

P. Kevin Lixey, LC
Section Church and Sport
Pontifical Council for the Laity

"The pursuit of excellence and the scourge of doping: Ethics in sport as a social paradigm"

*International Sport Forum
Brussels*

Good afternoon Ladies and Gentlemen!

I wish to thank the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung for the invitation to participate in this forum. During the 2006 World Cup in Germany, I also had the opportunity to participate in a forum on "Football, Democracy, and the Globalization and Latin American" organized by Konrad Adenauer Stiftung at their headquarters in Berlin and I am happy to collaborate again with this forum on "Europe's response to the doping threat".

As I was asked to speak about ethics in sport as a social paradigm, let me say something about this word paradigm, which comes from the two Greek words "παρά", meaning "by" and "δείκνυμι" (deiknumi) a verb meaning "to show, or to point out". Thus, it could easily be translated as "to show by an example or pattern". With Thomas Kuhn's "Structure of Scientific Revolutions", scientific paradigms and namely, "paradigm shifts" became popular terminology. In the English language, thinking "in the box" encompasses the reasoning of normal science; whereas thinking "outside the box" is what Kuhn calls revolutionary science. In the social sciences, paradigms have gained ground to describe one's world view or "Weltanschauung" for our German speaking friends; the world view is that set of experiences, beliefs and values that affect the way an individual perceives reality and responds to that perception. A "dominant paradigm" refers to the values, or system of thought, in a society that are most standard and widely held at a given time.

This being said, we could ask: What have been the dominant "Weltanschauung" or paradigms for the world of sport over the last 25 centuries or so? Not an easy question to answer! But, considering that philosophy of sport professor Dr. Karen Joisten of the University of Mainz already did this homework for us at a sport seminar held in conjunction with our Vatican office a few years ago, I would like to share with you her findings as a backdrop for my talk today. After doing so, we will be in a better position to consider the connection between sport and ethics in light of these social paradigms, and the possibility of proposing a "paradigm shift" for the world of sport that could be advantageous in the fight against doping.

Professor Joisten's working hypothesis¹ is along these lines: the manner in which we human person - consciously or subconsciously – approaches sport (and especially regarding the care or concern to his or her body) will be similar to the way he or she deals with his self in other areas of life an especially regarding their mortality. Thus, sport can be interpreted as a kind of mirror of society in which the especially pronounced intellectual-cultural positions of a time go hand in hand with the way the same society approaches sport, and in particularly, how a certain epoch envisions its athletic idols or heroes Trust me, although it seems complicated, the following brief sketches of some dominant paradigms over the last 25 centuries will help illustrate this point.

1) **Cosmos centred paradigm**

So, first of all, let us begin with ancient Greece. Here we have what Joisten calls the “cosmos centred” paradigm. This is a world view that is neither God centred nor man centred, but rather, on nature (*phusis*) where all creation or all the cosmos seeks to reaching its full “telos” or natural end already present in seed form in its nature or essence. Of course this aspect is highly Aristotelian. Yet, the pursuit of excellence in ancient Greek athletic competition, dates back long before Aristotle to the ritual of holding funeral games to honour the dead or royalty. In sporting contests, *arête* is manifested above all in excellence in physical strength and agility. While the noble dead are honoured by these lavish funeral games, the living participants who compete strive for a type of “immortality” by being remembered for the athletic feats, for their excellence. Later, the pursuit of excellence would also be incorporated into the pursuit of the virtuous life.

2) **God centred paradigm**

Later, with the spread of Christianity throughout the Roman empire, we have what Joisten considers a “God centered” paradigm. Here, there is a deep sense of being creatures created by a Triune God, where the human person is a pilgrim in a valley of tears- yes, but with a vivid hope of an eternal life of happiness. While some claim that Christians of this age totally despised their body (as symbolized by corporal penance). This depreciation of the body is more akin to Gnosticism than Christianity as the very Incarnation of the Son of God gives unprecedented value to the body. I see corporal penance or martyrdom- the supreme sacrifice of the body- as both being a subordination of the body and earthly life to a higher cause. The martyr simply values being true to their faith more

than extending their life temporarily on this earth in the hope of gaining eternal life. When religious persecution ceased, the “heroic life of a martyr” is transferred to the severe asceticism of the monastic life – and both in a certain sense- replace the athletic idol of the ancient athletes of Olympia or the gladiators of Rome.

