Breivik, G. (2019). The Sporting Exploration of the World: Toward a
Fundamental Ontology of the Sporting Human Being. *Sport, Ethics and
Philosophy, 14*(2), 146-162

The sporting exploration of the world; towards a fundamental ontology of the sporting human being

ABSTRACT

My goal in this article is to give a portrait of how modern sport philosophy, which started in 1972, developed from relatively narrow paradigmatic borders to become a diverse and multi-paradigmatic international discipline. This development has included several changes but also some continuity. I identify three main tenets that may be viable in the future. One is to focus on the traditional sport philosophical paradigm, which had an ambition to identify the essence of sport. A second option is to develop more specific approaches, focusing on single sports or types of sport, like football or climbing. A third alternative is to develop a philosophy, not only of sport but of 'homo movens', studying the moving human being in different environmental and socio-cultural contexts. All three options are viable and should be welcomed.

Introduction

My perspective in this article will be to look at sport and other physical activities as a way of exploring and experimenting with the environing world. The human being is basically the *homo movens* – born to move – for survival as well as happiness and health. Furthermore, the *homo movens* is the *homo ludens* – an active and playful being that explores the world in different ways and in a variety of environments. The *ludic* exploration of the world starts with children's play and goes all the way up to full-blown versions of rule-based sports, then on to various physical activities into old age. My point of departure will be Heidegger's (1962) notion of *being-in-the-world* which suggests that humans are never isolated individuals but are always in a deep way connected with a 'world'. The 'world' of sport comes in different versions. By use of a phenomenological approach I will try to show that the sporting exploration of the world takes place in four ontologically different dimensions. Here I distinguish between individual sports, encounter sports, team sports and nature sports, and I will argue that the I-Me, I-You, I-Society and I-Nature relations that are exemplified in these four types of sports have different ontological, and hence, experiential characteristics.[i] While my discussion in the following is inspired by Heidegger's early ideas as expressed in *Being*

and Time (Heidegger 1962), I will try to show that the ways of 'worldmaking' in sport are more ontologically diverse than Heidegger allowed for. The article will start with a presentation of Heidegger's idea of a fundamental ontology and from there develop a four-dimensional ontological model of the sporting human being. I will then characterize and describe typical sports that exemplify sporting activities in the four dimensions. I will conclude that to recognize and understand how humans explore the world through sports contributes to a fuller and more diverse picture of human *being-in-the-world*. In many ways this is an explorative article where I invite the reader on board. My aim is not to present a ready-made solution to the problem of how sports should be placed in different categories but to contribute to a better understanding of the ontological foundation and the experiential qualities of the sporting exploration of the world.

Phenomenology and ontology

My method in the following will be phenomenological, inspired by Heidegger's version in *Being and Time* (Heidegger 1962). While Husserl's phenomenology aimed at a pure description of eidetic structures presenting themselves to the mind, Heidegger's goal was to better understand how the human being is involved with the *Lebenswelt*: the basic processes and structures of human existence as they unfold in daily life. Sport and play belong here. Phenomenology means letting the phenomena present themselves to us: "'Phenomenon', the showing itself-in-itself, signifies a distinctive way in which something can be encountered" (Heidegger 1962, 54). Phenomenology is thus connected with ontology. The goal of phenomenology is to let the various things and entities in the world, the different 'beings', show *what* they are and *how* they are for the investigating researcher. Heidegger can therefore say: "Phenomenology is the science of the Being of entities – ontology" (Heidegger 1962, 61). Consequently, "only as phenomenology is ontology possible" (Heidegger 1962, 61). Let me say a few words about what I mean here by ontology. Ontology is traditionally understood as a branch of metaphysics. While metaphysics especially focuses on the question of a highest being, ontology is the philosophical study of the nature of being and of the main categories of being. Ontology as such has been relatively little discussed in the philosophy of sport. The term 'ontology' is rarely used. An early example is Morgan's (1976) discussion of the implications of Huizinga's and Gerber's views for a possible ontology of sport. More recently Halák (2015) has discussed the ontological importance of play according to Eugen Fink. The views of Heidegger and his idea of a fundamental ontology have been discussed to some extent by Breivik (2007; 2010; 2011) and also in Aggerholm's (2015) presentation of

existentialism and sport. Although ontology is not much discussed in sport philosophy it is often presupposed or indirectly discussed in questions concerning the definition of sport, the nature of sport and the metaphysical foundations of sport ethics (see Morgan & Meyer, 1988). Similarly the discussions around general theories of sport, for instance the discussion about formalism versus conventionalism, have ontological presuppositions and implications (Simon 2014).

In the following presentation I will not discuss the ontological status of sport as such, but rather look at the ontology of sport in the light of the ontology of the sporting human being. The focus will be on the human being exploring, testing and contesting the environing world, other human beings and itself through play, games and sports. This is somewhat similar to Heidegger's idea of a *fundamental ontology.*[ii] Before we can ask questions about how things are we must first inquire into the being that asks the question – the human being. Heidegger says: "The ontological analytic of Dasein in general is what makes up fundamental ontology" (Heidegger 1962, 35). I will not claim to present a full fundamental ontology in the following, but I will describe how human beings explore ludic environments and create or discover different ludic 'worlds'. I here distinguish between 'ontological' and 'ontic'. While 'ontological' signifies the structure, the essential and common elements, 'ontic' signifies the specific concrete instantiations or examples. The ontological characteristics of the I-Nature dimension are, for instance, exemplified in specific nature sports such as climbing, backcountry skiing and canoeing.

