PHYSICAL CULTURE AS A PART OF CIVIL SOCIETY

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BACKGROUND: The principle issue is that of the characteristics of civil society, its relationship to the state, and the understanding of physical culture as a part of civil society.

OBJECTIVE: The objective of this paper is to explain the position of physical culture as a part of civil society and all socio-political problems connected with it.

RESULTS: The principle part is devoted to differences in physical education, movement (physical-exercise) recreation and sport from the point of view of the part they play in civil society. It is stated that there is not a problem with physical education being a part of the school curriculum, because its presence there is guaranteed by the state. Furthermore, the problems of relationships between movement recreation and civil society, respectively between sport and civil society are described. These problems are addressed from the point of view of social benefit and they are understood at various levels. In conclusion, there are notes concerning volunteerism as a very important aspect of the activities executed within the framework of physical culture.

CONCLUSIONS: From the results described in the paper we can conclude that physical culture is, with its socio-political consequences, a very important part of civil society. That conclusion is important from the point of view of understanding its sense.

Keywords: Physical education, recreation, sport, social benefit, volunteerism.

To begin with, I have to make one terminological remark. The concept of “physical culture” expresses, in my view, a specific socio-cultural system (environment), in which physical-exercise activities, differentiated according to whether they belong to physical education, movement (physical-exercise) or recreation and sport, are implemented.

When we speak about physical culture on the whole, about the activities executed within its framework and about their philosophical, respectively philosophical-political and cultural conditionality, it is necessary to discuss the question of the meanings of the concepts of a civil society and a human-citizen. This problem is a problem of conflict or harmony within the state, respectively between a representative of the state and a citizen with his individual interests and his opportunities to pursue them. Evidently this is the reason why some politicians do not like the term civil society itself, nor its implementation, and a right “to speak one’s mind about something” they approve only for the members of political parties, respectively to elected bodies representing “power”. That is, of course, a reduction, facilitating the position of these political parties, respectively to elected bodies representing “power”. That is, of course, a reduction, facilitating the position of these political bodies. Citizens sharing in a functioning of the state which cannot be filled solely by their participation in elections, but by their concrete activity, which influences this functioning: because it puts pressure on elected politicians. The theory of the civil state is a politological problem, so there is no room for us to further devote ourselves to it. It is also not our problem. However, if we acknowledge that physical culture on the whole and all activities executed within its framework are a part of this problem (see further), at least a brief summary of information is necessary.

What exactly is a civil society? According to Rakušanová (2005, p. 17) a civil society “...is a term that encloses the space between the private sphere of interest and the state”. This means that in this space, the private interests of citizens and the effort of the state to enable the implementation of these interests should overlap. She adds that “...the existence of civil society is the result of a democratic political system based on the direct participation of citizens, who can influence the public sphere” (p. 17). Here, I would just like to stress the direct participation of citizens, by whose activity the course of the state is strongly influenced. Referring to Jean Cohen, she argues that modern civil society is formed and reproduced through various forms of collective actions and is institutionalized on the base of law.

In accordance with this statement, emphasizing the importance of NGOs for civil society Brokl, who sees the concept of civil society as equivocal, states: “In the broadest sense of the term civil society indicates a set of communities or associations which exist and operate independently of the state (...) Civil society, or, more precisely said, its individual entities, can, in modern state societies, work, only if they maintain their autonomy from the state
and even from the democratic state” (Brokl, 2002, p. 11). In this way he completely independently stresses the autonomous functioning of these institutions in a democratic society, because it is this condition, by which the degree to which the society is democratic is determined. In his deductions he refers to Habermas: “Habermas sees civil society as a space in which various organizations and movements, seek to articulate and loudly set forth the problems of the private life sphere in the political community” (p. 27). So, from the civil society, government institutions, including the state-financed non profit sector, political parties and economic interest groups, are excluded. “Habermas's function of civil society lies in the fact that civil society extends to the articulation of interests and interest aggregation by the creation of 'pre-institutional' pluralist interest mediation (...) Habermas's concept of civil society excludes from it not only state institutions and political parties, but also economic interest groups” (p. 19).

Therefore, on the most general level, the problem of civil society can be conceived as the problem of the relationship between the private and the public sphere. Then from this necessarily arises the following view on politics, respectively the requirements for political power. “Politics, political power and its modes are 'only' the tools for the shaping, collecting, selecting and accomplishing of interest under conditions of mass civil societies, mass production and consumption, i.e. the conditions under which we live” (Brokl, 1997, p. 11). Referring to Easton, the author notes that “...politics are such interactions, by which the values are authoritatively allocated for the whole society” (p. 11). However, the term authoritatively does not mean dictatorially, but “...obligatorily and legitimately, i.e. in correspondence with the prevailing legal and constitutional order and in conformity with the prevailing opinion in society, with the general public’s approval, and with the will of the society in general” (p. 13).

