



‘Good Sport’: Different Dimensions and Their Constitutive Properties From the Ontological and Moral Point of View

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Abstract

This paper deals with the question “What is Good Sport?”. It aims to enrich previous discussions of the issue by offering a systematic and comprehensive account of good sport, which is missing in the existing literature. The topic is analysed from the ontological and moral point of view. This project builds primarily on moral realism with an emphasis on objective moral values (Spaemann), traditional virtue ethics (Plato, Aristotle) as applied in sport (Pisk, Feezell), and the conceptions of relevant modern philosophers concerned with the ontology of sport (Suits, Fraleigh, Kretchmar, Butcher, Schneider, Jirásek, and others). I maintain that good sport involves various dimensions that need to be distinguished in order to analyse the concept properly. These are good sport as an activity, as an attitude, as an environment (culture), and as fandom. The primary task of this paper is to describe the most relevant properties of good sport in the first three dimensions, indicate their authors/supporters in the tradition of the philosophy of sport, and offer reasons why these properties are constitutive of good sport. I do not aim to analyse each property in detail, but to outline the general framework of good sport. The final classification of properties is analysed in terms of its strengths and weaknesses. I draw mainly from philosophy of sport literature written in English and from key figures in the tradition.

Keywords: philosophy of sport, good sport, moral realism, virtue ethics, property

Introduction

One of the essential tasks of philosophers is to determine, analyse and defend what is good and what is not good (i.e., bad, wrong). This task comes with various difficulties and presents one of the most pressing philosophical challenges. The difficulty arises partly from the fact that the word “good”, as G. E. Moore (1966, pp. 89–90) claims, “[...] is highly ambiguous: it is not only used, but correctly used in a number of different senses.” Moore (1966, p. 98) points out that “good” (he discusses it in

the meaning “worth having for its own sake”) is likely indefinable, although he admits that all the supposed evidence has failed to prove that it is indefinable. In any case, the term “good” appears somehow strange. On one hand, we understand it in a given context, but on the other hand, it is difficult to explain its exact meaning.

The purpose of this paper is not to deal with the general metaphysical, epistemological, linguistic, or ethical problems related to the concept of goodness. I focus here on the expression “good sport”. This does not mean that I avoid the philosophically fruitful problems related to

the concept of “goodness” completely. Rather, I try to narrow my scope and focus on this concept only with respect to a specific area, i.e., sport. We may come across different terms used in scholarly literature, such as “meaningful”, “authentic”, or “intrinsically valuable”. I will refer to these terms when appropriate. Some initial remarks and clarifications are needed before dealing with the main theme of this text.

It is important to stress that this paper does not attempt to define “good sport” in accordance with the analytic definition that places an emphasis on necessary and sufficient conditions. I will only try to provide those properties¹ that are arguably constitutive of good sport (i.e. necessary), without any ambition to offer an exhaustive (i.e. sufficient) list of them. I will do so under a specific methodological framework, which is described below. However, I do have a nominal definition of good sport in mind: ‘A desired type of sporting activity with certain structural standards and moral qualities (values) that are present within a sporting context and that also contribute to individual and social flourishing outside of sport.’ This paper attempts to answer the question: ‘What particular standards and qualities (values) are constitutive of good sport?’

I do not wish to speak here about a perfectly played game (or a perfectly fair game) and paradoxes related to it (e.g. the paradox of perfect handicapping or the paradox of perfect matching). My classification partly relates to some topics captured by those paradoxes (such as structural fairness). However, for the purposes of describing the most relevant properties of good sport, it is not necessary to directly address these paradoxes.² Moreover, I do not want to conflate good sport with sport’s intrinsic values. Even though these two issues are often interrelated, I look here for conditions under which sport is good (normative approach), not primarily for intrinsic and extrinsic values of sport (somewhat descriptive approach).³

To clarify what I mean by “sport”, I offer a definition (Mareš & Novotný, 2023, p. 43) that is a modified version of the account presented by J. Parry (2019): ‘Sports are institutionalised, rule-governed, structurally game and play-like (non-necessary, non-ordinary, arbitrary, and gratuitous) encounters in various tests and contests of human physical skills.’⁴ Sport is understood as a general category, i.e. I do not defend or argue against particular sports (e.g. ice hockey, football, skiing, or MMA fighting) nor particular forms of sport (e.g. amateur or professional). Instead, I focus on various durable aspects that make these and other sports good or potentially bad in particular instances of their occurrence (individual occasions, events, games, tournaments, etc.). Good sport is not conceived as a perfect or ideal (i.e. not yet existing) sport, but as a fulfilment of certain conditions in already existing sports. The presented properties are best applied to competitive forms of sport. However, they may also be applied to

individual sports (e.g. rock-climbing or bowling alone), although the list will have to be adapted to the specifics of these (and virtually any other) forms of sport.

Another important specification concerns the term “good”. I am not primarily interested in “good sport” from a certain relativistic perspective, where “good” refers to good for something else (i.e. health, physical prowess, or financial gain). This does not mean, however, that I do not look at the issue of good sport from a certain point of view nor that I completely avoid the qualities mentioned (health, physical prowess). Some identified properties may relate to qualities such as health or physical prowess, but this does not mean that the conception is relativistic (e.g. that the property is good only because it promotes health). Fraleigh (1983, p. 52) rightly points out that any sport (in his case “sports contest”) may be evaluated from different points of view and, if it fulfills the evaluative standards of a point of view (e.g. economic or health), may be correctly called “good sport”.⁵ It would be wrong to want to examine good sport from no point of view (i.e. in an absolutely neutral way), since any rational examination always includes a point of view, at least implicitly. Building partly on Fraleigh’s conception, I will be looking at good sport from the ontological and moral point of view, leaving aside other points of view that could have been applied, e.g. the aesthetic one.⁶ When I speak about ontology and morality, I presuppose a certain objective measure that points to the fact that what is good is not a matter of preference or of dominant opinion, but, as Spaemann (2009, pp. 11–23) suggests, something that needs to be discovered and cultivated through philosophical reasoning. Spaemann reminds us that we may discover that certain standpoints and ways of acting are simply better and certain others are worse (2009, pp. 22–23): ‘The argument about “good” and “evil” proves [...] that certain courses of action are better than others – better per se, not just better for someone or better in relation to certain cultural norms.’⁷ Similarly, we may say that some properties make sport good, whereas some others do not.

It is essential to note that good sport involves various dimensions that need to be distinguished to analyse the concept properly. These dimensions are good sport as an activity, as an attitude, as an environment/culture, and as fandom. They are my own distinctions that I draw based on my reading of the philosophy of sport literature. I will focus here primarily on the first three dimensions and I will leave aside good sport as fandom. The reason for this exclusion is not that fans are not important to sport, but because this dimension (unlike the other three) is not always present, i.e. we can imagine sports without fans.⁸ Philosophy of sport literature and various authors from the field (Suits, 1978, cited 2014; Pisk, 2006; Feezell, 2006; Kretchmar, 2012; Nguyen, 2017; Jirásek, Oborný, & Hurych 2018; Simon, Torres, & Hager 2018; and others) offer important insights into each of these dimensions.

