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# Doping as a Manifestation of a Narcissistic Civilization

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## **Doping as a manifestation of a narcissistic civilization**

### **Abstract**

Over every and each sports event, a dark veil spreads and obfuscates the celebration: doping. Although anti-doping policies have been widely applied, controlling and diminishing this phenomenon has not been achieved yet and the use of doping is commonplace. In this article, I attempt to propose the concept of narcissistic civilization as a tool to interpret this phenomenon. I seek for a parallel reading between the Freudian idea of narcissism and its extension to social narcissism by Fromm, together with Heidegger's analysis of technology, keeping in mind that doping is a technological application. This way I point out that both theories share a common view on that humans tend to fail in the distinction between the external reality as an object and their own self as the interpreter, that is between the "I" and the "not I". By making this fusion of the two theories that originate from different intellectual traditions, I aspire to provide an interpretation tool for the broad use of doping: I conclude that doping can be understood with the assumption of a narcissistic civilization, focused on technology, that calls for the use of PEDs.

Keywords: doping, narcissism, Freud, Fromm, technology, Heidegger

## **Introduction**

In this article, I attempt to examine doping in a philosophical way. I begin by contextualizing sports and its' significance to human life and then I offer an account of what doping is highlighting the difficulty of giving a clear definition.

Next, I attempt to elaborate my argument about our current western culture that I intend to characterize as narcissistic. To do so I bring together two distinct theories, each one derived from different traditions: The psychoanalytic and the philosophic. Namely, I call forth the original Freudian postulation of narcissism, that is focused on the incapability of the infant to distinguish between the "I" and the "not I", and the extension of this idea to a kind of social narcissism by Erich Fromm. On the side of philosophy I draw from the work of Martin Heidegger, where the issue of technology is treated, and I emphasize in two aspects of his account: The rationalistic tenacity of western thought and the function of the culture as an enframing for understanding that merges the objects with the attributes attached to them by the culture.

After this brief report, I use the exposed theories to make my argument and characterize our era as narcissistic. I argue that Heidegger's standpoint may naturally be seen as the philosophic analogous of the psychoanalytic concept of narcissism and when combined they compose a strong evidence for calling our civilization narcissistic.

This structure is then used to interpret the doping attitude and show that doping is an interesting, peculiar and unique manifestation of this narcissistic civilization that has to be studied thoroughly. Firstly, because doping is an application of modern technology that presupposes the lack of interest in nature and secondly because it is an act of interfering to the essence of the user that estranges him/her even more from an original relationship, the one with his nature.

Finally, some of the arguments in favour of doping are exposed and criticized, under the consideration that they are also products of the same narcissistic pathology that is guided by our culture, reinforced by technology and cause the fusion between the "I" and the "not I".

# 1 Sports and Doping

## 1.1 What is sports?

Many scholars tried to and define what sports is and philosophize on this activity. For example, discussions about the nature of sports, its relation to art and its purpose in human life are topics that are still under discussion<sup>1</sup>. In this article, I will not make another resume of these accounts. Instead, I will offer a rather personal view of what sports activity is and how it may be experienced – expressed in a philosophical language – in order to establish a minimum base of terminology that will permit me to develop my argument. Having said that, I may expose my representation of sports.

It is traditionally said that when human beings receive the external reality most often feel their tragic helplessness (Freud would call it a recall of *Hilflosigkeit*) facing it. Mobilizing intellectual skills in order to create milder living conditions is mankind's answer to the hostile environment and, as we will later see, to this end modern technology has managed to provoke such an alternation of the natural reality that it can be said that humans are now capable of changing the environment at will.

More important than the remaking of the external scenery, the conversion of one's self is a secondary, superior, response. This aim was served by the philosophy of ethics already in ancient times. Except for also being a theoretical science, ethics was formed to help the philosopher to obtain virtue<sup>2</sup>, as it is believed that through the acquisition of moral values, he may be capable of confronting life and seeking happiness. In this point we may recognize a strong connection between sports and ethical philosophy: both serve the aim for internal progress through *askesis*.

The ascetic discourse has a long history and can be traced back to the earliest times. Forms of ascetic practices have been of great importance in almost all the spiritual

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1 Edgar (2013)

2 For example, in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* (II, 2, 1103 b 26) it is written: "The present inquiry does not aim at theoretical knowledge like the others (for we are inquiring not in order to know what virtue is, but in order to become good, since otherwise our inquiry would have been of no use)". (trans. David Ross.)

trends. The Hindu and the Buddhistic traditions, the Pythagorean, the Platonic and Neoplatonic schools, various Christian denominations, the Cartesian philosophy up until the Foucauldian concept of *epimeleia heautou* are all forms of asceticism that share the common belief that humans are able to intervene and modify their own self, for a higher purpose.