Civil society is an expression of democracy in the society. “Generally, it is possible to say that today’s civil society is not considered (...) to be a panacea, but rather as a mere necessity, without which democracy can hardly function” (Müller, 2008, p. 32). Civil society strongly reflects the effects of global processes, multiculturalism, volunteerism and so on.

Many activities, which are focused on the human being, have a social character in the sense of care for someone, in the sense of creating conditions for the care of someone (including about oneself), etc. Here I would stress just the problem of the creation of conditions, because it cannot be individual, but is an overall-social problem. “The concept of the ‘welfare state’ indicates a state in which the laws, in the consciousness and attitudes of people, in the activities of institutions and in practical politics, promotes the idea that social conditions, under which the people live, are not only a matter of individuals but also of the general public” (Dohnalová, 2004, p. 32).

The majority of activities executed within the framework of physical culture are just a “public matter” (see further). Society is, according to this author, divided into a private sector (market), a public sector (state) and a civil sector (the civil society). “The associations, societies, unions, clubs, trade unions, common beneficial companies, endowments and endowment funds, and special-purpose equipment of churches belong to the civil sector” (p. 73).

I must therefore add the whole field of physical culture also.

I lack literature dealing with the problem of physical culture as an important element of civil society. The publication “Civil sociality: Children, sport, and cultural policy in Denmark” (Anderson, 2008), which is, however, focused on the problem of children, respectively their participation in physical education, sport and recreation, seems inspiring to me. According to the author, Danish politicians express their opinion that “...participa-
tion in sport organizations leads to the experience and understanding of democratic processes which are decisive for restoring the Danish democracy” and that is why the Danish Government states that “...all children have a cultural right to participate in voluntary and sports associations” (p. 12). Nevertheless, the civil community is considered to be a basic scheme of the Danish democracy. In relationship to the civil community, the importance of physical activities for socialization is emphasized: and, in particular, the relationship between me and the civil society, is this socialization space.

So, where physical culture and civil society are concerned, respectively, physical culture is an element of civil society. If the above mentioned author, S. Anderson, emphasizes that all children have a cultural right to participate in voluntary sport organizations, then I must add that, of course, all citizens, without any exception, have this right, without any discrimination based on sex, age, health, ethnic identity etc. Membership in the relevant associations, clubs etc. shows their allegiances to a particular group of citizens, which organizes itself in order to defend their interests and the conditions for the pursuit of its interests more easily. These organizations in particular are part of the whole set of elements that creates a civil society. They are the elected authorities of non governmental, non-political organizations, which articulate these interests and require of political and governmental institutions that they would be respected and helped by them. By this essentially the passive role of elector (carried out in an election) is shifted to an active role, creating for the benefit of the quality of their life, pressure on those who were elected, and who are our political representation. A large mosaic of these interest groups is the manifestation of a real civil society and the pressure generated on politicians is the expression of its democracy.

If, however, we speak in these contexts about physical culture on the whole, then it must be stressed that this role can not be uniform, but it varies according to the sense of activities that are carried out within their framework (physical education, physical-exercise recreation and sports). Moreover, some of these activities are for the benefit of citizens, some, by contrast, for the benefit of political power, respectively its representation. From the political point of view there is a discrepancy between saturating the interests of citizens and saturating the interests of politicians. This saturation closely relates to the implementation of the concepts “public” and “mutual” benefit and consequently it thus relates to endowment politics. (Note: State endowments contribute to ensuring the conditions for satisfying the interests of the relevant civil groups, they are thus dependent on the decisions of political power, but it is not correspondent merely to its philosophical and political orientation, but also to its own interests.)

The basic problem arises from it, into which individual and social activities we can include the activities, which are executed within the framework of the system of physical culture. This question can, in a basic form, correspond to the relevant rule. (Note: Here, we always deal with recurring terminological inaccuracies. In the officially accepted material we generally deal with the term “sport” as it was defined by the Council of Europe. But it brings up many problems, which must be explained away, or otherwise, other terms must be utilized.)

