

## **SAFETY CULTURE IN SPORTING ACTIVITY**

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### **ABSTRACT**

As a result of the growing pace of life and developing civilization in which important factors are the crisis of values, the misunderstood idea of freedom and the willingness to achieve success quickly (by taking a shortcut), a new area of threats can be observed. They are caused by faster pace of life that is related to technical development which, in turn, makes us place higher demands on ourselves both in respect to our physical and psychological fitness. Contemporary world requires people to take care of their bodies. This is related especially to taking care of our bodies through the prism of the myth of beauty. The ideal of beauty promoted by mass media is difficult to achieve for an average human being and impossible to achieve for the majority of people in a satisfactory time period. Therefore, reflection on experiencing corporality as an aesthetic value in reference to safety culture seems to be both interesting and significant. High safety culture is related to high values ascribed to human health and life as well as keeping the boundary between essential risk, which is an integral part of life and development, and ensuring safety and protection against threats. The axiology of physical activity and issues of movement, fitness, health and beauty of human body related to it is one of subject of interest in safety culture. The aim and specification of actions in the field of body axiology is description, interpretation and analysis of facts related to human corporality which have sense and therefore are a value.

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At the turn of XX and XXI centuries, after the terrorists attack on WTC in New York in 2001, there was a strong demand for security. Regardless of the New York symbol of the new era of global threats, the insecurity of everyday existence is constantly increasing. As a result of the growing pace of life and developing civilization in which important factors are the crisis of values, the misunderstood idea of freedom and the willingness to achieve success quickly (by taking a shortcut), a new area of threats can be observed. They are caused by faster pace of life that is related to technical development which, in turn, makes us place higher demands on ourselves both in respect to our physical and psychological fitness.

We want to become independent from the modern world and at the same time, being aware of some kind of dependence, we try to adapt to reality.

Contemporary world requires people to take care of their bodies. This is related especially to taking care of our bodies through the prism of the myth of beauty. Corporality, which is a part of human nature, is an omnipresent dynamic wholeness. Nowadays the cult of body and the belief that thanks to it an individual manifests their identity and depicts their individuality become widespread. In the post-modern society to effective functioning means that a person has to respect the arrangements of the modern world in which a beautiful body is one of many require-

ments. If a person does not meet standards specified by the society, they have to forget about fulfilling their dreams and plans. The body is a basis for identity creation. Therefore, a beautiful body has become a desired value which is to guarantee stable functioning of a person both at an individual and social level. Frequent attempts to modify corporality are an effort to fulfill those expectations and become a kind of threat. By becoming an essential requirement of contemporary times, the beautiful body may become a type of objectification similar to such rituals as human sacrifices, self-flagellation in the name of religious practices or slavery and prostitution. The ideal of beauty promoted by mass media is difficult to achieve for an average human being and impossible to achieve for the majority of people in a satisfactory time period. It should be noted that the media image is only an unthinking image which presents only ideal body proportions without showing the way to achieve them. It becomes a specific kind of a dream about a beautiful body. Contemporary socio-cultural concepts assume that value appreciated in a particular society, instilled in people by media, are often reflected in their individual value systems. Along with the advancement in different fields of medicine and technological development, the human body is subjected to various kinds of modifications without attention being paid to their consequences. Surgical procedures, diets ruining our bodies and various kinds of other procedures are a shortcut to obtain the dream ideal. Aesthetically pleasing appearance, regardless of the cost is an essential requirement needed to achieve success in contemporary world. The beautiful body becomes the objective of life as is sports championship gained by means of body. In both cases doping testing should be necessary to check whether the way to success was not a shortcut. In sport, even though it is still imperfect, the doping testing system is a threshold which significantly limits the practice of dangerous and artificial competition. Competition in everyday life takes the value of beautiful body into account without paying attention to the way it was achieved. Nobody wonders if a beautiful figure has been achieved by means of a balanced diet, effective physical exercise or a healthy lifestyle. The only thing which counts is the final effect and only ideal proportions and shape matter. The ma-