To my knowledge, a systematic and comprehensive treatment of good sport has not been sufficiently provided so far.⁹ The majority of authors have focused on a detailed analysis of a particular property or aspect (e.g. fairness of classification or moral cultivation through sport), without an explicit ambition to treat the topic on a general level and with respect to its different aspects. The reason why such a treatment is important is that it gives us a chance to think about good sport from a wider perspective, where the distance enables us to see the bigger picture of what good sport involves, i.e. its variety of properties and their relations. This paper is not a direct reaction to previous work. It aims to capture the problematics of good sport in this unique way and to enrich the previous discussions by offering a systematic and comprehensive (i.e. clear, structurally arranged) account of good sport. This account is then analysed in terms of its strengths and weaknesses and defended against possible objections. I should also mention that it is a theoretical project that uses tools that are used as a standard when dealing with these types of research questions: description, demonstration of relevant thoughts, critical analysis, comparison, evaluation, and interpretation.

Constitutive Properties of Good Sport

Any process of determining what are the constitutive properties of good sport faces several challenges. On what basis can we say that this particular property is desired? How can we know that the list is not subjective? Aren't we creating distinctions and categories that do not correspond to how sport is being practised?

To be sure, any constitutive property of good sport must not be a pure language category, but it must refer to a sporting reality. Therefore, the list of properties must be linked to the structural features, actions, and inner settings that are traceable in the sporting reality. Moreover, we need certain transparent standards and criteria to avoid subjectivism. Good sport is not any type of sporting activity, but one that meets certain desired standards. Where do these standards come from? I am working here with the thesis that they derive from our rational enquiry and moral reasoning, which are always subjective in a certain sense (i.e. shaped by a particular subject, her personal values, preferences, and worldviews), but through which we are also able to arrive at certain common ground that goes beyond subjectivity.

At the level of good sport as an activity, I apply an ontological point of view, focusing on the desired structural standards of the activity. At the level of attitude and environment (culture), I then take a moral point of view and identify relevant moral qualities of good sport. I base

the measure of an ontologically good sport on the positions of selected authors within the philosophy of sport (Suits, Fraleigh, Butcher and Schneider, Kretchmar, Jirásek, etc.), who deal with the ontology of sport in terms of its desired structural standards. The measure of a morally good sport is based on moral realism, traditional virtue ethics, and prominent authors in the modern philosophy of sport whose conceptions relate directly to the discussed issue. Moral realism and virtue ethics represent broad ethical accounts and include various authors and developments. Moral realism in particular is hotly debated in the philosophy of sport (e.g. Russell, 2004; Morgan, 2004). These discussions are linked to the debate on broad internalism and include detailed elaborations including distinctions that are not relevant to the present discussion, so I will not explicitly build on them.

The ethical framework of this paper is inspired predominantly by Robert Spaemann (2009) and his emphasis on objective moral values, by ancient Greek thinkers (Plato, Aristotle) and their ethical considerations, and by contemporary authors who connect virtue ethics and sport (e.g. Feezell 2006; Pisk, 2006, 2010). A philosophical approach focusing on virtues was previously used by McNamee (2008, p. 4), who argues that '[...] the context of virtues in ancient Greece offers us instructive examples for our conduct and character in sport in (post)modernity.' The task here is not to idealise previous epochs or to merely revive ancient Greek ideals, but to reconstruct some relevant insights from traditional virtue ethics in the context of modern sport. I chose these ethical positions and authors because they emphasise the objective side of moral values (the moral realism of R. Spaemann) and cultivation of character through the acquisition of desired qualities (virtue ethics, some modern philosophers of sport). Thus, they provide a solid starting point for identifying good sport from the moral point of view.¹⁰ The properties identified either derive from these ethical accounts or are formulated with the intention to be consistent with them.

The following subsections include three dimensions of good sport and their constitutive properties. The order in which they are presented has no significant meaning. My approach is not rooted in one particular theory of sport (e.g., externalism or internalism, the latter consisting of formalism, conventionalism, and broad internalism (or interpretivism); the last – broad internalism/interpretivism – is further sub-divided into contractualism, the 'respect for the integrity of the game' approach, and mutualism).¹¹ Rather, I offer a systematic list of properties that is (more or less) related to each of the mentioned theories. Further reflection reveals that broad internalism (an emphasis on underlying intrinsic principles of sport), and particularly mutualism (an emphasis on a cooperative pursuit of excellence) are of particular significance for the list.

Good Sport as an Activity

Good sport is optimally difficult and challenging. This means that the constitutive rules and general structure of the activity make it possible, yet not too easy, to achieve the pre-lusory goal of a given sport.¹² In the context of games, Suits (1973, p. 12) claims:

[...] we may think of the gamewright, when he invents games, as attempting to draw a line between permitted and prohibited means to a given end. If he draws this line too loosely there is danger of the game becoming too easy, and if he draws it with utter laxity the game simply falls apart. On the other hand, he must not draw the line too tight or, instead of falling apart, the game will be squeezed out of existence.

Suits' description points to the high level of difficulty or looseness in which the activity ceases to exist.¹³ We may add that even when the level of difficulty or looseness is not too much to destroy the activity, but they still make the activity too difficult or too loose, we would not call it good sport (Butcher and Schneider, 1998, pp. 12–13).¹⁴ What we are searching for is the optimal difficulty that makes the activity attractive and therefore valuable. Kolers (2019, p. 401) states that '[...] the best games continually optimize difficulty such that we remain challenged and engaged, but still capable of success.' Good games and good sports challenge us, stimulate us and enable us to achieve something valuable through the process of engagement. Butcher and Schneider (1998, p. 12) further claim that the activity is interesting when there is room to express creativity, to experiment (within limits, i.e. rules) with new ways of performing the task. Kretchmar (2019, p. 291) adds that 'it could well be the case that games of high agency, effort, and merit are qualitatively superior to games that are deficient in these features.' He quotes Hurka (in Suits, 2014, Introduction), who claims that the value of game-playing derives from its difficulty. The value lies precisely in overcoming reasonably difficult challenges on our path towards accomplishing a given task. The 'optimal difficulty' here resembles an Aristotelian emphasis on the midpoint between excess and deficiency used in the context of virtues (Barnes, 1995, 1107a, 5).¹⁵

The second property is that good sport is structurally fair. This means that in terms of its structure, it contains equal opportunities for everyone engaged. Of course, absolute equality is practically impossible, since athletes, for example, differ in the equipment they use. In the case of tournaments, they play in competitions at different times of the day, etc., and in different circumstances, such as location. Structural fairness suggests that participants will be properly/evenly matched and evaluated based on their skills, which will determine the outcome (Butcher and Schneider, 1998, p. 15), and that no one will have

an unjustified advantage.¹⁶ Fraleigh (1983, p. 54) claims that in a good sports contest, 'the opponents are equally competent performers and this is known before the contest.' Howe (2011, p. 146) suggests that a poorly matched competition makes the outcome predictable and therefore leads to boredom. Nguyen (2017, pp. 126–127) adds that when the skills are mismatched, we will fail to generate the valued activity. However, when the factors align, games (and arguably sports) offer a unique social possibility; namely '[...] one in which I may take my hostile and aggressive impulses and acts and, by placing them in the properly designed context, with the right people, turn them into something good'.¹⁷ The concept of structural fairness can be further developed by referring to equal opportunities. According to Papineau (2017, p. 169), 'sporting contests are essentially even-handed. Both sides can see that the other has an equal right to succeed, and that the appropriate result is victory for the more skilful team.'