The *being-in-the-world* in play and sports

To characterize the human being's way of existing Heidegger uses the term *Dasein*. The human being is there *(da)* (at a specific place) and it is present *(da)*. It is always in a situation and a context, interacting with 'the world'. It is thus a *being-in-the-world* (In-der-Welt-sein). Heidegger calls this the 'originary transcendence'. There is no isolated individual who then starts to contact and interact with an environment. The human being is from the start, alone (Selbst-sein) or with others (Mit-Sein), in interaction with the world through the senses, through movements and actions. What is called 'world' here is not the universe, the earth or the objective environment as described by natural science. Dasein is not simply installed in a natural world like an animal but its 'Being is an issue for it' (Heidegger 1962, 69). It cannot simply act on instinct but has to make sense of its environment, interpret it and establish connections and meanings. The 'world' of Dasein is thus constituted by meanings and

references. It is the total or the background of all the specific 'worlds' like the 'world of science' or the 'world of sports'.

Heidegger argues that the world can be inspected and constituted in a practical or in a theoretical mode, with the practical as the primary mode. In the practical mode humans deal with the world by the use of equipment. In the carpenter's 'world' the nails, planks, hammer and saw are functional materials and pieces of equipment that refer to each other and are useful in building walls and a roof with the ultimate purpose of making a house where people can live. I will argue that similarly in soccer the ball, the goals, the marking lines, the players and their relevant skills and attitudes are functionally related to each other by the rules that define the goal and the permitted means in the practice called 'playing football.'

A 'world' is constituted by meanings and references but it needs to be disclosed or discovered by a specific *sight* (Sicht). This sight is not a 'perceiving with one's bodily eyes' nor a kind of detached seeing with one's 'mind's eye'. It is rather an 'understanding', a standing or a stance, which lets 'the beings accessible to it (Dasein) come to meet us as unconcealed in themselves' (Heidegger 1962, 147). Therefore the practical dealing with things must be opened up as a possibility. Heidegger says: "But if Dasein is to be able to have any dealings with a context of equipment, it must understand something like an involvement, even if it does not do so thematically: *a world must have been disclosed to it.*" (Heidegger 1962, 415). This means that humans can discover the world in different modes. There are different sights or understandings that are possible. Different worlds can be disclosed. Heidegger very often uses examples of how we deal with our everyday world but the possibility of play which is basic in sports, is another example of 'world' which can be disclosed to us..

The same physical environment can open up for constitution of different worlds. A river can offer possibilities for white water kayaking, fishing or hydro-electrical power production. The river shows itself differently for different sights. In the sporting world of the kayaker the river has a specific character that offers possibilities for experimentation, exploration and perfection. In such a world one gradually feels at home. Heidegger mostly uses examples from daily life to characterize this familiarity with the environing world, but the same is true for the experienced sportsperson and her world. Heidegger calls this familiarity *dwelling* and the special sight that characterizes the human dwelling *circumspection* (Umsicht). Circumspection is the practical outlook that helps us to navigate the world and to know what to do (Heidegger 1962, 98). This feeling of being at home and getting a practical grip on the world is experienced by children, as well as adults, as they become skilled and proficient in their ludic environments.

The bodily being-in-the-world

The practical dealing with the world, whether in daily life or sports, is based on the use of the human body and its capacities and skills. While in *Being and Time* Heidegger presupposed the bodily character of Dasein's circumspection of the world, he did not fully describe and analyze the embodied character of the *being-in-the world*. As shown by Merleau-Ponty (2002) and Dreyfus (1999) the body is not only a body as a *body-object* but as a *body-subject*. Through play and sports the human being has ways of exploring and testing the capabilities of the body-subject in different ludic environments. As an athlete the human being not only has a knowledge of the body 'from the outside' – as a *body-image* – but, as argued by Merleau-Ponty (2002), 'from the inside' – as a *body-schema* – that is tacit and implicit. This means that athletes are aware of their performance space, what they can do in any case, what they can do at their best and what the best athletes can do at their best.

Through the body-subject humans explore from childhood different ludic environments with their specific ludic rationalities. These explorations result in the constitution of specific 'play worlds' and 'sport worlds' with specific ontological characteristics. Heidegger's conception of Dasein as *being-in-the-world*, combined with Merleau-Ponty's notion of a *body-scheme*, is thus fruitful for a better understanding of how the interaction between humans and the world can be understood through sport. In many ways this is similar to Goodman's (1978) idea of 'worldmaking' and Gebauer's (1993) understanding of sport as world-making. Building on Goodman as well as Danto, Edgar (2013) argues that the notion of a 'sportworld' can be argued for as akin to Danto's (1964) notion of an 'artworld'. Another example is Krein (2008) who has used similar perspectives to look at sports, especially nature sports, as examples of 'world-making'. In the following I will argue that individual sports, encounter sports, social sports and nature sports represent ontologically different ways of worldmaking. However, I make a reservation in terminology and understanding as 'making' or 'construction' of worlds may be misleading, since in my view, which follows that of Heidegger, worlds are not intentionally constructed but are rather given and opened up for us in a deep existential sense and by specific 'sights'.