All the problems related to “sport” are solved with reference to the relevant law. In Act No. 115 from 28 February 2001 about the promotion of sport and in the statutes at large of Law No. 219 from 5 May 2005 is stated: “This law defines the status of sport in society as a publicly beneficial activity...”. So that we might derive anything from this formula, it is necessary to explain not only this term, but also related terms. So the basic issue is that of “sport” as a publicly beneficial activity.

Based on the logic of the whole issue, confounded by inaccuracies of the different characteristics and definitions, significant discrepancies, the possibility of different interpretations and therefore their solutions, arise. “Beneficial activity” is a term that apparently allows for different interpretations, without being precisely defined which, of course, causes considerable problems. From the discussion of experts from thirteen European countries in Zakopane 2003, a text originated called ECON-NET – A model law of public benefit from 10, 26th, 2004 (http://zpravodajstvi.ecn.cz/, retrieved 20. 3. 2009), which says: “A publicly beneficial activity is any lawful activity that supports or propagates a public benefit by promotion or propagation...” The following is a list of activities in which, indeed, no sport appears, but which may be a part of one of the listed items, respectively, according to the interests of the state, it may be included. Even here also, however, it remains debatable, what is, as a matter of fact, a “public benefit”. This inaccuracy, respectively vagueness, then allows for different interpretations, which, of course, concern also the public benefit of “sport”. In the sense of specifying such benefits, other related terms may function. With the publicly beneficial activity “publicly beneficial association” is undoubtedly related, which is defined as “a legal entity that provides the society with publicly beneficial services under conditions which are given in advance and which are, for all users, the same, and its profits can not be used for founders, members of the organization nor staff and must be used to provide the publicly beneficial services for which the publicly beneficial association was founded. A typical example of the association as such, is an endowment” (http://portal.gov.cz, retrieved 20. 3. 2009).

Another related and specifying term is “publicly beneficial facilities”. In its sum these facilities are defined as “entire facilities determined for utilization by the
and telecommunication equipment, information, publicity and advertising equipment, traffic signs, benches, rubbish bins, etc." (http://portal.gov.cz, retrieved 20. 3. 2009). Although “sport” is not explicitly named, nothing stands in the way of it being included in this list.

What is, from the point of view of those three terms, the situation in “sport”, which is, on the whole, a part of civil society? As mentioned above, to clarify this problem, it is impossible to suffice with the term “sport”, but to clarify, we have to use terms, which are commonly used in this text.

The philosophical-political problem is the view of what the public beneficial activity is, and the question of whether it always relates to the problem of a “civil society”. Is it possible to include education and science, whose part is also “physical education” as the learning (part of a school curriculum), within the framework of public beneficial activities? Requirements for the orientation, content, and output of this learning are formulated by the state and it is also financially ensured by the state budget (additional funding may be received via various projects, subsidies, etc.). It is implemented in the schools, whose operation is guaranteed by the state, respectively by counties and municipalities. So, the situation of physical education and school is, from the point of view of the addressed problem, quite simple. Direction of education and training is a philosophical-politically caused matter and is therefore regulated by the state. Of course, this concerns physical education as a part of the educational system. Physical education is, as a part of this system, entirely dependent on the state. As a matter of fact, it is not a part of civil society in the sense previously mentioned.

More complicated is the situation with regards to physical-exercise and movement recreation (also see the previously used terms “mass sport”, “sport for all” etc.). This can be ensured to be not only a public beneficial activity, but also as a profitable activity. In the first case they are the organizations, and clubs, but also the various associations which are of a non profit character. In the second case it is concerning the physical or legal personalities, the aim of whose activity is their profit. This earning activity is not, from the point of view of the addressed problem of “public beneficial activity”, interesting for us, not even though is it a part of civil society. Physical-exercise recreation in the non profit form is from the point of view of its direction, an important public beneficial activity, because it shares not only in the growth of the quality of life of interested citizens, but also in the increase of their working efficiency, reducing illness, etc., which have a significant economic impact – the invested means are returned in multiples. That is why it is a typical part of a civil society. The relevant legal personalities that perform these activities are financially ensured by the state (regional, municipal) budget, which covers the costs associated with the activities (executed activity and maintenance of equipment), without generating any profit. Additional funds may be obtained from various subsidies and grants. Also it is possible to raise certain amounts by means of self profitable activity, but under the conditions mentioned above. Public beneficial facilities necessary for the carrying out of recreational activities are the property of the relevant legal personalities or municipalities that lent them or provided them free of charge. Part of the physical-exercise recreation thusly conceived may also be “recreational sport”. It has the character of a concrete sport activity (mainly sports games), which is oriented to recreation of participants, to an interesting way of spending free time, but at the same time it is registered in the institutionalized competitions of amateurs (not performance or top level professional sport). These activities are executed by sports clubs, whose activities have, in this case, the character of a publicly beneficial activity and are therefore entitled to financial aid as described above. All these recreational activities of a public beneficial character are executed on a basis of volunteerism and they belong to the sphere of civil society.

