

#### 4.

#### *Kalokagathia*

### ***Kalokagathia in the ancient Greece. The golden Age of kalokagathia and gymnasiums. Gymnasiums as a social sieve. Kalokagathia in the modern times.***

#### *Kalokagathia in ancient Greece*

This passage is based on my former, more profound philosophic and historiographic analysis, which I cannot present here in details.<sup>7</sup>

In almost all European textbooks which I have had in hands the ideal of *kalokagathia* is stated more or less in these words (I am paraphrasing):

*...Kalokagathia is an extraordinary conception of a harmonious mind and body development. The conception proves its significance by deliberated education of soul and by regular physical exercise. These two columns are linked together to overcome the mind–body distinction. The conception arose in ancient gymnasiums of the 5<sup>th</sup> and the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC...*

I am afraid this concept did not do both. It hasn't overcome the mind–body distinction, because the concept was foreshadowed by the philosophers in the 5<sup>th</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> century BC – for example, Plato, Aristotle and others – who put paradoxically extreme emphasis on mind and on reason and thus endorsed this distinction. And in the form which is familiar to us, it did not arise in ancient *gymnasiums*, but it arose primarily in the thoughts of the 18<sup>th</sup> and the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries' philosophers and pedagogues who were searching for new pedagogical and ideological ideals.

Despite what was just said it is useful to ask how history of ancient *gymnasiums* does look exactly and than to compare it with the 19<sup>th</sup> century myth-making.

Since the ideals we are interested in here are related to Athens, first of all we will pay attention to Athens of the 5<sup>th</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> centuries BC. However, many characteristics of Athenian private and public life can be generalized and used for description of majority of the Greek *poleis*. In this passage I am founding my analysis on the works of historians and philosophers such as Cambiano, Canfora, Fontana, Foucault, Garlan, Olivová, Redfield, Vernant.

If we examine *gymnasiums* in the above mentioned period, we could distinguish easily two their main features or functions:

- 1) They were closely linked to military life; and
- 2) They helped differentiate the noble, free citizens from foreigners on the one hand and from inferiors – slaves, poor, workers and even women – on the other.

#### 1) Militarism

Institution of *gymnasiums* originated in close relation to a way in which Greek *poleis* waged their wars in the period from the 6<sup>th</sup> up to the 4<sup>th</sup> century. Historian Garlan says about this point:

... *The exercise was applied for citizens that were not overburden with everyday work, and thus they were endowed by leisure time (scholé [in Greek]). Primarily there were athletic competitions for which they were prepared at gymnasiums and palastras that were traditionally related to military life...*<sup>8</sup>

At least until the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC wars were waged by citizen armies.<sup>9</sup> This fact required from Greek (not only Athenian) societies to prepare their citizens for war. From the age of twelve, Athenian guys entered gymnasiums and were subordinated to a whole system of religious and social rites whose important part was physical exercises. The entrance entailed boy's departure from the home world to be brought to the world of public surveillance.<sup>10</sup>

From the archaic times wars were accompanied by competitions. For instance, Greeks organized athletic contests outside of Troyan walls in the rests or in holy days. According to Homer's Iliad, the contests were always won by heroes of Troyan war and thus the heroes confirmed their military uniqueness in the competition. However, from the turn of the 7<sup>th</sup> and the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC the demands on soldiers started to be completely different. It was brought about by a new type of war waging – "hoplite's type". Its essence consisted in soldiers – called *hoplites* – arraying into a serried line – called *phalanx*. The aim of a *phalanx* was breaking through an enemy's *phalanx*, and thus causing confusion in it. The new virtues of soldiers follow from that: A soldier was forbidden to launch into a wild combat. On the contrary, he had to keep his place in a *phalanx*. Thenceforth, valour and success in a battle corresponded to compactness and obedience.<sup>11</sup>

As Italian historian Cambiano has shown in his article *On the Path to Maturity*, ancient Greeks distinguished themselves from others by their unusual yearning for individual success and for making oneself visible. In the time of hoplite's wars this immense power had to be canalized, because it could not be saturated in war life yet. So, the alteration in war waging resulted in multiplication of athletic competitions.<sup>12</sup> We should remember this fact. If we Europeans have inherited something from our Greek ancestors, then first and foremost it is this Doric and Ionic conqueror's urge which has to be constantly mastered. So, roots of *kalokagathia* seem not to rise from Greek intellectual superiority and gentleness, but from craving and from the necessity to relieve this craving. This is very important for our reflection of contemporary sports.