jority of women who watch models' slim figures on TV experience the feeling of sadness since they do not have such figures. This results in lack of acceptance of one's body which often causes frustration. The awareness of not fulfilling those conditions becomes the source of subjectively experienced suffering. People pursue the ideal of beauty by any means believing that this will allow them to achieve success and stabilization in life. However, such conduct which aims to gain the sense of balance and the feeling of psychophysical satisfaction, very often becomes a threat to us. The way to a quick bodily success often has destructive effects for health. The myth of beauty becomes a new kind of threat understood as a phenomenon or a group of phenomena which pose the possibility of specific events or states disadvantageous for human existence, including health, life and for the existence of beneficial conditions for further proper development. Therefore, reflection on experiencing corporality as an aesthetic value in reference to safety culture seems to be both interesting and significant. Safety culture is the field which includes a system of meanings by which threats throughout the world are understood. It also specifies an attitude of a particular society to risk, threats and safety as well as highlights values which are considered important in this respect. High safety culture is related to high values ascribed to human health and life as well as keeping the boundary between essential risk, which is an integral part of life and development, and ensuring safety and protection against threats.

A population, and similarly an individual, is motivated by physiological needs (e.g. nutrition and sleep) typical for the whole species. Until they are accommodated, they are its main concern. Another basic physiological need, which we are not always aware of, is the need for physical movement (physical activity) that results from historical conditions of human existence (protection, acquiring food, fighting, escape). It has not lost its relevance since biological nature of man does not stand physical inactivity. Pursuing balance between those aspects of safe functioning is becoming an important part in the discussion on the safe quality of human life.

The axiology of physical activity and issues of movement, fitness, health and beauty

of human body related to it is one of subject of interest in safety culture. The aim and specification of actions in the field of body axiology is description, interpretation and analysis of facts related to human corporality which have sense and therefore are a value. This is a means of understanding and explaining the structure and physical fitness of a man. Fulfilling needs by means of delivering desired values concerns all aspects of human activity. Responsible attitude towards your body is one of the most important values since it conditions our temporal existence. Needs related to the body may be necessary or relatively unnecessary or be an intentional complement of human existence. Differentiating between these is of great importance because it helps us understand the motives behind our attitude towards our bodies. Without a doubt behaviour motivated by the necessity to uphold our existence has to be evaluated differently than behaviour resulting from the desire to experience "something more" in life. "Nevertheless, it is possible to assume, without rejecting the attempts to order the world of values with regard to quality, that the division into existential values is the most fundamental one since its fulfillment decides about the existence of man (as an individual, as society, as humankind) and serves its existential safety and non-existential ones – which can accurately be described as essential – which fulfillment decides about specific existence in the world, expressing its nature which is constantly developing and come under axiological improvement. Apart from existential and essential values it is also well-found to introduce ornamental values, which make human life more pleasurable, comfortable and more beautiful, as well."<sup>1</sup> Fulfilling existential values creates an existential basis and non-existential values is going beyond potential completeness of the means of existence – it is a peculiar superstructure of simple life. Whereas, the pursuit to fulfill existential values is justified by the desire to survive, the desire to experience essential values, especially ornamental ones, makes a person more willing to express and experience "over existential" desires. The desire to enrich life

results in taking new challenges which breaks the monotony of existence, including challenges whose results are uncertain. Risk taken in emergencies seems justified because it serves a greater cause than only one's satisfaction which happens in case of putting yourselves or others at risk because of reasons which do not have the traits of necessity. However, this does not change the fact that for some people valuation of functioning in risky situations is much higher than quiet and stable existence. It can even be stated that it is precisely thanks to such actions which overstep necessity, the space of discovered values gets bigger and human life becomes more attractive. Health awareness and intelligence determine lifestyle and, above all, its elementary constituents, such as good diet and physical exercise and activity. They have significant influence on health and well-being of each individual. Physical activity is treated not only as a means to a pro-health end, but also as a source of personal satisfaction and auto-expression. Increase in vital forces of a person undergoing movement treatment is undeniable. The rule which says that the body can be not only fixed, but above all protected (prophylaxis) by means of general physical exercises has found application in human life. Protection, but also increasing one's physical abilities and improving them through physical treatment is a person's accomplishment.

