

AN APOLOG(Y) OF THE PROFESSION

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SUMMARY

The history of the development of mankind is filled with examples which confirm that *not everything has failed when everything has failed* (R. P. Nogo). And actually, in every sphere of social life we can find people, who in the given temporal and social circumstances, have brought about a kind of rebirth and have helped in the awakening of new dreams and new desires to move forward. These individuals, whose souls have borne all the wounds of their people (and the profession they once claimed as their own), have inspired hope and a new energy (both) to those who had already given up and abandoned themselves to a quiet self-destruction.

These individuals, beacons of light of a particular time, with their words and deeds were an example of those who would not acquiesce to the existing order, but did not know how to move on. These beacons of light, raised high by Love, went forward and through their work mapped out the roads of further development and progress.

One such man, who has shed his light and lit up our *physical education*, is certainly Milivoje Matić.

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INTRODUCTION

A long time ago, the wise king Solomon said that *there is a time for everything – a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them*. And truly, this simply stated truth by Solomon has been confirmed time and time again. It is, in a

way, the basis of the development of (not only) our culture, and within it our profession – physical education. It is a great truth, and a gift of our Maker, as the old Romans used to say, for the city (of Rome) and the world (Urbi et Orbi).

The history of the development of mankind is filled with examples which confirm that *not everything has failed when everything has failed* (R. P. Nogo).¹ And actually, in every sphere of social life we can find people, who in the given temporal and social circumstances, have brought about a kind of rebirth and have helped in the awakening of new dreams and new desires to move forward. These individuals, whose souls have borne all the wounds of their people (and the profession they once claimed as their own), have inspired hope and a new energy (both) to those who had already given up and abandoned themselves to a quiet self-destruction.

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From St. Sava to these modern times, as much as our Orthodox history can record, no period of time (ours) has been lacking in these kinds of people. They were always there, with their people, irrespective of the field of social life they were active in. Sometimes quietly, sometimes with a sword in hand, like the priest Mateja Nenadović, they raised their voices and through their example of how to do what is right for the greater good – were an example for others to follow.

And this greater good, not the individual or personal one, was the guiding light of these great men.

Why does this sound so unreal to us, and is it, measured by today's standards, normal?

Luckily for us, in addition to the generally accepted claim – that *money is the measure of all things*, and the view of life that goes with it, a *hedonistic-Darwinian* understanding of life, there are men who do not accept it. They, they light bearers of their professions, and the society they belong to, use their light to enlighten some new-old roads to travel. Irrespective of these roads being steep

¹ We are witnesses of new thickenings of the plot in geopolitical struggles. Even when the entire universe was convinced that, following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the final end and ruin of Russia would ensue, there came a man who not only stopped that planned destruction, but provided new strength for its development. The appearance of Vladimir Putin is just another example which confirms the truth of Solomon's words.

and winding, they should be followed, they say, since they lead to the source of life. And the profession we belong to, of course.

One such man, who has shed his light and lit up our *physical education*², is certainly Milivoje Matić.

THE METHOD

In this paper, using the method of Theoretical analysis, as well as Meta analysis, we study the field of the theoretical work of Professor Milivoje Matić.

The subject matter of this study is the theoretical contribution to the development of physical education, not only as a profession, but as the constituent part of culture in general, both for the individual, and for the nation as a whole.

RESULTS AND THE DISCUSSION

The search

The life of Professor Milivoje Matić, known to his friends as Baća, was made up of *restlessness* – due to his fantasizing and search for an improvement for his profession, and his *peace* – made up of the written word. Even in his oasis in Obrenovac, his peace and restlessness could be seen, going hand in hand towards immortality. This is shown (both) by our correspondence prior to the very end of his early life.³ Only in passing referring to his illness, as an excuse for not being able to do more, he wrote out the apology pages dedicated to our profession.

