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## FILOZOFIJA SPORTA. NASTANAK I RAZVOJ JEDNE DISCIPLINE [PHILOSOPHY OF SPORT. EMERGENCE AND DEVELOPMENT OF A DISCIPLINE] by Matija Mato Škerbić

Filozofija sporta. Nastanak i razvoj jedne discipline [“Philosophy of Sport. Emergence and Development of a Discipline”] was published in 2021 by Pergamena publishing house, and it represents the author’s attempt to answer some fundamental questions regarding the philosophy of sport, which were previously left unanswered in literature. Questions such as: When was it that the foundations of the philosophy of sport were set? What are the crucial points in the development of this discipline? What are all the themes that the philosophy of sports deals with, and its most important concepts? What are the possible directions for further development of this discipline? The author provides the answers to these and many other questions in his work, which is presented on more than 300 B5 pages.

The book is divided into seven chapters.

In the first chapter, Škerbić considers the answer to the question: What is sport? As stated by the author, this is one of the key questions because determining the area and limits of the sport, or clearly distinguishing between what it is and what it is not, is of exceptional importance in determining which of them will be inducted into the international community of sports and into the family of Olympic sports, as well as which social activities and games will be sportified and declared as such. Furthermore, in this chapter, the author presents and critically examines the definitions of play, games, and sport as presented by Suits in his famous work *Grasshopper: Games, Life and Utopia* and other articles. Škerbić expresses his point of view that the definitions and understanding of “the deceptive triad” (play, games, and sport) are the foundation and starting point of the philosophy of sport and that they are crucial for further work in this discipline. In relation to the definitions given by Suits, the author studies those by Huising, Wittgenstein, Fink, and others and sets a cornerstone for the

philosophy of play and games as a separate discipline of philosophical research. At the end of the chapter, the author establishes the fact that the definition of sport cannot be unambiguously derived, proceeding to consider concepts like fair play, competition and testing, the spirit of sport, the integrity of sport, and Olympic sport. The chapter ends with a critical retrospective of the philosophical determination of sport, with four main characteristics highlighted in all its definitions: competition, rules, physicality, and institutionalization.

In the second chapter, titled “Philosophy of sport”, the author gives his definition of the philosophy of sport and a brief summary of its hitherto developed branches. After that, he provides his review and division of the history of the philosophy of sport, the likes of which have not been seen in literature to date. He represents his division in three phases that are elaborated in detail. The first phase is *the antiquity phase*, which he also calls antique-Mediterranean roots of the discipline, emphasizing that during this phase, physical activity became a part of schools of philosophy, and invaluable important for achieving *arete*, or the ideal of *kalo kagatos*. Also, the author immediately notes that it is erroneous to call antique competitive games in honour of the gods a sport, which in actuality originated as such and under that name only in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. He finds the depictions of competitive games in the works of Homer (Iliad and Odyssey) relevant to the philosophy of sport. Likewise, in the works of Plato and Aristotle, he identifies numerous other instances that tell of the importance and role of exercise and competitive games in honour of the gods. He calls the second phase *pre-discipline*, which in the historical sense covers the period from the fall of Antiquity to 1972, and from which authors and works relevant for philosophical research in sport are drawn. The third phase is one of discipline, which started in 1972 when the philosophy of sport became a separate branch of philosophy. Within this third phase, Škerbić examines crucial points in development and authors who provided invaluable contributions. He finishes the chapter with a short overview of the philosophy of sport outside the USA, Great Britain, and Canada.

In chapter three, the author analyzes the role of William John Morgan and stresses that Morgan provided a crucial contribution to the development and spreading of the philosophy of sport. Škerbić puts special emphasis on Morgan’s reflections on the economization of modern sport, analyzes the merging of sport with big capital and names that as one of the main problems, after which he proposes possible solutions given through communities of sports practitioners. Just how well the author is familiar with John Morgan’s work is best illustrated by the following anecdote of an event that took place on 03/22/2018. The author,

while in conversation with Morgan before a conference in Zagreb and Varaždin, posed a question as to why Morgan, who had included the topic of animals in sport in his editorial editions up to that point, had later omitted the topic, rendering Morgan utterly dumbstruck by the level of the author's familiarity with his literature, and completely unable to form an articulated response... In the end, Škerbić offers his addendum to the solution for a more ethical sport, which consists of the process of education and upbringing.