Looking at classic Greek *gymnasiums* from the historiographic angle, the short period of their existence can strike us. Tracing history of *gymnasiums*, we can find their prime in the second third of the 5<sup>th</sup> century. Their decay coincided with the decline of Athenian society after the 2<sup>nd</sup> Peloponesian War that started in 413 BC. Between these periods, during the reign of Pericles, Athens experienced its best times. Wealth of this *polis* enables the ruler to support *gymnasiums* and a whole system of festivals and athletic competitions. Moreover, it enables to finance the showy policy of public works and of payment for "taking part in public affairs". However, where did the wealth come from? First of all, it came from taxes that Athens imposed on other defeated and beaten Greek *poleis*.<sup>13</sup> Present-day historian of Hellenism – Canfora – adds:

... *Systematic introduction of these public salaries shaped Athenian democracy... and fastened [our] fix idea that people of that time devoted themselves to public affairs, to dispensation of justice, to attend drama performances and festivals and that in large*

*degree they were freed from manual labour...*<sup>14</sup>

However, Athenians could afford all of these things until the wealth and taxes stopped to flow from enslaved territories into their *polis*. It is not heard frequently in public that the democracy of ancient Athens was found on imperialistic foreign policy and that the virtues of Athenian life disintegrated rapidly after the decay of this policy. Therefore, ideals of *kalokagathia* and *gymnasium* should be seen as a by-product of the short time period that was fortunate for Athenians, not for others.

## 2) External and internal exclusion

We tend to regard the Athenian "democracy" as the first open democratic community. However, Athens had another type of political system than that we usually think it had. Josep Fontana wrote about it:

*... "Democracy" which Athenians fought for, means hardly more than a privilege enabling a small group of citizens with all civil rights – that is the one of tenth of people in Attik – 'to talk over public affairs and to elect officials by the draw' ... (in Athens Herodotus was the stranger without these rights). Words like "freedom" and "democracy" did not mean for Greeks the same things as they do for us...*<sup>15</sup>

This was already pointed out above in relation to the Athenian imperialistic foreign policy. However, Athenian institutions served as a separating sieve not only outwards, but also inwards. One of the institutions, of course, was *gymnasium*. We can distinguish three types of segregating functions which *gymnasiums* satisfied:

- 1) They helped to separate public life from family life. This marginalized women in Athens.
- 2) They helped to divide people on the level of weaponry. In this way an upper class controlled lower classes.
- 3) They helped to divide people on the level of "freedom" and "bondage". This strategy condemned the bigger group to a role of a mere tool and provided the smaller group with leisure time that could be used for its physical and intellectual cultivation.

Ad a) Let us to examine the first division relating to the split of public and family life. What is really striking on the ancient Greek societies is a force of the masculine element. In history and mythology of Greece there were some representatives of strong women – for example Amazons or Pallas Athena –, but although they opposed the male world they only confirmed the role of men – Amazons were defeated by men and Pallas Athena had to subordinate to Zeus' will after all.

There were two basic models how to treat women in ancient Greece. While they both kept women on higher level than slaves, they put stress on the male matters only and controlled reproductive function of women. The Sparta's model transformed women into a special type of men. And the Athenian one excluded women from the public sphere and circumscribed the sphere of family as the only sphere where women could express themselves. Of course, this model was fatal for women, because

the Athenian conception of freedom was grounded on the right to take part in public affairs. The one who conducted one's civic duties well had the right to take part in public affairs. The one who was taking part in public affairs had more chances to conduct well one's civic duties. From the present-day gender point of view, it is a vicious circle.<sup>16</sup>

In spite of their exclusion from the public sphere women helped to define Athenian citizenship. Only the boy who was born as a son of an Athenian father and an Athenian mother could afterwards (if he satisfied other requirements) become free citizen. This fact aided women not to sink to level of slaves and to gain better position – in the sphere of home at least.