In the later Middle Ages, there arises the ideal of knighthood, where brave young men embrace the code of chivalry and engage in battles to defend their king or the Holy Land or some other cause. In lieu of battles, jousting tournaments arise. Yet these are quickly condemned by the Church (in favour of the body and human life!) because these tournaments unnecessarily exposed the knights to risking mortal wounds in the pursuit of folly and vainglory (Here, perhaps, we can see a sort of precursor to the risks taken in doping for similar purposes).

3) **Man centred paradigm**

(I admit that we are making sweeping generalizations in order to offer a sketch of these paradigms; so I ask the reader to bear with me.) At the end of the Middle Ages, and especially during the Baroque period – arises the ideal of the “galant homme”. Here, the perfect gentleman was understood as the complete harmony of body and mind. The men and ladies of court had to have a good intellectual and physical education if they sought to be fully refined and acknowledged at court.

With the flourishing of science, and the coming of the “Enlightenment”, man moves to centre stage, as his reason takes him to new heights. With this capacity of science to now obtain precise measurements, and to quantify everything quantifiable, we have a shift that Alan Guttman neatly sums up with the title of his book “From ritual to record”! The stage is thus set for Coubertin and the Olympic games, which have man and humanism as the key actor! Yet, also with this new found confidence in science, comes a certain blind faith in that all which is scientifically possible is also licit. When this mode of scientific thinking mixes with the now much more calculable and relentless pursuit of “citius, altius, fortius”, it can become a potent cocktail that continues to inebriate the sport of today.

4) **Trans-anthropological paradigm**

So, where are we today? Joisten makes well the case for one last dominant paradigm that she calls “trans-anthropological”. In this fourth paradigm, man is concerned, after the disappearance of God, with the task of overcoming his own self. The man centred *Weltanschauung* has become obsolete. The world becomes a manifold intertwined network constituting of a vast web that is very broad but also very shallow! This world view can be described with the help of the image of the rhizome, an underground rootstock which does not possess a main root, thus lacking a centre: the complete opposite of a tree or a root wherein a centre point and a hierarchy is always determined. So too our paradigm today, is a meandrous and labyrinth-like mode of thinking and understanding of the world which lacks a fixed centre and an origin: the Facebook era where it is possible and almost mandatory to be able to connect to every arbitrarily chosen point with one other like the rhizome.

As Joisten notes, Friedrich Nietzsche’s mad man describes our situation in a poignant way: “...wither do we move? Away from all suns? Do we not dash unceasingly backwards, sideways, forwards in all directions? Is there still an above and a below? Do we not stray, as through infinite nothingness? Does not empty space breathe upon us? Has it not become colder? Does not night come on continually, darker and darker? ...”²

The Enlightenment has expired and there is nothing new that remains to be explained. There is nothing mysterious in it, it is transparent as mesh. It has no depth. Along with the loss of faith there is also a loss of traditional ties and tradition per se, leaving man radically thrown back on to himself, having lost any foothold or orientation.

So, what will happen to man in trans-anthropocentric age after having before placed all the focus upon himself in the scientifically saturated anthropocentric age? According to Joisten: “After the death of God, the death of traditional relationships and knowledge acquired through experience, the loss of time and space, of values and the omnipresence of technical images, man has - in a figurative sense- begun to kill himself. He has abandoned himself and is now endeavouring with every possible means -whether bio-technology, artificial intelligence or media-theory research- **to create something new and different: a trans-human!**”³

There are then two tendencies to overcome the existing human person: one is the **trans-human meta-body**, the other is through a **trans-human intellect**. Both tendencies share the mutual

interest of demolishing the physical constrictions and limitations of man to become unlimited, without horizon and immortal at last.

We should note how the quest for a trans-human meta-body aligns itself well with the fitness-craze, the quest for the most state of the art doping procedures and the future exploitation of new biotechnologies that could produce made to order genetically modified athletes in the future. In pursuing superior performance, human beings have long sought advantages obtainable from better tools and equipment, better training and practice, and better nutrition and exercise. Besides the pharmaceuticals of today, tomorrow, we may also find help in new technological capacities for directly improving our bodies and minds-both their native powers and their activities-capacities provided by drugs, genetic modifications, and surgical procedures (including the implantation of mechanical devices).