Related to the previous property is the third one; namely, that the result is the subject of competition and not known in advance. The very nature of sport, as Weiss (1981, p. 52) points out, involves a certain openness, which means that sport is produced '[...] then and there, with incidents and outcomes that cannot be known in advance.' This means that a genuine sports competition involves the possibility of winning/succeeding and losing/failing (Borge, 2019, p. 439). Kretchmar (2017, p. 62), in this context, speaks about the uncertainty to which human beings seem to be drawn in sport: 'Boring games and one-sided contests provide no drama.' This uncertainty brings about a 'sweet tension' which makes an event attractive (Kretchmar, 1975, p. 26). Butcher and Schneider (1998, p. 15) specify the condition for uncertainty as follows: 'The outcome of the contest should be in doubt until the end.'¹⁸ This claim is supported by Suits, who asserts (in Yorke and Lopez Frías, 2023, p. 133): '[...] as players or as spectators we want the games we play or the games we view to be as exciting as possible. Easy victories and humiliating defeats are anathema to players and spectators alike.' The element of exciting moments is also highlighted by Ryall (2020), who names several features necessary for good sport, among which are novelty, genius, and drama. If the result is highly predictable, then the sporting activity is likely less exciting. If the result is known in advance, we either speak of a corrupt sport, or of other types of activities that are, for example, more theatrically based, such as wrestling (Suits 2014, p. 207; Howe 2011, p. 146).

The fourth and the last property that I wish to mention here is that good sport cultivates rather than damages our physical, mental, and social spheres of being. As early as in the 4th century BC, Aristotle points out the negative effects of excessive physical training and participation in competition (Barnes, 1995, 1338b, 40–1339a, 5): 'The evil of excessive training in early years is strikingly proved by

the example of the Olympic victors; for not more than two or three of them have gained a prize both as boys and as men; their early training and severe gymnastic exercises exhausted their constitutions.’ Good sport promotes our holistic development and avoids a one-sided orientation toward physical prowess linked to the obsession with obtaining results and being successful.¹⁹ Jirásek, Oborný and Hurych (2018) discuss the ancient Greek concept of *techné gymnastiké*, which they present as the authentic mode of sport influenced by a natural human power and its harmonious development. It is in opposition to *techné athlétiké*, which is characterised by an effort to develop some parts of the human body without taking account of the holistic approach. This form of “sport” has its historical exemplification in the context of ancient Greek professional athletics, which even led to the physical deformation of athletes (Olivová, 1988, pp. 135–145). We may add that good sport is also not too aggressive. The structure of sport (rules, internal principles) should imply that the opponent is a partner in a mutual process, not an obstacle that needs to be beaten, or even destroyed. Some sports, such as boxing, require that athletes be sufficiently energetic and ready not only to defeat an opponent, but also to protect themselves. Moreover, there are phases in sports that are more intense and aggressive, like the NHL playoffs. This is fine, so long as the structure of competition implies mutual respect and the will to fight fairly, without the intention to hurt the opponent. In such a case, we would call these actions defective sports, or rather fights and battles than (good) sports. What matters is the commitment to playing well (i.e. in accordance with the rules and internal principles of sport), not the destruction of the opponent (see the section below).²⁰

Good Sport as an Attitude

Athletes in good sport play fair and respect each other. This means that they learn to go beyond their ego and to recognise the other as a person. Even in more individually based sports, it is not just about the individual. Each athlete is situated in the context of a concrete sport with its specific demands to which she needs to adjust. Moreover, she needs to develop a healthy approach towards the activity itself and other competitors. Hyland (1978, pp. 33–34) states that *com-petitio* means “to question together, to strive together”.²¹ It is not necessarily connected to alienation but, paradoxically, to the possibility of friendship (1978, pp. 34–35): ‘It is a questioning of each other together, a striving together, presumably so that each participant achieves a level of excellence that could not have been achieved alone, without the mutual striving, without the competition [...] competition, as a striving or questioning together towards excellence, in so far as it most adequately fulfils its possibilities, does so as a mode of friendship.’

In a similar vein, Simon, Torres and Hager (2018, p. 47) argue that sports are best conceived as collaborative enterprises:

[...] competitive athletics is best conceived as a mutual quest for excellence, an activity that is significantly cooperative in that all the participants consent to be tested in the crucible of competition for both the intrinsic value of meeting interesting challenges and for what we can learn about ourselves and others through the attempt to meet the competitive test.

This position of “mutualism”, rooted in the Socratic tradition of questioning, faces several objections. For example, we may argue that this approach diminishes the importance of winning and losing (Kretchmar, 2012, pp. 105–106; Nguyen, 2017, p. 129) since it focuses primarily on excellence. Moreover, Nguyen (2017, p. 130) objects that Simon does not distinguish adequately between playing and training.²² However, what Simon, Torres and Hager seem to emphasise is the importance of an ethical approach towards sport, not that winning or losing are not important (2018, p. 50): ‘Although each participant aims at winning, mutualism implies that they see each other not as enemies or mere things or obstacles but rather as persons who facilitate the ability to test oneself through challenge.’ These authors illustrate the basic content of the position of mutualism in the following words: ‘Mutualism, then, condemns viewing opponents as enemies or reducing them to obstacles to success while at the same time supporting our best efforts to meet the challenges a worthy opponent presents.’ Similarly, Fraleigh (1983, p. 54) states that opponents should view one another as mutual facilitators in the contest and have respect for the rules.²³ These rivals share a common goal, which is to participate in sport. They enable each other to achieve this basic goal through their participation.²⁴

Moreover, good sport involves a certain zeal for the game. This does not necessarily mean a commitment to achieving excellence. It rather means that an athlete is engaged and committed to playing their best (or at least reasonably well), i.e. playing genuinely, wholeheartedly, and without prolongation (Suits, 2014, pp. 141–142). This property appears a little controversial, since we want to see new and surprising strategies. What is meant by playing genuinely and wholeheartedly is that we play to our best abilities (Butcher and Schneider 1998, p. 15) and do not calculate whether playing poorly or eventually losing is more beneficial to us. This becomes an issue especially in tournaments where losing might lead to having a weaker opponent in the upcoming and arguably more important round.²⁵ The reason why this is important is twofold. On one hand, giving our best (being truly engaged) enables us to discover the inner attractiveness of a given sport by

immersing ourselves in it. It also makes it possible to recognise our abilities more accurately, improve our skills and to become a better athlete. On the other hand, if the sides are properly matched, it makes the competition challenging and therefore more attractive for others.²⁶ The task here is not to be the best at any cost (such as through enhancing performance against the rules and ethos of sport, or in terms of extreme dedication that fails, using Spaemann's terminology, to give justice to reality and what is truly good, i.e. what has higher value²⁷), but to create a space for a good encounter within the accepted boundaries of a given sport (even an amateur one). Fraleigh (1983, p. 54) asserts that in the good sports contest, 'the opponents all play well in the contest and playing well means performing at, or close to their previous levels of performance.' Moreover, they recognise as an important value the acquisition of complete and accurate knowledge of their abilities.