Although we know there was the female footrace at the Olympic Games (but the footrace was a part in special female Olympic Games that took place in other days than male Games) we have no evidence that Athenian women took part in it unlike – for instance – Sparta's or Theban women.<sup>17</sup> Sports and other public activities in ancient Athens seem to be a matter of male life only.

As it was said above, in Athens guys were pulled out of private home life and in *gymnasiums* they launched their training for their future public career. This fact brought about establishing of life style which we can hardly link to the ideal of *kalokagathia* or of *gymnasiums* – we can discern this life style for example in Plato's writings. It is the educational and sexual relationship between fledged man and his juvenescent beloved.<sup>18</sup>

Ad b) Now we are turning to the second type of internal exclusion. This exclusion was related to social stratification. The border between men who could influence public affairs and those who could not was changeable. In archaic times the privilege to have power depended on armament. As being mention above, in the time when *poleis* emerged the mode of waging wars changed. In the *hoplite's* system the armament was not as inaccessible as in the time of Bronze Age. It consisted primarily in a shield of specific type – called *hoplon* –, a lance and a small sword. Everybody who was able to furnish oneself with this armament could become a soldier. The award for this new class of warriors was acquisition of the status of fully-fledged citizen. They could intervene in politics finally. From that time to the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century (when the mercenary principal of waging war prevailed over the citizen one) meanings of words "citizen" and "soldier" fused.<sup>19</sup>

Of course, without respect to property sons of the soldiers could enter *gymnasiums* and thus raise their social status. This inclusion increased in the second third of the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC, because the demand for soldiers grew. The poor formed newborn light infantry (this type of soldiers was called *peltastes*) and afterward filled Athenian ships – triremes – as rowers.<sup>20</sup> This process was learned as a display of Athenian democracy. That might be true, but we should not overlook that the openness ("democracy") was changed not only as soon as the Athenian imperialistic politics was on the wane, but also as soon as the closed linkage between citizenship and military service was broken. At the end of the 5<sup>th</sup> century attempts of aristocracy to exclude back the poor began and

led into a civil war. This social change influenced the form of *gymnasium*, because they started to be a privilege of the rich again and altered their profile.

Ad c) The last type of exclusion is represented by a grid that formed a border dividing slaves from other citizens. Slaves (as well as foreigners) could not enter *gymnasiums*. The reason was that slaves' entering into *gymnasiums* could disrupt the important condition of the Greek life at that time. The Greek society needed slaves to provide itself with gratis labour force. There had to be a mass of labourers without rights so that the noble, free man could have enough free time to cultivate his body and mind.

However, Greeks needed their slaves not only on the material level, but on the symbolic one also, since they constructed their uniqueness in opposition to them. Even the genealogy of the term "*kalokagathia*" – as it is known very well – is a proof of this mental tendency, for initially *kalos kai aghatos* meant "noble origin". Slaves were stereotyped as creatures who cannot command themselves, and that is why they were expressed on pictures by bend bodies, contorted faces and emphasized genitalia. These monsters were opposed by *kuros* – the young boy whose gentle smile reflects at first sight that his body and soul were absolutely harmonized and that nobody and nothing could disturb this balance

#### *Kalokagathia and we "moderns"*

When we descend to the ancient roots of *kalokagathia* we find that the ideal is not the same as the ideal we have in mind when we normally utter this word. This might be one of the reasons why some authors have attempted to define the word *kalokagathia* in completely different way. For instance, Irena Martínková – the contemporary Czech philosopher of sports – sets the meaning that avoids the dichotomy mind–body and defines *kalokagathia* as a "beautiful and good movement" or a "movement of truth". The word "movement" is connected there with the late philosophy of Jan Patočka.<sup>21</sup> However, I cannot understand why Martínková need to use the old word *kalokagathia* why the Patočkian word "movement" itself is not sufficient for her, because the word "movement" help us understand better neither ideality of *kalokagathia* nor its original ancient meaning.

