Inquiry of the concept and mechanism related to idea of sports coaching : Focusing on two practical processes inherent in "physical education"

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Abstract

Sports coaching has played an important role in improving performance of athletes and teams. In reality, however, its fundamental principle are not consciously comprehended and because of "ad hoc" interpretation and responses, there is a lot of confusion. Based on the premise that a return to fundamental problems is still one of the challenges to be tackled anew, the study aims to examine the universal meaning and mechanism of coaching. This article redefines coaching as the act of the coach leading the athlete to the realization of victory, and concludes that coaching consists of a "double-operation" mechanism. This mechanism is closely linked to the operation of "generalized physical education" that aims to manifest new physical abilities in athletes; while the practical process in "specialized physical education" aims at victory on an (physical) educational basis.

Key words: habituation, transcendence, physical education process, Plato's the analogy of the cave, double operation

1 Introduction

The influential role of sports coaching (hereafter, coaching) in athlete and team performance and development has long been acknowledged. On the other hand, traditional coaching research has predominately focused on studying the observable behavioral elements of coaching and the coaching process by describing a coach's "ad hoc" behavior through quantitative methods has dominated the research. Although such methods conform to assumptions of traditional scientific methods [16], they fail to address fundamental principle that support the unobservable phenomenon of coaching.

In current coaching research, why have coaching scholars been unable to develop a model of coaching that has at its heart sound theoretical and research foundations, which are applicable to all sports, coaches, and age groups thus far? Perhaps coaching is considered an enterprise in which a definitive set of concepts always will be elusive, and as such, a singular all-encompassing model may not be possible [4]. Also, the recognition form of "coaching" has been a "mental" form in that it has been created based on the connotations that researchers or coaches have within their own consciousness. Husserl presented the concept of "ideal objectivity" or "ideal

symmetry "[17] as the first condition for the transition from the generation of meaning to the institutionalization of the cognitive subject, but according to this point. In order to achieve the institutionalization of the cognitive subject, each person's idea1) needs to acquire a certain degree of objectivity. In other words, the connotations born within each person must be accessible to "any person" beyond the subjective framework. Then, in order for "sports coaching", which was created to improve the performance of athletes and teams, to become a certain system as a recognition format, that format is all in practice for each era and each person. It must function as a universal rule for individual cognitive forms, that is, an objective idea. To explain from the above quote, it can be used by "all humans," "all times," "every ethnicity," and their language, and in a form that includes the possibility of development by subsequent seekers. If the condition that can be communicated between each individual and each generation of a certain cognitive form is called " ideal objectivity " following Husserl, coaching also says, "It is super-temporal and everything. It must also be accessible to all ages" [26].

Based on the premise that a return to fundamental problems is still one of the challenges to be tackled

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anew, the study aims to re-examine unchanging meaning of the concept of coaching, which is unavoidable in understanding the "idea" [27] of coaching, and the content of coaching mechanism while focusing on two practical processes that are inherent in physical education with a fundamental goal of "humanizing a human being in terms of the body" [32] (p.231).

2 Research questions and analytical framework

In examining fundamental questions about what coaching is and what constitutes its mechanism, two statements present an important perspective. The first one is, "The most evident starting point in analyzing and understanding coaching is to distinguish coaching and the coach. This is self-evident and essential but research into coaching so far has dealt with the coach as if there is no issue" [21] (p.39). The other is, "Coaching is directed by the coach" [13] (p.389). They point to the fact that the questioning the existence of the coach itself is the first stage of an enquiry into the fundamental problem of coaching.

However, while there are some studies that refer to the coach in the field of sports science from the second half of the 1960s [1][13], they do not provide convincing answers to the questions who the coach is and what coaching is. The following two points explain this.

First, while a general definition of the coach as "an expert of skills and strategy" [21] (p.64) has been widely accepted, these studies take a view that a coach is substitutable with a teacher by "uncritically accepting" [21] (p.59) north american literature that equates a coach and a teacher without examining the content of expertise, an essential attribute of an expert [8][11] [15]. Still, many studies have demonstrated that both a teacher and coach are professions and as such they should be distinguished from one another [3][5][9] [10]. Secondly, and most notably, there are a number of studies that deal with coaching, a hard and laborious job, in a manner that is closer to experience stories[19][20]. However, as Lyle observes, "experiences are meaningless unless all coaches can use them and in order for this to happen, various key principles need to be analyzed and examined." In fact, Lyle says further, "the majority of experience stories are no more than an episode, peculiar to the person and to the discipline" [21] (p.31). In others, a particularistic and individual experience can never go beyond the stage of ad hoc interpretation.