Related to the previous property is that good sport requires that playing and winning (succeeding) are in optimal balance. Within the context of a game, Suits (1969, p. 320) states: '[...] a good game is one in which, for the winner, the aims of playing and winning are jointly realized, perhaps in terms of some kind of optimal balance.' The challenge here, as Kolers (2016, p. 740) suggests, is to realise the optimal balance between trying and achieving. If we do not try enough, we fail to respect the opponent by not being a challenging contestant. If we try to win too much, we may fail to meet the moral standards of the competition and neglect the process just for the sake of a good result. An emphasis only on winning reduces sport to just one or two of its categories, namely intrinsic and extrinsic achievement play (Nguyen, 2020, p. 32). Winning in itself has little value; it is part of good sport only if it comes from good competition (Mareš and Ryall, 2021, p. 302; Butcher and Schneider 1998, 15–16). Therefore, what matters is also the process, or what Nguyen calls 'striving play', which values the struggle. Arguably, the value of sport derives partly from its educational potential – sports teach us important lessons about our physical capabilities, mental qualities, and social competencies. Reid (2011, p. 6) claims that the 'winning is the only thing' mentality destroys this educational potential of sport. An inspiring case in this respect is the gesture of the long-distance runner Iván Fernández Anaya who let an opponent win who has mistakenly stopped running about 10 metres before the finish, thinking he had already crossed the line. Fernández stated (Arribas, 2012): 'I didn't deserve to win it. I did what I had to do. He was the rightful winner. He created a gap that I couldn't have closed if he hadn't made a mistake. As soon as I saw he was stopping, I knew I wasn't going to pass him.' Fernández's gesture raises some interesting questions: Under what circumstances is the pursuit of winning (un) desirable?²⁸ Or: Is winning in sport the ultimate or "only"

conditional value? The answer to the second question is more likely to be the second option. However, we can ask whether a misidentification of the correct finish line is not ultimately the evidence of inferior running skills and whether the appropriate response to such mistake is to let the opponent win.

Fourth, good sport requires the ability to cope with winning and losing/success and failure. The challenge is to approach winning/success reasonably, with humility and respect. However, sport is predominantly about coping with failure and losing. Pike (2019, p. 15) states that people playing sport try to do difficult things that are on the margins of their abilities, and sometimes they succeed, but more often they fail. The vulnerability to defeat as an unavoidable fact in sport is described and analysed by Edgar (2013, pp. 131–132), who claims that '[...] there must be an inherent risk of failure for the activity to count as sport'. Facing these difficulties and the possibility of failure is in an important sense positive, since, as Spaemann says (2009, 35): 'For we can only develop our strength against a reality that resists us.'²⁹ Losing is clearly not the aim of participation in sport. However, it should not be neglected or treated as a purely negative aspect. Jirásek and Roberson (2010, pp. 10–11) emphasise that loss has the value of authenticity and could be just as important as victory: 'We must go beyond our shallow thoughts to realize the negative aspects of rivalry and perfectionism (pain, loss, effort) have more value and importance than only victory and especially victory at any cost. Fair loss is more valuable than victory that does not respect one's partner, health, or fairness.' Sports invite us to respond to our failures, and therefore contain an important educational opportunity. The task is not to give up but to learn from our mistakes and work hard on improvement. Defeat can teach us a valuable lesson if we approach it constructively. As Jirásek and Roberson (2010, p. 12) claim, 'defeat can aid in one's personal development to create a big heart rather than remaining a one dimensional winner.'³⁰ There are several positive examples that can be mentioned here. The ability to cope with winning and losing might be observed even in rather small gestures, such as shaking hands after a match or in honestly congratulating the opponent who has won the game.

The fifth property, which could be seen as a hinge of the previous four, refers to virtues,³¹ particularly to their acquisition (habituation) and demonstration through sport. Pisk (2010, p. 9) points out the insufficiency of rules alone and highlights the role of moral virtues: '[...] only the whole of both – the one coming from outside of the man (rules or laws) and the one coming from inside (virtues) can assure and make possible a good and fair played sport.' Virtues in the context of sport are clearly traceable in the era of Classical Greece (Zowislo, 2009). In his analysis of good sport from a Platonic perspective, Pisk (2006, p. 69)

highlights the virtue of fortitude/courage (*andreia*), which relates to the emotional part of the soul and is particularly cultivated through sport. This virtue is highlighted also by Aristotle in the context of moderate physical exercises (*techné gymnastiké*) that are meant to promote this particular quality of character (Barnes, 1995, 1337b, 20–30). Aristotle (Barnes, 1995, 1105a, 30–1105b, 5–15) claims that one becomes virtuous through performing consciously and voluntarily chosen virtuous actions and through their proper habituation, i.e. through being stable in our moral conduct. In the context of sport, this could be interpreted as a conscious aspiration to act in a certain virtuous manner. This aspiration should not be occasional, but firm and stable.³² Concerning Aristotle's conception, Reid (2020, p. 69) further specifies that athletic training can only contribute to virtue when it is complemented by an effort to understand what is good and beautiful. It is therefore not a mere repetition of a particular virtuous action, but also and essentially a certain internal focus on what the action is intended to pursue, i.e., moral good.³³ Arguably, sport has a structure that offers many possibilities for demonstrating virtues. Besides courage, we may list the examples of perseverance, justice, determination, sportsmanship (Feezell, 1986), or fair play (Butcher and Schneider, 1998). An ethical approach towards sport with a special emphasis on fair play and sportsmanship is presented by Feezell (2006, Introduction):

The good sport must combine in the unity of single attitude and in his behavior the generosity of the play spirit and the keen sense of fair play characteristic of a competitive athlete. The good sport is both player and athlete, and the virtue of sportsmanship should be seen in Aristotelian terms, as a judicious mean between excessive playfulness and excessive seriousness.

Problematic in this context is the topic of gamesmanship. Although it may potentially bring some positive consequences (e.g. help us to understand a given sport and its rules³⁴), it neglects the importance of good intentions, which are constitutive of a good sporting attitude. Good sport from the perspective of virtue ethics is not just about the consequences that our actions bring, but also and primarily about the manners of executing these actions and about the intentions that precede them.

The sixth property is that good sport requires a playful attitude. Mareš and Ryall (2021, p. 298) define it in the following way:

An intentional, voluntarily chosen way to be open and responsive to the play situation; to be intrinsically motivated, to be in the "game", that is attentive towards, and immersed in the activity in its own space and time, and to experience it as pleasurable; to be

capricious in the choice of play action; and to operate through the mode of positive mental states and dispositions, such as curiosity, energy, enthusiasm, creativity, spontaneity, and anticipation.