The first noticeable comeback of ancient sports ideal can be traced back to the end of Middle Ages and to Renaissance (for example, to the school for "young Christian gentlemen" called "The House of Delight" which was founded by Italian humanist Vittorino da Feltre<sup>22</sup>). However, we can hear vivacious discourse about this ideal from the last third of the 18<sup>th</sup> century AD when people like Besadow or GutsMuths tried to improve modern educational institutions. If we inspect the sources of *kalokagathia*'s "reevaluation" in the 18<sup>th</sup> and the 19<sup>th</sup> century we will easily find that the ideal is much more a modern creation rather than the product of ancient thoughts.

Let us focus on GutsMuths' case. He looked up to ancient gymnastic ideals because he wanted to introduce systematic physical education into school.

Thus he revived the word "gymnastics". Even in his *Gymnastics for Youth* invoked ancient dead Greeks: "Brilliant folk! You left us going to Elysium, but your answering the question of relation between body and soul is still alive and eternal".<sup>23</sup> However, we should ask ourselves what sources were available for GutsMuths when he started this revival. He answered our question in his memoirs:

*...What I dug out from primeval rubble, from historic residue of early and late antiquity what I found out by thinking and even by chance, were brought back here (in Schnefentahl [place where GutsMuths worked as a teacher – RŠ]) piece by piece in joyful trial. And thus principal exercise multiplies and splits itself into new forms and tasks and new rules that it was hard to track down rose up ...*<sup>24</sup>

It is important to take notice of the vocabulary that GutsMuths used: He "dug" his information out of "rubble", out of "historic residue", he found it out "by thinking" and "even by chance", the body of new gymnastic system was "revived piece by piece", the "principal exercise multiplies and splits itself into new forms and tasks" etc. All his verbal equipment doesn't indicate that GutsMuths took over and revived some formerly existing pattern, but that he created it from historic "rubble" and "residue".

And if we inquire the historic context of his lifework in detail we readily grasp that there were no deep historic inspections of ancient original texts there. GutsMuths needed to solve problems that he faced (problems with an outdated system of education of his time) in new Enlightenment's way and the ancient examples were only passing inspirations. His system of gymnastics was very different from the Greek *pentathlon* or other Greek disciplines. For example, horse vaulting played a very important role in his system (and Jahn intensified this feature later in German system, called "Turn-movement") and thanks to it the word "gymnastic" got a different meaning than it had in antiquity. It was a residue, however not of ancient times, but medieval knight's exercises and owing to this residue we can exercise on vaulting horse, pommel horse, buck, parallel bars, or horizontal bar.

Let us return to *kalokagathia* myth. In GutsMuths' above mentioned main text *Gymnastic for Youth* we can take notice another feature that we don't usually connect with this myth, although the feature was present in ancient *gymnasiums* also. In this text GutsMuths expounded in exact way how "gymnast" – the man who oversees and conducts gymnastic exercises at a gym – should control his charges:

*...The wards line up, at regular intervals of one step from each other, stick out their chest, with arms akimbo. Gymnast commands: 'Line up! Step out!' And then a ward begin exercise in perfect regular beat...*<sup>27</sup>

The rules of these exercises had not only the type of regulation which we know from games, but first of all they had the type that is typical for military exercise. It is the type of disciplinary surveillance which demands an array and visibility from all wards for all the time of any activity. It is the time-tested system that enables supervisors to control a mass of people. The impact of militarism penetrated even into humanist's institutes of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, like GutsMuths' Philanthropinum was. As Foucault shows, especially in his *Discipline and Punish*, this manner of administration pierced from military life not only into

prison service, but also into hospitals and educational institutes. However, I don't think, unlike Foucault, that this manner has arisen only in Early Modern period. It is the tool which has been used in ancient Greece and probably since time immemorial up to now. Physical culture has always been in close relation to military life and its values. This fact helps us to understand why GutsMuths' and Pestalozzi's ideals of equilibrated education of mind and body were used in progress of physical education in military institutes and were utilized to introduce national principle into the 19<sup>th</sup> century European thinking.