From *homo ludens* to *homo sportivus*

Play starts early in life as a spontaneous activity. One does not need to teach children to play. According to Fagen (1981) play is an answer to the deep question: "What can I do?" For a small child the world is open and anything can happen. The free experimentation in play

serves to build internal representations or models of what one can do, how the body is built and operates and how the environment is constructed. Play is thus an experimentation and exploration of the interactional possibilities of the bodily *being-in-the-world*. Play is not only play with objects and environments, but social play. In social play one learns the difference between an I-You interaction, a face to face encounter with another child, and an I-They interaction in a group with several participants. Explorative play is thus also a learning of how to operate in ontologically different contexts and situations. But as maintained by Gibson (1986), play is not only initiated by the child but also elicited by affordances in the environment. A tree invites to be climbed, a ball to be kicked, a stone to be thrown. Gibson's theory of affordances is closely linked to his theory of perception. Gibson suggests that: "Phenomenal objects are not built up of qualities; it is the other way around. The affordance of an object is what the infant begins by noticing" (Gibson 1986, 134).

Play is developed into games and sports with specific rules and regulations. This may be controversial as a theory of the historical development of specific sports. Historically sports have developed from children's play, search for food, transportation, religious ceremonies, scientific explorations, warfare and work activities (Yler 1969). One can, however, argue that whatever the historical background it is the playful attitude that transforms the specific activity to a form of play and then to a sport. In their way sports represent the same experimenting and explorative attitude as play. Sports explore the 'what can I do?' element in ontologically different ludic contexts and environments, but in a more standardized and full-blown form than children's play. Sports are rule-governed in another way, and to a greater extent, than in different forms of play. Sports thus presuppose an end-state and a final result where winners and losers are identified. By this sports invite participants train and enter into a goal-directed pursuit of perfection to a greater degree than normal play. 'How good can I become?' 'What can I do at my best?' In sports there is a possible concern for excellence or an element of *verticality* (Sloterdijk 2013), as discussed also by Aggerholm (2015). How this can be further developed and understood will be my topic in the following.

Expanding on Heidegger: my fourfold

Heidegger described the deep relation of Dasein to its own *being-in-the-world*, to other human beings and to things in the world. The relation of Dasein to its own *being-in-the-world* was characterized by Heidegger as c*oncern* (Sorge), the relation to other human beings as *being-with*, and the relation to environmental things as either *occurrentness*

(Vorhandenheit) (theoretical mode) or *availableness* (Zuhandenheit) (practical mode) (Dreyfus 1991).[iii] I want to expand on this. What I will present is not a Heideggerian ontological model of the sporting human being. I will in many ways depart from Heidegger and present a different and new model. But the model is inspired by the key terms *concern, being-with* and *availableness*, identifying the human being's relation to its own existence, to other human beings, and to things (as tools or equipment in the environment). The new model identifies, however, four basic dimensions (see figure 1). The human being has first a relation to itself, an I-Me relation. Secondly, the human being has a relation to the single You, the individual person I may look directly in the eyes and interact with. The third relation is the I-Society relation, where other persons are in plural and identified as 'they', as a group or a 'society'. The fourth relation is the I-Nature relation, which identifies the relation to natural elements, landscapes and nonhuman living beings.In all these dimensions the relation is dependent upon cultural and technological elements and characteristics. One may interact with nature semi-naked or with advanced technological gear and motor craft. Similarly, in the other dimensions technological devices and cultural artefacts influence the relational interactions.

Placing the I in the center does not mean that the I is always the acting power or in control. But sometimes it is, such as when the 'I' is reflecting on herself and her own life situation. In the I-You interaction the 'I' is set in an interactive mode by the You and the result is a dynamic I-You relation that can only partly be controlled by the I, like in a boxing match. In the I-Society situation the I is caught in a web of relations with varying roles and positions in a dynamic social web, whether it is in a protest march or a football game. And in the I-Nature relation one may actively play on and with natural elements, but also be played with, like in a storm, on waves at sea or in a canoe on a river. Yet in all these situations it is in the I that the experience of the interactions is registered. The experiencing self, the I, is thus central.

Let me make it clear already here that the model is of course a construct, a hypothesis, supported by philosophical arguments and personal experiences. It is an ideal-typical model identifying the most salient features of different types of sport, but without neglecting intermediary cases. As I will discuss later, not all sports fit into one and only one dimension, but may, depending upon organization and goal, be placed in more than one dimension.

I think furthermore that it is possible to give the ideal-typical model with the four ontologically different dimensions some backing from the history of philosophy, without this being decisive for the fruitfulness of the model. In the history of philosophy some philosophers have been quite balanced in their views whereas others have focused on one

single dimension. While some philosophers think human lives are determined by 'nature' (Rousseau, Thoreau, Naess), others think that 'society' determines human lives (Aristotle, Marx). For yet others the I is central (Fichte, Sartre), and still others think the I-You interaction is basic (Buber, Levinas). [iv]

The four dimensions invite actions and reactions that are ontologically different. When the I relates to the Me it is a direct contact, the active I and the passive Me are in a sense the same; there is no medium in between. This does not mean that I am totally transparent to myself. My memories may be unclear, my unconscious is not available to me, my body and its operations are mysterious, and so on. But in the I-You situation the You is another person, not accessible to me in the same way as the Me. What is special in the I-You situation is the direct looking into the eyes of a human being different from me, a You, who is acting and reacting immediately to my actions and reactions. This is different from the I-Society situation with a group of persons, the We (and the They), operating together as an organism, with specific roles in different positions. Here it is in most cases not the direct You but the Him or Her or They. In some situations, say in a soccer match, the other person may change from being Him or Her to a direct You, for instance in a feint or dribble situation. In the I-Nature situation there are no intentional actions and reactions from a You or a We or a They. The white water follows the laws of nature, as does the air for the skydiver or the rock for the climber. Nature does not respond to the I's actions. The situations are ontologically different from the I-You or I-They interactions.