These authors give several arguments as to why such an attitude plays an important role in producing good sport. It enables a richness of experience that goes beyond simply being engaged in an activity. It allows one to play the game when the temptation would be to tighten up, work at it, overthink, and perhaps "choke". It also helps to be more fully a part of the activity and to engage in it in a proper way, i.e. positively and appropriately towards the challenges. It therefore serves as a precondition for playing genuinely, wholeheartedly, and virtuously. This last point is suggested by Schneider (2001, p. 158): 'We should adopt a play attitude to sport precisely because such an attitude grounds fair play and respect for the rules of sport.' It should be noted that this is not the only desirable attitude in sport. Athletes may hold a mixture of attitudes in one particular moment. Being a good athlete, both in a moral and performative sense, requires more than a playful attitude, but rather a proper mixture of several attitudes that emerge in the proper order at the right time (Mareš and Ryall, 2021, p. 303). However, if we think of morally good sport, this attitude is arguably one of its constitutive elements, because it implies caring about the process of playing, and therefore also respect for the rules and others involved.

Here, one could object that I demonstrate an "amateur bias". It can be argued that the playful attitude only applies to amateur sport and is not desirable in performance-oriented or professional sport, because there is no room for free play in them. In these forms of sport, one needs to play with responsibility and desire to perform at one's best. I will only note here that the playful attitude does not preclude these other approaches. It merely points to their insufficiency when we seriously address the question of what it means to have a good attitude in sport. Moreover, one could object that not all "good sport" needs to be intrinsically motivated or pleasurable. Arguably, sports quite often involve pain, suffering, injuries, etc., that are not pleasurable. Moreover, one could play sport, for example, to raise money for charity, i.e. be primarily instrumentally (extrinsically) motivated. My point here is not that sport has to be pleasurable and intrinsically interesting for us in all instances of our participation, but if it generally (over a long period of time, e.g. during our whole professional career) is not, then something very important would be missing.³⁵

Good Sport as an Environment/Culture

Good sport on a cultural level is open to every human being, i.e. it does not involve discrimination. The fourth

fundamental principle of Olympism (in the Olympic Charter, 2021) states: ‘The practice of sport is a human right. Every individual must have the possibility of practising sport, without discrimination of any kind and in the Olympic spirit, which requires mutual understanding with a spirit of friendship, solidarity and fair play.’ We may ask on what basis sport is a human right, but the general Olympic message is clear: sport is a human category accessible to all human beings, without discrimination of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, sexual orientation, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status (see the sixth fundamental principle). However, this does not mean that good sport is without categories and does not involve the concept of eligibility. Categorisation is important for creating a meaningful and fair competition. What it should not do is to deprive some groups of people their opportunity to participate in sport generally. With respect to modern global sport, Kreft (2019, p. 263) claims: ‘[...] global sport cannot survive, not even function if it does not actively fight against racism, sexism, and many other ideologies of discrimination.’

Moreover, good sport aims to have a positive impact on society by emphasising human flourishing and cultivation. Here again, we may quote the Olympic Charter (second fundamental principle of Olympism): ‘The goal of Olympism is to place sport at the service of the harmonious development of humankind, with a view to promoting a peaceful society concerned with the preservation of human dignity.’ As Breivik (1998, p. 105) states, ‘sport is not locked in its own world.’ Being an influential social phenomenon, sport is deeply rooted in the lives of many people. Again, Breivik writes (1998, 107): ‘Sport is part of a society where values flow back and forth between practices and institutions, and influence each other in various ways.’³⁶ Morgan (2006) reminds us that sports morally matter. Sport is good when it promotes positive values and cares not just about results, records, and popularity, but more importantly about helping people to live better lives through emphasising positive physical encounters and an active lifestyle. Good sport is value-oriented in a sense that it goes beyond the realm of excellent personal performances and statistical results. It reflects and implements cross-cultural values such as respect, solidarity and dedication. Therefore, it reaches the social realms of morality and humanism.³⁷ These theoretical insights have their practical implications. For example, good sport requires a reasonable approach from parents, coaches, clubs, organisations and governing bodies. To determine what this “reasonableness” means is a difficult task; it requires a multidisciplinary approach and reflection that enables learning from previous mistakes. An initial answer could be that good sport is not harmful. In other words, it requires a recognition

of other values (such as joy and experience) rather than just performance and progress. This presents a challenge, especially for modern competitive youth sport and professional performance and result-oriented sport. Zurc (2019, pp. 341–342) emphasises that the competitive nature of sport and the interest in winning at any cost represent a risk of harm, especially for young pre-adolescent athletes. He stresses that the exploitation of children is one of the biggest questions in the ethics of sport. The challenge here involves seeing an athlete as a person, not as a commodity or a tool for realising someone else’s dreams. Moreover, giving our best (a property of good sport – see the attitudinal dimension above) does not mean being obsessed with performance. It is desirable, as Aristotle suggested (Barnes, 1995, 1338b, 40–1339a, 5), only under the condition of being in a harmonious relationship with integral development and preservation of physical and mental health. Some topics addressed in this section are discussed in detail by Torres and Lopez Frias (2023) in their recent text on a justly organized sport for youth. These authors conceptualise just sport for youth as an enterprise in which adults collaborate to promote children’s quest for autonomy, which empowers them to promote their interests and needs and encourages the creation of a community of equals.

It is important to add that good sport is not corruptive. This property strongly relates to the one mentioned in the activity dimension; namely, that a result is the subject of competition and not known in advance. On a cultural level, it means that the primary aspects of sport, such as the exercise of physical skills and demonstration of physical prowess (Papineau, 2017, pp. 244–245) will not be manipulated by economic (e.g., gambling) or political interests. Although sport often functions in close cooperation with the state and private sectors, it is neither a political nor a business tool in terms of ideological manipulation and unjustified financial gain.³⁸

The characteristics mentioned so far were related to human culture. One may object that such sport is anthropocentric and that it does not sufficiently take into account its own embeddedness in the world that includes much more than human beings. It is therefore important to also refer to the animal kingdom and the natural environment. Good sport does not exploit animals for the purpose of giving the best performance and entertaining the audience. On the contrary, it involves actively seeking to protect the health of animals, respecting their value as living beings, and caring for their welfare (or at least not hindering it). A positive example is set by the European Equestrian Federation (Mission statement from the EEF strategy 2022–2026): ‘The EEF’s mission is to provide the platform to inspire the growth and accessibility of equestrian sport with horse welfare as the guiding principle of our progressive and transparent leadership.’³⁹

Finally, good sport is environmentally friendly. This is in tension with sports mega events and other similar venues that represent a significant burden on the natural environment. The reason is that these events require mass-scale travelling, building new complexes and therefore a significant restructuring of the landscape in the places where tournaments are held. Ryall (2023) glosses this problem as follows:

[...] good sport doesn't have to involve athletes and the sporting entourage to travel around the world for our entertainment, or even to determine who is the best just to satisfy egos or our relish in seeing some amazing athletes compete face-to-face against each other. Good sport can take place on a much more local scale and this is what we should be promoting.

Ryall formulates this claim as reaction to the elite British runner Innes FitzGerald, who recently said that she would not be flying around the world to compete in athletics events due to the carbon footprint it leaves. In a letter to UK Athletics (January 2023), FitzGerald stated (Ryall, 2023):

I would never be comfortable flying in the knowledge that people could be losing their livelihoods, homes and loved ones as a result. The least I can do is voice my solidarity with those suffering on the front line of climate breakdown. Coming to a decision has not been easy, however little compares to the grief I would feel taking the flight.