Even though going out for a sweaty, foot hurting, thirsty (and so on) 10km run in the forests may not have any obvious relevance with the spiritual practices of these traditions, through a deeper examination we can see that the principles of sports training are quite the same: someone chooses voluntarily to suffer in order to educate-reform-train him/herself. This aspect of sports surprisingly may find its perfect parallel into phrases written by ultra-ascetical religious figures like the one of Maximus the Confessor who was suggesting to “voluntarily train thoroughly through pains”<sup>3</sup> in order to deal with the natural limitations and be prepared for a superior task (in Maximus’ case the paradise but in the runners’ case would be the 20km run or the marathon).

It seems that overcoming the limitations that are externally set to human volition is what composes everyone’s athletic experience. For every athletic effort receives its etymology from this same fact: it is an *athlos* (Greek for *feat*), the overcoming of the abilities that before were the apex of the capacity of the athlete and that, after months or years of askesis, he manages to exceed.

This kind of request for a response, for a dialogue between natural limits and human will, lurks as a motive for training. Contrary to the philosophers of the Late Scholastic and the Enlightenment eras who, facing the physical weakness of the human race, deified *logos* and logic, every athlete includes his body among the components of human essence. Thus, avoiding the fallacies created by the rationalistic fantasies that place truth in another metaphysical world – the transcendental worlds of “pure reason” or of *noumena* – far from the reach of the senses and of the experience of the body<sup>4</sup>, the dialogue with external reality through gymnastic activities becomes psychosomatic.

An interruption of this dialogue is imposed by doping. PEDs do not help the user

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3 Maximus the Confessor in Migne, *Patrologia Graeca*, vol. 90, 349B: ...έκουσίους εκπαιδύειν πόνους... (The translation is mine.)

4 See Descartes’ (1984) *Meditationes* and Kant (1998, 338) respectively.

to discover his or her limits nor, as many believe, contribute to the overcoming of those limits. Doping simply shifts the limits, it postpones them. The limits of the abilities of the doping user are prolonged by the proportion of the quantities that will be inserted into his or her body, leaving as an ultimate restricting end the side effects and even death itself.

Sports is not just another human activity. In sports, we have the chance to confront the natural world and our own substance as entities of mind and body. The physical part of the athletic activity, which assures this magnificent confrontation, cannot be found in such clarity anywhere else. Unfortunately, up to now, we have failed to see and appreciate this fact. But doping malpractice can be the point from which we can start to re-organize the hierarchy of our priorities and values.

## ***1.2 What is doping?***

Perhaps the anti-doping reader finds it easy to stand by the affirmation exposed above, that doping is a confusing malpractice. But if we try to justify this claim, we will confront a great obstacle: we cannot really define what doping is. Although it seems easy to talk about what is doping, an attempt to create a comprehensive and strict determination has finally proved that it is not. For the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA)<sup>5</sup>, doping is considered everything that is included in the *Prohibited List* that it provides.

There are numerous kinds of doping methods included in the regulation. All of them have the intention to help the user level up an ability that he believes is necessary for his sport. These methods do not solely consist of drugs (Performance Enhancing Drugs) but also of a wide variety of methods: The list includes, among others, anabolic agents such as testosterone that are used mainly for strength development, erythropoietin for aerobic endurance, growth factors for muscle hypertrophy, blood manipulations like blood transfusions for endurance and even cutting-edge techniques of gene doping “designed to alter genome sequences”.

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<sup>5</sup> World Anti-Doping Agency, <https://www.wada-ama.org/en>.

The elements of the list are not included by arbitrariness. According to the Code of the Agency, in order for a substance or a method to be included among the restricted ones, at least two out of the three following criteria have to be fulfilled<sup>6</sup>:

- Has the potential to enhance or enhances sports performance.
- Represents an actual or potential health risk to the Athlete.
- Violates the spirit of sport described in the Introduction of the Code.

Unfortunately, none of these three criteria may be a safe guide due to vagueness. Let us examine the case of ephedrine, a drug that is catalogued among the forbidden ones. Ephedrine increases the activity of the central nervous system and thus it is used as a fat-loss agent or a pre-event stimulant<sup>7</sup>. But while ephedrine can be found in cough mixtures suitable for runny-nosed children it is included in the doping list because in exceptionally high doses it can damage health. This argument immediately falls apart since every drug can damage health if consumed excessively, even painkillers<sup>8</sup>.

Many scholars have traced the fuzziness in the use of the core term *Spirit of Sport*<sup>9</sup>. In the Code, this term is described in the following way in an attempt to clarify it<sup>10</sup>:

- Ethics, fair play and honesty
  - Health
  - Excellence in performance
  - Character and education
  - Fun and joy
  - Teamwork
  - Dedication and commitment

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<sup>6</sup> World Anti-Doping Code (2009, 32-33).