Let us now look at how these ontologically different relations are exemplified in sporting interactions. The sports may be said to be ontic realizations of basic ontological possibilities.

The sporting life and the four dimensions

The four dimensions represent basic possibilities for *homo ludens* to develop *ludic environments and arenas* with their own specific ludic rationality and logic. In their full-blown versions these ludic environments can be exemplified by different sports, such as shown in figure 1.

SOCIETY

Rugby | Soccer

Marathon   Boxing

ME ←——————→ **I** ←——————→ YOU

Gymnastics   Fencing
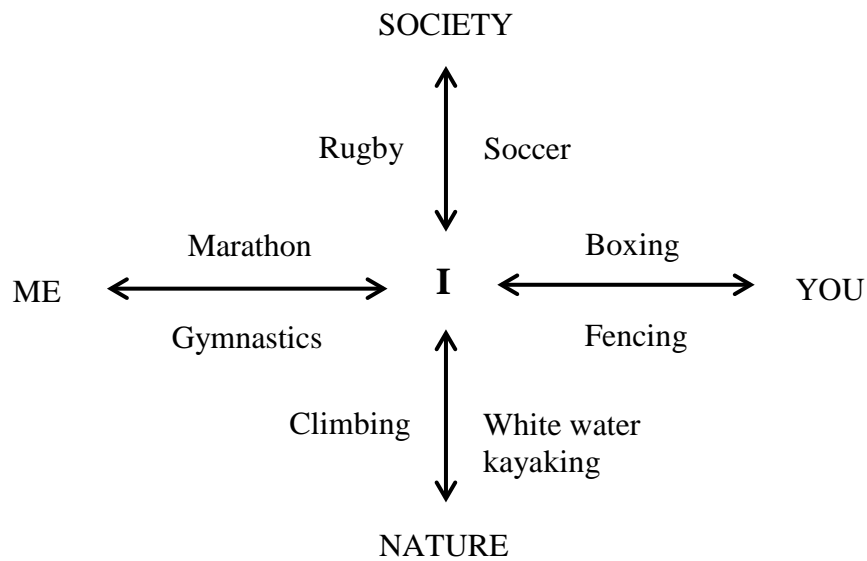
Climbing | White water
kayaking

NATURE

Figure 1. The basic ontological dimensions of the sporting human being with examples from sport

When I discuss and categorize different sports in relation to the four ontological dimensions I distinguish between the realization of the sport as such and its instantiation in competitive events. [v] Competitions can be organized in various ways but their structure does not necessarily tell us much about the nature of a sport, since one and the same sport can be organized in many different ways as a competitive event. I will come back to this later. I will thus look for the basic, one could say, constitutive structure of each type of sport. I will look at the *conditio sine qua non* elements: what is *necessary* and *sufficient* for the sport to be realized in its basic version.

The I-Me dimension and Individual sports

We may define a sport as an *individual sport* if it is *sufficient* that there be just one individual athlete for the sport to be realized in its basic version. It is however not *necessary* that there is just one person present. Several individuals can perform side by side, one after the other, etc. But it is the single athlete's own body, skills, movements, etc., that are in focus. There is no direct interaction, physical or other, with other athletes that is necessary for the sport to be realized. Similarly, since the focus is on the athlete and her bodily skills the environment is present as a stable and controlled court, field or arena. This means that the element of chance should be minimized. [vi] Similarly, the element of strategy plays a lesser role here than in sports with direct interaction between athletes. It is like a scientific experiment where all relevant factors that influence the result must be controlled. The causal chain must run

correctly. The victory should come about in the right way, not by chance or deception (Breivik 2000). *Prototypical individual sports* are athletics (track and field) and gymnastics. [vii] Other examples of individual sports are archery, rifle shooting, pistol shooting, weight lifting, race walking and golf. They can all be performed alone in their basic and constitutional version and can be evaluated in relation to a standard or with a focus on one's own experience (deep flow). [viii] What is *ontologically unique* in individual sports is that the acting person is the same as the person who is acted upon. There is no causal chain running via another person. I am able to have full control because I have immediate access. But this is only in principle because humans are not completely in control of themselves. This means that there may be surprises. I may become out of control from a weak will or sub-conscious fears that interfere negatively with my performance.

In individual sports the basic structure seems to be formed by the question: "*What can I do* with and through my body?" How fast can I run 100 meters? How well can I perform a series of acrobatic moves in floor gymnastics? Individual sports are similar to other self-testing situations where the individual measures up to some standard or ideal. This does not make individual sports static. Innovations and improvements are welcome. Fosbury invented a new style in high jump, Bokløw a new style in ski jumping. In aesthetic sports more difficult moves, more innovative combinations, unexpected solutions, etc., are welcome. After all individual sports are about "what can I do", which means perfection but also experimentation and exploration.