For example, important disciples of Pestalozzi's thoughts became instructors of physical training in state's military institutes: the Spanish officer Amoros in France, Swiss Phokion Heinrich Clias in Great Britain. Peter Henrik Ling formed and brushed up his well-known gymnastic system in military academy in Swedish Carlsberg.<sup>28</sup>

As regards nationalistic principle, Friedrich Ludwig Jahn and Friedrich Friesen found German national gymnastic movement at the beginning of 19<sup>th</sup> century. They discreetly, but successfully militarized Germans by the help of it. Thus they contributed to the defeat of Napoleonic troops. In some years later the movement split itself into follow-up different gymnastic movements. However, all of them had programme with an ideological background – one of them was created by conservative nationalists, other by socialist internationalists, and the third group confessed "democratic values" and so on. Isolated Euler's rebukes that gymnastic movements are too much politicized stayed unheard.<sup>29</sup>

The same principle of constructing own nation and of fight for its character can be found in Czech movements – on the one hand the movement called "Sokol" [Falcon – in English] and on the other "Orel" [Eagle] which was catholic reaction to freethinking background of "Sokol" movement .

- 7) Šíp, R. (2008). „Kalokagathia jako ideál?“ [Kalokagathia as an Ideal?]. In: ŠÍP, R. (ed.) *Kalokagathia – ideál nebo flatus vocis? [Kalokagathia – an Ideal or flatus vocis?]*, Brno: Paidó, pp. 13–24.
- 8) Galrlan, Y. (2000). Člověk a válka [Man and War]. In: VERNANT, J.-P. (ed.). *Řecký člověk a jeho svět [Greeks and Their World]*. Praha: Vyšehrad, pp. 66–67. Stress added.
- 9) Ibid, pp. 69–70.
- 10) Cambiano, G. (2005). Cesta k dospělosti [On the Path to Maturity]. In: VERNANT, J.-P. (ed.). *Řecký člověk a jeho svět [Greeks and Their World]*. Praha: Vyšehrad, pp. 89–91.
- 11) Garlan, Ibid., pp. 56–59.
- 12) Cambiano, Ibid., p. 90.
- 13) Canfora, L. (2005). Občan [Citizen]. In: VERNANT, J.-P. (ed.). *Řecký člověk a jeho svět [Greeks and Their World]*. Praha: Vyšehrad, pp. 113–116.
- 14) Ibid, p. 115.
- 15) Fontana, J. (2001). *Evropa před zrcadlem [Europe before an Mirror]*. Praha: NLN. p. 10.
- 16) Redfield, J. (2005). Homo domesticus. In: VERNANT, J.-P. (ed.). *Řecký člověk a jeho svět [Greeks and Their World]*. Praha: Vyšehrad, pp. 141–144.
- 17) Cambiano, Ibid, p. 83.

- 18) Ibid, p. 91.
- 19) Garlan, Ibid, p. 56.
- 20) Canfora, Ibid, pp. 110–111.
- 21) Martínková, I. (2008). Kalokagathia – člověk jako krásný a dobrý pohyb [Kalokagathia – A Person as a Beautiful and Good Movement]. In: ŠÍP, R. (ed.) *Kalokagathia – ideál nebo flatus vocis?* [*Kalokagathia – an Ideal or flatus vocis?*], Brno: Paidó, pp. 53–62.
- 22) Kysučan, L. (2008). V zajetí slov a mýtů aneb kalokagathia mezi fikcí a realitou [Being Captured by Words and Myths, or Kalokagathia between fiction and reality]. In: ŠÍP, R. (ed.) *Kalokagathia – ideál nebo flatus vocis?* [*Kalokagathia – an Ideal or flatus vocis?*], Brno: Paidó, p. 30.
- 23) Cited according to: Olivová, V. (1979). *Lidé a hry. Historická geneze sportu* [*Humankind and Games. History of the Genesis of Sports*]. Praha: Olympia, p. 471.
- 24) Quoted according to: Olivová, Ibid, p. 471.
- 25) Quoted according to: Young, D. C. (1984). *The Olympic Myth of Greek Amateur Athletics*. Chicago: Ares Publishers, p. 9.
- 26) Young, Ibid, pp. 10–11.
- 27) Cited according to: Olivová, Ibid, p. 471.
- 28) Olivová, Ibid, pp. 497–499.
- 29) Perútka, J. et al. (1985). *Dejiny telesnej kultúry* [*History of Physical Culture*]. Bratislava: SPN, p. 78.)
- 30) Olivová, Ibid, p. 495.
- 31) Fontana, Ibid, pp. 8–9.
- 32) Reid, H. L. (2006). Was the Roman Gladiator an Athlete? In: *Journal of the Philosophy of Sport*, v. XXXIII, i. 1, pp. 39–42.
- 33) Young, Ibid, pp. 128–129.