In a 2008 Spiegel interview ⁴with Dick Pound, the former president of Wada spoke of some of the future horrors of Bio genetic engineering with this example. Dr. Sweeney of the University of Pennsylvania has – through genetic engineering- increased the muscle mass in laboratory mice by 35 percent. Half of the emails he receives are from athletes who ask him: “Try it out on me”. When Sweeney tells them that he works only with laboratory animals and has no idea how a human body would respond, they email back: “That’s ok; do it to me anyway!” According to Pound; the world of people who dope is a sick world!

Thus, something tells me that the dominant paradigm in sport today is not “the important thing is to participate”, but rather, the athletic ideal of our time can be understood as the realisation of the trans-human meta-body.

Part II. An ethical response: a paradigm shift to virtue ethics in sport

A. Proposing a paradigm shift

In the battle against doping, appeals have been made against doping in order to safeguard the long term health of the athletes, as well as to uphold fairness. And this must continue!

We can note that already in 1955, Pope Pius XII observed: “Youth must realize that ... no motives can prevent the sportsman from observing the common moral law with its three-fold object: family, society and self. In this last aspect, one must deplore the error of claiming the right to

dispose unconditionally of his body and thereby to submit it to obvious risks and to exhausting efforts, or else, in order to obtain results that are beyond his own natural forces to absorb gravely noxious substances such as the case when consuming highly stimulating drugs, which besides being likely to cause harm to the body of a possibly irreplaceable nature, are considered as fraudulent by specialists!”⁵

Yet, in spite of these appeals, doping is ever more prevalent and is killing athletes just as it will kill sport itself. The lives of many athletes have been claimed because of this scourge, however, sport itself is not dead yet. It seems that the pursuit of excellence that began with the Greeks and continues today with greater intensity – victory at all cost- is the true “Achilles’ heel” of sport today? It is sports weak point. Yet, could this same Achilles’ heel also be our point of attack, the door to enter into this world and create its transformation; In other words, could the quest for excellence also be a type of catalyst for change? Let me explain.

I was asked to speak about “ethics in sport as a social paradigm”. But, in doing so, allow me to propose “**virtue based ethics in sport**” as a new paradigm – or paradigm shift- in the fight against doping and other maladies that afflict sport today.

As noted, the pursuit of excellence is innate to the human person. Our aspirations to reach lofty goals are at the heart of much that we do and much that is admirable about us. Many of us aspire also to excel in the specific activities to which we devote ourselves; and nearly all of us admire superior performance whenever we encounter it, even in areas where we ourselves are only mediocre. Huizinga makes the case in the classic *Homo ludens* that this competitive streak, this desire to play, to pursue excellence in a myriad of fields is also responsible for the creative flare of genius in the human person that has been at the heart of each culture. He sights the ancient Greek Olympics, the magnificent Roman games, or the baroque period in art, as emblematic of this.

In a certain sense, doping has its roots in this quest for excellence- in this relentless pursuit of “*citius altius fortius*”. However, it is a pursuit of a false excellence through fraudulent and illicit and health damaging means. True excellence cannot be pursued through non excellence, through illicit means! In our shallow rhizome era, we need a deeper, more comprehensive understanding of true excellence, especially as it applies to sport. While the anti-doping campaign must continue, raising awareness and fostering government and non-government body participation, perhaps we could also tap into this quest for excellence, by rooting it in a hierarchy of values as found within a virtue orientated ethics.

In our third Vatican sports seminar held last fall in November on the mission of Catholic sport associations, we focused one of the panel discussion on “What does it mean to be a champion?”. In other words, we set out to explore how we, and how should we, define success? Is it only to be defined in external terms of gold or silver? Or internally?

According to Coach John Wooden, one of most winning coaches in US college basketball, “Success is peace of mind that is the direct result of self-satisfaction in knowing you did your best to become the best you are capable of becoming.”⁶ One point to stress here is that success is primarily determined from within as you are the only one who really knows whether you have won or whether you have cheated. Perhaps we are quick to forget the deeper thirst for the transcendent that lies within each and every person. He or she is not only “*homo economicus*” but also *homo sapiens*, where it is man’s thinking and spiritual capacity that should distinguish him from an ape, setting the human person within a framework that goes beyond the mere material and extends to the spiritual.

