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## Philosophy of sport for all by H. Eichberg

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**Key words:** body culture, Eichberg's theory, recreational sport

Henning Eichberg, *Bodily Democracy: Towards a Philosophy of Sport for All*, Routledge, London – New York 2010, pp. 348.

Prof. Dr. hab. Henning Eichberg is a famous Danish, German and European researcher of body culture, cultural anthropologist, historian, sociologist and philosopher. He is a member of the international network of the International Society for Eastern Sports and Physical Education, and a member of “Ido Movement for Culture” Scientific Board.

His notions of “body culture” and “movement culture” are similar to the “physical culture”, his “sport for all” – to “recreational sport” or “physical recreation”. However, there are important points in his theory. The meaning of “all” in the notion of “sport for all” is an expression of democratization in and out of the field of sport.

The book is published in a series “Sport Studies / Ethics” by the publishing house. On the first page we find an introduction: *Series Editors' Introduction* by Mike McNamee, Jim Parry & Heather Reid. The first chapter is a preface of the author (H. Eichberg) – *From body culture to philosophy: thinking bottom-up – an introduction*. On pages 2–7 we can read that he was inspired by the Frankfurt School, the phenomenology of human body by M. Merleau-Ponty, the power-critical perspective of M. Foucault and M. Buber's dialogical principle. Empirical material of the socio-cultural study “is mostly taken from Scandinavian experiences, especially from Denmark” (p. 5).

There are 4 thematic parts of the book. The first part is entitled: *From networks of movement culture to conflicting social philosophies*. The second one is *From popular practice to the phenomenology of body cultures* and it contains chapters 6 to 12. Part 3 – chapters 13–14 – is entitled *From international practice to people-to-people dimensions*. In the last one (part 4 – *From bodily practice to living*

*democracy*) there are 4 remaining texts (15–18); perhaps the most important ones. In the following parts we can find aspects and dimensions of the subject of our interest as well.

In the first part we find chapters 2–5. In the 2<sup>nd</sup> chapter, which was written with S. Loland as a co-author, we can perceive that it is in fact not a philosophy. It is rather sociology of culture with a reference to sport, or a philosophy in the meaning of a theoretical reflection. Movement, physical education and other components of physical culture (body culture) are interpreted from a socio-cultural perspective also in chapter 3. Is a theory of bodily education a philosophy of this area?

In the 4<sup>th</sup> chapter we read of the institutional sport between corporation and co-operation, conflicts of businesses, etc. There are also many examples and descriptions, great factography and interpretations about the Nordic (Danish and Scandinavian) “sport cultures”.

Chapter 5 is on “fitness” on the market and in the media (mode, promotion of patterns), on ethnic barriers and barriers of race, and on reification of fitness, too. We find a history of fitness movements in the Nordic countries and connections with a new lifestyle.

Text no. 6 is on outdoor activities, skauting and a “Green Sport”. It is a pity, that Polish works on the “green school” of W. Pańczyk (written in Polish) are not known outside Poland [Pańczyk 1999; Pańczyk, Warchoń 2006]. We find here also a conception of nature, eco-activism and eco-political movement (or ideology of ecologism). Some issues are only signaled, as “nature as scene” (9 lines of the text, p. 93). Others are developed, with an increased reflection. Some – controversial or provocative, as “nature as culture” (pp. 94–95).

The 7<sup>th</sup> chapter – on phenomenology of the event – examples, cases and in general approach, as a “configuration of festivity” (p. 111). A social

role has changed from a shaman to event manager, following to cultural change. Eichberg interprets "festivity" as an "event" (pp. 118-119).

Chapter 8 is on *Song and movement: phenomenology of human 'energy'*. The problem of singing, from the Danish perspective, is known by our readers [Eichberg 2006b]. However, a philosophy of human energy in ancient Chinese psychophysical practices (*qigong, taiji quan*) was interpreted here in brief. And that is perhaps the most interesting subject of the area [cf: Włodyka, Cynarski 2000; Cynarski 2004, pp. 91-355; Nagatomo 2002].

A philosophy of play and traditional games is the subject of Chapter 9 with K. Nørgaard as a co-author. The reflection points to an educational application.

The next chapters are about *Sport and laughter* (10<sup>th</sup>), *Pull and tug* (11<sup>th</sup>), and *Sports in the life cycle* (12<sup>th</sup>). Too little is said on the Asian martial arts, their philosophy, and as a special example of sport for all [cf: Tokarski 1989; Cynarski 2004, 2009]. A comparison between Budo and Western sport (p. 207) contains interesting formulations, but with a major simplification and is somewhat superficially treated. It is an interesting description of a role of a shaman in societies connected with religions of nature and the magic of nature (p. 209). In the explanation of sport for all for people 60+ (over 60) the author takes into account a category of "tai chi and yoga, meditative movement, slow motion and contemplation" what is in the 9<sup>th</sup> place among preferred disciplines [Eichberg 2010, pp. 211-212]. We have in the "sport of the elderly" an example of cultural dialogues.

Figure 1 (p. 201) with a scheme of the 'career' seems very pessimistic. After the start and some successes there is the top and defeat. The first defeat is the top of our career? And after that is there really only vacuum?

In part 3, the 13<sup>th</sup> Chapter: *Inter-ethnic football in the Balkans* (co-authored by A. Levinson) we meet "the Other" in *Sports: culture of difference* (pp. 229-232). We see something on a competitive sport, gymnastics and popular movement culture (dance, folk-games, outdoor life).

Text 14 – *Sport cooperation between Denmark & Tanzania* – contains an explanation of the cooperation in the area of pop culture. It is also about the role of sport for development of national identity in Africa (ethnic groups Sukuma and Masaai); on a global confusion in the traditional and adopted sports.

