



COMMENT ON “CHINESE AND WESTERN SPORTS PHILOSOPHY AND THEIR DIFFERENCES”

Hongsen Chen


School of Education, Shanghai Normal University, Shanghai 200234 – China.

 <https://orcid.org/0009-0000-3933-0929> |  chenshnu@tom.com

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COMMENT ON “CHINESE AND WESTERN SPORTS PHILOSOPHY AND THEIR DIFFERENCES”

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The concept of the “body”, remember Zhu and Du (2024), is naturally linked to sport, which is inseparable from the “body” whether viewed as “education of the physical” or “education through the physical.”

Wittgenstein pointed out in *Philosophical Investigations* that “the human body is the best picture of the human soul” (Wittgenstein and Lou, 2019, p. 39). The explicit expression of this sentence is “the best picture that the human soul can draw is the human body”, which shows the importance of physical beauty and the human soul must rely on the body to show its inclusiveness.

Our body itself has two sides. On the one hand, it is affected by the nature, society and culture in which we live. Our body image, body experience and body knowledge are all restricted by the specific living environment and cultural form, that is, the body is constructed externally. On the other hand, it is also the world’s prototype. Since ancient times, human beings have placed it in the universe’s center, taking the body as the standard and thinking as the network to construct the bridge between their body and the world, that is, the body is perceived internally.

The setting of the separation of subjective and objective, of subject and object, in Western traditional philosophy are the dualism of physical and mental separation and opposition in human body. It began with Orpheus and Pythagoreans, in ancient Greece, who

¹ School of Education, Shanghai Normal University, Shanghai 200234 – China. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0000-3933-0929>. E-mail: chenshnu@tom.com.

regarded the body, as the “tomb of the soul”, and obtained its rational form through Plato’s theory, and then occupied the mainstream discourse position of classical philosophy through the Gnosticism doctrine of “knowledge redemption”.

The founding role of Plato’s philosophy in Western thought is clearly unquestionable, and his ideology divides the world into the visible reality and the absolute world of ideas. The latter, as the eternal and immortal abstract existence, is undoubtedly superior to the former and marks the world’s essence. Accordingly, human knowledge is also divided into opinion and knowledge, and only the knowledge from the idea is the real understanding of the world. On the basis of this ontology and epistemology, Plato believes that human existence is also composed of two parts: the visible body and the invisible soul. The soul is eternal, while the body is corruptible. It is only through the immortal soul that man can attain true knowledge, something that mortal bodies cannot do. In Plato’s early work, *The Republic*, he mentioned: “The human soul can be divided into reason, passion and desire, among which reason is the true meaning of the soul and is the noblest existence of the three, while desire is more related to the body and easily leads people into the abyss of sin” (Huang, 2017, p. 118). The duality of mind and body is embodied here, in Plato, as the opposition between reason and bodily desire: the disembodied reason becoming truly immortal, and the body merely acting as a tool for purifying the soul. But we should see that Plato’s claim to dualism is not yet an outright rationalism, but merely an expulsion of the body from the sacred ranks of immortality.

Cartesian philosophy, as the pivot of Western thought from ancient to modern form, changed the understanding of man from the ontological argument of idea or God to the investigation of individual reality, especially the cognitive ability, and came to the conclusion that man is the thinking self. Cartesianism rejects the human actors’ sensibility and focuses on instrumental rationalism, which has the consequence of subordinating the everyday life’s habits to a superior cognitive order. He found non-physical forms in cogito and believed that whatever could be washed away, in a purely intellectual manner, must not be philosophically necessary or the human subject’s “essential aspect”. The nature of the mind and the nature of the body are separate and cannot be compared. Anything different from the intellect is isolated from the flow of the pineal gland. In Cartesian mythology, the human figure is an image of control, domination and supreme authority, that is, its own will is expressed through the supreme reason, which is above all else. He concluded by arguing that the soul and the body are two very different entities: the mind, whose only attribute is thought, has no extension; and the body, which has extension, but no thought. Unlike the body, which is immortal as a simple being, and the body, which operates as a broad being following its mechanical principles, the soul and the body are distinct and separate beings.

Thus, human existence can be understood as the union of two different entities, a dichotomy that relegates the body to the realm of medicine and physics, as a purely

mechanical object, and the object of many scientific studies. Although Descartes' work laid the metaphysical foundation for modern science, especially the science of the human body, further research has increasingly revealed how difficult it is to view human existence in a split way. Nevertheless, this dualistic view still represents the mainstream voice of Western traditional mind-body philosophy and has played a different impact on the development of various disciplines in the later generations, especially the development of physical education.

We can see that under the influence of the above dualism, the attention of the school to sports is often one-sided, but this “attention” is not an emphasis in the true sense. Some people believe that physical education is to exercise the body, and the body refers to the flesh. Therefore, exercise can only make the body strong, and has nothing to do with the spirit and soul. This is common in many professional sports training, and the result is to cultivate students into “well-limbed” deformities. Without the participation of the mind, the process of physical education is torturous. Rather than serving the harmonious development of the student's body and mind, this kind of sport aggravates the separation between physical activity and the need for physical activity, and further creates the separation between physical activity and psychological pleasure.

In addition to schools, modern sports have also been affected by this, with the result that one extreme of dualism (the supremacy of the mind) has shifted to the other (the primacy of the body). This theory of body priority lays a profound theoretical foundation for the vigorous development of competitive sports, but, because of its own defects, it also sows the seeds of alienation in advance. With more and more non-sports significance (national, social and personal) being carried by competitive sports, the purpose of competitive sports is not for their own physical health and spiritual satisfaction, but for the breakthrough of physical limits, the appreciation of others and the stimulation of money.

When we look at the athletes' injuries and short lives, the scandals in sports competitions, and the lack of unfair competition and the overall culture of competitive sports, we cannot help, but believe that physical and mental physical sports ultimately end in physical and mental confrontation and mutual harm. The result is either to ignore people's thoughts and emotional will and harm the mind with the body, or to ignore people's physiological capacity and harm the body with the so-called “tenacious will”.

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