This begs the question of where lies the true source of self-satisfaction. Is it not more internal than external? Are doped athletes really happy in being victorious for a few years until their medals and health are eventually stripped away from them? Where lies their happiness then? I recall these haunting words of former boxer, and also former convict who has spent time in prison, Mike Tyson- who responded to a question in this way before his last fight: “When I’d get up in the morning, my former trainer (Cus D’Amato) would make me breakfast. Now he’s not around anymore. I’m going to do well, but when I come down to it, who really cares? ...I’m not happy being victorious. I fight my heart out and I give it my best, but when its over, there’s no Cus to tell me how I did, and no mother to show my (newspaper) clippings to!”⁷

Pope Benedict, during his recent trip to Prague, touched on this quest for excellence- especially as it relates to youth. “At the present crossroads of civilization- he said- so often marked by a disturbing sundering of the unity of goodness, truth and beauty and the consequent difficulty in finding an acceptance of common values, every effort for human progress must draw inspiration from that living heritage. Europe, in fidelity to her Christian roots, has a particular vocation to uphold this transcendent vision in her initiatives to serve the common good of individuals, communities, and nations. Of particular importance is the urgent task to encourage young Europeans with a formation that respects and nurtures their God-given capacity to transcend the very limits which are sometimes presumed to entrap them.

In sports- the Pontiff went on to say- ...young people welcome the opportunity to excel. Is it not equally true that when presented with high ideals they will also aspire to moral virtue and a life of compassion and goodness? I warmly encourage parents and community leaders ... to promote the values which integrate the intellectual, human and spiritual dimensions of a sound education worthy of the aspirations of our young.”⁸

B. Virtue ethics in sport

As mentioned before, sports talk is littered with reference to the achievement excellence. So too is virtue ethics. *Arête*, in ancient Greek, meant just that: excellence. *Arête* could mean the excellence of anything. In human terms, a virtue, then, is a way of being humanly excellent. People are not born with excellence but, rather, become excellent by acquiring a certain human quality.

It could be said, that in attempting to establish a singular ethics of sports based upon the cultivation of virtues, I am suffering from excessive nostalgia. There may be some truth in this claim. The shared identities, norms and purposes of the *polis* are long gone and inapplicable to the modern multicultural world that is short on tradition. Yet, if sports, with their explicit rules and implicit ethos of fair play, cannot help to model human behaviour, it is difficult to see what modern practices can. Thus, I uphold that sports, when staged in the right way, could be a **rich arena for practicing virtue ethics.**

What would virtue ethics in sport entail? Obviously, we cannot offer a treatise on this here, but a brief sketch of some of its potential and actual application is in order. Let me explain some of these ways the practice of sport – with its internal dynamic of seeking excellence- can lend itself to the practice of certain virtues.

a) Self –control

There is an English saying: “At table and at play, a man gives himself a way.” This is to say that a person manifests his or her character- or, if you prefer, their degree of self dominion-- when they are precisely in the heat of the game where the player reveals how much will power or self control dominates over his or her compulsory inclinations? How one plays on the field, doesn’t automatically determine how one performs in life, but there is some overflow. One who cheats on the field might easily cheat in other areas of their life; while one who shows composure in the heat of the game- keeping in check their compulsory urge to punch the referee in the face for calling

unjustifiable foul- might also show composure in other situations off the pitch. This is one of the ways sport can be a paradigm of human behaviour in general.

Since we are on the eve of another World Cup, allow me to quote from Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, on the eve of World Cup of 1978. Speaking about the great hype over this event, the then Archbishop of Munich stated: “the fascination for football consists in the fact that it unites the following two aspects in a persuasive manner. First of all, it “compels the human person to exercise self-discipline”, so that they may gain control over themselves, and through this control, reach self mastery. In turn, this self mastery leads to freedom.”⁹

b) Learning to obey rules

Players of a game, mutually accept certain rules and boundaries that determine the game, and make it what it precisely the type of game. If in a game of soccer, a child picks up the ball and starts to run with it, the children themselves are the first to recognize this breachment of the rules and will unanimously decry the guilty culprit as a spoil sport for not playing by the rules, for the spoil sport has spoiled the play, making it what it isn't.