The judgment whether something is useful, necessary and important lies in an underlying valuation process. As a result, for humans safety grows into value. Value is something which is significant for a subject in each dimension and sides of their existence irrespective of consciousness of this meaning or real knowledge about them. It is also something which in procedures affecting corporality is good, necessary, beneficial for the subject and which produces appropriate reactions in an axiological act. With reference to people these will include various physical activities which will bring the expected results in the form of a beautiful body when they are individually adapted to a person. However, they have to be done systematically for a longer period of time. Therefore, it is not about taking a shortcut, but doing intensive work for the results of which one has to wait. They can constitute a value which not only can be experienced here

<sup>1</sup> Lipiec J.: *Świat wartości. Wprowadzenie do aksjologii*. FALL, Kraków 2001, p. 42.

and now, but whose essence manifests itself in further fulfillments and realities. These are values important for psyche, the body and whole structure of the human being. They are a response to dreams, desires and aims. Thus, dreaming about a well-built body emerges as a desired value. It can be said that a peculiar type of value system is being created in response to our own desires. When values fulfilling human existence are desired qualitatively, they bring joy and positive sensations can be vital values. Therefore, it is not about pleasure here and now, but about more distant effect. Very often focusing on the present, especially with respect to beautiful appearance, results in short-term benefits, which manifest themselves in everyday joy, but turns out to be destructive in the long-run.

### **SAFETY AND RISK IN SPORTING ACTIVITY**

One of means of expanding a person's personal space of available values is broadly understood sporting activity. The term sport refers to all kinds of physical activity participation in which has influence on developing or improving physical and psychological condition, development of social relations or obtaining sports results at all levels.<sup>2</sup> It has to be considered by making a basic distinction between amateur and professional sport based on the level of an individual's engagement. "An amateur makes something in accordance with their choice made by means of subjective satisfaction, that is above all pleasure itself, resulting from something they have chosen as well as pleasure for themselves, resulting from the fact that they could it themselves. Feat, on the other hand, starts where the term related to how to do something which one is doing \...\ It turns out that it is not enough to simply throw a ball and that is also necessary to throw it accurately. Accuracy is not enough, strength and finesse are also necessary so that a goalkeeper will not be able to defend the goal. The effectiveness of a move is not enough, it has to be original, beautiful and perfect like an act of a virtuoso."<sup>3</sup> Whereas amateur sport is usually associated with recreational activity, professional sport

with its professional form. However, the stance of a competitive sports person occurs also in other types of intentional human activity. "Competitive sportspeople – as character types or a type of practical outlook on life – can basically be found everywhere: in material and intellectual production, art, science, erotism and fight."<sup>4</sup> The subjective desire to be constantly better leads to the search for and creation of new values which will contribute to take more risky actions since extraordinary effect are rarely obtained through standard means.

Taking intentional actions which change the current lifestyle is caused by dissatisfaction with the way we exist in the world and the lack of, unsatisfied feeling or satiety of fulfillment of expected needs. "They are accompanied by specific means of experiencing one's satisfaction, e.g. dissatisfaction, insatiability, emptiness, boredom, sadness, melancholy, despair and grief."<sup>5</sup> The original state in the pursuit of need fulfillment is finding or creating values which decrease the sense of emptiness. In such a situation a person searches in their personal and social space for such kind of physical activity (sports discipline) whose values will contribute to the fulfillment of needs. Already at this stage an initial decision based on its potential place at the level of safety and risk is made. This choice depends greatly on an individual's physical structure. Some people expect that their sporting physical activity will be satisfied while maintaining the maximum level of safety, others want to experience a bit of thrills related to the increased level of risk. However, it should be assumed that even people taking extreme risk want to at least stay alive because benefits resulting from doing sports are achieved only if we continue to live. Making some simplification it can be stated that people doing sport to stay healthy will prefer safer sporting disciplines while those who want to experience a bit of thrills will be interested in more risky sports. It should also be noted that decision about taking up a particular kind of sporting activity is motivated mainly by an individual's ideas and the influence of their environment and is linked to potential rather than

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<sup>2</sup> The Act of 25 June 2010 on Sport, Art. 2.1.