The self-testing in individual sports is, as discussed by Kretchmar (1995/1975), different from the situation in encounter sports and team sports where there is a contest. Yet individual sports may also be set up as competitions, as contests, where I compete with other athletes. Nature sports are similarly sports where athletes test their skills in relation to some element or feature in nature. But nature sports may also take contesting forms like climbing competitions.

Individual sports have similarities to other cultural pursuits that have an individualistic character. Sartre and the existentialists focus on one's own life and how one should live an authentic life, creating oneself according to one's deepest wishes and interests (Aggerholm 2015). The existentialist philosophy attracted artists, painters and novelists who 'work on themselves' and create art from their own life stories. One can also work on oneself through one's body. This is the kind of work done by hunger artists, ascetics, monks, trapeze artists, yogis and athletes (Sloterdijk 2013). It is a kind of work which presupposes a strong will and mind, and a focus on controlling oneself through self-discipline and training.

This is also the kind of work that is required for basic training in sports in general. The training of strength, endurance, speed or technique is important in all sports. One needs to build and develop the relevant skills and capacities that the specific sport requires. So the I-Me focus and the individual training are common parts of most sports. But here the individual focus is only preparatory. It is only in individual sports that the I-Me relation is the basic relation in the full version of the sport itself.

Let me try to relate this to the Heideggerian perspective. According to Heidegger: 'Dasein's basic mode of being is that 'in its very Being, that Being is an issue for it.' (1962, 32). Dasein is aware of its own existence and has to take care of itself in its concrete bodily existence. I would argue that The I-Me sports, and the basic individual training in many sports, are expressions of Dasein's basic bodily way of taking care of itself in the world. They can be understood as examples of what Taylor characterizes as embodied and engaged agency of the human *being-in-the-world* (see Taylor 1995, 68-69).

The I-You dimension and Encounter sports

A sport is to be called an *encounter sport* when it is a *conditio sine qua non* that there are two and only two persons required for the sport to take place and that these two persons interact with each other in sport-relevant ways. In addition, the interaction must be central to the outcome of the sport. *Prototypical encounter sports* are boxing, fencing and tennis. Other examples are wrestling, judo, jiu-jitsu, karate, table tennis, badminton and squash.

What is *ontologically unique* in encounter sports is the face to face encounter with an opponent that is exactly like me, a human being with the same capacities that I have. And that the opponent can directly react to all my moves with the same repertoire as I have. I am therefore not able to control the situation but have to act and react depending upon what my opponent does.

Encounter sports seem to express in various ways the original and deep-seated *love/hate relation* which is possible between two single individuals. In most cases encounter sports express the hate or conflict side and are, therefore, mostly combat sports or fighting sports. Only sports dance and other forms of couples dancing express a loving or friendly relation between the partners. In encounter sports, like wrestling, boxing, fencing, etc., there is a conflict, a direct fight between two opponents. One wins and the other loses. Some of these sports model, in a symbolic way, what in earlier times was a fight between two adversaries over social status, territory, spouse, etc. Even in sports like tennis with a distance between the

players the conflict element is dominant, although in a more abstract manner than for instance in wrestling.

Encounter sports go from the almost naked and direct bodily contact in wrestling to a little more distance in boxing, then through fencing, table tennis, badminton and squash to tennis with increasing distance and indirect contact between the opponents. At the same time we see an increase in different types of sporting equipment. We go from bare fists to tennis rackets, from the boxing ring to the tennis court. But even in tennis I can see the body and face of my opponent, with her eyes focused on me. It is this opponent that I have to beat. It is an encounter game, a fight between a You and a Me. That there is a fight does not necessarily mean that there is hatred. We must distinguish between what the sport seems to express or symbolize and the emotions of the participants. Some of the hardest opponents are best friends outside the arena. And two dancing partners who perform well together may not be best friends.

In encounter sports the element of fairness is especially important. This means that irrelevant chance factors should be minimized. Rather it is the strategic factor, the mind factor, that becomes very important. One may outwit the opponent by use of deceptive moves, feints and surprise tactics. In addition to bodily and technical skills encounter sports make use of a variety of cognitive and emotional skills including will, courage and determination.

The I-You relation expressed in encounter sports is a basic human relation. The interaction between mother and child through movement and gestures starts immediately after birth. Recent studies of mirror neurons show that we immediately and nonconsciously understand intentional actions by other people (Rizzolatti & Sinigaglia 2008). Our own identity is developed by the interaction with others. The encounter with a You is a necessary condition for the formation of the I. It is this unique relation between I and You, You and I, that is centrally focused in Buber's (1970) philosophy and in Levinas's (1987) more recent works. But as some philosophers seem to forget the You is not only the person who is my friend or my love. The You may be my enemy, my adversary, my opponent. Fighting goes way back in history and expresses a prototypical conflict situation, well depicted in classic works like Homer's Iliad or in the Viking sagas. It was central in the gladiatorial contests and in jousting in the Middle Ages (Kretchmar et al. 2017). The duel or the fight between the two heroes from opposite camps is a classic situation not only in Western countries, but around the world. Some sports are ritualized, rule-governed and institutional versions of such prototypical duels or fights.

Let me again return to the Heideggerian background for this article. Heidegger states that Dasein is not only concerned about itself and its own existence, but about other human beings. 'Being-one's-self' (Selbst-sein) and 'being-with' others (Mit-sein) are equiprimordial according to Heidegger. Dasein does not only care about itself, but also about others. And this concern for others (Fürsorge) need not only be comfort and solicitude, but helping the others to stand on their own feet: "Standing on one's own two feet is *Sorge*." (Inwood 1999, 36). In principle this invites one to stand on one's two feet facing an opponent in a duel sport.