As moral philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre points out, there are communities constituted by a tradition and also **communities constituted by the practice they develop**. A community of practice is a socially established cooperative of human activity through which goods internal to that form of activity are realized in the course of trying to achieve those standards of excellence which are appropriate to it. He cites sport as an example of such a community of practice. Furthermore, as MacIntyre points out: “A practice involves standards of excellence and obedience to rules as well as the achievement of goods. To enter into a practice is to accept the authority of those standards and the inadequacy of my own performance as judged by them. It is to subject my own attitudes, choices, preferences and tastes to the standards which currently and partially define the practice.”¹⁰

The rules of the game, which all mutually obey, unite the competitors together by a common bond. The freedom of play -when rules are respected- gains a certain seriousness and this tension that directs play is only resolved when the game is over. Note, I am not saying that the presence of contrary vices is not prevalent in sport. I am merely claiming that sports because of the very nature and purposes, place demands on all players. Their responses are obligatory in nature through rule structures and conventions. Observing them, and doing so not only because of a fear of penalty or sanction, still challenges us because of our weakness of will and the ready availability of (more or

less substantial) external goods that incentives the ends of victory over the means of playing fair and well.

c) Role models

In Aristotelian thought, understanding the right thing to do, feel, and see is a product that is learnt from wiser souls than ourselves whose grasp of practical judgement is more reliable than our own. Yet, it is not enough only to *know* what to do, but also *to do it*, for it is by doing just acts that the just man is produced, and by doing temperate acts the temperate man is produced, etc.

But, as Aristotle also keenly notes: “But most people do not do these, but take refuge in theory and think they are being philosophers and will become good in this way, behaving somewhat like patients who listen attentively to their doctors, but do none of the things they are ordered to do. As the latter will not be made well in body by such a course of treatment, the former will not be made well in soul by such a course of philosophy.”¹¹

This is precisely why philosophers have stressed that sports can be an important arena for the development of virtue: they can provide, in a very public way, occasions for practicing good and evil. Sport activities create relatively controlled, and sometimes contrived situations, we can afford opportunities not merely for sporting youths to “try out” moral action, but to think and feel it out too. Here the role of the coach is crucial!

Yet, also important to note here is that -for better or worse- the importance of sound role models for the young people to emulate. Professional sports are also a realm of heroes- of star athletes who young children look up to. Because of this, elite athletes are publicly held accountable for higher standards of conduct and character. We are setting the bar high and asking of athletes more than might be expected of others. But it is precisely because of their high profile, and the enormous financial endorsements or social prestige, that expectations of higher standards are justified.

In a New York Times interview from August 2008, sport psychologist Dr Brim, who is author of the book: *The fame motive*, says that seeking fame is not the number one motivation for most athletes, but, according to his research, it is rather, the drive to simply be their best! The article cites the remarks of gymnast Natalie Comaneci: “I didn’t want to compete to make history; I wanted to compete to be my best!”¹² Once again, the quest for excellence surfaces.

Although there are plenty of bad apples in professional sports, there are also many positive role models for the youth to look up to, who going against the grain of direct competition, they act in ways that are selfless, (such as assisting fellow athletes who are injured, or deliberately eschewing easy opportunities to win at the expense of incapacitated opponents) or exercising honesty by indicating to the official that they have broken a rule when it was not realised, etc.. Clearly many people under such circumstances would seek to gain unfair competitive advantages. Yet, the fact that, with so much to win and lose, the vast majority of athletes rejects opportunities to cheat is one reason that we properly think of them as above everyday folk.

d) Teamwork

It is often said that sports focus on competition which fosters egoism. Logically speaking, this cannot simply be the case. What is playing sport if not an appeal to suspend all differences of creed or colour in order to strive together for victory? Competition requires co-operation. Sporting contests cannot survive without this shared spirit we often call fair play. Neither can team sports excel without team play, as players learn to insert their individuality into the service of the entire group.

e) Other virtues

While it is fairly obvious that one would need virtues such as discipline, determination, persistence and tenacity, as sportspersons whose endeavours are focused on a specified goal, one would also need “courage” and “prudence” in knowing when which levels of risk were really worth taking in one’s sporting life, which is usually only a microcosm of a life fully and wholly lived over the full course of one’s allotted years. Ignoring one’s future health by risk taking in one’s adolescent years (say by doping) represents a challenge that demands great prudence and moral imagination. Yet, all have at their base this quest for virtue in general, this quest to excel at their endeavours.