<sup>3</sup> Lipiec J.: *Fenomenologia wędrówki*. Wyd. FALL, Kraków 2010, p. 262.

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<sup>4</sup> *Ibidem.*, p. 263.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibidem.*, p. 147.

real acceptance of the level of risk. Only after starting to do the selected sports discipline is the level of risk tolerance verified. The initial period of learning motor skills is the time when we verify our ideas of the experienced and real level of safety. This results from knowledge and ideas we have about a particular sports discipline. Such ideas, which usually are not sufficiently underpinned by a sound knowledge base, are often created on the basis of an idealized and emotional picture based on observation of champions. The result of such admiration is the tendency to highlight benefits and minimizing expected risks.

The level of safety relies largely on the method of sports initiation. People learning on their own usually have a small sense of the risky nature of their actions because they have low awareness of the level of real threats. They do not expect any risks since they believe they are able to do a particular sports discipline safely and on their own. Students taking part in integrated learning are informed about potential risks (which may temporarily strengthen the sense of risk), but at the same time the appropriately conducted process of teaching should reduce the sense of risk and ensure a high level of real safety. The level of safety, both in its emotional and real form, rises along with the growth of skills. The acquired knowledge and skills verified by being applied in varied situations give the sense of satisfaction while doing the selected sport. Experiences consolidated in memory tend to be generalized through the prism of description in categories of pleasure or distress sensation, stimulating the desire for or avoidance of a similar situation; information incompatible with the adopted schemata, on the other hand, are ignored<sup>6</sup>. The image of sporting activity that is created in our imagination and then confronted in real situations exerts great influence on the tendency to finding ourselves in a similar situation that is considered to be constructive. If a person is satisfied with the discipline they practice, they are inclined to fulfill their need for sporting activity in it; if they are not satisfied, they will search for a different method of

fulfilling this need. The awareness of the increased level of risk related to some types of sporting activity will stimulate the pursuit to increase the level of motor skills and competence and to provide protection of people who take care of safe practice of sport. Attention to systematically improve or maintain suitable qualifications increases the level of body and emotional safety effectively and enriches human life with experiencing numerous values related to sport.

Looking for risk may be one of stimulus behind selection of a sports discipline, but it may also occur as a result of still being hungry for adventurousness while doing sport. Repetitiveness, stability and safety experienced during sporting activity may be the most expected values of such lifestyle, but they may also result in the feeling of boredom, stagnation and hunger for adventurousness. As a result, a person may either stop doing a particular sporting discipline or, on the contrary, stimulate the pursuit to increase the sensation experienced when shaping one's body (improving effectiveness, versatility and aesthetics of body movement) or to reinforce experienced emotions (entering competition, increasing the level of risk, looking for recognition or admiration). In the second case even people who earlier represented a play-safe attitude to sport, become more self-confident and willing not only to accept, but also seek increased risk. Similar signs are observed in case of people who become bored with the discipline they practice – they give it up or look for new experiences in it. Seeking to extend the scope of values experienced in sporting activity can be used as a positive sign, however, it needs to be remembered that the desire for greater emotions should not exceed one's qualifications since this may create excessively risky situations.

"Fitness training which, by realizing a number of values related to human beings, has been a natural human need for centuries, influences their safety both directly and indirectly. /.../ Taking care of one's body by means of physical exercise may be a way dealing with dangers both by increasing the possibilities to fight them and by improving one's image and the quality of life by gaining a higher status in the society."<sup>7</sup> Sport is

<sup>6</sup> Pirecki K.: *Psychologiczne czynniki subiektywnej percepcji i oceny ryzyka*. [in:] Studencki R. (ed.), *Zachowanie się w sytuacji ryzyka*. Wyd. Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, Katowice 2004. p. 69.