The I-Society and Team sports

A sport is to be called a *team sport* when it is a *conditio sine qua non* that there are at least two players on each of two teams playing against each other and that there is a division of positions and roles. Furthermore, there must be an interaction between the players on each of the teams. *Prototypical team sports* are rugby, football (soccer), basketball and baseball. Other examples are American football, ice hockey, cricket, handball, volleyball, bandy and water polo.

What is *ontologically unique* in team sports is that they identify the human being in its social mode: belonging to a group, being a team member. It is the dimension Heidegger called the *Being-with* (Mit-sein). Being a member of a group limits my freedom to some extent, but it also generates new possibilities because I am part of something bigger and more diverse than me. It is the feeling of being with other people not in their mode of individuality but in the mode of being part of an acting social organism: the team. Similarly, players on the opposing team are not discovered in their identity as single players, but as team members and team players. That does not exclude meeting a single player in a match in her capacity as a unique dribbler.

Team sports express basic social processes like *cooperation and conflict.* Team sports require efficient cooperation among team members in order to beat the other team. As a member of a team each player must be able to take a role on the team and fulfill the obligations and tasks connected with the role. Important is the ability to understand and foresee the moves and actions of one's own team, as well as those of the opposing team. Mental capacities are important in addition to physical and technical skills, especially strategic competence and the ability to 'read' the play. In team sports chance and luck have to be taken into consideration as they can influence the results and outcome of a game. A football match is for many particularly successful and exciting if it combines elements of skill, strategy and chance in an optimal way.

Team sports have a long historical and in many ways evolutionary background. The human being is a social animal. Our evolutionary history shows that until around ten thousand years ago we typically lived in small groups of families, bands or tribes, with maybe 30-50 persons. (Lee & DeVore 1968). Conflicts in early human societies typically consisted of disputes and fights over access to territories, spouses or power rank. While fights over spouses and power rank could end in a duel between two opponents, disputes over territories typically ended in greater conflicts and war-like situations. It is no surprise that this is mimicked and symbolized in play, games and sports. Many sports thus represent conflicts or wars in a ritualized, rule-governed and symbolic way. They are about gaining positions, controlling areas and winning points.

To again turn to the Heideggerian background: Heidegger's Being-with does not only include the single human being, but the group or the team. The concern for others, the solicitude as well as the letting the others stand on their own feet is important for the coordinated actions of teams. It allows players to take roles and positions and to develop responsibility. But Heidegger distinguished between an authentic and inauthentic version of Dasein. In the inauthentic mode Dasein does not follow its deepest concerns, but instead 'falls' (Verfallen) into the averageness of daily existence, characterized by among other things curiosity and idle talk. Instead of resolute Being-towards-death and focus on authentic living Dasein does what One does or They do. This may happen with teams on the playing fields as well as with the crowd on the bleachers.

The I-Nature and Nature sports

A sport is to be called a *nature sport* when it is a *conditio sine qua non* that there is an interaction with some part of nature (a natural element, an animal, a landscape) and that this interaction with nature is the main purpose of the sport. It is therefore not enough that the sport just takes place in nature or a natural environment. The sport needs to be what Howe (2012) calls a *nature-directed sport*.[ix]

Prototypical nature sports are climbing, skydiving, surfing and skiing. Other examples are ice skating, white water kayaking, canoeing, swimming, bobsledding, rowing, yachting, hunting, orienteering and hang-gliding. In general, various snow and ice sports, water sports, air sports and wilderness sports may be called 'nature sports', with the proviso that the interaction with a natural feature is in focus. If 'nature' is just a stable and predictable arena for displaying certain skills the sport should not be called a nature sport. Swimming in a swimming pool is not a nature sport but swimming in the waves on the open sea or in a river is.

What *is ontologically unique* in nature sports is the interaction with some part of nature. In Heideggerian terms the interaction is a meeting with nature in its *equipmentality* as something *available* (Zuhanden). In nature sports the grip on nature is practical. Various parts of nature can be used for playful or sportive experimentation and exploration. In contrast to encounter sports and team sports there is no acting back from nature. Nature has no intention. The waves in the river do not react intentionally to my paddling, but simply follow the laws of hydrology. For the kayaker it may feel as if the waves react. It may seem as if the huge wave plays with me by throwing me around. For a skydiver the air pressure during free fall may feel like a reaction to the falling body. There is thus an experience of nature being alive and interacting with me. It is not like the 'dead surface' in an athletic stadium or arena. It is wild nature which seems to be alive even if we know it is not intentionally acting and reacting to our actions.[x]

Nature sports reflect a basic *adaptive process* where the human being adapts itself to nature and not vice versa. In order to climb a mountain one needs to respect the mountain, one cannot control it. Similarly, when kayaking in big waves on a river one needs to read and adapt to the white water. Following Gibson (1986) one could say that nature affords possibilities and invites exploration, experimentation and perfection. One may oppose this and argue that a nature sport, like sport hunting, represents a controlling attitude. One tries to gain control over the animal by stalking it, getting close enough and then killing it. But there is also an element of adaptation in trying to find the animal, getting close enough and then shooting.