The impact of sports (mega events and international competitions in particular, e.g. Olympic Games or World Cups) on the natural environment and climate change presents an important contemporary issue that is worthy of a serious philosophical (ethical) investigation. Nature preservation (including not wasting resources) is arguably an objective moral value and an essential precondition for human flourishing. Since a comprehensive ethical debate on the environmental impact of sport and moral issues connected with it has not yet taken place (Edgar, 2020), I will leave this last property as an invitation to further reflection.

Discussion

This section is meant to complement the main text by discussing its potential strengths and weaknesses together with the philosophical problems that emerge when dealing with the problematics of good sport. These problems are particularly related to an attempt to present the general account of good sport and the list of its constitutive properties.

One of the crucial tasks for contemporary philosophy of sport is to identify and argue for a desired version of sport. The presented list serves as a certain compass or roadmap in answering the question “What kind of sport is worth pursuing?” It speaks primarily about competitive forms of sport. However, with a certain adaptation to particular cases, it is also applicable to individual sports as well as various levels of sport, e.g. amateur, youth, or professional. It could be accused of not going into detail (which is true), but this is not the purpose of the current study. Its main purpose is to offer the most relevant general properties of good sport that could then serve as a solid foundation for future detailed investigations. It does not describe sporting reality as it is now but argues from a normative perspective what properties are constitutive of good sport. The basis of the argumentation consists in certain explicit standards rather than in the assumption that because things are a certain way, they should be that way. Therefore, the project does not commit an is-ought fallacy. However, this does not mean that the list has no weak points or that it brings no difficulties.

The list will probably not be accepted by those who are sceptical towards general classifications (i.e. by radical historicists, cultural relativists, contextualists or anti-essentialists) and by those who consider morality unimportant for sport, that is, for example, by those who would say (explicitly or implicitly) that rules should be viewed and treated as egoistic devices, which means that we should follow them when it is in our self-interest to do so and break them when it is not (Morgan 2006, Preface). To the second group, I reply that sports are not just about ourselves and our self-interests, but about ourselves in relation to others and to the game itself. Spaemann (2009, 20–21) in this context states that human beings are not determined by their instincts and preferences, but we must search for and find the measures of our actions: “[...] man is not a being pre-determined by instinct, but a being who must first seek and find the standards of her actions [...] For there is not only my will, there is also the will of others.”⁴⁰

A response to the first group is more complicated. Can, and if so, should we even attempt to categorise “good sport”? One of the problems with general classifications is that they do not sufficiently cover concrete issues of the reality they attempt to classify, and therefore they may be accused of not being informative. For example, if one of the properties states that athletes in good sport play fair and respect each other, what does it tell us about “strategic fouling”? Clearly, we need further analysis to explicate the exact meaning of this property and to determine how it applies to this concrete case.⁴¹ Moreover, if one of the properties states that athletes in good sport play fair and respect each other, and another property says that good sport involves giving our best and being a challenging

contestant, what shall we do when we play a hockey game and the score is 10-0 to us? (“the running up the score” dilemma). We can again say that we need further analysis to determine how these properties apply to this concrete case. However, it is likely that even then we will not reach an ideal solution. In an ideal case, we will only understand better what the dilemma is about and what options are available. The fact that there is a tension between some properties, or that some properties require further analysis to reach an appropriate interpretation of their meaning does not suggest that the general classification is wrong or generally pointless. It rather suggests that a practical attempt to live morally (i.e. to reach morally acceptable solutions as a basis for morally acceptable actions) is hard because it requires dealing with complex issues, difficult cases and dilemmas in which what is good (or better than something else) is not clear.

But why then should we attempt to generally clarify what is “good sport”? Here, I think there are at least two possible answers – one is wrong, and the other is philosophically valid. The wrong one would include the tendency to imply preferred views and enforce what is beneficial for a certain group of individuals. The “wrongness” of such a view lies in intellectual imperialism and unjust manipulation. The philosophically valid answer would suggest that some occurring states of affairs in current sporting reality are worthy of preserving whereas some others are not. In order to distinguish between them and make them understandable for others, we first need a general account of good sport.

Another possible issue with the presented list of properties could be called “definitional”. Are the properties necessary and sufficient? Since the definitional sufficiency was not my interest here, I will put this problem to one side. Concerning necessity, although I would say that they are, this point begs clarification. If some property is not traceable in a particular sporting example, then something important is missing. Here, we may use the analogy with the definition of sport. Some activities (such as speed-eating or bridge) meet many relevant criteria to be classified as sports, but they also lack at least one relevant criterion (in our example, proper physical skills) which makes them something (slightly) different than sport. In the case of good sport, if some relevant criterion is missing, we should speak of something else, but not of good sport in a proper sense. Furthermore, sport that lacks five properties (or the entire dimension) is worse than sport that lacks three, even though both will be deficient in some way. Arguably, some properties might be considered more important than others (e.g., having a playful attitude might be considered less important than respecting our opponent on the grounds that the former is “just” concerned with playing the game well, whereas the latter is concerned with being a morally good person).⁴²

My reply here would be that the presented properties are often interconnected and if one piece is missing, it will have an impact on other properties and the whole structure. A playful attitude (as mentioned above) grounds fair play and respect for the game. Therefore, it is important to recognise the relevance of each property within the whole structure.

However, the problem goes deeper. How much does any property have to be realised with respect to intensity and durability? Arguably, each property has a minimal level of “goodness,” which enables us to say that this property is sufficiently present in a given context (e.g. in the case of corruption, it is possible to determine its absence by pointing to certain transparent mechanisms that prevent it). Sometimes, however, this level of sufficient presence varies based on a particular situation (e.g. being a challenging contestant is not a fixed, but rather dynamic category with different intensity throughout the season). The mere absence of negative features does not automatically entail that sport is good. We need at least some minimal positive features to speak about good sport. With respect to good actions, Spaemann (2009, pp. 93–94) claims that the upper limit of what constitutes a good action cannot be definitively stated. We can always do something better than what we did before, but this does not mean that we are always obliged to do the best, because this would be impossible. The lower limits of what is permissible do not define good action. Spaemann gives this example: a good intention alone does not make an action good, but without a good intention, without a good attitude, there is no good action. In the case of good sport and its properties, I suggest that it is useful to speak about a continuum and direct our attention from the minimal limit to an effort to realise each property as much as possible. The more intensely (but not in terms of extremes) and more often (or more stably) a particular property is traceable, the better the given sport is.⁴³ This implies that the concept of good sport is not strictly fixed, but rather that it involves a certain spectrum of more or less realised good-making properties.

Moreover, we may ask how stable our classification is with respect to cultural differences and historical changes. It is fair to admit that the list was created with respect to modern sport and is based on a Western perspective. Breivik (1998, p. 116) is right in pointing out that ‘sport is not a stable institution with regular, predictable occurrences, fixed rules, and a widely accepted ethos [...] We need to come to understand the process, change, dynamic, and development of modern sport.’ Clearly, some properties from the list were not so obvious in the past. For example, sport has not always been open to everyone.⁴⁴ But this does not mean that it is not an objectively desirable property of good sport. It would be a mistake to dogmatically claim that the list applies to every historical

period and every culture. It primarily serves as a guiding tool for practising sport in the contemporary world. It is good to be modest enough in claims about cross-cultural validity. Recent decades of work in anthropology and cultural psychology have shown that much of what we once assumed to constitute universal human functioning is actually culturally varied.⁴⁵ However, it does not exclude the possibility of objective moral values. If the presented list of properties successfully builds on these values, then it is worth pursuing in any human context.