The above has shown that preceding studies that refer

to the coach, while they may provide thorough analyses of a particular era, country, discipline, or individual, constitute after all what Lyle calls "an opportunistic use of samples" [21] (p.31) and they can provide only "ad hoc" and "coincidental" results. While what is a priori can be applied to anywhere anytime, which means it has universality, what is a posteriori only has an ad hoc nature and, therefore, can be only valid for a particular time and at a particular place. Needless to say, what is ad hoc cannot underpin what is universal. Consequently, in order to overcome the current, chaotic situation, we need what is "anywhere, anytime", what is a priori, universal, and inevitable rather than an ad hoc ontology, which is a posteriori, particularistic, and coincidental, in order to clarify the meaning of the term coach and provide a clear definition. Additionally, so far, work has been carried out to compare a group of individual subjects called the coach in abstract common and essential definitions; however, how the group of subjects called the coach, a given in this work, has been selected and collected has not been questioned [18]. This means that preceding studies which have tried to explain who the coach is by way of inductive abstraction commit logical contradiction that they have to know, in advance, the identity of the very subject, the coach, which is to be abstracted and fixed. Furthermore, since, logically speaking, induction is premised on the idea that the content of the concept to be abstracted is known and does not constitute a procedure to derive and form a universalistic definition from various individual and particularistic phenomena; as such it is not an appropriate method in exploring the existence called the coach.

Consequently, in attempting to grasp the existence of the coach who directs coaching evidentially, we have to adopt an analytical framework in which ad hoc coaches are distinguished from universalistic coaches in order to highlight the existence as the subject so as to transcend the individual to reach the individual's being. The adoption of this analytical framework makes it possible to show explicitly the unchanging meaning of the concept of the coach and to achieve an a priori and common understanding of coaching based on the universalistic definition of the existence called the *coach*.

3 Re-defining the concept of coaching

3.1 The fundamental role of the coach

In Japan, people of various jobs working in their particular environment, including teachers who advise

sporting clubs at school, voluntary sport instructors in the community, and those with qualification working at commercial sports facilities are called *coach*. However, if the identity of the meaning of the *coach* in different environments and jobs is supported by the identity of images that are linked to the word, since an image is a private one exclusive to its owner, the meaning of the *coach* has to be private. If this is the case, it is impossible to communicate using the same. As it is said, "images do not give a single rule" [38], because images are private, they cannot achieve public and inter-subjective identity. Consequently, in a fundamental sense as to why a coach has to exist, the criteria for the coach's identity need to be clarified.

Looking at the origin of the coach, based on this premise, we find that the originates from kocsi or kotsi, a Hungarian from the fifteenth century, which was used as an abbreviation of kocsi szekér, or a "fourwheeled horse-drawn carriage made in the village called Kocs"[30]. Since then, the spread to European countries, and it was used in England of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to mean "the official horse-drawn carriage of the king," in the nineteenth century to mean "a private tutor hired to prepare for the exam." In sports, it was used to mean "someone who trains players for a competition, in particular, the boat race" [28]. Judging from the etymology and lexical definitions, although it is self-evident, we can say that the extension of the concept of a coach has been expanded by each era and by a cultural sphere.

If we seek commonalities found in these developments, as seen in the contemporary practice in Britain of calling long-distance bus service and railway carriages coaches, the fact that a derived from a place name indicating a "horse-drawn carriage" is the origin of the *coach* is directly linked to the role the coach played to transport people with certain purposes to their destination, or goal, without fail. Looking at this from a different angle, this means that not only a passenger cannot reach his or her destination on his or her own but also he or she does not know where the destination is and what it looks like. Conversely, "the coach (the horse-drawn carriage) transports important customers to their destination, or goal, without a problem" suggests that although the coach cannot change or revise the goal arbitrarily, he or she can be understood as the *leader* who knows what the goal is, what needs to be done in order to reach it, and, in others, who already knows what training should be undertaken.

3.2 The primordial being of athletes

On the other hand, under what conditions are athletes who want to reach the destination (goal), or in others who are taken for granted "to play to win" [15] (p.21) placed in the first place?

