



Sports Ethics In Terms of Historical And Social Progress

Murat ŞAKAR

Munzur Üniversitesi, Spor Bilimleri Fakültesi, ORCID iD: 0000-0001-9853-5879

Abstract

Sport provides vitality to people in terms of its benefits to physical and mental health, and mentality (openness of mind) in terms of its contribution to mind and intelligence. With these effective features that surround the human being, sport has existed in various forms since ancient times. This historical existence of sports can be easily observed through sportive activities that stand out in different cultures. Each society has developed sports activities and games that reflect their own worldviews, traditions and customs, in accordance with their own historical and social identity. Therefore, sport is a philosophical phenomenon that is experienced by people of all ages, has local and universal qualities, and has socio-psycho-cultural and aesthetic dimensions. Sport is the subject of philosophy with its ontological, epistemological, aesthetic, ethical and even economic dimensions. Today, it is seen that sports events are the market element with the highest market value. The capitalist economy, dominated by mone-hedonism, does not comply with the universal values of sports, which care about friendship and brotherhood, and prohibit all kinds of discrimination, aiming to reach the best and the most beautiful. The main purpose of sports is to give people vitality, mentality, joy of life, sense of brotherhood, universal human values and in this context, the principle of sportive virtue (fair play). This article is a research article that reveals the historical and social development of sports ethics with new analyzes.

Original Article

Article Info

Received: 26.06.2022

Accepted: 22.09.2022

Online Published: 20.12.2022

***Anahtar kelimeler:** Sports Sciences, Philosophy of Sport, Sports Ethics, Fair play.*

Tarihsel ve Toplumsal Seyri Açısından Spor Etiği

Öz

Spor, beden ve ruh sağlığına yararı açısından insana zindelik; akla ve zekaya katkısı açısından ise zihinsellik (zihin açıklığı) sağlamaktadır. İnsanın varlık yapısını kuşatan bu etkin özellikleriyle spor, antik zamanlardan bugüne çeşitli şekillerde varlığını sürdürmektedir. Her toplum, kendi tarihsel ve toplumsal kimliğine uygun, dünya görüşlerini, inançlarını, gelenek ve göreneklerini yansıtan sportif etkinlikler ve oyunlar geliştirmiştir. Dolayısıyla spor, her yaşta insanın deneyimlediği, yerel ve evrensel niteliklere sahip, sosyo-psiko-kültürel ve estetik boyutları olan felsefi bir olgudur. Spor, ontolojik, epistemolojik, estetik, etik hatta ekonomik boyutlarıyla felsefenin konusu olmaktadır. Günümüzde spor etkinliklerinin, pazar değeri en yüksek piyasa unsuru olduğu görülmektedir. Parasal hazcılığın egemen olduğu kapitalist ekonomi, sporun; dostluğu ve kardeşliği önemseyen, en iyi ve en güzele ulaşmayı hedefleyen, her türlü ayrımcılığı yasaklayan evrensel değerleriyle de uyum sağlamamaktadır. Sporun asıl amacı insana zindelik, zihinsellik, yaşama sevinci, kardeşlik duygusu, evrensel insanlık değerleri ve bu bağlamda sportif erdem (fair play) ilkesini kazandırmaktır. Bu makale, spor etiğinin tarihsel ve toplumsal gelişimini yeni analizlerle ortaya koyan bir araştırma makalesidir.

Orijinal Makale

Yayın Bilgisi

Gönderi Tarihi: 26.06.2022

Kabul Tarihi: 22.09.2022

Online Yayın Tarihi: 20.12.2022

***Keywords:** Spor Bilimleri, Spor Felsefesi, Spor Etiği, Fair play.*

INTRODUCTION

Sport, as a term, is understood as the sum of activities that include orientations such as entertainment and competition, which are performed individually or mutually with other people in order to develop the physical and intellectual abilities of the person as a whole. Sport is also defined in different ways with very different interpretations. Some of them are as follows; Sport is a healthy and peaceful safety valve for aggression in human nature. Sport is the basis of friendly competition and peaceful struggle. Another definition of sport is that it is an educational tool that organizes national unity by a patriotic, hierarchical and authoritarian state. According to another definition, sport is the opium of the masses. Sport as a human activity is an activity with ontological and epistemological contexts. According to the German philosopher Schiller, who is known for the view that “people are fully human as long as they play”, sports and sports games are activities that make people free (Durak, 2011).