This brings us to the last question of how we shall use this “compass” in practice. Arguably, the answer will vary based on the role and competencies (parents will use it differently than coaches, coaches will use it differently than managers, etc.). I consider it especially relevant to use this compass on the level of sport for youth. Local clubs and organisations may use it as a certain code that will shape their development programmes and constitute the basis of their identity.

Conclusion

This paper has offered a systematic and comprehensive account of good sport from the ontological and moral point of view. I have distinguished between three dimensions of good sport, i.e. an activity, an attitude, and an environment/culture. Moreover, I have presented the most relevant constitutive properties of each dimension and demonstrated their relevance in the list. The text has not offered a detailed or exhaustive analysis of these properties, but only their general explication. Although this paper is primarily a theoretical project, it may very well serve as a practical compass on our way towards identifying and promoting good sport. The current sporting reality is dynamic and requires swift responses together with fast adaptation. The new forms of practices that have emerged relatively recently and are now highly popular (e.g. e-sports) present not just a conceptual challenge, but also invoke ontological, ethical and axiological questions related to the general issue of what kinds of activities are good for human beings. Perhaps, more than ever, we need a solid ethical and axiological basis to “walk on the right track”. This analysis has attempted to provide a comprehensive answer to the question on what kind of sport is worth pursuing in the contemporary world.

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- ¹ The term “property” represents an important metaphysical concept. Metaphysics has traditionally contrasted a substance with its properties (or attributes or characteristics). A substance is what has properties, what is the bearer of properties, where properties somehow inhere. It is also the term frequently used in the analytical philosophy and the contemporary philosophy of mind (Crane, 2001, pp. 35–40). In this text, I use the term “property” with a specific meaning, i.e. that which gives a certain character to an activity – in our case sport.
- ² The paradox of a perfectly played (fair) game is discussed by Suits (in Yorke and Lopez Frías, 2023, pp. 126–142).
- ³ Intrinsic values of sport are discussed, for example, by Reid (2012, pp. 191–197).
- ⁴ Parry (2019, p. 4) claims that sport is ‘an institutionalised, rule-governed contest of human physical skill’. I maintain that the contest condition leads to a narrow concept of sport, as it does not encompass all relevant encounters that can be present in the activity, i.e. more individually based and collaborative forms of sport. Moreover, Parry’s account lacks the emphasis on play and game structures that are inherently present in sport. For a reply to this criticism, see Parry (2023).
- ⁵ Fraleigh adds that the same sports contest could be called a good sports contest from the point of view of health and a bad sports contest from the economic point of view.
- ⁶ Fraleigh (1983, p. 53) describes the good sports contest as meeting both standards supplied by the nature of the sports contest itself and some standards of the moral point of view; namely, those meant for everybody and for the good of everyone. The major difference between my project and Fraleigh’s is that I attempt to analyse good sport in a wider sense, whereas

Frleight's scope is narrower, as he focuses "just" on good sports contest. He then includes some characteristics that I think are neither necessary nor important for good sport (e.g. that the opponents complete the contest by the determination of winner(s) and loser(s).

⁷ Author's translation from German. Original: 'Der Streit um "gut" und "böse" beweist [...] daß bestimmte Handlungsweisen besser sind als andere – schlechthin besser, nicht nur besser für irgend jemanden oder besser im Verhältnis zu bestimmten kulturellen Normen.'

⁸ This idea is supported by Howe (2011, p. 140), who claims that sport, even the most commercially committed sort, can always be played in the absence of an audience and without losing any of its character as sport. Howe uses this claim in the context of a sport-theatre distinction and suggests that theatrical production, unlike sport, must presuppose an audience.

⁹ However, there are studies that offer important preliminary insights and are therefore worth investigating. In his analyses of good sports contests Frleight (1983) claims that there can be good, bad, or neutral sports contests, and the standards for such judgements are partly derived from the nature of the sports contest itself. He offers six characteristics of the good sports contest which I partly address in this paper. Moreover, he relates his conception to the four different classes of value – inherent, intrinsic, instrumental, and contributive. In her master's thesis, Taliah Powers (2022) focuses on good sport with respect to physical literacy and the moral self. Her analysis of sportsmanship offers important insights into the attitudinal dimension of good sport. Other relevant approaches to good sport are presented by Butcher and Schneider (1998), Culbertson (2008) or McFee (2009; 2012).

¹⁰ There are other possible ethical approaches on which good sport might be based (e.g. ethics of care, utilitarianism, or ethics of authenticity). It is likely that these other approaches will produce different properties that might even be in tension with some properties that are listed here (e.g. maximizing the pleasure of participants in the case of utilitarianism might be in tension with the property of human cultivation that is not always pleasurable). However, these different approaches might also reach the same (or very similar) properties (e.g. playing genuinely).

¹¹ These theories of sport are well described in the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, search "Philosophy of Sport" (Devine and Lopez Frías, 2020). See <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/sport/>. Accessed 27th June, 2022.

¹² Suits (1973, 10) characterises the pre-lusory goal as a specific achievable state of affairs that can be described before, or independently of, any game of which it may be, or come to be, a part (e.g. getting a golf ball into a hole). Winning as a lusory goal of a game presupposes being part of that game, i.e. accepting its constitutive rules in our effort to achieve the pre-lusory goal.

¹³ Suits (1973, p. 12) gives an example of a game that in principal cannot exist: '... *imagine a game where the pre-lusory goal*

is to cross a finish line, with an attendant rule that the player must not leave the track in his attempt to do so. Then imagine that there is a second rule which requires that the finish line be located some distance from the track.'

¹⁴ Hurka (in Suits, 2014, Introduction) gives an example of Rock, Paper, Scissors, which is not a challenging activity and therefore a very good game with respect to this criterion. Analogically, we may say that any sport (either newly invented or as a modified version of the contemporary challenging sports) that is not optimally difficult is not good in a required sense.

¹⁵ It also resembles the Goldilocks principle with the concept of "just the right amount".

¹⁶ Suits (in Yorke and Lopez Frías, 2023, p. 133), in this respect, raises an important question: '[...] how closely matched ought the skills of the contestants be?' He then claims that in the case of a perfectly fair game where the skills of the contestants are perfectly matched, these games will turn out to be ties (paradox of perfect matching).

¹⁷ One of the most discussed topics in the philosophy of sport is the issue of fair categorisation. A particularly interesting question concerns the competition of men against women, and of transgender athletes against cisgender athletes. This issue is highly relevant, but its detailed analysis is not the main theme of this paper, so I will leave it aside.

¹⁸ Carlson (2013, p. 193), with reference to Loland and Caillois, suggests that good sports competition involves a delicate balance between *agon* (the skill-based competitive element) and *alea* (the luck-based element, chance). Even though sports are essentially skill and merit-based, they involve an element of chance, which makes them unpredictable and exciting.