To sum up this section on virtue ethics in sport, I again turn to Pope Benedict’s words with occasion of our last sports seminar: “In our time when an urgent need to educate the new generations is evident it is therefore necessary for the Church to continue to support sports for youth, making the most of their positive aspects also at competitive levels such as their capacity for stimulating competitiveness, courage and tenacity in pursuing goals. However, it is necessary to avoid every trend that perverts the nature of sports by recourse to practices that can even damage the body, such as doping. As part of a coordinated, formative effort, Catholic directors, staff and

workers must consider themselves expert guides for youth, helping each of them to develop their athletic potential without obscuring those human qualities and Christian virtues that make for a fully mature person.”¹³

C. Implementing a paradigm shift

As we have seen, the trans-anthropological paradigm of today lacks a centre, as it is characterized by shallow, rhizome like roots without depth, nor hierarchy, and consequently, without meaning. Thus, the first step to creating a new paradigm would be to give the human person a firm anchoring, a ground to stand upon.

In his encyclical letter, *Caritas in veritatem*, Pope Benedict XVI observes: “Without God man neither knows which way to go, nor even understands who he is.... A humanism which excludes God is an inhuman humanism. Only a humanism open to the Absolute can guide us in the promotion and building of forms of social and civic life — structures, institutions, culture and ethos — without exposing us to the risk of becoming ensnared by the fashions of the moment.”(n.78).

In previously sketching the various characteristics of each of these dominant paradigms, we can see that each paradigm has its positive aspects as well. The appreciation of excellence and the acute sense of the *telos* present in the essence or nature of each thing is something that could be to our advantage to recover. Especially with regards to the human person, the Holy Father noted just last week that “But today Nature is considered as a purely mechanical thing, which therefore does not contain any moral imperative in itself, any value orientation: it is purely a mechanical thing and orientation comes from being itself.”¹⁴ (CEI....)

Regarding the God centred paradigm of the Middle Ages, it would be beneficial today to recover this sense of being creatures and consequently, of having human limits. From the renaissance era we could recuperate the sense of balance emblematic in the *gallant homme* who cultivated both his body and his intellect, and the quest to integrate science with faith. As for the trans-anthropological era, we can learn from this that a man centred paradigm doesn’t suffice, as man himself thirsts for the transcendent. Yet, instead of seeking to overcome man himself with a meta body or a meta intellect, we could seek a deeper understanding of his spiritual dimension through a recovery of the spiritual heritage of Europe, this rich patrimony that is all too easily dismissed for a much bleaker horizon. One positive side to the “rhizome-like age” is this a greater sense of being connected with others, could help man overcome a false concept of his autonomy, that claims that man must develop himself by and for himself without impositions from others.

This concept is erroneous, explained Pope Benedict XVI, because man's self is defined in relation to others. "In reality, the essential fact is that the human person becomes himself only with the other. The "I" becomes itself only from the "thou" and from the "you". It is created for dialogue, for synchronic and diachronic communion. It is only the encounter with the "you" and with the "we" that the "I" opens to itself.¹⁵

Dominant paradigms are shaped both by the community's cultural background and by the context of the historical moment. Some social scientists attribute the following as the conditions that could facilitate a virtue ethics paradigm would include: educators who propagate the paradigm's ideas by teaching it to students; lay groups that embrace the beliefs central to the paradigm; dynamic leaders to introduce and support this alternative paradigm; professional organizations giving legitimacy to the paradigm; media backing: journalists and editors who write about the system of thought; government agencies who give credence to this other paradigm.

Conclusion

In a very general way, we have seen how man's approach to sporting activities and sports heroes reflects in some way his world view of himself in each epoch. This has also given us a sense of where the human person is heading, and what is driving this meta-body trend that is much akin with doping and the use/abuse of biotechnologies of tomorrow. We have also been able to see how attempts to debunk doping in sport was necessary and will continue to be but are at the same time insufficient. We need to change a mentality, and this requires incentives as well as prohibitions. It requires positive role models as well as penalties; it requires preventive education as well as controlled testing. In light of this what was proposed here is a virtue ethics in sport paradigm shift that seeks to incorporate this dynamic of excellence – already latent in sporting pursuits as well as in the deeper aspirations of the human person- into the pursuit of virtue at all levels.