In Chapter 15 – *Body, soma – and nothing else?* – we are going from body reductionism to comparative body semantics (pp. 257-258). Some ontological outlooks are presented, as dualism,

materialism, idealism, and ideological issues. We find *The Tao of Physics* by F. Capra [1975] and a body perception of Merleau-Ponty, Buber's dialogical principle (in new reading?) and "the trialectical way" – an idea of H. Eichberg. "Trialectical thinking is, thus, a method to find problems and work on them, not a systemic attempt to triangulate society or to define phenomena in boxes. It is the way that counts" (p. 277).

Chapter 16 is on *Sport & ethics*. Interesting reflections; thanks to the erudition of the author – references to different religions, traditions and theoretical conceptions. But, it is a description without any normative ethic. So it is simpler.

The 17<sup>th</sup> text, co-authored by Ejgil Jespersen, is on *Education through sport* (also for and by sport) (pp. 310-312). The authors mention technical, functional and relational aspects of the education.

Chapter 18 – *Bodily democracy: towards a philosophy of sport for all* – includes various European gymnastic traditions – German, Slavonic (Sokol), Christian sport movements (p. 319). 'Sport for all' is connected with democracy and democratisation (p. 321-323). It should be a cultural project – for education, health and living democracy.

The sport for all human is a sportsman, dancer, gymnast, player, tourist, member of association, practitioner or participant (pp. 328-329). For Eichberg the conclusion is that 'differential phenomenology' is the philosophy ('bottom-up philosophy'), and 'philosophy as inductive thinking from phenomena has solid place in the tradition of philosophy' (s. 330). The author enumerates J.W. von Goethe, M. Buber, G. Bachelard, J. Huizinga, H. Lefebvre and others. He critically evaluates monistic and dualistic phenomenology, going towards differentia phenomenology.

The trialectical configuration of Eichberg illustrates (as a model) "the diversity of human practice in a non-dualistic manner" (p. 332). Yet he writes that "trialectical relations help towards an understanding of complex phenomenological experiences and contradictions" (p. 332). Nota bene, like in Kernspecht's [2004] conception.

The index of names and notions was placed on pages 337-348. In the monograph there are 348 written pages and 8 blank pages, probably for own notices of readers (?).

Who and what works were cited in the book? We find "classical" names, as K. Marx, N. Elias, R. Benedict, and also other famous personalities as mentioned in this article. There were several quotations from a book, published by Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Rzeszowskiego (UR) – Rzeszów University Press [Eichberg, Kosiewicz, Obodyński 2007], and our journal "Ido Movement for Culture",

where several times Eichberg's works were published. It is worth-mentioning that he is not only a Nordic and Western oriented scientist.

Works and theoretical conceptions of Eichberg are only little known in Poland [cf: Eichberg 2004, 2006a, b, 2009; Eichberg, Kosiewicz, Obodyński 2007]. However, they are interesting. The new book [Eichberg 2010] can be a manual of Eichberg's theory of sport for all. It should be an obligatory set book for people who study sport sciences.

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## Cieleśna demokracja – w kierunku filozofii sportu dla wszystkich H. Eichberga

**Słowa kluczowe:** kultura ciała, teoria Eichberga, sport rekreacyjny

### Streszczenie

Powyzsza recenzja dotyczy książki *Demokracja ciała: W kierunku filozofii sportu dla wszystkich (Bodily Democracy: Towards a Philosophy of Sport for All)*.

Prof. dr hab. Henning Eichberg jest antropologiem kultury, historykiem, socjologiem i filozofem oraz badaczem kultury ciała. Jest on także członkiem międzynarodowej sieci Międzynarodowego Stowarzyszenia Sportów Wschodnich i Kultury Fizycznej oraz Rady Naukowej „Ido – Ruch dla Kultury / Movement for Culture”. Pojęcia „kultura ciała” i „ruch ciała” są podobne do pojęcia „kultura fizyczna”, a „sport dla wszystkich” do „rekreacji fizycznej”. Jednakże w jego teorii istnieją inne ważne punkty. Znaczenie słów „dla wszystkich” jest wyrażeniem demokratyzacji w sporcie i poza nim. Eichberg inspirował się frankfurcką szkołą oraz fenomenologią ciała w rozumieniu M. Merleau-Ponty'ego, perspektywą M. Foucaulta oraz M. Bubera. Empiryczny materiał socjologiczno-kulturalny czerpie głównie z doświadczeń skandynawskich, w szczególności duńskich.

Książka składa się z czterech głównych części tematycznych. Dotyczą one między innymi ruchu i edukacji fizycznej oraz innych komponentów kultury fizycznej interpretowanych z perspektywy społeczno-kulturowej. Poruszone są też tematy dotyczące miejsca kultury fizycznej w mediach i jej promocji, sportu uprawianego „na łonie natury”, fenomenologii wydarzeń, roli śpiewu i humoru oraz szamana w społecznościach związanych z religią natury i magii, a także etyce w sporcie. Według recenzenta, zbyt mało uwagi poświęcono azjatyckim sztukom walki oraz idei rekreacyjnego sportu dla wszystkich w powiązaniu z ich uprawianiem. Kilka rozdziałów napisano we współpracy z innymi badaczami np. rozdział 9 – dotyczący roli tradycyjnych gier czy 17 – mówiący o edukacji przez sport.

Prace oraz teoretyczne koncepcje Eichberga są mało znane w Polsce a zasługują na uwagę. Jego nowa książka może być podręcznikiem dotyczącym teorii sportu dla wszystkich; w szczególności powinna być obowiązkowa dla osób zajmującymi się naukami o kulturze fizycznej.