Sports, as an integral component of human life, has a history of thousands of years. In the historical development process, sports activities exist with different structures in every cultural environment. Societies contributed to this process by highlighting certain branches of sports that reflect their political, economic, cultural and ideological development processes, perspectives on life, and shape their thoughts and behaviors. In this context, both the composition and play style of a team reveal the metaphors of the real and imaginary identity of a city. In the words of Bromberger, “If we find a football match fascinating, it's not just because it grabs our attention, it's because it makes the central values of our societies intensely visible (Bromberger, 1993). As social and cultural values transform, sportive activities have also reached their current dimensions by going through some changes and transformations in the historical process.

Human societies have been interested in sports for various reasons since ancient times. For example, the ancient civilizations Mesopotamians, Egyptians, Indians and Greeks practiced sports for entertainment, worship and preparation for war. Sports fields (arenas) arose in ancient Greece for the development and demonstration of excellence (which at that time meant virtue (arete)) thanks to athletic competitions. The pursuit of perfection in body and mind, which was tried to be achieved through sports, on the one hand united people for an ideal common goal, on the other hand, formed the basis of the relationship between sports-philosophy and sports-ethics. Likewise, in Maya civilization, ball games served religious, social, and political purposes, such as providing a common bond while downplaying differences and conflicts arising from local diversity (Devine, 2020).

Philosophers, especially Plato and Aristotle, who have been thinking about the nature of sports since Ancient Greece, saw sports as an important component of education and, accordingly, human development. According to Plato, who is also a good athlete and takes his famous name from his sporty appearance, an educated Athenian must find harmony between body and mind by participating in athletic competitions (Reid, 2011; Ilgaroğlu, 2019a). Reflections on the role of sports in human life continued in Rome and the Middle Ages. In Rome, the sport was understood as a method of training warriors. Although it lost its

importance in the public sphere in the Middle Ages, sport played an important role in Christian thinking (Reid, 2011).

At the beginning of modern times, sport has come to the fore again in social life, especially because of its potential to develop the perfection of the human body and mind and to promote the good life. Sports lessons began to take place in school curricula. In the Western Enlightenment, Rousseau advocated the importance of exercise for body-mind harmony. This pedagogical theory of Rousseau was applied in 19th century Europe. Inspired by these pedagogical philosophies, Baron Pierre de Coubertin founded the Olympic Movement by considering Olympic sport as “a philosophy of life that puts sport at the service of humanity” (Parry, 2006).

Today, sports, with its many branches, has become a multidimensional functional phenomenon that deeply affects our social, cultural and economic life. Sports education continues as compulsory courses at all levels of educational institutions. More importantly, besides being a branch of science, sports has also become the subject of many disciplines, from philosophy to sociology and psychology. In addition, sports media, sports magazines, sports news, sports events are an indispensable entertainment and focus of attention.

METHOD

In this research article, sports ethics will be discussed in terms of its historical and social course in the context of sports philosophy. This article is a research article that reveals the historical and social development of sports ethics with new analyzes

Philosophy of Sport and Sports Ethics

Philosophy of sport is a discipline that philosophically examines both the nature of sports and its relationship with other fields. (Weiss, 1971). Sport becomes the subject of philosophy and ethics in the context of dealing with the human body from an individual, social and historical perspective. Because sport is the name of a process in which people become socialized by being aware of their individuality, and learn all the conditions of being human and the possibility of being human like a human (Hosta, 2008).

From the 1870s to the 1990s, the philosophy of sports became independent from the philosophy of education and became a field of study in its own right. It is known that sports philosophy went through three phases during this time: the 'eclectic' phase, the 'system-based' phase and the 'discipline' phase. In the 'Educational Philosophy Period' before these stages, sports were studied philosophically. Defying the dominant intellectual pedagogical tradition, philosophers such as William James, Edward L. Thorndike, and John Dewey have emphasized the value of play, games, and sport in preparing people to achieve good lives. Physical educators Thomas D. Wood and Clark Hetherington, inspired by these thinkers, founded the "New Physical Education", a pedagogical movement aiming to show that physical education should be an integral part of general human education (Devine, 2020).

Sports ethics, on the other hand, is a sub-discipline of sports philosophy that examines the moral situations that arise in every situation where human and sports phenomena are handled

together. Sports ethics is one of the most important factors affecting the human's understanding of value and expresses an existential aspect of it. Indeed, sport is a human trait. The many different branches of today's sporting events may raise the question of how it is possible to provide an ethical perspective covering all these areas. This understanding may even lead to the idea that there is an ethical pluralism in sports competitions. Therefore, when considering sports ethics, it is necessary to have an all-encompassing perspective instead of focusing on a specific sport. In addition, it should not be forgotten that the sports event includes a dimension that covers different areas from the audience to the economy, as well as the athlete performing the sports action. For example, a kick made by a player in a sports match may not be an ethical aspect of playing football. However, after this shot, the attitude and behavior of the athlete, the way he reflects his success or sadness can suddenly become the subject of ethics (Hosta, 2008). In this case, ethics, in addition to presenting some generalizations, contributes to the reinforcement of the generalization with concrete events based on the concrete actions of the person who performs the sports action, thus contributing to the formation of a lively value perspective. Another important issue that should be emphasized in terms of ethics is the use of drugs for doping purposes just for the sake of success, despite legal practices and prohibitions.

