a manifestation of the national community of the Greek tribes, becoming a sacred place for them with the possibility of realizing their dreams and humanistic aspirations. Religious worship together with sports competitions, as well as artistic competitions (singing, music, poetry) were the dominant element of reconciliation and peaceful coexistence of citizens during the agones. The program and duration of the games were subject to periodical changes, so that at the peak stage of

development - according to Plutarch's message - Hellenic agony in 468 B.C.E. took place over five days:

- on the first day, victims were given to Zeus and the players took the oath before the helanodik,
- on the second day, the boys competed in the race, the adult competitors struggled in wrestling and fistfighting,
- on the third day men competitions took place in running, long jump and pankration,
- on the fourth day of the Olympic Games horse races were carried out at the hippodrome, pentathlon and the Hipolit race, i.e. the race of armed warriors,
- the fifth, last day falling on the full moon, was the day of honoring the winners (Olympics), who immediately after the end of the competition were decorated with palm branches or woolen loincloths on the forehead, while on the day of the end of the games they received wreaths, created from the branches of the holy olive bush [11, p. 8]. The closing act of the games was to offer thanks to the gods. This fact is a testimony that in the Olympic Games of ancient Greece religious events were the highest and also autotelic value. All participants - athletes, artists, wealthy viewers - showed a testimony in compliance with the norms of conduct existing in the Hellenic religion. Both the sports agon and the one relating to selected fields of art were objectively and axiologically related to ancient ethics. In the conclusion about the nature of the Hellenic Olympic agonist J. Kosiewicz - taking into account the above premises - emphasizes its sporting dimension in the context of cultural and religious values:

*[...] the competition associated with it also concerned art, so it not only went beyond sport, but also - as, for example, the indicated Athens Games - had nothing to do with sports competition. [...] Efficiency, perfectionism or high specialization, the pursuit of victory, were also one of the means to display sacred feelings [12, p. 8].*

Of course, a simplification would be to say that the program of sporting competitions of the games of the ancient era was exclusively a noble theater of sports competition of representatives of individual states, cities and Hellenic regions. In this context, J. Lipiec believes that they took place in order to:

*[...] manifest their military readiness, which was clearly demonstrated by the very selection of competition, not to mention the tactical ways of breaking the rules of the knightly game at that time [9, pp. 73-74].*

The Ancient Greek Games, despite Greece losing its independence and many deviations from the humanistic tradition, survived until the end of the 4th century AD. It was not until the Roman emperor Theodosius I, an ardent Christian, in 393 CE, that they forbade them as manifestations of "pagan" practices. The last took place in Antioch in 508, it was only fifteen centuries later

that they deserved reactivation thanks to Pierre de Coubertin - a humanist and poet, as well as a social activist and educator, visionary and practical man who changed the image and history of the modern world [ 13, p. 5]. The creator of the modern Olympic Games, using the doctrine of the ancient world, believed in the person-forming power of sport activity. Like the Greek agonist, he preferred striving for physical and moral perfection thanks to tried and tested educational measures, including his own effort, perseverance, noble competition and high activity of the charge [14, pp. 171-181].

### **Summary**

It is worth emphasizing that modern Olympic sport, largely referring to its ancient sources and to the moral values of *Kalos kagathos*, constantly strives for global sanctioning of its values in social reality. In the period of escalating conflicts and international tensions, sports games, grouping players in different countries and different continents in peaceful rivalry, were to be the area of understanding, mutual knowledge, conflict resolution and cooperation. Also in this context, R. Wroczyński, pointing to the global nature of Olympism and its historical pedigree, wrote as follows:

*[...] In ancient times, the Olympic Games were a manifestation of the unity of Greek tribes scattered in the southern Balkans and constituting local state organisms, often at odds and glistening among themselves. In the intention of the ideologists of modern games, mainly Pierre de Coubertin, the resumed games were to fulfill the same role only on a much wider territorial space, namely all continents and countries of the world at that time "[10, p. 313].*

It can be assumed that, following the model of Hellenistic agonism, basic Olympic paradigms have been adopted:

- perfection, understood as the pursuit through sport of achieving a high level of sport, social and moral as a result of the combination of a fit body, mind and will;
- friendship, defining sport as an area of mutual understanding and friendly interpersonal relations, which are an inspiration to overcome political, economic, racial and religious differences;
- equality bringing people together through sport regardless of age, race, religion, social affiliation, gender, fitness, sexual orientation or gender identity;
- respect, referring to the review of your own body and other people, and referring to compliance with the rules and regulations of the game in sport competition - fair play.

The universal potential contained in the Hellenic axiom "*kalos kai agathos*" makes it an important canon of integral human development. Probably due to its timeless values and

pedagogical achievements - it is still worth exhibiting in modern upbringing sciences, with particular emphasis on educational practice in sporting activities [15].



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