### List of References:

- CAMBIANO, G. (2005). Cesta k dospělosti [On the Path to Maturity]. In: VERNANT, J.-P. (ed.). *Řecký člověk a jeho svět [Greeks and Their World]*. Praha: Vyšehrad, pp. 77–103. ISBN 80-7021-731-6.
- CANFORA, L. (2005). Občan [Citizen]. In: VERNANT, J.-P. (ed.). *Řecký člověk a jeho svět [Greeks and Their World]*. Praha: Vyšehrad, pp. 105–132. ISBN 80-7021-731-6.
- FONTANA, J. (2001). *Evropa před zrcadlem [Europe before an Mirror]*. Praha: NLN. ISBN 80-7106-395-9.
- FOUCAULT, M. (2000). *Dohlížet a trestat [Discipline and Punish]*. PRAHA: DAUPHIN. ISBN 80-86019-96-9.
- GARLAN, Y. (2000). Člověk a válka [Man and War]. In: VERNANT, J.-P. (ed.). *Řecký člověk a jeho svět [Greeks and Their World]*. Praha: Vyšehrad, pp. 47–85. ISBN 80-7021-731-6.
- KYSUČAN, L. (2008). V zajetí slov a mýtů aneb kalokagathia mezi fikcí a realitou [Being Captured by Words and Myths, or Kalokagathia between fiction and reality]. In: ŠÍP, R. (ed.) *Kalokagathia – ideál nebo flatus vocis? [Kalokagathia – an Ideal or flatus vocis?]*, Brno: Paidó, p. 25–31. ISBN 978-80-7315-164-5.
- MARTÍNKOVÁ, I. (2008). Kalokagathia – člověk jako krásný a dobrý pohyb [Kalokagathia – A Person as a Beautiful and Good Movement]. In: ŠÍP, R. (ed.) *Kalokagathia – ideál nebo flatus vocis? [Kalokagathia – an Ideal or flatus vocis?]*, Brno: Masaryk University Press, pp. 53–62. ISBN 978-80-7315-164-5.
- MCCutcheon, R. T. (2000). "Myth". In: Braun, W. – McCutcheon, R. T. (eds.) *Guide to the study of religion*, London : Cassell, s. 190–208. ISBN 0-304-70176-9.
- OLIVOVÁ, V. (1979). *Lidé a hry. Historická geneze sportu [Humankind and Games. History of the Genesis of Sports]*. Praha: Olympia. ISBN unavailable.
- PERÚTKA, J. et al. (1985). *Dejiny telesnej kultúry [History of Physical Culture]*. Bratislava: SPN. ISBN unavailable.
- REDFIELD, J. (2005). Homo domesticus. In: VERNANT, J.-P. (ed.). *Řecký člověk a jeho svět [Greeks and Their World]*. Praha: Vyšehrad, pp. 133–159. ISBN 80-7021-731-6.
- REID, H. L. (2006). Was the Roman Gladiator an Athlete? In: *Journal of Philosophy of Sport*, v. XXXIII, i. 1, pp. 37–49. ISSN 0094-8705.
- ŠÍP, R. (2008). „Kalokagathia jako ideál?“ [Kalokagathia as an Ideal?]. In: ŠÍP, R. (ed.) *Kalokagathia – ideál nebo flatus vocis? [Kalokagathia – an Ideal or flatus vocis?]*, Brno: Masaryk University Press, p. 8–23. ISBN ISBN 978-80-7315-164-5.
- VERNANT, J.-P. (ed.) (2005). *Řecký člověk a jeho svět [Greeks and Their World]*. Praha: Vyšehrad. ISBN 80-7021-731-6.
- YOUNG, D. C. (1984). *The Olympic Myth of Greek Amateur Athletics*. Chicago: Ares Publishers. ISBN 0-89005-523-8.