His care for his profession, and the will not to reconcile with the existing situation, began, if memory serves me, back in the 1960's. As a young teaching assistant at our faculty – our focal point - rich in experience he acquired in school, he bravely set off to enlighten the necessity of refreshing our profession with new

² The term *physical education* is a very good name for our profession. Decades of struggle against the use of this term have successfully come to an end. The names of all our faculties have been changed in accordance with this victory. But, as it is often the case, first in the Scandinavian countries, and just recently in South America, the term physical education has been used in its fine cultural meaning. In Russia this term, luckily, has prevailed. And professor Milivoje Matić has dedicated his excellent work to it.

³ Our correspondence from December 2012 and January 2013, on the occasion of the release of my book *The apology of physical education*, showed all his care for his profession. His study, presented in over twenty pages of finely typed manuscript, is as precise as the finest scanner, and was his contribution to the need for the constant care for our profession.

ideas. He indicated the necessity of a braver and more professional approach, both to school practice and the theory of the profession.

At that time he was almost – alone against the tide. He enjoyed the support of a handful of older and more experienced professors, mostly by the fact that his texts were at the same time published in our journal *Physical Education*. This was not an “easy” time. Burdened by the fossilized political norms, it was extremely dangerous for young people desiring change for the better, not of themselves, but for their profession. Luckily for him, but even more so for the profession, with the help of his good professors, he managed to emerge from the troubled waters and stand tall for all time.

Later, just like he was cared for by those who cared for the effort he had put in, so he too, when the time came, cared for his associates; so that they could grow at least as much as he had grown, in the hopes that they might even surpass him.

Whether they have caught up with him, or have surpassed him, is a topic for some other discussion, but the truth is that, each in his own way, they tried not to lag behind. And he, professor Matić, full of Love which was clear in every single letter he wrote, wanted for it to go unnoticed. He discretely wrapped himself up in a cloak of earthly force, hiding himself from the celestial one. And thus to infinity.

Confirmation for this claim can certainly be found in a quote from the Old Testament, Solomon’s verse from the *Song of Songs*, which hung from the wall of his office. Woven by the effort made by Professor Matić, his office was a comfortable place to work in and fantasize about new endeavors. But its idiosyncrasy lay precisely in the short verse of Solomon’s which sent its own message of love. *For those who have eyes to see and for those who have ears to hear* it is quite sufficient. For all the others it is merely a glimmer of earthly reality.

But time (both) as a measure of our existence, and even more so as a sample of infinity, shows us what we are like. And this image is not just a reflection in our cultural mirror. It is, at the same time, a marked sample of our lives, which we use to build our story of the eternity of existence and the life of the future century. And this is rendered impossible without Love. This is why Professor Matić, in the quiet recess of his soul, strived for this Love.⁴

⁴ Love written out in capital letters, is another name for our God. Actually, God appears to main in his love, and from it comes our freedom. The freedom that Solzhenitsyn wonderfully noted among Orthodox Christians – **freedom as the restriction of the self for the sake of others.**

Physical activity

Physical exercise, as a means of human wellbeing bestowed upon us by our Maker, was the focus of Professor Matić's work. The cloak he at times used to shield himself, even from himself, all the more emphasized his Love even in its mere traces, so characteristic of him, and he agreed that it was actually nourishing food for the body of man. Food which during this turbulent time is quite necessary.

A long time ago Professor Matić saw a picture which we now, quite vividly, see ourselves. Inspired by the Biblical quotes he showed us what our reality is now and what our necessity in it is:

*In the beginning there was movement
Which remained, ... primarily, ...
in the form of exercise.*

This truth, spoken in the language of poetry, can encourage – with its message of what needs to be done, but can also bring concern. When shall we, but also where shall we practice? How will we move when we find ourselves in megalopolises, into which the people of this world are forced, and where there will not be enough space for such a luxury?

Do I (we) exaggerate when drawing this conclusion, considering that in our environment there still is room for movement and exercise?⁵

If we were to look at the environment in which we live – yes. But if we were to look at the time which is approaching us and the direction of its movement, incited by the governing ideology of neoliberalism – no.

