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"Movement Culture" - Proposal for a Definition

(see: <.../movementculturedefinitionEnglish.html>

see the German version: <.../bewegungskulturdefinition.html> resp. <.../DefinitionBewegungskultur.pdf>

(The web links refer to the addresses <www.claustiedemann.de/> <www.sport-geschichte.de/> and <www.kulturwiss.info/>;
the documents can be found in the respective subdirectory <.../tiedemann/documents/>.)

"Movement culture" is a field of activity in which people deal with their nature and environment and consciously and intentionally develop, shape and present their in particular physical abilities and skills, in order to experience an individual or shared gain and enjoyment that is significant for them.

„Bewegungskultur“ ist ein Tätigkeitsfeld, in dem Menschen sich mit ihrer Natur und Umwelt auseinandersetzen und dabei bewusst und absichtsvoll ihre insbesondere körperlichen Fähigkeiten und Fertigkeiten entwickeln, gestalten und darstellen, um einen für sie bedeutsamen individuellen oder auch gemeinsamen Gewinn und Genuss zu erleben.

La „culture du mouvement“ est un domaine d'activité dans lequel des personnes traitent avec leur nature et leur environnement, développant, façonnant et présentant consciemment et intentionnellement leurs capacités et compétences, en particulier physiques, afin d'en tirer un significatif gain et plaisir individuel ou aussi collectif.

*Since I have defined the term "**sport**"¹ so narrowly that many areas meant and designated by it in everyday language (such as jogging, hiking, bathing, fitness training, gymnastics, "health sport" etc.) are excluded, and/but since I do not want to leave this everyday language without a concept, I call this wider area „**movement culture**", which includes "sport".*

I realise that this term is a bit cumbersome.² Even more obstructive for the use of this term in everyday (and scientific) language might be the fact that the words "sport" and "sportive" have been associated with such significant positive attributions for some time now, that every other word is perceived as derogatory by many people (including Sport Scientists). I have already experienced this in many discussions as a fierce resistance against my definition proposals.

If I knew a better accepted, but equally clear and selective other word, I would be happy to use and recommend it. At the moment I know nothing better, and that is why I suggest - at least for the field of sport science - to seriously consider this proposal for the definition of ("sport" and) "movement culture".

¹ <.../sportdefinitionEnglish.html>

² In German, the term „Bewegungskultur“ seems even more cumbersome.

While working on my proposed definition of "movement culture" I did not find much help - even less than on the term "sport" - in the relevant sport science lexicons and publications, although this word has been used in sport science discussions for a long time and, for example, a few years ago was seriously discussed as naming the Department of Sport Science at the University of Hamburg. In 2005, the department actually changed its name to Department (now: Institute for) "Movement Science".

Regarding the way I use to elaborate definitions, see my remarks on my definition of sport: <.../sportdefinitionEnglish.html#Definition1>.

In order to clarify the discussion that hopefully will begin, I will briefly explain my understanding of the particular elements of my "movement culture" definition below:

"Movement": This word is so ambiguous (the German word "Bewegung" even more!) that it is not as selective as some "sport" scientists would like to have it, who (want to) call their science „movement science“. In doing so, they face difficulties in the theory and politics of science: philosophically (movement as a form of existence of matter, etc.), physically (movement as a property/condition of bodies, etc.), sociologically (movement as a term for active social groups) and many other aspects.

"Movement science" in the generalising singular implies for my sense of language the claim to be the one and only science that deals with movement. Of course, the relatively young branch of science, which in most (German) university institutions still (and in my opinion more appropriately) is called "sport science", cannot meet this claim.

In connection with "-culture" there are not so many competing fields of meaning. As far as I know, no other scientific discipline has (yet) claimed the term "movement culture" for itself except sport science. However, the definition (of „Bewegungskultur“) offered by Gröbning in the (German) "Sport Science Lexicon" is much too broad; according to it, even an everyday movement activity such as peeling potatoes would belong to "movement culture" (see Gröbning 2003 and Tiedemann 2005).

Of course, sport science is all about movement, but just about one part of the wide semantic field of "movement". In the centre of the sport scientific occupation with movement it is mostly and specifically about the (physical) movement of the (own) human body.

Even if one restricts the concept of movement to "*human* movement", this is not yet sufficiently selective: For example, the phrase that a person is "moved" by an event or an action expresses an affective, emotional effect on a person; and this belongs to the field of psychology.

My idea of man does not really permit any substantial separation of "psyche" (or "spirit" or even "soul") and "body". Since in sport science, however, the psychic field of meaning of "movement" is made very little the subject (if at all, then mostly in the sense of an improvement in performance), a conceptual narrowing to "physical" (human) movement seems necessary to me in this area, which is meant however only as a stopgap (*see also below the remarks to "physical"!*).