Ethical values in sports activities include issues such as avoiding doping and violence, match-fixing events, making sports a commercial commodity only, and preventing the ambition of winning from getting in the way of participation in sports activities. Sports, one of the most important fields of activity of our age and an advanced industry, is faced with a very serious and dangerous situation as well as social, economic, cultural and political manipulations. This danger is embodied in the ethical value problem that exists in sports activities (Durak, 2011).

It is a well-known fact that with globalization, there is a great interest in sports activities, which stand out in terms of improving the morale of people in particular and the society in general. Despite this, it is an ethical problem that sports activities show a feature and attitude that focuses more on results. A sports action that only focuses on winning is carried to a different dimension outside of sports by people who handle the event from different angles, such as fans and club managers, as well as the athlete. Emphasizing sports as a market economy value has caused sports to be seen as a capital and attitudes have been developed in this direction. Ilgaroğlu, who defines the person of the capitalist economic order we live in as a mone-hedonist person, says the following: “the money-hedonist individual is one that is in love with money, the joy of having it, the pleasure of using it, who desires it with immeasurable passion and ambition and is willing to use all legitimate and illegitimate methods of obtaining it” (Ilgaroğlu, 2019b). The most prominent characteristics of this type of individual is egoism, a desire to possess, hatred and mistrust. The transformation of clubs into a commercial institution, the replacement of amateurism by professionalism, in other words, seeing professionalism as a rising value, the evaluation of the athlete as a commodity instead of sportive virtue, and the consideration of transfer fees and profit-loss calculations can be considered as a paradigm brought about by this process. This situation detaches sports from its cultural and moral context and gives us the responsibility to evaluate sports activities from an ethical point of view (Walsh-Giulianotti, 2007).

Sports ethics, while dealing with all the ethical problems mentioned above, emphasizes the ethical value of sports in human life. In this context, he emphasizes that sports is a meaningful human activity that helps people to have their bodies in depth, and that people get the opportunity to get to know themselves better thanks to sports. Sports is a door through which a person finds the opportunity to open to himself, society, history and his environment through his body. Thanks to sports, a person learns the energy of his body, being an individual, a society and a human being. In this respect, sports events are a great opportunity for people. It is the possibility of being human like a human. It is an important opportunity for a better environment, a better world and a better universe that opens its doors to the people of the future. In this respect, sport is a phenomenon that deeply affects and transforms people beyond being an entertainment. It is a sport that interacts the physical and mental integrity of people with their environment and culture (Ínam, 1993).

Reading Sports Ethics through Olympism

The Olympic games, whose roots can be traced back to Ancient Greece, made a new official start in 1896, with the addition of various sports and the establishment of international norms. More than just a sports festival, the Games have a complex philosophical vision that requires ethical principles. Pierre de Coubertin, the founder of the modern Olympic games, called this philosophical vision the "Olympics". This new philosophical vision not only enlarged the Olympic Games but also determined the rich social and ethical foundations of the Olympic movement. Coubertin's emphasis that the main purpose of organizing these games is to serve world peace can be considered as a bridge built between the past and the future and a reflection of a unity of purpose. However, to look at the Olympic games with a reductionist approach, thinking that they are just sports championships means ignoring the importance and inspiring ideals of the Olympic movement. Similarly, it is often difficult to determine how Olympism clarifies the ethical conflicts that arise in and through sporting events (McLaughlin-Torres, 2012).

What is clearly known, however, is that Olympism explicitly seeks to uphold moral values through sport and especially the Olympic Games. Accordingly, the content of Olympism is "about drawing attention to values such as holistic human development, excellence, peace, justice, equality, mutual respect, fairness and non-discrimination among others. Olympism emphasizes the role of sport in global culture, international understanding, peaceful coexistence, and social and moral education. Connecting moral values, the Olympic Games and Olympism for sport have become a program for moral and social development. Since the advancement and realization of the values put forward by Olympism require action, the Olympic Games and sports are determined by an educational mind and purpose (McLaughlin-Torres, 2012).