Whereas some nature sports like hunting represent basic survival techniques from earlier times, others represent a freer exploration of "what can I do – in and with nature?" Most activities in the air, like flying, sky diving, base jumping and paragliding belong here.[xi]

In many ways modern nature sports continue the long explorative history of homo sapiens. With new types of equipment, modern nature sports play with and in natural elements and landscapes. The original exploration driven by need for shelter, food and protection against enemies has continued in modern times with the same curiosity and skill development, but now as playful and sporting pursuits in a variety of ludic natural environments. Nature sports require physical and motor skills as well a strategic competence and good planning. In addition, chance factors play a great role. Nature is in many cases unpredictable and impossible to control. Nature sports include risks and risk-taking. Following Caillois (1955) one could say that they represent a combination of skill, strategy, chance and vertigo (risk).

From a Heideggerian perspective nature sports represent the exploration and creation of a meaningful sporting 'world' in nature. In *Being and Time* Heidegger focused on the difference between the practical dealing with the world (Zuhandenheit) and the theoretical (Vorhandenheit). Following Howe (2012) the practical dealing in nature sports can take different forms, from *nature-instrumental sports* where nature is used as a mere instrument, to *nature-directed sports* where also aesthetic and other qualities become important. Heidegger's perspective in *Being and Time* is thus too narrow on this point. He uses daily life and work-related activities to exemplify the practical dealing. But things can be discovered not only for their work-related use but as things to play with or as aesthetic or religious objects. In his later work Heidegger introduced a wider perspective looking at how nature can be understood in relation to the history of Being-itself (Sein selbst); as *Fysis* in early Greek philosophy or as *Gestell* (Enframing) in modern technological society (See Taylor 1995, 100-126).

Complications and extensions

It is possible to come up with several complications and also some extensions to the fourfold model. The model represents the sports in their constitutive stripped down form, their *conditio sine qua non*. It is in many ways an ideal typical model. But the empirical manifestation of the different sports is more complex and varied.

Sports can be organized and set up as competitive events in many different ways. Cycling can be performed as an individual sport, displaying the skills of cycling for a young person. It can be competitively organized as an individual tempo or time trial pursuit. But it can also be set up as a nature sport (mountain biking) or a team sport (team tempo). Similarly, in athletics a 100 meter sprint can be parallel or four 100 meter sprints can be performed serially and become a 4x100 meter relay. Climbing can become a team sport when a team is going for the highest and most difficult mountains. Individual sports and nature sports in particular are changeable and can be set up in different competitive schemes. With such changes the role of skill, strategy and chance will also change. But my argument is that behind these changes there is a deeper invariant structure that reveals the ontological characteristics of the sport, the main idea, how it can be performed in its most stripped down version.

Another complication is that the dimensions as they are empirically manifested overlap in many ways. For instance the I-They dimension which points to a society with its history and culture will influence how competitions are staged in individual as well as encounter sports, not to forget the nature sports. Similarly technology in its historically shaped variants will influence how competitions are carried out. Social and cultural rules and regulations influence

whether certain animal sports, such as bull-fighting and fox-hunting, are considered acceptable or not.

A further complication is that the element of competition seems to be of variable importance. It seems to be more constitutive in encounter sports than in individual sports and nature sports. Football among kids in the backyard can be just play, but one must follow constitutive rules that require one to try to score goals. There is even here an element of competition for the play to be realized. This can soon change to a 'play to win' attitude where the results, the number of goals scored and, thus, the competitive element become more evident. Competition is thus closer to the constitutive structure of team sports and encounter sports than individual sports and nature sports. This does not prevent that boxing as well as football can be performed in their full constitutive structure – but in a stripped-down version – without being set up as a formal competition with end results, winners and losers, and so on. The fourfold model presupposes that we talk about physical versions of play and sport among humans. But what about e-Sports, and other versions of play or competitions between humans and machines based on artificial intelligence? Or even further away; sport-like competitions between cyborgs, robots or avatars? These possibilities would require an extension of the model, but lies outside the scope of this article which focuses only on human players. But I would certainly welcome an extended study and debate here. In many ways the study of what sport means and can mean for the sporting human being may help us discover the implications of these new technologies for the way humans are (Dasein) and for how they understand themselves.

Another question is what the fourfold model adds to or improves upon existing models? In his well-known study of games Caillois (1955) distinguished between Agon, Alea, Mimicry and Ilinx. The Agon category includes running, boxing, football. Alea and Mimicry contain no physical games or sports, whereas Ilinx, or Vertigo, includes nature sports like climbing and sky diving. The categories need not be understood as exclusive. Elements of chance are present in most sports even if they play, and should play, varying roles. From a Heideggerian perspective one could argue that elements are, so to speak, built into our existence. The element of Alea is for instance present in the way we are thrown into existence (Geworfenheit). But the Caillois model has in any case some problems. One problem with the Caillois model as a sport model is a) it does not focus solely on physical play and sport but on games, and b) it has unclear criteria for distinguishing between types of games. It uses structural criteria such as skill versus chance, as well as experiential criteria like vertigo. A model more relevant for sports is the studies of play and games in different cultures by the

anthropologists Roberts and Sutton Smith (1962). They distinguished between games of strategy, games of chance, games of skill and games with one central person. But again the criteria are mixed. One can combine elements from the Caillois model and the Sutton-Smith studies to develop a more sport-relevant and coherent model distinguishing between individual sports, combat sports, team sports, and risky nature sports. The structural key elements then go from individual sports focused on skills to combat sports with physical skill and strategy, then to team sports with physical skill, strategy and chance, and eventually to risky nature sports with elements of skill, strategy, chance and vertigo. This model has some similarities with the fourfold model as developed in this article. The advantage with the fourfold model is that it is based on a phenomenological study of the fundamental ontology of the sportsperson interacting with other persons and the environment. I would argue that it has a more solid base and is more coherent.