<sup>7</sup> Llewellyn (2011, 563).

<sup>8</sup> Møller (2009, 8).

<sup>9</sup> Geeraets (2018).

<sup>10</sup> World Anti-Doping Code (2009, 14).

- Respect for rules and laws
- Respect for self and other Participants
- Courage
- Community and solidarity

This description rather obscures than clarifies the term since its arbitrariness together with its obvious flaws makes every sufficient reader doubt for it. For example, “Respect for rules and laws” is a *petitio principii* since it is supposed that the rules and the laws are produced by the Spirit of Sport that is here defined by them. Also, the terms “ethics” and “character” can not support the constitution of any concrete regulatory provisions that may claim some kind of validity. Be that as it may, the Agency undergoes the obligation to offer some ethical principles for the rules that it imposes.

It seems that the authors of this text relied on common sense and trusted that the reader would approach the text with a comprehensive intention. In this direction, Charles Dubin declared that “a comprehensive definition of doping has proved impossible to achieve”, indicating that all “athletes, coaches, and the organizations and individuals in control of amateur sport agree on the fundamental values of athletic competition.”<sup>11</sup> Therefore, it is finally deduced that “the definition lies not in words but in the integrity of character”.<sup>12</sup>

The reader may have already felt the switch in the style of the present text: From a purely philosophical genre a brusque change into a legal text full of unreferenced terms. Although the two chapters are treating the same issue, the essence of sports, it stays incomprehensible the fact that no reference is found in the Code to sports as an intimate – private, out of the public sphere – matter that needs to be protected. This absence of a sports definition inevitably leads to the absence of a universally accepted definition and it opens the way for the development of arguments in favour of doping like the ones exposed later.

Those arguments are difficult to overcome within the existing cultural context and this is why new conceptualizations are necessary in order to carry on the fight against

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<sup>11</sup> Dubin (1990, 78).

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

doping and keep up with its' defenders. This article stands by the anti-doping camp and the following theories are used to compose a conceptual framework for this scope.

## **1 Interpretation tools for the doping attitude**

### **1.1 Narcissism and its relation to modern civilization**

The term narcissism is commonly used to describe the self-complacent man who admires excessively his physical appearance and But when abilities, the vainglorious, or an erotic interest in oneself. This meaning of the word is obviously relevant to the gym fanatics that are constantly admiring themselves in the mirrors. But when Sigmund Freud introduced the term in 1914 he meant something quite different. Let's make an overview and refresh our knowledge about the psychodynamic framework before we move on and apply them to our scheme.

Freud postulated narcissism as a concept in his essay *On Narcissism: an introduction* and he defined two types of narcissistic attitude: primary and secondary. Primary narcissism refers to the new-born infant agent, while the secondary refers to the narcissistic attitude of a grown person.

Primary narcissism corresponds to the original libidinal cathexis<sup>13</sup> of the ego. It occurs during infancy when the new-born does not yet relate to the outside world and thus this world does not exist for him or her. The real world has not yet emerged as real and so the baby's libido has not yet cathected outside objects. Lacking the experience of the existence of anything more than its own self, the infant is characterized by the absence of any sense of its' need for help and is unable to distinguish between the "I" and the "not I", but this is just a typical stage of development which any sane individual passes through.

Secondary narcissism refers to the return of the libido to the ego. After developing libidinal relations with the external world and its objects, libido is withdrawn and is "directed back to the ego and thus gives rise to an attitude which may be called narcissism"<sup>14</sup>. Freud presumed that there is an antithesis between "ego-libido" and

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<sup>13</sup> "Cathexis" refers to the process that attaches psychic energy, essentially libido, to an object.

<sup>14</sup> Freud (1914, 75).

“object-libido”<sup>15</sup> and that the libidinal cathexis of the ego fundamentally persists throughout all the lifespan<sup>16</sup>. This way, he credited to narcissism a very necessary biological function<sup>17</sup>: “A strong egoism is a protection against falling ill, but in the last resort we must begin to love in order not to fall ill”<sup>18</sup>.

Freud, as usual, brought into play very ambiguous concepts, like the concept of love, and used them to build his theoretical construction. With this style of theorizing, he suggested that when frustration is the dominant feeling caused by the relation to the objects, the cathexis of the ego with libido exceeds a certain amount and thus the sane narcissistic function gives its place to the narcissistic pathology<sup>19</sup>.