For the Olympic movement, acting in accordance with the nature of sports, universal moral values and ethics will bring an intersubjective and international understanding of moral sports. However, there is a well-known fact that, due to the nature of sports competitions, the athlete is driven to seek competitive advantage. Regardless, in the end, the athlete is responsible to himself and others for his success and failure. Given the nature of the sport, the rationale

behind seeking an advantage that leads to winning is known. This competitive structure lays the foundations for an ethical logic that follows the imperative to be the best and outperform others. The struggle for the top is brutal and does not allow for relaxation. Therefore, maximization ethics comes to the fore in competitive sports (Hosta, 2012). Just as a good soldier dedicates his life to his country, a good athlete dedicates his body to his team, and his team to the society, culture and history that take care of him. In this respect, sport is also a virtue activity. In other words, it is an area of activity in which the search for higher values is expressed (İnam, 1993).

Fair Play as the Ideal Representation of Sports Ethics

Sport is a set of activities that encourages adherence to basic ethical values and principles, thereby positively transforming human character. However, in order for this constructive feature of sports to be effective, athletes and other interested persons should approach sports as a moral field of action. There is great potential for moral development in sport. This potential is linked to the idea of fair play and the desire for virtue. Indeed, virtues such as greatness, justice, courtesy, respect for rules, and cooperation are character virtues exhibited and developed by those who play well (İlgaroğlu, 2021). Generally, these virtues are values that are embedded in sports traditions and revealed by the athletes over time. Therefore, sports can reflect its character-building function when athletes, especially coaches, officials, and fans are committed to sports as a moral practice, to display virtues, to develop virtues in the field of sports, and to express appreciation for these attitudes and actions. The potential of sport as a moral practice can only be realized when we use them wisely (Jones-McNamee, 2003). The most important sportive virtue emerging in this context is, of course, sportsmanship. It is an important virtue not only for sports but also for social life. The application of the principles of fairness and equality in sport as the norm creates the official rules. The sportsmanship virtue is one that requires more than just following official rules (Sabl, 2008).

Today, the meaning area of the English adjective 'fair', which defines the game in fair play composition, is 'beautiful', 'looks good', 'nice', 'noble', 'kind', 'right', 'sincere', 'tolerant', 'calm', 'moderate', 'decent', 'appropriate', 'reasonable', 'authentic', 'fair', 'equal', 'honourable', 'neutral', 'regular', 'under equal chances' distributed over a wide range (Yıldırım, 2011). Fair Play means that the athletes should patiently, consistently and consciously abide by the rules even under difficult conditions, do not accept unfair advantages in order not to disrupt the equality of opportunity, do not try to take advantage of the unfair disadvantages of the opponent, see the opponent not as an enemy, but as an individual and partner with equal rights who ensure the realization of the game and means to value them (Yıldırım, 2004). While the concept of fair play was used in the sense of "good game" at first, it was defined as "the mood that will ensure good play and the behavior that suits the athlete" over time. This concept has been evaluated in the historical process in a dimension that expresses "all of the behavior styles that those involved in the game absolutely have to fulfill in order to ensure a good game". Today, this concept is used within a concept that expresses being "totally honest" at all stages of the sporting event. Although the concepts of "sportsmanship" or "sportsmanship" used in this sense evoke the same meaning dimension, the concept of "fair play" has settled in our

language in recent years. The sportive values and virtues that the person performing the sportive activity should have find their expression in this concept. In this respect, sportive virtue (Fair play) includes the ethical evaluation of the sport action and the athlete (McIntosh, 1980).

It is a matter of education to develop this style of action, which will clarify the real nature and quality of sports, and to bring it to people. It is necessary to understand the importance of this ethical dimension, which sports overlaps with philosophy, and to try to bring sportive virtues to people through education, in order to prevent people from harming each other and killing people in the name of sports, examples of which we see frequently today and in the historical process.

Sportive virtue (Fair play) includes positive meanings such as obeying the rules, not deviating from the tradition, doing good, showing bravery, being brave, behaving worthy of human dignity. This concept is the expression of a human and behavior model that the British refer to as “gentleman” and that can be met with the concepts of *çelebi* and *master* in our country. It is a virtuous behavior that Aristotle expresses with the concept of “self-sovereignty” in the *Nikamagos Ethics*. Compliance with the rules, not interpreting them for one's own benefit, not being whimsical, can be thought of as a life principle that encompasses the whole of human life, not just a game and sporting event (Durak, 2011). The way to prevent the increase of virtuous behaviors in sports is possible by first providing the understanding of Fair Play to athletes and athlete candidates through a long-term, systematic training process (Yıldırım, 2005).

CONCLUSION

Sports, as a human-specific activity, is an activity that brings people together on the common denominator of being human.