Why not? Precisely because of the vision of professor Matić and his prophetic words, spoken in the verses we have cited. And that is why it is necessary to *use one's eyes to see and one's ears to hear*. Only then will we understand the beautiful message to the family, against which the *New Age* is fighting with all its might:

⁵ Unfortunately, space for exercise, stylized according to the latest marketing ploys are mostly reserved for those who can afford to pay for its use. Various fitness centers, equipped with machines and mirrors, encourage narcissism among these lonely individuals exercising, as they sprout like mushrooms. All according to the trend of the hedonistic-Darwinian understanding of life.

*An old man sat his grandson on his hip,
.....
but no more of that, now together they skip.*

This is why it is necessary, especially for the western world, to turn once again to the family. Of course, that is easy to say, but it is very difficult to do in the current circumstances. Long taught by the educators of the western world – that the family is an outdated social category, a man can only with difficulty tear himself away from the well-learn lesson. Immersed in the Darwinian-hedonistic way of life, he is not ready to deny himself the existing “pleasure” of a false freedom.

Even though this great neoliberal ship has already reached a devastating speed, with a little personal courage and desire to once again be a personality, and not simply an individual, tiny and lonely, it is possible to *abandon* that ship. And it should be done.

This will once again lead to the emergence of mothers and fathers in families, but also of grandmothers and grandfathers. And then there will be physical movement-exercise all around us:

a) *In the apartment* – through spatial organization, such as what Professor Matić did in his own apartment;

b) *In the yard*, or in front of the building we live in – by providing a space for exercise. Through joint activities, and socializing, such as has been shown by our famous athlete Duci Simonović;

c) *In the natural environment* – while it still exists. We should go roaming and enjoy what it has to offer us as much as possible. A return to nature and the natural forms of movement – exercise, which is what is needed. As J. J. Rousseau did, a long time ago, with his Emile.

With the reborn desire for the family to be the center of our progress, we will feel the joy and all the well-being of physical exercise. Since physical exercise actually is – the nourishing food to the body of man. And without that nourishing food, needed not only by the physical part of our being, existing in this world is not made easy.

Anyway, let us once again be reminded: physical exercise is not only an activity of a certain scope and intensity, it is at the same time an emotional experience of that physical exercise. And that is *always* the case, and that is why it is *always* good (and better) to exercise in the company of your dear ones.

A physical exercise class

School, irrespective of the small and great people that it gathers together, was the subject matter of the study of Professor Milivoje Matić. And of course the **class** as the basic organized form of work. To this physical exercise *class* Professor Matić dedicated an entire book; and a good book at that.

In this book, meant as a textbook for students and a reference volume for those who are students no longer, we find written out the philosophy of the physical exercise class. And thus the philosophy of physical education in schools. This book was written several decades ago (1978) and is now a basic reference book for any serious study in this field, and of course, the methodology of physical education.

In the mid 17th century, John Amos Comenius gifted our profession with a place in the school curriculum, with the same amount of time allotted as the other courses. It is thanks to him that our profession became respected, since all of its values were upheld. Once again there was talk of the importance of physical exercise for the proper development of a human being. He did this following the example of the Ancient Greeks and their relationship towards physical exercise. At the same time he also used their dietary and agonistic approach to physical exercise.

Following the idea of the Ancient Greeks, he not only wrote important works and thus enriched the theory of physical education,⁶ or gymnastics in particular, but he also in direct practice gave a huge contribution to the development of physical education.

Just like Comenius, Milivoje Matić also, not only with this book, left a deep mark in the theory, but also practice of physical education. For example, let us remind ourselves how in his book, thanks to his own personal experience, he spoke of an open physical education class. Based on the Sokol gymnastics system and their *public activities* he spoke of the physical education class also being a suitable occasion, and that it should be open to anyone. Its participants should

⁶ John Amos Comenius (1592-1670) is one of the most important humanists who both in his theoretical and practical work made a significant contribution to the development of our profession. Two of his works: *Didactica Magna* *Orbis Pictus* have remained seminal works to this day, and are referred to when we want to understand the extent of the development of physical education. And in the case of immediate practice, it is sufficient to remind ourselves of the in-school Olympic Games which Comenius organized for his students.

also include all the students attending a particular school, their friends and parents.⁷

In a theoretical sense, in this book, as in his later entire opus which was quite impressive, he accepted to a great extent the philosophy *Biocentrism*. Following the example of Jean-Jacques Rousseau and the other followers of this theory, he advocated various forms of physical exercise in nature. In this effort his creativity was not only reflected in a large number of new ideas of how to organize physical exercise during physical education classes, but he also adorned it with beautiful verse.

