



MALMÖ HÖGSKOLA

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Limitations or restrictions in functionality can happen to anybody, anytime, any which way, and in varying degrees of extent and permanence. When a limitation of functioning is regarded as permanent and has an extent which makes it significantly more difficult for the individual to live her or his life on an equal basis with the major part of the population – primarily because society is adapted to suit that part, the major part, of the population who has no or minor restrictions of functioning – the epithet usually reached for is disability. Until some time ago one usually talked of handicap rather than disability; however, that concept, given its etymological roots in illicit gambling, is well on the way out of everyday parlance, but lives on in composite terms like handicap accessible (accommodation) and in some instances, unfortunately, handicap sports, mainly from linguistic habit. The term handicap sports is included in the Swedish association which organizes athletes with disabilities, Svenska Handikappidrottsförbundet (SHIF, The Swedish Handicapped Sports Association; the English counterpart is called Disability Sport England). Disability sports is a growing research field within sport studies, in disciplines like history, kinesiology, pedagogy, sociology, and, particularly relevant here and now, philosophy, or to be more precise, ethics. The edited volume *Ethics, Dis-Ability and Sports* (Routledge), compiled by Ejgil Jespersen and Mike McNamee, presents contributions to a conference on this theme held in Norway in 2007. Kenneth Aggerholm, this forum's reviewer, delivers a knowledgeable and critical assessment of the totality of the book as well as of its parts; individual contributions are put in polemic with each other, creating a tension from which the book as a whole benefits. Inspiring stuff, in Aggerholm's opinion.

Sound theoretical basis and practical resonance

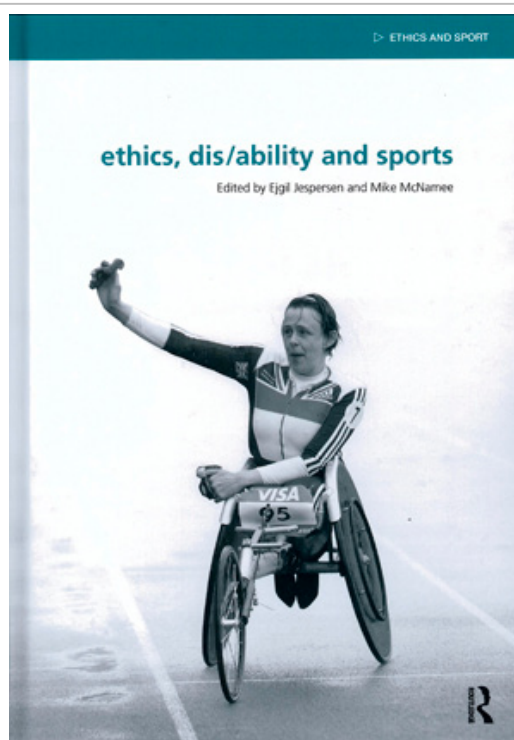
Kenneth Aggerholm

Department of Sport Science, University of Aarhus

Ejgil Jespersen & Mike McNamee (red)
Ethics, Dis/Ability and Sports
190 pages, hc.
Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge 2009
(Ethics and Sport)
ISBN 978-0-415-48797-9

Usually in sport top athletes are congratulated by the crowds, their (sometimes abnormal) physiques are admired and their extraordinary feats are watched with amazement. Just think of the tall basketball players, the small gymnastic girls or the giant sumo wrestlers. Sometimes however, when the athletes appear too abnormal or too extraordinary, reactions are not quite as predictable, and it is in these instances that fellow practitioners and researchers in the field may be called upon to vary their approaches, too. It is also in these instances that some ethical dilemmas may arise, and that is the kick off point for this book.

Over the last 50 years the field of Adapted Physical Activity (APA) has grown from treatment to self-determined involvement and performance (sport). Along with this development, a wide range of



ethical, philosophical and academic issues and questions have arisen, that have only rarely been addressed until quite recently. This book deserves credit for tackling a range of the more challenging ones. Consider, for example, who is the more normal (or disabled) – a man with 3 legs or a man with no legs – and should the man with no legs be allowed to compete with ‘normal’ athletes? How can one help a disabled athlete develop towards less dependency? Is independence really a goal in itself? Can a researcher ever imagine what it is like to be a disabled athlete? How can we know if APA works as a treatment for disabled people? And how come that the body functions of conversion disorder patients – people who have physical symptoms and no organic cause – seem to improve when they become unaware of them?

Clearly, questions like these do not call for straight answers. Rather, they are of the nature of ethical dilemmas and therefore all we can ask of a book like this is to promote them, clarify related concepts, and bring various perspectives to the reader’s attention. That is exactly what *Ethics, Dis/Ability and Sports* does. With the declared intent to stimulate further and richer ethical and philosophical debate it takes us through puzzling dilemmas, theoretical descriptions and interesting (and at times even entertaining) cases. It does so by letting 16 international scholars, who took part in a symposium at the Norwegian School of Sport Sciences in August/September 2007, consider the subject from different angles.