It seems that in these cases public benefit is rather obvious, from the point of view of organizational or financial matters there should be no doubt. The only problem is probably the political will and the understanding of the importance of these activities for the development of the society and the related amount of state, regional or municipal subsidies. This is unquestionably the philosophical and political problem that can otherwise be seen by the relevant elements of the civil society and political representation. There are contradictions, and with them are joined accentuation of the function of the civil society.

Quite different and more complicated is the situation in the case of performance and top level (professional) sports. There is no dispute that this sport is a huge phenomenon, tempting by it attractiveness hundreds of millions of people around the world. However, the logical question comes to mind – is there, as such, any perceived sport which is truly a public beneficial activity? If in the above mentioned cases (physical education, recreation) the public benefit cannot be doubted even in the case of a top and namely professional sport, this may occur.

The first problem is – who, in this case, does public benefit concern? Are they the athletes themselves (as in the cases mentioned above)? Evidently not. It is their partial or full time, well paid employment. Are they the spectators? Evidently yes. But what is the proportion between the amount of spectators and the total population? (With the exception of the World Championship, Olympic Games etc.) Indeed sport needs spectators. But
the spectator pays himself for his show, for more or less beautiful “movement theater”, for his excitement... Does public benefit concern the state interest in the sense of its representation and raising its political prestige? If so, it is necessary from the point of view of the state to share in the financial support gain of the representation. But representatives are recruited from the clubs that supply their athletes to the representation teams. As long as a state representation is a state or public interest, evidently only these clubs which give their athletes to the state representation have the right to government endowment. Why not the others? In this case is sports a part of a civil society? Evidently not, because it performs quite another function.

The second problem – the clubs performing the top sport activity mentioned above, do not have the character of non-profit organizations. On the contrary, they are aimed at profit, either as a limited liability or joint stock companies. Which other companies of this kind receive regular endowments? Surely none, but only in exceptional cases (farmers, the victims of the consequences of the current crisis etc.). Certainly, there is a problem of the spectator’s involvement here. Also, the art is for the spectators, so also it is here where the relevant institutions gain state funds, but on the basis of grants and clearly defined rules. So, is it not possible in a similar manner, where is it necessary (particularly from the point of view of state representation), to introduce a similar system also in a sport? It is a problem of a philosophical-political nature.

The third problem – the organization of big sport events of a European or of a world character. Is it in the public interest, or the state (political) interest in the sense of representation of the state? I think it is more of a state political interest concerning the representation of the state – the integration of sports and politics, sports as a political problem... If so, do our possibilities in the case of organizing these events correspond to the kind of the given sport? Is it concerning a sport which is so popular for us that it produces a sufficient number of spectators? Certainly, we can continue to ask further.

The fourth problem – the character of the whole current system of “sport”. In comparison with other countries, in our state, it is a completely free, voluntary set of elements; the relations among them are not precisely defined and the criteria and rules for the flow of money are not precisely fixed. The formulation and formalization of the system is a philosophical problem.

The fifth problem – a specific philosophical problem. It concerns the wrongful understanding of performance, influenced by “philosophy” of performance in our consumer society. At least a brief note about this problem. Performance is what is emphasized or what is required. Human beings are not evaluated according to their human qualities, but by the performance that they are able to give. The existence of concrete human beings is proven by their performance. “Performance has become a fetish, evidence about it that ‘we are’. Performance needs recognition by others, but in this recognition by others, their own interests for their own performance are often covered...” (Hogenová, 2005, p. 10). But the essence of life is in something else. It is in a way, in the search for sense. If we consider the performance as the value, then it should be added that the main value is a human being. From the human being, the values (as well as the performances) which are created are derived. Otherwise, human beings are lost. Of course, sport is based on performance, but if it is to maintain its purity and original sanctity, it is just this performance derived from the quality of a human being – the target is not performance, but a human being. This derived, real value, however, has a performance only in relationship to the overlap, transcendence, in relationship to the whole. Otherwise it loses its significance and becomes a mere object of any registration.