For this reason we can say that Professor Milivoje Matić, the great erudite, was actually a poet of our profession, physical education.

PROLOGUE

The history of the development of humankind, with all its ups and downs, is full of great and small roads taken by renowned individuals. Without them and their dreams – of something better and improved, our civilization would not have risen this high.

In the earthly lives given to them by the Maker, they are filled with great humbleness and work, we find indicators which help us to stick to our path and not stray, not descend below the threshold of humbleness, but also the threshold of academic honesty.

Which is why we can say that the memory of them – *is a shadow that persistently shines*. And this shadow, which shrouds the centuries that lie behind us, is our incentive and our hope, but also our commitment. A commitment to always be, in our thoughts and our actions, on the paths which they showed us and which amazing people have beaten for us.

Of this memory, which encourages and permeates our being with a subtlety of emotion which it inspires in us, should be cherished. And we should strive to approach, and if we can, achieve, the work and philosophy of these renowned individuals.

⁷ The author of this paper, working as a young teacher in a high school in his home town of Paraćin, organized a *class open for the public* for his students. For this small town this was quite an event. In it, each in their own way, almost all of the students of the school participated: some by taking part in the physical exercise, some as the teacher's assistants, and some as the organizers of this fine event.

Why is this necessary? The answer is very simple: for our profession and for ourselves, so that we can know where to go and what we should do.

For a start we could for ourselves and others, in the vein of Professor Matić state

*Enough with the idleness,
we want exercise and fitness.*

And this we do, here, by evoking this memory of Professor Milivoje Matić.

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АПОЛОГ(ИЈА) СТРУКЕ

САЖЕТАК

Историја развоја људског рода препуна је примера који потврђују да *све пропало није кад пропало све је* (Р.П.Ного). И заиста, у свакој области друштвеног живота, могу да се препознају људи, који су у датим временским и друштвеним околностима, учинили својеврстан препород и помогли буђењу

нових снова и жеље да се иде напред. Ти људи, којима су на души биле све ране њиховог рода (и струке којој су припадали), уливали су наду и нову енергију (и) онима који су се већ предали и препустили тихом самоуништењу.

Такви људи, светилници у једном времену, својом речју и делом, били су пример онима који се нису мирили са постојећим, али нису знали како даље. Ови светилници, високо издигнутом Љубављу, ишли су напред и својим делима трасирали путеве даљег развоја и напретка.

Један од таквих људи, који је својим светилом осветлио нашу *физичку културу*, је свакако и Миливоје Матић.

ПРЕДАННОСТЬ ПРОФЕССИИ

АННОТАЦИЯ

В истории развития человечества насчитывается много примеров, подтверждающих, что Ничего не потеряно, пока не потеряно всё (Р.П.Ного). И действительно, в любой сфере общественной жизни есть такие люди, которые в данных временных периодах и социальных условиях привели к возрождению и способствовали пробуждению новой мечты и нового желания двигаться вперед. Эти люди, чьи души несут все раны своего народа (в том числе и в профессиональной деятельности) вселяют в нас надежду и новую энергию, в том числе и в тех, кто уже сдался и предал себя тихому саморазрушению. Эти люди – как луч света в своем времени, их слова и поступки являются примером для тех, кто не хочет смириться с существующим порядком, но при этом не знает, как жить дальше. Эти маяки, окрыленные Любовью, поднялись высоко, шагнули вперед и благодаря их деятельности, намечены пути дальнейшего развития и прогресса.

Несомненно, что одним из таких людей, кто пролил свет и всесторонне разработал наше физкультурное образование является Миливоје Матић.

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