In this situation, that is essentially similar to that of the infant, the person has totally lost its ability to love any external object<sup>20</sup>. The senses have lost their perceiving function of the external reality and “they register subjective experience in categories of sensory response to objects outside”<sup>21</sup> and in the extreme point, this phenomenon is manifested as insanity, psychosis.

For the heavily narcissistic person, the world has ceased to be real. The libidinal investment has been withdrawn from the world causing a lack of interest in it. In this state of absolute self-centred worldview, subjective emotions, like fear or suspicion, are converted into objectified events and the subject is absolutely convinced that these emotions are part of the external reality; they have been transformed into a fact.

Erich Fromm introduced an extension of the concept of narcissism from the person to society, obviously inspired by the hints Freud left in the ultimate paragraph of his text<sup>22</sup>. He assumed that the narcissistic energy of the members of a community may

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<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 76

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 75

<sup>17</sup> Fromm (2010, 70).

<sup>18</sup> Freud (1914, 85).

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 85

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> Fromm (2010, ch.4).

<sup>22</sup> Freud (1914, 101).

supply the social imaginary<sup>23</sup> with the psychic energy that is crucial for its survival. Such a group may be the fatherland, the nation or a religious group.

Fromm argues that the unrealistic claim that a nation or a doctrine is the best of all becomes easily accepted when it is shared by many members of a community. Thus, since for the *hoi polloi* the criterion for the verification of the validity of an idea is the collective consciousness, instead of reason, it is possible that such arbitrary beliefs become popular. Each member of the narcissistically supplied community receives merits and obtains a feeling of superiority through the participation in the idea of the group.

The notion of social narcissism was Erich Fromm's contribution to a psychoanalytic theory of racism<sup>24</sup> and will be also used here as the main component for the notion of a narcissistic civilization. His conception of a collective narcissistic way of thinking based upon individual psychological needs allows us to explore its implications with other kinds of cultural interpretations such as the one created by Heidegger. Thanks to him, the terms narcissism and civilization may stand together and form the new concept we are about to explore.

### ***1.2 Aspects of our contemporary technological civilization: Heidegger***

Technological advances are connected to the philosophy of sports well before the development of doping drugs, not always in a negative way. It is very common for a sports federation to welcome technological innovations and include new rules for their sake. Special waxes for the skiers, fibreglass poles for the Pole vault and even anatomic shoes for all kinds of runners are appreciated and incorporated technological applications. Nevertheless, technology has to find its limits: no jet engines are allowed in a Bobsleigh competition and competing in a marathon wearing Rollerblades should not be allowed<sup>25</sup>.

PEDs came into view also as a technological achievement and since they would not have the augmented potential that they now have without the help of sophisticated

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<sup>23</sup> Castoriadis (1975).

<sup>24</sup> Fromm (1973, 203).

<sup>25</sup> Murray (2008)

laboratories that elaborate efficient doping techniques, it is indispensable to examine what the philosophy of science might offer to our analysis. This kind of essay can be found in the work of Martin Heidegger that I use here to extract the concepts needed. In his work, we can see that the emergence of modern technology is not independent of the rest of its cultural context and I will try to show that his ideas are relevant to the narcissistic ones described above.

A great part of Heidegger's work is dedicated to the investigation of the emergence of technology and the philosophical issues that it creates. Among other articles, he wrote *The Question Concerning Technology* and *The Age of the World Picture*<sup>26</sup>. These essays are an attempt to conceptualize the *essence* of technology as well as its relation to *art, science* and *truth*<sup>27</sup>.

Heidegger notes that from the earliest times up to Plato the word *technē* was linked with the word *epistēmē* and that both words meant knowledge in the widest sense, to be an expert in a field. For Aristotle, *technē* is a way of *alētheuein*, where *alētheia*, according to Heidegger's own interpretation<sup>28</sup>, is used to express the revealing, the unconcealment. *Technē* reveals what is not before us and it is a man who is needed to reveal it, for example, a mass of bronze needs the action of the artisan, the art of bronze-casting, so that the shape of a statue may be revealed<sup>29</sup>.

Technology is also a way of revealing, and Heidegger gives the example of a hydroelectric plant to show the way this happens. He says that unlocking, transforming, storing, distributing, and switching about the energy that is concealed in nature, happened through the use of modern technology. For the first time, everything that is on earth is revealed<sup>30</sup> in the form of energy and in this way man is turned into an observer and administrator of nature.