The problem of civil society is logically connected to the problem of volunteerism as an expression of civil engagement in its favor. It is a manifestation of human consciousness that the quality of individual-social life is associated with its own initiative and involvement. “Volunteerism is not immolation, but a real expression of civil maturity. It brings concrete help to anyone who needs it, but it also provides a sensation of advisability to the volunteer, is a source of new experience and skills and of enrichment in interpersonal relationships” (Tošner & Sozanský, 2002, p. 18). Volunteerism, which is a typical, characteristic part of civil society, has many forms. Meanwhile, according to Hudcová (2003), volunteerism does not have, in all of society, support in our environment; more widespread is donation. However, in this context she notes that “...volunteerism is also a gift, but the gift of a non-pecuniary nature” (p. 19). In participation in any form of volunteerism, the sensation of responsibility for others, a sensation of solidarity, of helping, etc. are evident.

Although differently developed, volunteerism has a long tradition in the world as well as in the Czech lands. If we combine the activities carried out within the framework of physical culture with manifestations of a civil society (see above), then it is logical to observe how voluntary work is involved in them. From the point of view of the history of Czech physical culture, voluntary activity is associated with the development of the organizations called Sokol, DTJ, Orel, FPT Scouts and other organizations. So, voluntary activity has its roots in the period of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. The vast majority of these organizations existed on the basis of voluntary activity, only a very small percentage also involved professional work. In terms of a comparison of development in the rest of the world and the Czech
lands, significant differences came about due to the existence of totalitarian regimes in the Czechlands, which excluded expressions of democratic citizenship. In totalitarian societies, civil society does not exist. So volunteer activity was restricted, respectively it acquired another character, associated with political enforcement. It wasn’t restored until after 1989. Although we can say that volunteerism predominates in charitable organizations, in the field of physical culture it has not reached the level known from the past. This is probably due to the continued predominating consumer performance of “philosophy” with which are necessarily related ideas such as: “If I can do anything, I have the right to be paid for it”, respectively, in the opposite: “The service for which I am paying is much better than the service I get for free”. These opinions are necessarily in antagonism of each other.

Herewith, their activity predominantly depends on voluntary activity. The mentioned Act lists the spheres to which the voluntary “service” corresponds. Without the specification of other possibilities it indicates also help in taking care of children, youth and assisting families in their leisure time. So, it does not indicate explicitly activities connected with physical culture (instructor, coach, official...); but they can be incorporated into the above mentioned activities connected with leisure.

The fundamental problem in dealing with volunteerism is the problem of remuneration. Does the volunteer have or not have the right to remuneration? This question is mainly connected with financial remuneration. “Remunerations” of other types are somehow automatic, they concern the provision of needed equipment, travel reimbursements, lending of sport material and so on. If it has to do with financial remunerations, it is only possible under the assumption that it is of a level lower than the regular wage for work of the same character.

So, volunteerism is a huge social phenomenon, which is involved in all spheres of social life, traditionally also in the sphere of physical culture. Volunteerism covers by its “philosophy” also philosophical kinanthropology, that is why it needs to also be addressed there.

REFERENCES

TĚLESNÁ KULTURA
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(Souhrn anglického textu)

VÝCHODISKA: Hlavním problémem je charakteristika občanské společnosti, její vazby na stát a pochopení tělesné kultury jako složky občanské společnosti.

CÍL: Cílem tohoto sdělení je vysvětlení postavení tělesné kultury jako části občanské společnosti a všech jejích socio-politických problémů s tím spojených.

VÝSLEDKY: Hlavní část je zaměřena na rozdílnosti tělesné výchovy, pohybové (tělocvičné) rekreace a sportu z hlediska jejich účasti na občanské společnosti. Je konstatováno, že není problém s tělesnou výchovou jako části školního vzdělání, poněvadž ta je garantována státem. Dále jsou popisovány problémy vztahů mezi pohybovou rekreací a občanskou společností, resp. sportem a občanskou společností. Tyto problémy jsou řešeny z hlediska veřejného prospěchu a jsou chápány v různých úrovních. V závěru jsou poznámky týkající se dobrovolnictví jako velmi významného aspektu aktivit realizovaných v rámci tělesné kultury.

ZÁVĚRY: Z práce vyplývá, že tělesná kultura je se svými socio-politickými konsekvencemi velmi významnou součástí občanské společnosti. Tento závěr je významný z hlediska pochopení jejího smyslu.

Klíčová slova: tělesná výchova, rekeace, sport, občanská prospěšnost, dobrovolnictví.

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*First-line publications*