¹⁹ This criterion presents a challenge for esports that are situated in a virtual reality and does not always involve gross motor skills (i.e. does not involve gross motor movements). It also presents a challenge for professional sport, where the pressure on performance is significant and may, for example, push athletes to play with injuries in order to deserve their place "in the market".

²⁰ For a further discussion on bad games and defective games see Nguyen (2017, p. 129) and Suits (2014, p. 162).

²¹ Loland (2012, p. 160) further specifies that the related term 'contest' (from the latin *contestare*) originally refers to a striving together towards a common goal: the good game.

²² An interesting critique of mutualism is further offered by MacRae (2018).

²³ It may be added that this respect is also essential in relation to the referees who oversee the rules of the game.

²⁴ A hotly discussed issue related to this property is strategic fouling. The scope of this paper does not allow me to go into detail. Relevant texts on this topic are offered by Simon (2000), Russell (2017) or Imbrišević (2019). I will only note here that I do not see an insurmountable contradiction between strategic fouling (or playing tough) and respecting the opponent, i.e. it is possible for both to exist simultaneously. Of course, this does not mean that all strategic fouling (or playing tough) is

- compatible with respecting the opponent, e.g. play that involves an intention to injure the opponent is clearly not.
- ²⁵ Papineau (2017, p. 87) suggests that it is also the responsibility of the organisers to organise the competition properly.
- ²⁶ Highly problematic in this context is the concept of running up the score. The tension here is between respecting our opponents and giving our best when the score clearly indicates that the result of the game is irreversible. It is a complex and still debated issue that goes beyond the scope of this paper.
- ²⁷ Suits (1973, pp. 18–19) gives a fictitious example of the dedicated driver Mario Stewart who, in order to avoid disqualification from a race, ran over a child that had crawled out onto the track directly in the path of his car. Suit's point is that extreme dedication does not destroy the game, even though it may destroy the person. This example opens an interesting debate on the relation between morality inside and outside sport and its possible hierarchisation. This topic is discussed by Butcher and Schneider (1998, 19), who claim that sport can be all-absorbing and pursued with the utmost dedication and commitment, but in the end, it is not worth a life. For a discussion on the absolute moral standpoint see Spaemann (2009, p. 88).
- ²⁸ Fernández's coach Martín Fiz said (Arribas, 2012): 'The gesture has made him a better person but not a better athlete. He has wasted an occasion. Winning always makes you more of an athlete. You have to go out to win.'
- ²⁹ Author's translation from German. Original: 'Denn nur an einer Wirklichkeit, die uns Widerstand leistet, können wir unsere Kräfte entwickeln.'
- ³⁰ McLaughlin spoke at the IAPS 2022 conference about conceding defeat, which is an important condition with respect to the discussed property.
- ³¹ Pisk (2010, p. 7) characterises virtue as a habit to do good, which captures the general notion established in Classical Greece. Plato (1987, 428a–445e) exposes four main virtues (later called "cardinal" by Latin Christian authors): justice (*dikaioyné*), wisdom (*sofia*), courage/fortitude (*andreia*), and temperance/moderation/self-control (*sófrōsyné*). Aristotle discusses virtues in his *Nichomachean Ethics* (Barnes, 1995). Especially relevant is the second book devoted to moral virtues.
- ³² For example, we may say that the virtue of courage is performed by a boxer who finds a way to prepare herself for matches with various (sometimes stronger and very dangerous) opponents who are eager to take her title.
- ³³ A particularly pressing point is the question of how exactly virtues are cultivated through sport, i.e. under what circumstances sport promotes virtues. A relevant concept in this respect is *paideia* (ancient Greek education), which aimed at virtue and involved physical competitions and exercises (*techné gymnastiké*). A detailed discussion on virtues in sport is offered by Bäck (2009).
- ³⁴ Shawn Klein tried to highlight some positive aspects of gamesmanship at the IAPS 2022 conference. He spoke about gamesmanship as a discovery process.
- ³⁵ For more details on the nature of a playful attitude and how it applies to sport, see Mareš and Ryall (2021).
- ³⁶ Breivik's claim raises an interesting question: Is it possible to practice "good sport" in "bad societies" (i.e. societies where the regime and cultural ethos go against the presented account of good sport)? If yes, what are the conditions and limits?
- ³⁷ A more consequentialist-based approach with respect to this property could have highlighted sport's social potential. We can consider sport undertaken as a form of political protest against racial injustice, or sport aimed at raising money for cancer research, or even just sport undertaken to lift one's family out of poverty.
- ³⁸ The relationship between sport and politics is a complex issue. A detailed discussion is offered by Kreft (2019). The relationship between sport, ethics, and politics is further elaborated by Meeuwssen and Kreft (2022). An interesting critique of Olympic sport as an ideological tool is presented by Simonović (*Olimpijska podvala* or *Philosophy of Olympism*).
- ³⁹ The imperative to care of animals' welfare raises interesting philosophical questions that have been hotly debated: Do animals have rights? If yes, on what basis can these rights be attributed to them? Do humans have the right to use animals in sporting activities? How do we know that it is pleasant rather than unpleasant for an animal (e.g. a horse) to participate in sport? Can this be known at all? Some of these questions were addressed by L. Kreft at the 11th Czech Philosophy of Sport Conference held in October 2022 (see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qn8gbUBH71Y>. Accessed 6th March 2023).
- ⁴⁰ Author's translation from German. Original: '[...] der Mensch nicht ein durch Instinkt vorgeprägtes Wesen ist, sondern ein Wesen, das die Maßstäbe seines Handelns erst suchen und finden muß [...] Es gibt nämlich nicht nur mein Belieben, es gibt auch das Belieben der anderen.'
- ⁴¹ The concept of fairness is rather uncontroversial in terms of its importance, but it is rather controversial in terms of its content and meaning. Here, I want to highlight only the first (i.e. the importance of a general concept) and not to discuss the second (i.e. concrete conceptions of fairness), which is however a necessary step when we try to live according to the presented list of properties in terms of realising them practically.
- ⁴² An examination of value priorities with respect to sports contests is offered by Fraleigh (1986).
- ⁴³ This aspect has interesting connotations in the case of team sports and contest-based sports (e.g. tennis). Does a particular property (e.g. playful attitude, ability to cope with winning and losing) have to be realised by every player? With respect to the aforementioned continuum, I would say that the more players realise these properties, the better the sport becomes.
- ⁴⁴ Olivová (1988, p. 117) states that ancient Greek Panhellenic festivals were open only to Greek free men and not, for example, to married Greek women.
- ⁴⁵ However, this does not entail relativism. There are studies that show that certain moral rules are universal. Curry, Mullins and

Whitehouse (2019) argue that cooperative behaviour and moral values connected with it (helping family members, helping group members, engaging in reciprocal cooperation, being brave, respecting superiors, sharing and dividing disputed resources, respecting others' property) are observed in the

majority of cultures with equal frequency across all regions of the world. It should be noted that this study supports universal moral values (as opposed to cultural relativism), but it should not be used (or used very cautiously) as support for the presented normative list of properties.