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<sup>26</sup> Heidegger (1977)

<sup>27</sup> Essence (*ousia*), art (*technē*), science (*epistēmē*), truth (*alētheia*)

<sup>28</sup> Heidegger (1977, 11-13)

<sup>29</sup> Aristotle, *Physics* II, 3 and *Metaphysics* V, 2

<sup>30</sup> Heidegger (1977, 32)

Hence “man [...] exalts himself to the posture of the lord of the earth. In this way, the impression comes to prevail that everything man encounters exists only insofar as it is his construct. This illusion gives rise in turn to one final delusion: It seems as though man everywhere and always encounters only himself”.<sup>31</sup>

This Heideggerian visualization of a human looking around and finding him/herself is of a great significance for our culture and is the core element of my analysis. By thinking on technology and its philosophical implications, the German thinker arrived at the most crucial factor in the formation of the identity of the modern subject: its {non} relation with the external world. He highlighted that the western subjectivity is formed in a self-absorbed manner and this way he attributed to it a withdrawal of interest on the external reality – let it be the other person or the environment in general. For us now, this notion gets spontaneously recognized and clearly finds its analogous to the symptoms of what we just described as narcissism.

The philosopher offers us thoughts on more aspects of this mentality. He notes that the revealing of the world as an administrative object, like all revealings before man, happens within a certain enframing, which allows this kind of understanding. This enframing is the base of natural science as an exact science: the causality — the representation of everything in terms of cause and effect. Thus, in the light of a cause-effect coherence, even God can lose all that is exalted and holy, the mysteriousness of his distance. In the light of causality, God can sink to the level of a cause, of *causa efficiens*.<sup>32</sup>

The enframing, he continues, although necessary for any understanding, contains at the same time a great danger: “it threatens man with the possibility that it could be denied to him to enter into a more original revealing and hence to experience the call of a more primal truth”<sup>33</sup>.

With this narrative, Heidegger does not leave us any way out towards the “primal truth”. His ontology – in accordance with his western tradition – misses the essential elements that could help in the construction of an account where humans could come in touch with some kind of unmediated (by civilization) experience: the body.

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<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 27

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 26

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 28

In the 20th-century bibliography, it has been demonstrated that Cartesian metaphysics is still the base of the philosophical production of our era. Truth has been transformed into the certainty of the calculating man's representation, and science is only possible in the assumption of this ability for certainty<sup>34</sup>. The self-efficient rationality became possible after western culture's establishment of the rational self-determined self who sanctifies the rational nature that exists as an end in itself<sup>35</sup>.

Meditations on these subjects are attempted by many western theorists of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and Heidegger was not the sole philosopher that attempted to deal with these core elements of the occidental culture<sup>36</sup>. Nonetheless, eastern thinkers, many of them belonging to the neohellenic intelligentsia, drawing upon their ancient and Byzantine cultural roots, have addressed this crucial civilizational divergence between the eastern and

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<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 127

<sup>35</sup> Taylor (1989, 83)

<sup>36</sup> See for example the early work (with a clear sociological orientation) of Habermas, 1987, (originally published in 1968) *Technology and Science as "Ideology"*. There he builds his argument commeting on the ideas of Max Weber and Herbert Marcuse and offers his interpretation on this topic.

western cultures<sup>37</sup>. This kind of outlandish interpretations of what is considered a strictly “western topic” may provide us with alternative ways of thinking and living<sup>38</sup>.

Up to this point, I tried to investigate some aspects of the cultural heritage that is present in our contemporary western civilization. Now, I will try to make a connection between these ontological accounts with the modern psychodynamic theories of narcissism and I will suggest that our contemporary era may be characterized as narcissistic.

### ***1.3 The narcissistic civilization***

#### *1.3.1 Relative bibliography*

In modern bibliography, the term “narcissistic civilization” has already been used with many different meanings. Since its born in ancient times, the myth of *Nárkissos* was not an established tale. There were many accounts for this mythical person offering various narratives and this multiplicity still appears in the modern usage of the term. An academic conversion of this myth into psychological term, as we saw in chapter 1.1, was done by Freud and examples of theorizing over his concept of narcissism can now be found in the

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<sup>37</sup> A fine example of such a scholar is Nikolaos Nisiotis who stood on his Orthodox Theologic tradition and commented on this objectification of the world and its submission to the scientific investigation, saying that “it is about, after a self-confinement of man to pure reason, a recreation of the world by man. There, at the new creation, God, as a hidden greatness, appears after an invitation in order to keep the human intellect from annihilation and from the fallacy of the evil demon, while man remains alone in nature to exploit, evaluate and use it as an object of his investigation”. See Nisiotis (1956, 24)

<sup>38</sup> Indeed there is a growing interest on several Byzantine-type interpretations. See of example the focus placed on the Byzantine concept of *persona* in Torrance & Paschalidis (2018), where this key notion is used to form an anti-self-centered ontology.

work of Christopher Lasch<sup>39</sup>, Ralph D. Ellis<sup>40</sup> and many other contemporary scholars like Twenge and Campbell<sup>41</sup>. Nevertheless, these scholars are still not in line with each other in respect to the meaning of narcissism and they employ aspects of Freud's theory different from those that we are about to see. Therefore, we may say that the multiplicity of the term is maintained and this is perhaps how it should be since it remains fertile.