Today, sports branches have assumed an important role on a global scale by gaining international qualifications and structures. Various sportive activities that reflect their own folkloric and cultural values belonging to each society of the past have left their place to more global sports branches, rules and competitions. In this respect, sports activities have reached their current positions through some changes and transformations. In the past, self-contained sports teams and sports understandings have been replaced by values and understandings that are thought to be more global. The most prominent aspect of this phenomenon is that teams competing in national leagues, and even national sports teams, take the field with athletes from different nations and nationalities. In this respect, while sports activity represents a spectrum of different languages, religions and races, rules and norms become evident as the expression of a common consensus. This phenomenon can be considered as an expression of the global paradigm that sport has gained today.

In this context, sports branches shaped within the framework of local cultural values are changing and transforming with global structures. Sports involved in this process are shaped in line with the production and consumption principles of global culture. This situation

brought the economic values to the forefront and pushed the ethical values into the background in the sports event.

The definition and evaluation of sports activity in the context of economic relations represented by capitalism and the globalization process can inevitably affect and change the value and judgment measures. The focus of sportive success on winning has led to an understanding that financial gain comes before everything else. For this purpose, using doping, showing violence to each other, etc. unethical actions have occurred.

Fair play and sportsmanship, as the ideal form of sports ethics, express common universal values that have emerged in sports activities over time to prevent all these unethical actions. As an activity that brings moral values to people, in order to reveal this core quality and potential of sports, athletes must comply with the rules of fair play and even behave in a sportsmanlike manner.

REFERENCES

- Bromberger, C. (1993). Stadyumdaki kent, futbol ve kültürü, der. (Roman Horak vd., Çev.) İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları.
- Devine, J. W. & Lopez Frias, F. J. (2020). philosophy of sport, the stanford encyclopedia of philosophy (fall 2020 edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2020/entries/sport/>
- Manolaci, V. & Vizitei N., 2018.
- Durak, N. (2011). Gelenek ve modernite etkileşimi bağlamında spor etiği. Süleyman Demirel Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi, 27, 44-63.
- Hosta, M. (2008). Ethics and Sport: Whose Ethics, Which Ethos—a Prolegomenon—, Kinesiology 40 (1), 89–95.
- Hosta, M. (2012). Olympism between individualism and transnationalism. The Olympics and Philosophy. Edited by Heather L. Reid and Michael W. Austin, Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky.
- İlgaroğlu, M. C. (2019a). Ahlak felsefesi açısından duygu-değer ilişkisi, İstanbul: Hiperlink Yayınları.
- İlgaroğlu, M. C. (2019b). Money-hedonism from Ibn Khaldūn’s notion of morality, Cumhuriyet Theology Journal, 23 (3), 1319-1335.
- İlgaroğlu, M. C. (2021). Verili bir değer duygusu olarak adalet, Felsefe Dünyası, 74, 118-135.
- İnam, A. (1993). Bedenim kimin? Bir spor felsefesi için bazı ipuçları, Felsefe Dünyası, 8, 6-10.
- Jones, C. & McNamee, M. (2003). Moral development and sport: Character and cognitive developmentalism contrasted, in *Sports Ethics: An Anthology*, ed. Jan Boxill, Malden, MA: Blackwell.
- McIntosh, P. C. (1980). Fair play: ethics in sport and education, Heinemann.
- McLaughlin, D. W. & Torres, C. R. (2012). More than Games: Olympism as a Moral Approach to Sport, The Olympics and Philosophy, Edited by Heather L. Reid and Michael W. Austin, Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky.
- Parry, J. (2006). Sport and olympism: Universals and multiculturalism, Journal of the Philosophy of Sport, 33(2), 188–204.
- Reid, H. (2011). Athletics and philosophy in the ancient world, New York: Routledge.
- Sabl, A. (2008). Democratic sportsmanship: Contested games and political ethics. Taiwan Journal of Democracy, 4(1), 85–112.
- Walsh, A. & Giulianotti, R. (2007). Ethics, money and sport. This sporting mammon, London: Routledge.
- Weiss, P. (1971). Sport: A Philosophic inquiry, Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press.
- Yıldıran, İ. (2004). Fair play: kapsamı, türkiye’deki görünümü ve geliştirme perspektifleri. Gazi Journal of BESBD, 4(3): 3-16.
- Yıldıran, İ. (2005). Fair play eğitiminde beden eğitiminin rolü. Gazi Journal of BESBD, 1: 3-16.
- Yıldıran, İ. (2011). Fair play: etimolojik, semantik ve tarihsel bir bakış. Gazi Journal of BESBD, 16(4): 3-18.