While some models and categorizations of sport types try to be exhaustive and avoid intermediary cases the fourfold model is more tolerant. In my examples of sports in the four categories I have referred to prototypical sports. The specific suggested examples of prototypical sports can be contested, but the idea of prototypes is fruitful. It was developed by among others, Rosch and Mervis (1975) and Tversky (1977), and indicates that the human mind naturally categorizes things according to prototypical exemplars and then decides whether or not things belong to the category by looking at similarities and differences with the prototype and weighing the result. Prototypes thus represent 'the most typical'. This is in contrast to theories where categories are defined by a list of specific characteristics and only those exemplars that satisfy all criteria are to be included. The prototypical model is thus in many cases closer to how our mind operates, but maybe less acceptable from a logical point of view.

Concluding remarks

I have tried to expand on Heidegger's fundamental ontology. I looked at the *being-in-the-world* structure and argued that the relation to a 'world' in sport and play takes place in different dimensions that have different ontological characteristics.

The human being is the *homo movens* and the *homo ludens* that through play and sports explores and experiments with itself and the environing world. This exploration takes place in four ontologically different dimensions. The Me, the You, the Society and the Nature operate in distinct and different ways in relation to the I in the ludic context. While the Me is to some extent transparent to the I, the You is different from the I, uncontrollable and intentionally

self-directed. Similarly, the Society operates in sport as a complex organism where the I need to adjust to the operative goal of the team and with an eye on the opposing team. And finally, the Nature consists of elements and features that operate according to physical laws. Nature has no intention or will but is complex and uncontrollable and thus often surprising to the ludic I.

The ontologically different dimensions offer unique sporting experiences, which I have tried to describe to some extent in this article. I hope these findings expand on our understanding of how humans *are* in the world and how they interact with other human beings, with nature and with themselves in ludic contexts and environments.

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[i]   The fourfold model was first presented in an article by Breivik (1998) focusing on values in sport. In the present article the same model is used but the focus is now on the ontological exploration of the sporting human being.

[ii]   In Being and Time Heidegger showed how the Dasein is always transcending and thus connected to an environing world. The world is explored with others (Being-With) and in practical as well as theoretical modes. Heidegger furthermore wanted to identify the basic structures (the existentials) of human existence. I think it is just a step from these premises to try to identify the basic structures in Dasein's way of interacting with the self, the other and nature in playful and sporting modes. .

[iii]   *Vorhandenheit* is standardly translated as 'presence-at-hand' and *Zuhandenheit* as 'readiness-to-hand'. Here I follow Dreyfus's (1991) translation with 'occurrentness' and 'availableness' respectively.

[v]   The four dimensions also function as a possible basis for classification of sports, even though that has not been my primary goal in this article. Sports can be classified in many ways, often based on superficial criteria, such as summer sports and winter sports, outdoor sports and indoor sports, individual sports and team sports. More interesting is the distinction between purposive and aesthetic sports. Better still is Kupfer's (1988) distinction between Quantitative/linear sports (typically athletics), Qualitative/formal sports (typically gymnastics) and Competitive/overcoming an opponent (typically football, tennis).

[vi]   The element of chance cannot always be minimized and be reckoned with. One may have to fight wind on a golf course, but it is not a part of the sport in its constitutive essence. Here there is a clear difference to nature sports, such as yachting where wind is part of what yachting is all about.

[vii]

[viii]   Individual sports allow for differences in how performances are organized and evaluated. In athletics the performances are measured objectively. In gymnastics the performances are evaluated by judges according to specific criteria or standards, such as difficulty, elegance, etc. Athletics is thus a purposive sport, gymnastics is an aesthetic sport.

[ix]   Howe (2012) uses 'nature-based sports' as the umbrella term for all sports that have nature as an essential and non-substitutable component. She then makes a distinction between 'nature-instrumental sports' where sport is a necessary instrument for displaying relevant skills and 'nature-directed sports' where the direct interaction with a natural feature is essential. Nature-directed sports can be further divided into 'nature-specific sports' like climbing, where technical and physical problems dominate the attention and 'nature-oriented sports' like hiking, where there is time and possibility to take in the aesthetic and other qualities of the landscape. I think on many climbs there are, as Howe suggests, difficult sections that need nature-specific attention and time during belaying or rests where nature-oriented attitudes are possible.

[x]   An exception here is of course hunting or fishing where nonhuman living beings may be said to have intentions of some sort and act and react to human intervention.

[xi]   Some nature sports present challenges which bring strong feelings, like *deep flow*. Since the 1970s activities that go under names like 'action sports', 'lifestyle sports', 'risk sports', 'extreme sports' have developed into new forms influenced by technological revolutions, internet and media coverage. These sports bring various risks and dangers. As argued by Breivik (2010), a sport like skydiving makes it possible to experience deep flow but also anxiety and confrontation with one's own finitude and death.