<sup>7</sup> Korzeniowski L., Ambroży T.: *Potrzeba aktywności fizycznej i bezpieczeństwa a hierarchia wartości w treningu holi-*

a very safe method of enriching life if the level of an individual's skills is supplemented with social safety measures. "Unrealistic optimism – which is the most common mistake – is an extremely deceptive element of threat and potential risk evaluation. According to this theory people believe that they are invulnerable – others are more exposed to dangers and risks than them. Of course this does not mean that they are mistaken. However, the majority of us think in this way, the evaluation of one's risk is below the average. This phenomenon is not truly reflected since a significant proportion of these people have accidents. Optimism is manifested in failure to evaluate the negative results of events and overestimating positive ones."<sup>8</sup> This favours taking unnecessary risks, including sports and recreational ones which are highly promoted in common socio-cultural space. However, it is necessary to make people aware in a responsible way that "physical activity itself may create risks. People who take up physical activity are vulnerable to exhaustion, overtraining and various kinds of body injury. That is why the intensity of physical activity should be carefully monitored (a role of a professional – a trainer – plays a significant role here) and to adapt it trainee's current abilities. Uncontrolled sport rivalry may also result in risks. It can take the form of a uncontrollable willingness to win the title of champion (e.g. by using *doping* which has devastating impact on our body) or be related to the organizational aspect of sporting competitions (e.g. soccer fans' acts of hooliganism during matches, not only at the stadium but also outside it)."<sup>9</sup> Therefore, in planning and taking up sport we have to be responsible for ourselves and other people and balance the risk and the possibility to ensure safety responsibly and consciously. Risky activities create emotional values while diminish-

ing the value of safety. Excessive care, on the other hand, results in taking unnecessary actions and limiting emotional life.

Freedom manifests in the possibility to make one's own choices in the pursuit to meet their need. For this purpose we search the space of available values and choose the ones which help to realize the objective in the most effective way. "The results of our decisions are evaluated in reference to how they meet our needs, which are expressed at the level of informal language in abstract categories which are not incompatible with each other: happiness, good, satisfaction, self-realization."<sup>10</sup> Values related not only to safety and stabilization, but also to the expectation of experiencing something new or even something crazy have gained a prominent place among the expected and desired values. In case of voluntary sporting activity the place of risk and safety in the hierarchy of values depends on subjects' personal preferences. Attention to obtaining skills suitable to presumed aims and movement competences increases the felt and real level of safety in a significant way. Having the sense of safety when doing physical activities increases comfort and lends space to potential decision taking about more fascinating forms of doing them. Practicing sport in a responsible manner makes it possible to realize a number of values in a satisfying way, starting with the most fundamental ones, which foster health and physical fitness, to ornamental values which make it possible to experience emotions, sometimes even extreme ones. The intensity of being engaged in unnecessary physical activity should be characterized by responsibility founded by a thorough evaluation of one's own and social abilities to ensure safety since their negative consequences concern usually not only a particular person, but also their social environment. If physical activity we take up voluntarily is to expand the space in which we experience happiness, we have to consider the presence of other people, who have similar expectations, in it. Values related to safety and risk in doing sports should complement each other so that body and emotional needs are met without exposing people

stycznym. *Annales Universitatis Mariae Curie-Skłodowska*, Vol.IX, suppl. XVI, 231, Lublin 2005, s. 22–23.

<sup>8</sup> Sankowski T.: *Funkcjonowanie człowieka w sytuacjach zagrożenia związanych z aktywnością rekreacyjno-turystyczną*. [in:] Wyrwa A.: *Studia Periegetica, Teoria i Praktyka w Turystyce*. Zeszyt 3/2009, p. 178–179 and Goszczyńska M.: *Człowiek wobec zagrożeń. Psychospołeczne uwarunkowania oceny i akceptacji ryzyka*. Wyd. Żak, Warszawa 1997, p. 103–111.

<sup>9</sup> Ambroży T.: *Kultura fizyczna a bezpieczeństwo*. Apeiron, Zeszyt Naukowy no. 6, Kraków 2011, p. 259.

<sup>10</sup> Szapiro T.: *Co decyduje o decyzji*. PWN, Warszawa 1993, p. 22.

to experiencing values which are destructive for them and their social environment.

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