First of all, it is necessary to comprehend the fundamental existence of human beings in order to overcome this challenge. In this regard, we all know that because human beings are originally "deficient beings" [12], they continuously aim for transcendence as "possible being" 14) with "the will to power" [29].

If we infer the original state of human nature from these perspectives, Plato's "Allegory of the Cave," from his Republic [31] (pp.503-537), an examination of residents who are, like prisoners, kept in a situation from the moment of their birth in which they are tied up at the neck and limbs so that they could not move or look back in the cave which goes deep down into the ground, is very suggestive. If we further apply intellectual education for the philosopher king which is argued in the work, since it is stated that educational ideals are hidden in the original condition in which the residents are placed, for the residents of the cave education is essentially a technology for "a redirection of the soul" and "ascendance to the truth," which is essentially an extrinsic "compulsion" that takes into account the staged growth process in accordance to biological natural law and intrinsic subjectivity which is unique to human beings such as impulse and desire for movement. Following this, we can regard the educational process which is transcendentally described in the "Allegory of the Cave" as the manifestation of the physical education processes. This is because, if we apply Plato's discourse on education to physical education, a specific type of education, it is clearly shown that both "non-motility" and "transcendence" as human nature²⁾ exist in a physical education practice that is the form of relationship composed in order to realize the goals that are set as conditions between the action term (coach/teacher) and the actioned term (athlete/student) mediated by a concretely selected mediating term (movement culture³⁾).

If we were to describe the relationship between "physical education practice," "non-motility," and "transcendence" briefly, the content is summarized as follows: in contrast to education with a universal aim of "humanizing the human beings," the universal aim of physical education, a specific concept of education, is "humanizing a human being in terms of the body" [32]

(p.231), and is concretized in human relationships under unique cultural/social conditions in a special life world. In others, the body of human beings, precisely because it has physicality with potential whose essence is plasticity, is transformed into a body as a reality embedded in a particular culture by the working of physical education, which then completes life as a human being. However, given that putting on a particular culture itself is another name for "non-motility" and that movement culture which serves as the medium in "the embodiment of the body" has been transformed into the alienated state which we have to master as a unique culture of the relevant life world, it cannot be other than something that is essentially particular which has been turned into tradition in each life world. Consequently, to manifest it as physical ability inevitably leads to the "habituation into particularity" of movement culture, which lies dormant with the actioned as a given. However, since if we go as far as that, the body will become "a body as a yoke," entwined with non-motility, we cannot explain at all amazingly continuous changes in the life world unless physical education practice aims to make us transcend such a situation by "turning the direction of the whole body by force" [31] (p.508).

Conversely, similar to the residents of the cave who are kept under the situation of "bondage," as mentioned before, that "not only a passenger cannot reach his or her destination (goal) on his or her own but also he or she does not know where the destination is and what it looks like" means, as it has been repeatedly pointed out in studies that analyze acts of successful coaches [2][35], the athletes are left in the situation called "ignorance" by Plato.

3.3 The function of movement culture as a medium

Following the above, the passenger, in others, the athlete is a being that has to habituate into the particularity of the relevant movement culture by breaking free from the yoke of "ignorance." This is because skills which the athlete is to master have all been accumulated historically and traditionally as a transpersonal form of culture through the *exercise form* which is unique to movement culture in question, and they appear as givens, as something that have to be mastered 'in order to adapt to challenges and various environmental constrains for the purpose of achieving the goal [34]. On the other hand, simply making the athlete habituate into his or her given conditions does

not explain a number of astonishing changes the athlete has expressed so far such as an incredible development/improvement in physical abilities as seen in energetic strengths and the emergence of many tactical behaviors. Following this, we can also understand the athlete as a being that has to attempt "transcendence of the current situation for further advancement" through movement culture as a medium; the athlete is a being that attempts to acquire excellence by repeating the process of transforming *dynamis to energeia*⁵⁾, then the achieved *energeia* to an advanced *dynamis* by engaging specialist training in order to realize the goal which is inherent in a competition, the determination of win or defeat by focusing on the pursuit of victory.

On the other hand, there is another important essence to the athlete that must not be overlooked. The athlete is also a being who lets human nature, as expressed by "something like leaden lead weights" [31] (p.508), which tries to "turn the vision of the soul below" [31] (p.509), to take control; as discussed above, because for the athlete "it is taken for granted to play to 'win'", "something like leaden lead weights" works more as a self-imposed bind on the athlete than on ordinary people.