"Movement culture" is a field of activity in which people deal with their nature and environment and consciously and intentionally develop, design and present their in particular physical abilities and skills, in order to experience an individual or shared gain and enjoyment that is significant for them.

"Culture": For me, culture is the conscious shaping of one's own development, both on the level of the human species and on that of the individual human being.

In the tribal history of the "homo", the capability for (self-) reflection means a decisive step towards the development of communication, language and free, playful thinking. Only after this step of development can one speak of culture, i.e. also of "movement culture" (and other cultural fields of activity such as "sport").

Only then is it possible to consciously and intentionally shape (or configure) one's own development. Shaping presupposes that there are alternatives for action, a (relative) freedom. In everyday life, especially in the areas of need, habit, etc., these alternatives exist less, or they are not perceived. The perception of the possibility to choose and determine the way of one's activity and finally the conscious decision for a certain way of (movement) action is what shaping constitutes for me.

When a two-year-old child "configures" a surface with available colours, it is not culturally active for me, insofar as it is not yet sufficiently capable of a self-reflected, conscious, intentional configuration. If, on the other hand, an adult person does something similar (viewed from the outside), then it may be a cultural act -regardless of the fact that one can argue about the cultural "value" of the product.³

An example from the activity field of movement culture: As a two-year-old boy I ran to get from A to B and to become more confident in this activity, which I had not yet mastered with much self-control; this was not an activity of movement culture because I lacked the reflected, conscious will or the ability to "shape" this action.

When I was eight years old, after reading "Indian novels", I wanted to shape my (endurance) running like the Indians in the novels, whom I admired so much, could do it so well; this activity can already be attributed to the field of movement culture. By the way, it also had the character of a play or game (= acting as if), and sometimes, when I did it with another boy in competition, it also had the character of sport.

The additional word "culture" is therefore used in "movement culture" to set a demarcation from the activity field of everyday action with its movements. Simply reaching for a glass of water is an everyday movement; the outwardly almost identical movement at a festive meal can (should) be a "cultured" movement, insofar as it is consciously, intentionally "shaped". Below I will illustrate this difference or change using the example of hiking / Nordic walking or skiing.

³ cf. the explanatory notes on my definition of „art“: <.../art-definitionEnglish.html>; PDF-file: <.../Art-DefinitionEnglish.pdf>

With this distinction from everyday movements, I contradict the definition offered by Gröbning in the (German) „Sportwissenschaftliches Lexikon“ (Gröbning 2003, p. 94), which defines "movement culture" as a "*collective term for all manifestations of human movement in everyday life, work and leisure*"⁴ - in my view, far too broad.

"Activity Field": By defining the term "movement culture" as a field of activity I want to make evident that it is a conceptual level above the activity itself. According to the rules of a real definition, "activity field" is the designation of the "next higher generic group" (*genus proximum*). So it is not about an activity or action, and certainly not about an object, a state or about a "medium", "relation" or the like, as some authors call it. Rather, the term "movement culture" signifies an abstract issue to which various activities are assigned.

„deal(ing) with their nature and environment“: These words mark the beginning of the „species-forming difference“ („*differentia specifica*“) between the activity field "movement culture" and other fields of activity. In this (activity) field people act in relation to (their) nature and environment, especially to their own human environment, their creatureship. The fact that thus they act in a (also self-) related, reflexive way makes their actions a cultural activity (*see above the explanations on "culture"!*).

„consciously and intentionally“: People, of course, also act unconsciously; the area of unconscious action may even dominate, both qualitatively and quantitatively. In the field of culture, i.e. also in the field of movement culture, however, the awareness of acting is necessary for me (*see above!*). The boundaries between unconscious and conscious, though, are fluid. Sometimes people *seem* to act unintentionally; in such cases they just follow a "secret plan", which is difficult to find out, but not impossible.

Since both consciousness and intention are psychic categories, whose existence or effectiveness is fundamentally not perceptible from the outside, this designates a field in which people must step into relationship with each other, in order to have an understanding. "What does this mean to you?" or "What do you want to achieve with it?" are fundamental questions in this field of activity, for example. The exchange on this influences the effectiveness of cultural activity.

An example of the "soft" boundaries between sport, movement culture and everyday activities: a skier of the highest level of ability practises sport when he goes down the slope in competition with others; he practises movement culture when he goes down the slope just

⁴ my translation; in German: „*Sammelbegriff für alle Erscheinungsformen des menschlichen Bewegungsverhaltens in Alltag, Arbeit und Freizeit*“.

for himself with the intention of making "ideal" turns; and he carries out everyday activities when he goes down the slope, for example to help an injured person. The outer form of the movement may be very similar; the decisive thing takes place psychologically: The motive and aim of his acting make the difference.