On one hand, Lasch uses the term "culture of narcissism" in the sense of a culture in which we are increasingly preoccupied with the images that other people have of us and with creating an envisionment of ourselves as very important. Ellis, on the other hand, uses this term emphasising to the narcissistic obsession with proving the superiority of the self. He deems that for the narcissistic person this obsession takes priority over all other concerns and he holds that modern ethics are dominated by extreme competitiveness. This way, Ellis condemns our culture as "increasingly narcissistic"<sup>42</sup>. The same antagonistic aspect of the narcissistic attitude is accentuated in the book of Twenge and Campbell.

In this essay, the antagonistic aspect of the narcissistic attitude is not treated and instead, a more fundamental feature of the concept of narcissism is used. Since the origins of narcissism, as seen in the Freudian literature, are found in the incapacity for the distinction between the "I" and the "not I", this is the notion that will be used for the articulation of the "narcissistic civilization".

### *1.3.2 Arguing about the narcissistic civilization*

In our supposedly postmodern – and post-positivism – era, although the epistemological theories of the great European philosophers have been put aside and denounced as delusively rationalistic, the profound intention of the traditional intellectuals to submit

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<sup>39</sup> Lasch (1979)

<sup>40</sup> Ellis (1996)

<sup>41</sup> Twenge, M. and Campbell, W. K. (2009)

<sup>42</sup> Ellis (1996, 13, 33)

creation within the limits of the mental capacity of humans is still the dominant spiritual pursuit of our scientific epoch.

Within our western tradition, there is a constant exaltation of the *nous* as a logistic system above the body and the *psychē*<sup>43</sup>. External reality is mainly perceived as a threat consisting in a problem that seeks a solution, “for sensory appearances generally interfere with it [*sc.*, the intellectual vision] and darken it to a very great extent”<sup>44</sup>. Hence, there occurs the need for protection from the external reality, from the world of the Kantian phenomena. At the same time, the “pure” reason of the subject results inefficient for a meaningful representation of the transcendental nouména and so humans deem for a new alternative – satisfactory this time – frame of reference.

This need for a new enframing is nowadays served by technology. By means of the technique that mankind has been able to use in the 21st century, we are given the chance to recreate the world that surrounds us according to our will and we enjoy a sense of omnipotence. We have witnessed the construction of cities in the middle of the desert, the plantation of artificial islands in the oceans or the installation of human communities in space, all of which are outcomes of the new cosmogonical means of which we have become users.

The advanced technology is perceived simultaneously both as independent from and as a result of the western rationalistic worldview and strongly reinforces the Hegelian-style belief that our contemporary civilization is the greatest achievement of all times. Thereon, this ideology becomes the unquestionably dominant ideology and the aftereffects of our way of living<sup>45</sup>, instead of making us sceptical, are received as a threat of dethronement of the idealized collective and individual “ego”. The problem that now occurs for us is that the interest in external reality is restricted to the extent that it is exploitable and this is a defensive reaction that precisely resembles the narcissistic mechanism.

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<sup>43</sup> Heidegger’s account as show above supports this standpoint.

<sup>44</sup> Descartes (1984, 115) in *Meditations on First Philosophy*, p. 163.

<sup>45</sup> The harmful effects of the modern way of living are not restricted to the psychological health of the individuals but are extended to the surroundings, seriously damaging the entire environment.

In addition to the proclivity toward narcissistic growth that is developed because of the western culture and its emanative technological means, another decisive factor that foments the narcissistic illusion is our embedded civilization as a context. Heidegger's essay provides a double account of the function of the present-day culture. Firstly he highlights the rationalistic aspect of western thought and secondly he treats culture as a necessary enframing that contains the great danger of a clearly narcissistic illusion: Man is deprived of the relation to a primary truth and seems like confronting always himself. Into this monotonic scenery that contains only humans, man is naturally unable to discern between the "I" and the "not I".

Our civilizational context surrounds us like a box and "the sides of this conceptual box, while not eternal and unchanging, can nevertheless remain fixed over long periods of time and often seem so transparent that we are not even aware of their existence, just like a fly that keeps coming up against a glass pane and remains oblivious of the obstacle"<sup>46</sup>. The context is a powerful web of conceptual structures. It forms, like a paradigm, an insurmountable barrier to our thought that obliges us to fit natural reality into its premises and resists stubbornly to withstand a reversal of the cosmovision that it provides<sup>47</sup>.

