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Book Review

Third half, fair play. The values of sport to oppose homophobia and transphobia

by Giuliana Valerio. Ed. Mimesis, 2017.

In the book entitled “Terzo tempo, fair play. I valori dello sport per il contrasto all’omofobia e alla transfobia”, p. 147, Mimesis editions, 2017, edited by Giuliana Valerio, Associate Professor of General and Specialized Pediatrics at the University of Naples Parthenope, Manuela Claysset, President of the National Council Uisp, Responsible for Gender Policies, and Paolo Valerio, Full Professor of Clinical Psychology at the University of Naples Federico II, the documents of the Conference organized in Naples on 22.04.2015 by the Parthenope University, by C.I.R.B. (Inter-University Center for Bioethics Research) and by other promoting bodies are collected.

From the title it is possible to notice how the will of the authors to oppose homophobia and transphobia favors characters able to maintain constant openness to dialogue and reflection, essential prerogatives so that we can arrive at an effective understanding of the phenomena. It is no coincidence that we immediately refer to the concepts of third half and fair play. As happens at the end of the match, in fact, even this book seems to have the intention to create an atmosphere of loyalty and non-violence to deal with topics that often seemed to be burning. And so that painful issues such as those referable to the concept of discrimination can emerge more conscious and transformed - especially in a country like Italy, where even the gender disparity in sports is still quite evident (see chapter VII) - it is necessary to approach the reading of the text using those typical qualities guaranteed by the logic of fair play. Sports practice has the potential to counteract the phenomenon of discrimination, but it can easily be seen that even today, especially in reference to issues such as sexual orientation and gender identity, the results achieved cannot be considered satisfactory, and the motivations appear to be multiple. Thanks to a detailed explanation of the multidimensional concept of sexual identity (see chapter I), it is possible to understand how the misunderstandings generated by a lack of knowledge of the phenomenon can make sexual identity an object of prejudice and violence, not only agitated but also hidden. Precisely on this last type of violence, the second chapter proposes a study in which stereotypical beliefs and prejudicial attitudes are put forward by the students of Motor Sciences, thus presuming that future trainers and sports teachers risk feeding a heteronormative culture rather than contributing pedagogically to develop culture of inclusion.

The implications of heteronormativity, amply detailed in the text, mean that in sports - potentially fertile soil for developing a cooperative goal-oriented training (see chapter IV) - it becomes extremely difficult, if not impossible, to be able to carry out the process coming out (see chapter X). And if it is true that sport brings with it the possibility of revealing a redemptive experience, it is equally true that various barriers (see chapter V) prevent an effective body awareness, further complicating a genuine path of self-seeking.

The analysis that the authors propose with reference to the opportunities offered by sport to encourage inclusion phenomena seems to be in line with Mandela's statement in 2000: «Sport has the power to change the world. To unite people. It speaks a language that everyone understands. Sport can create hope where there was only desperation before». The challenge remains current and, above all referring to inclusion dynamics related to sexual identities in sports, the hope is to continue on a path of a serious and profound debate, so that we can increasingly succeed in achieving an effective awareness capable of soothing the suffering caused by prejudice and discrimination.

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