Drawing from the preceding discussions, we can now understand an athlete as a being who materializes various physical abilities in order to be freed from "ignorance"; still, he or she has to habituate into a particular movement culture as someone that inherits the uniqueness of movement culture in question while on the other hand, he or she is a being that tries to keep aiming higher by transcending the nature that prefers status quo as seen in the Olympic Games' motto "Citius, Altius, Fortius" in Latin. In this regard, the coach is the one and only leader for the athlete who is placed in a condition which exceeds the normal level of "never-ending conflict" with "something like a lead weight" that is inherent in human nature. If it is based on such a relationship between the coach and athlete, coaching, which has been described as being "given direction by the coach" [37] (p.683), is now redefined as "the act of the coach leading the athlete in order to realize victory."

4 The coaching mechanism

4.1 Prerequisites to "lead"

Now that coaching has been redefined as the act of the coach in leading the athlete in order to realize victory, we must now ask in what concrete ways does the coach lead the athlete?

The question is premised on the fact that the vast number of physical skills based on the exercise form and the realization of possible physicality, which is usually comprehended as strength, are based on the diversity and multi-dimensionality of physical ability. This is precisely the reason why the coach needs to deal with the realization of possible physicality with some intent while maintaining direct solidarity with a clear subject called physical ability. On the other hand, it has to be diverse. However, in the end, the realization of possible physicality ends up with victory only. The reason why "very realistic pressure many coaches face is one on winning" [6] (p.83) is because there is an undeniable fact that "if they cannot win, they will be expelled"[7] (p.31). If the goal of victory is ignored, in reverse, situations such as "taking part in the 100 m sprint and crosses the finish line by walking through" and "during the match, forget about chasing the ball but deepen friendship by having a dialogue with athletes of the opposing team" could be regarded as the same as the "aim" which controls the athlete, the actor, in reference to the conceptual framework characterized by the question, "Why do I do this?"

If we think about the coach's intention in leading the athlete to the realization of victory in reference to the two aforementioned modes, "habituation into particularity" and "transcendence of the current situation for further advancement," we find the following.

First of all, if we regard the "habituation into particularity" as the aforementioned aim, it then constitutes a condition that influences how the goal of victory, the substantial subject to be realized, is set. Let us examine the relationship from the aim and goal from a different perspective. "Team cohesion," [33] (p.48) says Silva, is "the most urgent and important problem a coach faces." If the coach intends the mastering of a tactical behavior related to detailed physical skills for the cohesion as the realization of the "habituation into particularity" that is essential for victory, the tactical behavior itself has a clear subjectivity as a goal but cohesion is nothing other than an attribute that gives meaning and justifies the mastering of the tactical behavior as a condition—i.e., the aim. Needless to say, if this attribute does not function as cohesion, the realization of victory, let alone mastery of the tactical behavior, will be difficult to attain. While the tactical behavior has a specific definition, the attributes for justification can be anything other than cohesion, there is no inevitable one-to-one relationship between the two.

Second, the "transcendence of the current situation for further advancement" is only possible when the "habituation into particularity" is realized. If the manifest physical abilities are immediately transformed into a yoke, it could end up with a thesis that coaching is "useless." However, if we recall the transcendental educational process starting with "the change of direction of the whole body by force" as argued by Plato-in others, if we recall the never-ending conflict between the individual who wants them to see the true world by way of the "upward journey" and the residents of the cave who would rather call off a difficult journey to return to the comfortable place they used to be, there is "habit" [31] (p.505) in each of many stages that have been carefully prepared for the ultimate goal of the idea of the good and in order to "proceed further" from that point, one has to perform "continuous transcendence from the current situation." Similarly, in order to realize the goal of victory, the coach has first to complete the habituation into particularity that is peculiar to the exercise culture in question and then drives "the transcendence of the current situation for further advancement" so as to manifest new physical abilities that have evolved/ advanced from that level while in constant conflict with the athlete. This can be understood as a situation in which, vis-a-vis the goal called victory, while both function as aims on the one hand, the transcendence of the current situation for further advancement manifests itself as the aim of the habituation into particularity, which serves as a trigger to drive the realization of the latter on the other[37] (p.685). In short, the situation should be understood not by treating each of many aims as equal but as diverse aims having a hierarchical order by introducing a relationship of "aim-means" among each aim as seen in the case that aim B is chosen for aim A, and for aim B, aim C is chosen.