This context, that dictates our worldview and forms our perceptions, is not a natural being. It is a humans' creation and as such it always carries the creators' interpretation of reality. This way, the subjects living in this enframing seem to always and everywhere encounter themselves, not being able to distinguish between the "I" and the "not I", in an attitude that can be characterized as extremely narcissistic.

Up to here, I tried to explore the relevance between the psychoanalytic concept of narcissism and the philosophical aspects raised by the emergence of technology in our era. Next, I am going to apply this new concept for the examination of doping and I will try to unroll the otherwise hidden connection between the doping and the narcissistic civilization.

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<sup>46</sup> Stoczkowski (2002, 2).

<sup>47</sup> Here we borrow the terminology of Tomas Kuhn.

## 2 Doping as a manifestation of a narcissistic civilization.

### 2.1 Doping as a manifestation of a narcissistic civilization

Into our rationalistic era where the deified logos claims to be the absolute authority for everything, sports stands as an ultimate barrier to this kind of despotism. In sports, we have the chance to consider afresh our fundamental ideas of mankind and of its place in the natural habitat. The inherent implication of the body in the dialogue between mans' volition and the natural limitations opens an opportunity for a truly primal experience that may lead to an original relation with reality.

In contrast, when in drugs the user is committed to ignore any ideology other than the one he/she has adopted. The ideological and practical (way of training) framework that doping creates can never go along with the ascetic aspect of sports that as we saw it lies as the essential constituent of the nature of sports. It then comes the question: If sports with doping is not sports, then what is it? The solution to this kind of, difficult indeed, dispute can only be found in a different framework for sports as the one offered in this article. The shift of interest from the self-efficiency to the external reality and an effort to establish a dialectical relation with this reality is what is here argued for.

The interruption of this dialogue that doping imposes, does not simply equate sports activity with the rest of humans' activities but degrades sports to a level even lower than the rest. On the one hand we witness the lack of interest that the doping user demonstrates to the external world which he tries to manipulate according to his needs and on the other hand the implication of science and technology that presuppose the initiation of the user to the culture that dictates this kind of practices. Both factors alienate the user from an encounter with his nature and lead him to lose the chance to experience a truly archetypical relationship with the world and himself. The results of the doping practices applied may be studied scientifically and thus predefined, in a cause-effect terminology, the intimate and personal relationship with the world is undermined and the subject is dissociated by the *unapparent harmony*<sup>48</sup> that gives meaning to our existence.

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<sup>48</sup> Cf. Heraclitus, fr. 54 DK: "The unapparent harmony is stronger than the apparent one" (ἀρμονίη ἀφανής φανερώς κρείττων).

Beyond these two factors that we can recognize in many human activities, there is a third one that is decisive and can be found in doping at excellence. Common doping practices, like Steroids, implicate technology applied to the essence of the user and affect the structural elements – physical and mental – that form his/her identity: his/her own core<sup>49</sup>. This fact, that is to be found in genetic engineering and in the near future in what will be defined as Gene Doping, is considered the ultimate expression of the “ethics of willfulness” and represents the one-sided triumph of willfulness over giftedness<sup>50</sup>.

This recognition may please the doping enthusiasts, but in a second, dispassionate, examination of these affirmations having in mind what Heidegger postulated about technology, a great danger is revealed: In Doping the technology is applied to the essence of the applicant and the cause becomes indistinctly assorted with its effect. This way the fusion between the “I” (represented by nature) and the “not I” (represented by artificial products) becomes impossible to be distinguished and it seems like even in his own essence, man “always encounters only himself”.

The disastrous cultural results of this mindset are already seen in the not long past formation of the catastrophic (Nazi) subjectivity that is solely present to itself, “as foothold, origin and end of the representation, of the certainty and of the will”<sup>51</sup>. Having in mind the interpretational scheme proposed in this article, it straightforward comes to mind what kind of danger is encrypted in the ampliation of our potential caused by technology that gives rise to mighty doping practices<sup>52</sup>.

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<sup>49</sup> For those in the gyms it is not uncommon to witness males and females in their early 20s suffering a massive change of their – physical and emotional – characteristics, caused by steroids. From being a scraggy teenager, after a few months and some circles of “recommended therapy” basically based on artificial hormones, they become unrecognizable persons – emotionally and physically. Examples may better be found in the social media than in any bibliography.

<sup>50</sup> For an in depth consideration on the Philosophy of Genetics and implications over Doping, see Sandel (2007, 85)

<sup>51</sup> Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy (2008, 24).

<sup>52</sup> Drug abuse for enhancing Nazi soldiers’ effectiveness revealed by historical research indicate that this alarm is not raised needlessly but there is strong evidence to this direction.