I now conclude by asking whether or not a paradigm shift is actually taking place? Let us reconsider the success of the Paralympics at Beijing, where stadiums were packed full of Chinese spectators to watch Paralympians as they were part of a vast population who couldn't get tickets to the Olympic events. Here we are talking about a country that has a poor track record with regards to human rights, where parents are only permitted one child. Consequently, a perfectly healthy baby- and especially a baby boy are the favoured conditions by some people's standards- in order for that child to survive birth. Nonetheless, in this very same country, its inhabitants were buying tickets

and filling mega stadiums to watching Paralympians- athletes who might not be considered “ideal” as they might be missing a leg or an arm or are confined to a wheel chair - to compete at the international level.

Such was the popularity of the Paralympics in China that it was rumoured that I.O.C. members were concerned that the Paralympics were growing in popularity while Olympic diminishing. I don't think this is the case. But, I do think that the Paralympic Games live up to their motto of “inspiring and exciting” the world by enabling Paralympic Athletes “to achieve sporting excellence!” IPC president, Sir Phil Cravens, who participated in our sport seminar last fall in the Vatican, noted: “When talking about Paralympians, we shouldn't talk about champions despite the obstacles; rather, they are champions precisely by overcoming these obstacles!”

The world has enough cheaters. Consequently fans don't want to have to watch them in their favourite sports. They would prefer to see genuine human greatness: human excellence at its best. People have loved sport for its transparency and unpredictability and will continue to do so. Although, other than an Oscar Pistorius, we might not remember the names of the Paralympians, the images of greatness of these athletes- of being champions in spite of -and precisely through obstacles- are etched in our mind and strike a deep chord in our heart. These athletes too are true witnesses to the greatness of the human spirit in a way that is very attractive as well as contagious and inspiring. And this greatness of the human spirit is precisely that excellence that virtue ethics in sport and through sport seeks to promote! Thank you.

¹ Cf. K. Joisten, “Der Mensch, die Endlichkeit und das sportliche Idol – getsehn und heute” in *Sport und Christentum: Eine anthropologische, theologische und pastorale Herausforderung*, D. Mieth - N. Müller - C. Hübenthal [ed.], Grunewald, Ostfildern 2008, pp: 20-38.

² F. Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, W. Kaufmann (ed), Vintage Pub., New York, 1974, pp.181-82.

³ K. Joisten, “Der Mensch, die Endlichkeit und das sportliche Idol – getsehn und heute” in *Sport und Christentum: Eine anthropologische, theologische und pastorale Herausforderung*, D. Mieth - N. Müller - C. Hübenthal [ed.], Grunewald, Ostfildern 2008, p. 36.

⁴ M.Grossekathfer-C. Gilbert, “Interview with former anti-doping czar: doping is organized along mafia lines” in Spiegel Online, 12/02/2008, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/0,1518,druck-593937,00.html>

⁵ Pius XII, *Address to the Centro Sportivo Italiano*, 9 October, 1955, found in Italian in *Discorsi e radiomessaggi di Pio XII*, Vol. XVII (1955), p. 277. [my translation].

⁶ J. Wooden- J. Carty, *Coach Wooden's Pyramid of Success: Building Blocks for a Better Life*, Regal Books, Ventura, 2005, p. 17.

⁷ T. Kluck, *The Reason for a Sports: a Christian Fanifesto*, Moody, Chicago, 2009, p.48.

⁸ Benedict XVI, *Address to political and civil authorities and the Diplomatic Corps at Prague Castle*, 26 September, 2009, in “L'Osservatore Romano” Weekly Eng. Ed. N. 39, 30 September 2009, p. 7-8.

⁹ J. Ratzinger, *Co-Workers of the Truth: Meditations for every day of the year*, Ignatius Press, San Francisco 1992, 262-263.

¹⁰ A. MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, Notre Dame Press, South Bend, 1984 (2nd ed.). p187, 190.

¹¹ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Bk. II.V; 1105-21.

¹² B. Carey, “After Glory of a Lifetime Asking ‘What now?’” from August 18, 2008 in New York Times Electronic edition, found at <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/18/sports/olympics/18psychh.html> .

¹³ Benedict XVI, “Message to the President of the Pontifical Council for the Laity on occasion of the International seminar on Sports, Education and Faith: a new season for the Catholic sports movement” in *L’Osservatore Romano* Weekly English Ed. N. 46, 18 November, 2009, p. 5.

¹⁴ Benedict XVI, Address to the General Assembly of the Italian Bishops Conference, 27 May, 2010 in *L’Osservatore Romano* Weekly English Ed. p.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, p.