4.2 Coaching as shaping the physical education process

The above also means that the goal of victory is set under the conditions of the habituation into particularity as the aim and the transcendence of the current situation for further advancement. What does this mean in concrete terms? In examining this question, it is important to identify and show the content of the two conditions and the process which governs and controls both.

However, the reality, Lyle says, is that "while there

is a general concept called 'coaching process', shared understanding of this process has not reached the stage which can be applied to any situation in coaching" [21] (p.36). Because "coaching cannot be organized at the stage of 'hypothesis → practice → examination' that is widely applied to scientific learning," [36] says Uchiyama, "the process has been treated as 'invisible". In addition, "while there have been a number of coaches who are seen as excellent," the situation is one in which, Lyle says, "these coaches have done nothing other than giving mythical air to coaching and their claims to their ultimate knowledge, methods and experience remain covered by a secret shell" [21] (p.27). All of this is due to the general "belief" that coaching "is a mysterious process depending on the coach's whim or an intuitive and sensory process without research and self-reflection" [21] (p.xiii).

Acknowledging the situation as described above and considering the process which controls the two conditions afresh, the aforementioned discourse on the physical education process assumes an important meaning. This is because the aforementioned interpretation of the practical process of physical education is quite helpful in clarifying the content of "the invisible" in conventional coaching. Sato explains the relationship between physical education *practice* and physical education *process* as follows:

In the case of the physical education process which we actually see, each of the constitutive moments in the formalistic definition, PE = f(a', b', c'|P') (PE: physical education, f: function, a': identified action term, b': identified actioned term, c': mediating term, p': condition), can be individually identified, and we understand the physical education process in such an individual phase by means of a concept called physical education practice [32] (p. 260).

The physical education *practice* as shown above refers to an individual form of phenomenon in the physical education event that becomes possible only on the basis of institutionalized physical education as a social system in a similar manner to the pair of *langue* and *parole*, the educational system and educational practice, respectively. In others, physical education practice is shown as a form of relationship constituted for the realization of the goal set as a condition (P') between an identified action term (a') and an identified actioned term (b') with a concretely

selected mediating term (c') as the medium.

Then, since the practical *process* of physical education in the individual phase has been extracted based on the process shown by Plato that a certain "someone," in "constant conflict" with the residents of the cave, led them "from darkness to light" through numerous turns and twists, there is no problem in understanding it as "the same journey as the coach who aims to produce a champion in the sense to complete life" [23] (p.123). Consequently, if we suppose the action term (a'), the actioned term (b'), the mediating term (c') and the goal (P') as described above as the coach, the athlete, movement culture, and victory, respectively, the process through which the coach as the leader reaches victory with the "ignorant" athlete by repeating twists and turns mediated by movement culture can be understood as the shaping of the coaching process.

On the other hand, Sato attributes two terms—generalized physical education and specialized physical education—to practical processes of physical education in individual phase in order to distinguish the two. Generalized physical education aims to realize basic and broad possibilities of human abilities; specialized physical education aims to specialize, advance, and deepen a particular field or area [32] (p.287). In fact, this conceptual distinction itself brings about an extremely important perspective in examining the mechanism through which the coach leads the athlete.

4.3 The coaching mechanism

The premise of dividing the practical processes of physical education into generalized physical education and specialized physical education is that there is a clear relationship between movement culture and physical abilities based on a basic understanding that "no culture can be transmitted unless concrete abilities of individuals serve as the medium and this is also, entirely true in the case of movement culture" [32] (p.287). Contrary to generalized physical education, which is "positioned as a mediating term for exercise culture to present new physical abilities at the actioned term," specialized physical education suggests that "exercise culture mediated by excellent physical abilities transmits and develop itself further as exercise culture." This also appears as a phenomenon with the following content in the practical processes of movement culture including sports.

In order to realize systematically the exercise form in

movement culture called sports as exercise abilities (skills) of a certain individual, the construction of a relationship between a specialized instructor (the action term) with the relevant sport discipline as a mediating term and the competing athlete (the actioned term), and here we find immediately the existence of physical educational relationship. ... Furthermore there is a transcendental moment between the instructor and the athlete to transcend the current situation for further advancement, which means that we cannot deny the existence of a solid educational (physical educational) base in specialized physical education [32] (pp.289-290).