After this account, doping may be seen as a peculiar symptom of the narcissistic civilization. Thinking within this new framework, when attending a sports event where the malpractice of doping is insinuated as an open secret, the great confusion between the natural and the artificial is revealed. If we do not recognize this condition, like a fly stuck behind a glass — the cultural lens —, while we think that we esteem man as a brilliant part of this cosmos, in fact, we contemplate over and over again a scenery that contains solely our image. We fail to distinguish between the “I” and the “not I” and this is why we mistakenly fall into the narcissistic fallacy provoked by our civilization.

### ***2.1 The arguments in favour of doping as products of a narcissistic enframing***

Although anti-doping policies are applied in almost every international sports federation, its’ defence is not rare in contemporary literature. For example, many investigators consider that doping is not to be prohibited on the base of a risk to health argument. They hold that treatment methods that are included in the doping list should be permitted due to the benefits that they may offer to the user. To build their argument, they bring forward the case of testosterone. They claim that the use of testosterone is a normality in medical conditions where a man needs to replace the testosterone lost as the result of testicular pathologies. So, they draw the conclusion that when a constraint of testosterone emerges due to hard training, it is reasonable to replace it with external sources, since they believe that the long-term effects of steroid use are poorly understood.<sup>53</sup>

The regulations of WADA, due to the fuzziness showed above in 1.2, have also accepted a lot of censures. Many scholars addressed this issue asserting that the ethical foundations that produce the List are not convincing. They emphasize on the instability of the structure and they try to introduce a more solid ethical base so that justice may be ensured for the participants in sports competitions.

These intellectuals apply the same terms that are used to analyze political justice when approaching justice in sports<sup>54</sup>. Equal opportunities and avoidance of discriminations that may occur due to the origin or economic status are set as prerequisites

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53 Kershner (2012, 96-97).

54 See, for example, Corlett (2013) or Geeraets (2018).

for the conduct of truly just competitions. Upon doing this, they end up proposing the acceptance of any kind of doping method, in the name of justice.

Their method may be interpreted sufficiently with the concept introduced in this article. The doping advocators tend to examine, in an offensive simplicity, the human activity in terms of casualty (more training brings more success, less training less success) and this way the human essence<sup>55</sup> is overlooked. Furthermore, by using the findings of biology at will, they overestimate the importance of genes and accuse heredity of being an unfair agent. Then, hitting the dead end that they have constructed under the influence of the modern narcissistic context, they propose their solution to the problem that emerges from reality: doping is our means for bringing justice into the inequality that our nature imposes. For them, any doping technique<sup>56</sup>, obviously Gene Doping included, may be approved since it introduces a fair equality between the members of the “lucky sperm club”<sup>57</sup> and the not so talented athletes.

These scholars enlist the biotechnological powers as means against the “ethics of giftedness” claiming the liberating triumph of the “ethics of willfulness”<sup>58</sup>. This is the point where a suspicion rises and the fallacy of their principles comes into view. It is, for example, far from clear what kind of limitation may stand before the demand for intervention into genes of each individual that carries the belief in his rectifying reason against nature.

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55 Here we refer to the soul. The effects of the soul to the body are mentioned by Aristotle in his *De Anima* (Book I, 403 a 15): “But all the affections of the soul seem to be found together with a body too—spiritedness, gentleness, fear, pity, boldness, and also joy and loving and hating—for along with these the body is affected in some way”. Similar perception about the indivisibility of soul from the body we have a rich Byzantine bibliography. Here we can quote as an example Maximus the Confessor in Migne, *Patrologia Graeca*, vol. 90, 272C: ὅλω καὶ ἐκάστω μέλει τοῦ σώματος δίχα μειώσεως ἐνυπάρχει φυσικῶς ἡ ψυχή. “The soul exists naturally in the whole body and in each part of it as a whole and without reduction”. (The translation is mine.)

56 Bonte *et al.* (2014, 375).

57 *Ibid.* (2014, 373).

58 Sandel (2007, 29).

The misstep of their thought can philosophically be traced back more easily when applying the concept introduced here. Having in mind the notion of a narcissistic civilization, the deviation that occurred in their way of thinking may be interpreted sufficiently. If brought together, the confusion of one's perception (idealized ideas of justice, equality and reason) with the object of this perception (nature's limitation), along with the lack of interest in the external reality and its' submission to the service of one's psychological needs (that in this case is the need for success in sports), it may be deduced that a cultural kind of narcissistic attitude takes place.

This narcissistic way of thinking should not be considered as an isolated deed charged to these scholars. As shown before, it is about our cultural trend, reinforced by technology, that guides the fusion between the "I" and the "not I" and drives us into the pathology of narcissism.

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## **Miscellaneous**

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