Two of them (Hilvoorde and Landeweerd) take a philosophical meta stance and aim at the dilemmas connected to fairness within disability sports. They take a closer look at how today’s technology can make certain disabilities an advantage to the athlete due to more refined prostheses, lighter wheelchairs, etc. This blurs the picture of who is dis-abled or too-abled, and using terms that could come straight out of a general doping discussion it is argued that it challenges part of the internal logic of sport: equality. Furthermore, they discuss the difficulties of classification and categorization in disability sports. Unfortunately the definitions can encourage some athletes to overstate or misrepresent their (dis-)abilities and as the definitions are never neutral or objective, there is often a thin line between disability and extraordinary talent – both of them being equally far away from ‘normal’. From a more pragmatic stance Edwards touches on the same issue in his analysis of the case of Oscar Pistorius, the runner with no legs who wants to compete in the ‘real’ olympics.

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Another angle of approach is a media analysis. From that perspective Gard and Fitzgerald take a look at how disabled athletes are depicted in the movie *Murderball*. It is a movie about wheelchair rugby and the essay is a negatively biased (or critical, as they put it) review which raises some more general questions about how the media perceive disabled persons.

The book also offers a more theoretical approach directed at research within the area. The positions presented in this category are primarily inspired by phenomenology and reveal some disagreement on the matter. In his essay Smith delivers a methodological critique of the phenomenological approach in qualitative research on disabled athletes. With Levinas by his side he argues that imagination is embodied and that a researcher can therefore never imagine what it is like to be a disabled athlete. He therefore encourages researchers of disability and sport not to overstate the power of imagination. On the other hand, Papadimitriou in her essay delivers a counter-argument, saying that sociological phenomenology can be a fruitful methodology for collecting and interpreting data concerning persons with disabilities. From her perspective it provides a valuable tool to avoid reductionism and explanatory hypotheses and it enables the researcher to recognise and put aside biases, and revisit and interpret the phenomenon at hand as it presents itself rather than through a priori theoretical standpoints. This is backed up by Connolly who praises semiotic phenomenology as both orientation and methodology when exploring the subjectivity of disabledness. Based on the case of a movement-education-based program for persons with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), it is argued that this theoretical approach allows the researchers to see expressions as based on an embodied intentionality rather than a pre-established (fixed) neurological given. Hence it can be a fruitful experience and can facilitate a constructive understanding of the phenomenon, so enabling an understanding of the negotiation of meaning beyond the descriptive level.

This praise of a phenomenological approach is shared by Jordbru, Jespersen and Martinsen. Their essay is both directed at research and practice as they present APA as an alternative and interdisciplinary approach in a treatment programme for conversion disorder patients. The theoretical combination of radical behaviourism and phenomenology provides a perspective that can explain the symptoms without labelling them in psychiatric or medical terms, as it reconsiders the relation between body and mind. That further allows for an existential behavior therapy in which the patients regain control of their body by actively becoming unaware of it.

Following this, Standal also covers the learning aspect of APA in his critique of evidence-based practice in the field. The question is: How do we know what works when we work with disabled people? He answers from a hermeneutical perspective and through the concept of phronesis, by stating that the learning situation is a process in which the input-output relation cannot always explain causality. While evidence-based practice (and evaluation) may give the practitioners a feeling of security, Standal claims that it is important for practitioners of APA to be able

to handle the immanent insecurity of the field — hence his nuanced analysis ends up celebrating ‘the insecure practitioner’.

Finally three essays provide some general ethical considerations for the field of APA. Hutzler offers some perspectives on applied ethics from an ecological stance, considering task, rule and instruction modification and environmental adaptations. In her essay, Goodwin digs into the ethics of support through the concepts of dependence, independence and interdependence, leading to a suggested practice of self-regulated dependency. She ends up calling out for more exact ethical guidelines for the field of APA, just like Bredahl does in her essay on the ethical aspect of research in APA. She furthermore suggests a greater involvement of people with disabilities in the area as they may have valuable knowledge that could help the research.

As this survey of the selected essays shows, the book covers a great variety of perspectives and approaches, and it goes without saying that they are not dealt with in great depth, and so the feeling of «surfing the surface» is inevitable. The same thing goes for the redundancy when it comes to concepts and cases. The book serves, however, as a fine introduction to the various themes, and the good thing about this structure is that since the essays are self contained you can pick and choose what to read according to your interests. To help with navigation and overview each essay is provided with a short abstract (in 4 languages). Though the selection is quite academic and influenced by the philosophical interest of the editors, contact with the field of practice is never lost, and so professionals working with APA as well as others interested in the more practical dimensions of the area should not be deterred from taking a closer look at this inspiring book.

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