The author deals with the ethics of sport in chapter four. He proposed the year 1984 as the inception of sports ethics when the book *Right Actions in Sport* by Warren Fraleigh was published. However, as everywhere else in his book, he gives his critical opinion and points to the main problem with this book, which is the lack of references. The ethics of sport is a discipline within the philosophy of sport. Through its lens, sport is viewed broadly, in the sense of general ethics applied to sport with all its implications, and which endeavours to grasp and theoretically study the phenomenon of sport from all its morally problematic sides. In the first part of this chapter, the author emphasizes the difference between the two terms of *ethics of sport* and *sports ethics*. Škerbić notes that the ethics of sport is a broader umbrella notion which includes sports ethics. He demonstrates how four areas of the consideration actually exist within the ethics of sport, these being: competition, performance enhancers, sex and gender, and social ethics. He then examines the crucial points in the development of the ethics of sport, fleshes out possible paths of further development and claims to see great room for the development of particular sports ethics, or ethics of particular sports, in which specificities or unique traits of particular sports will be taken into account.

In chapter five, the author presents normative theories of sport that are based on internal, that is, intrinsic values of sport. He gives an overview of the theories of formalism, conventionalism, and internalism. In this chapter, Škerbić notes that William John Morgan is the founder of internalism and that the formulation of intrinsic values of sport is only possible through personalized narratives of sports practitioners.

The sixth chapter starts with the author's explanation of the bioethics of sport and the most important cases of bioethics that have been current in recent years. He then presents a thematical spectrum of bioethics of sport through two different conceptions that he calls narrow bioethics of sport and wider bioethics of sport. He names eight themes as part of the narrow understanding of bioethics of sport (doping, genetics, sex and gender, health, sports medicine,

biotechnology, transhumanism, and the Paralympics). In the wider sense, “bio” is understood as “bios” – life, and therefore, in addition to the theme of humans, themes of non-human living beings and everything alive are likewise relevant. This is one of the most interesting chapters of the book because it deals with clarifying and explaining the most difficult incidents in the sport today but also elaborates on possible scenarios in the future of the sport.

In chapter seven, the author puts forth a history of the philosophy of sport in Croatia in the form of organized lectures at faculties, published works with specific themes, and conferences held until now.

Filozofija sporta. Nastanak i razvoj jedne discipline [“Philosophy of Sport. Emergence and Development of a Discipline”] is truly a fantastic and unique publication. Above all else, it is a book that the professionals have lacked, which will be not only instructive, but mandatory reading for the expert public, and a true delicacy for the broader public, introducing them to a discipline and simultaneously opening the doors for further reflections.

The author displays an amazing acquaintance with literature dealing with this discipline, but even more importantly, in each chapter, he gives his critical reflections and contributions to the development of the philosophy of sport. Apart from being written in accordance with all the academic standards, the book is a very easy read. That is its particular quality, making one feel like its subject matter is not so complex and difficult after reading, although the complete opposite is true. That is the author’s true mastery, just like when one observes the performance of a technique by a famous athlete. *I could do that*, one thinks to oneself, then enters the playing grounds and realize there is no chance of you recreating the feat. The author has a special perspective on all the issues he covers for four reasons: the first is his direct participation in sports as a player (tennis, football, and basketball); the second is his experience as a top-level referee; the third is formal philosophical education, and the fourth – his enthusiasm and motivation to read all previously published works. This makes him unique in the community of philosophers of sport, a fact that was acknowledged by the greatest authorities in the field.

In conclusion, it is evident that the author plays with the themes and literature from the philosophy of sport in the same manner that his sports idol, Dražen Petrović (featured on the cover of this edition), played with a basketball.

It would definitely be helpful if the author invested the additional effort and had the book translated into English because not offering it to the whole world would be a great waste.