Since in this statement, while the end point for generalized physical education is the manifestation of new physical abilities, that for specialized physical education is a transformed/evolved movement culture with new developments through the contact between the coach and the athlete and mediated by individuals' physical abilities, it is suggested that the roles these two practical processes play differ. Still, both processes occur based on the (physical) education basis, and they are not in opposition; still, they cannot be unified or circulate – they progress simultaneously.

If we give a label "double operation" [37] (p.687) to the "state in which multiple things with different quality are linked through the continuation of operation, a state that cannot be reduced or attributed to one," what is happening in coaching can be understood as two practical processes that are "doubly operated" for the realization of a clear goal called victory with the practical process of specialized physical education as the base (Figure

1). This is because while specialized physical education habituates the athlete to particularity of movement culture and then continuously prompts the athlete to transcend it, its process is maintained by using the physical abilities of the athlete as the medium. Put differently, the connection is only possible when the process that triggers incredible development and improvement of physical abilities whose essence is "possible physicality" is started by the coach.

Drawing from the above, it becomes apparent that coaching consists of the "double operation" mechanism that is closely linked to generalized physical education as the base in the context where the practical process in specialized physical education operates and continues.

5 Conclusion

Coaching has played an important role so far and its function will be increasingly emphasized from now on. However, it is an enterprise in which a definitive set of concepts and mechanisms always will be elusive, and as such, a singular all-encompassing model may not be possible. Consequently, based on the premise that a return to fundamental problems is still one of the challenges to be tackled anew, the study aims to examine unchanging meaning of the concept of coaching and the content of the coaching mechanism.

The examination has found that coaching, which can be defined as "the act of the coach to lead the athlete to the realization of victory" on a (physical) educational basis, consists of a "double operation" mechanism that is closely linked to the operation of a generalized physical education that aims to manifest new physical abilities in athletes while the practical process in specialized

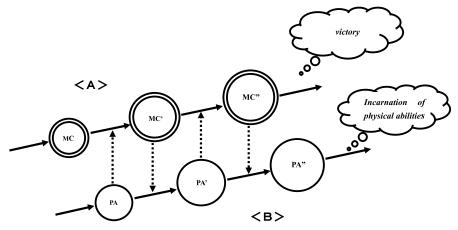


Figure 1. Double operation of practical processes in physical education (A: specialized physical education, B: generalized physical education, MC: movement culture, PA: physical abilities)

physical education aims at victory.

The findings of the study will make significant contributions to research and practice by increasing the breadth and depth of existing literature and having the potential to expose and explain some of the unobservable contexts that drive coaches' behaviors and positively influence coaching effectiveness.

Notes

- In this study, we regard the "idea" as meaning the fundamental thought that "it should be like this" in a certain thing.
- 2) The process of education described by Plato begins with a person "turning their whole body around," and also grasps it as a journey far away, escaping from the underground depths of the cave. Here, the cave-dweller's circumstances of being chained to posts so that they cannot even move can be grasped as our "non-motility" of not being able to accept other cultures due to having learned our own specific culture. In this sense, the ubiquitous goal of physical education of "humanizing a human being in terms of the body" carries the dual responsibilities of departure from the body (or nature) and transcending the fetters of the body (or culture). The practice of physical education aims to sustainably transcend one's condition rather than stagnate within it, by means of another person such as the teacher or coach "lifting up with recovered strength" [31] (p. 504) the athlete or student from the two conditions or circumstances described
- 3) If the vast culture that accumulates with regard to the body could be bundled together and called "body culture," then "movement culture" is within that "body culture," being culture specifically with regard to the movement of the body; it is understood as a concept that generally refers to sports, dance, martial arts, play, etc.
- 4) This refers to "the format that functions as law to constitute the exercise form" [32] (p.243). In others, it is independent of individuals' exercise skills and it implies basic law which manifests each exercise skill in individuals as a reality (exercise form).
- 5) "dynamis" and "energeia" are the central concepts that characterize the late Aristotle philosophy. He considered that the creation of things is the development of what is possible into reality, and

puts "dynamis" into the potential ability of what is possible before it becomes reality. The word "energeia" was used to describe the realization of "dynamis."

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