„develop, shape and present“: With these verbs I refer to the broad field of acting. It ranges from discovering possibilities of movement to exercising in order to be able to move, to (aesthetical) shaping and (theatrical) presentation. Rehabilitation and fitness exercises are rather meant with "developing", dancing and gymnastics for example with "shaping". Both can have a value in themselves for the actors; they do not necessarily need a human counterpart. If the actors relate to other people with their movement action, they present themselves with their physical abilities and skills (*see below!*), e.g. in a gymnastic or dance show. *For further explanations of "shaping" see above under "culture"!*

„in particular“: By this wording I express that it is not a matter of principle, of everything or nothing, but of nuances, graduation. This blurring is due to the problem of the concept "physical", which I will explain below.

„physical“: By this word⁵ I want to express that "movement culture" is only partly about thinking, psychological abilities and skills, but mainly about externally visible, mainly about (physical and physiological) abilities and skills of the human body, especially of the musculo-skeletal system.

However, I am not completely satisfied with the word "body" (and therefore also with "physical"), because according to occidental Christian tradition in this word even today a separation from „psyche“, "spirit" or even "soul" resonates. I consider this separation to be questionable from my view of man. In addition, the word "body" can also denote *dead* objects.

I use the term "physical" with a reservation hoping to refer thus to an aspect of our human-kind that has its main point in the *externally* visible movement, even if of course every (movement) action is (mentally) founded and controlled *internally*; and in the end it is of course the "entire" person whose action becomes / is externally visible.⁶

⁵ In my German version (see <.../bewegungskulturdefinition.html>!) I use the word „körperlich“, which more literally could be translated by „bodily“ or „corporeal“.

⁶ I will not translate the following paragraph of my German version into English, because it refers almost exclusively to the difficulties of German terminology; for German experts here is its wording: „Vielleicht ist es klüger, den „Körper“-Begriff durch den „Leib“-Begriff zu ersetzen - und dementsprechend von „leiblichen“ Fähigkeiten und Fertigkeiten zu sprechen. Mein derzeitiges Zögern ist insbesondere darin begründet, dass mit den früher gängigen Worten „Leibesübungen“, „Leibeserziehung“ usw. etwas meines Erachtens zu Recht Überwundenes bezeichnet worden ist. Vielleicht ist es aber auch Zeit, sich für eine Neu-Interpretation des Begriffs „Leib“ einzusetzen.“ The quintessence of these considerations can be found in the next paragraph.

Interestingly, some Anglo-American sociologists and philosophers have discovered the German word "Leib" (instead of „body“ resp. in German „Körper“) as a better solution for this terminological dilemma.⁷

So for me the focus is on the externally visible human movement, and through the prefixed term "particular" a further non-binary aspect is introduced. The demarcation thus is not completely clear, unambiguous, but in each individual case in need of explanation and justification.

An example: For me, simple hiking is not only not a "sporting" activity (simply because it is not run as a competition), but also does not belong to the realm of "movement culture", because intentional shaping of the movement is not essential for simple hiking. On the other hand, the so-called "Nordic Walking" belongs to "movement culture" for me insofar as it depends on the special configuration or shape of the movement when it is supposed to strain and train a lot of muscles; those who do not use the poles properly (in this sense) do hiking with poles - or, as someone once put it polemically: "silly walking with crutches" (in German: „albernes Rumgekrücke“).

„abilities and skills“: The differently gifted people have or develop different possibilities to act in different activity fields, so also in the realm of movement culture. Abilities are rather general, comprehensive possibilities of acting, which can be based on talent and practice, e.g., to grasp strongly, to run perseveringly or to coordinate ones movements very finely. Skills are more specific possibilities of acting, which have been acquired / developed especially through intensive practice (training), e.g. jumping a somersault or juggling three balls.

„in order to experience a (...) gain and enjoyment that is significant for them“: This is intended to designate the motive or possibly numerous interacting motives that cause people to "develop, shape and display their abilities and skills, especially physical abilities and skills". This is too a broad field. It ranges from the gain in world participation through the ability to walk and run in childhood development to the regaining of such abilities and skills after an accident or illness, from the joy about the success of certain abilities and skills and their ever better control up to the joy of being able to please other people with the presentation of one's own abilities and skills (or to gain their recognition, appreciation or attention with it).

⁷ Cf. my lecture „body turn“ – how many „turns“ does „the body“ tolerate? difficulties with real and terminological turns: <.../VortragPisa2009Englisch.pdf>

"individual or shared": It is not important whether such "gain and enjoyment" is sought and experienced by a single person for himself or herself, or whether it is several people who are in relationship to each other. Neither is mutually exclusive. The lonely jogger, for example, may not need another person to whom he refers in and with his activity (jogging), nor does the recovering person who quietly exercises his or her muscles; others may prefer to do the same in the company of others. The recreational kicker, on the other hand, needs other people just as much as someone who wants to impress others with a trick of movement.

Literature: see the more detailed list following my explanations of the definition of "sport" ([<.../sportdefinitionEnglish.html>](#))!

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