

## ON BODY AND EDUCATION

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The history of the teaching of movements is a remarkable field in the history of education, the research paradigm of which also presupposes social and cultural-historical studies and accurate document analysis. The impressive volume published in 2021 and edited by Simonetta Polenghi, András Németh and Tomáš Kasper, provides a comprehensive overview of the educational trends from the turn of the century to the 1950s. The book's authors present the trends in physical education and movement arts in the European countries of the era from exciting perspectives. The studies focus on how the public health, ideology, art, and pedagogical trends of the first half of the 20th century influenced educational policy aspirations for the physical and artistic development of the body.

The book was published as the fourteenth volume in the series *Erziehung und Wissenschaft in Praxis* (Education and Science in Practice – translated by the Reviewer) by Peter Lang Publisher. The series includes study volumes and monographs in English and German on pedagogy, especially in the fields of didactics, social pedagogy and the history of education.

This volume is related to two previous volumes in the series in terms of the chronology of educational history. One of the volumes – the second part of the series (Hopfner & Németh, Eds., 2008) – collects papers that discuss the direct historical and theoretical antecedents of this volume. The description of the life reform movements and herbartianism within the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, as well as the characterisation of the impact of changed public thinking about the child on teacher education and school culture, contribute to a complex interpretation of the topics in the first chapter of this volume. The fifth volume of the series (Hopfner, Németh & Szabolcs, Eds, 2009) also focuses on the tendencies of the history of education in Central Europe. The chronological continuity between these two volumes is created by the present volume, which summarises the trends in the education of the body from the turn of the century to the 1950s.

This volume is related to the two other books in the series in terms of the history of ideas and educational policy. The eleventh volume (Németh, Stöckl & Vincze, Eds., 2017) examined the cultural and social effects of the reform pedagogical movements until the beginning of the Second World War in Austria and Hungary. The studies in the thirteenth volume focus on the interconnection of art, especially the visual arts, the art of movement, and life reform movements. It is the background volume of the conference organised in connection with the interdisciplinary exhibition *Hidden Stories* (Art Gallery, 2018), as well as the book published in Hungarian (Németh & Skiera, 2018). In particular, the study of Ágnes Boreczky contains essential information about the social conditions of the development and practice of modern

dance, and Christine Mayer writes about the connections between life reform movements, reform pedagogy and modern dance.

This volume further deepens the topics of movement art and dance education in the Central European region in the 19th and 20th centuries, especially in Germany, Austria and Hungary, and it presents Western and Southern European trends as well. The common motive of the studies is the interaction of movement and spirit. The review title is a direct reference to Ildikó Enyedi's 2017 Oscar-nominated and Grand Prix-winning film at Berlin International Film Festival, entitled *On Body and Soul*. Just as the director of the film presents how the soaring of the soul and the body's reactions create human connections, so the essays in this volume revolve around the close interaction of body and soul.

Thinking about physical education can come into focus in many sub-disciplines of educational science. Subject pedagogy thematises the methods by which the optimal development of the body's abilities can be achieved. Social pedagogy discusses the social perception and integration of the body determined by social views. It includes topics such as the punishment of the body as a tool of moral education and discipline, the relationship between public health rules and school hygiene, and the presence of political-ideological goals in physical education. In addition, the cultural-historical determination of the body and the movement cannot be ignored. All these topics are extremely relevant to the history of education, which summarises and interprets the facts obtained from the sources in a historical context.

The rich primary source material of the period – photo documentations, newspaper articles – provided the starting points for exciting research for the authors of the volume. The 14 essays were written by researchers from 12 universities in 10 countries (Great Britain, Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Hungary, Slovenia, the Czech Republic, Italy, Spain and France).

The volume is divided into three main thematic sections. The studies in the first chapter thematise the effects of the life reform movement on body image and body education. The second chapter presents the situation of sports education in Western Europe in the first half of the 21st century, focusing on the role of gymnastics and physical activity in Western industrial societies. The studies show how the topos of a strong and athletic body strengthened national self-awareness or even extreme nationalist ideology in countries with totalitarian regimes. The third main part of the volume reveals school concepts related to children's bodies. The studies in this chapter cover hygiene and moral education issues and the approaches to the normal and abnormal body.

The first chapter of the volume is the most significant in terms of the history of dance education. Ehrenhard Skiera presents the impact of the life reform movement on education which focused on the mystification and sacralisation of the body. Nutrition, care and development of the body were the basic ideas of the life reform movement. The idea of a child-centred, close-to-nature, harmonious, loving and healthy education was opposed by alienated, industrialising mass society. The life reform movement considered the development of the individual to be conceivable only in harmony with nature and cosmic forces. The author reflects on the thinkers who interpret the idea of *mens sana in corpore sano* on an idealistic or materialistic basis and then states that the transcendental, universal interpretation of the body appears only in the reform pedagogical principles. These tendencies saw the body

as a representative of cosmic forces from God and dance and rhythmic movement as an act of connection with cosmic forces. Among the reform pedagogical trends, the author highlights the work of Maria Montessori, who referred to modern movement art. Skiera also draws attention to the subject of eurythmy in Waldorf schools, in which the body is the essence of aesthetics, of spiritualisation.

Two further studies in the first chapter of the volume are essential for exploring the relationship between dance teaching and the life reform movement. In the essay 'Life reform and the new body concept of the art of movement', written by Janka Balogh and András Németh, we get an insight into the inspiring and liberating effect of the life reform movement on modern movement art through the work of Isadora Duncan, Rudolf Lábán and Mary Wigman. The authors continue the line of thought of the previous study on dance in nature and its role in education and present the ideology of the life reform movement regarding body liberation. The identity of the iconic figures of modern dance was largely determined by the topos of fleeing from the isolation of atheist industrial society to nature where inner harmony and connection with transcendence can be achieved by liberation the body. The liberation of the body meant, on the one hand, that people who went out into nature practised ordinary activities (such as sunbathing, hiking, swimming) naked or in loose clothing, and, on the other hand, that there was a turning away from the academic forms and clothing of classical ballet. Dance became a self-expression tool, which was characterised by the natural movements of the body. In their study, the authors also thematise the American and European trends of modern dance and its survival in Hungary.

Agnes Trattner writes about the life reform community in Monte Verita in Switzerland and the gymnastics and dance in the women's settlement of Loheland. The *fin du siècle* liberated the upper-middle class from the narrow clothes and gender-based social discrimination. The author highlights the importance of Gräser, who later founded his dance ensemble on Monte Verita. Gräser's moonlight dance had a significant impact on his followers, who danced naked with improvisational movements around the fire in a spirit of sexual freedom and spirituality. Agnes Trattner notes that the concept of the Loheland settlement equally reflects a holistic and integrative approach, aiming to achieve a harmonious and ideal unity of body and soul. The self-education youth movement of women considered it important to strengthen body awareness. Their practices included elements of gymnastics, yoga, and self-expression movements. Creating the unity of body and soul was also accomplished through excursions, dancing, vegetarianism, nudism, and wearing loose clothing.

The other two studies in this chapter focus on the social definition of female body image. Dorina Szente and András Németh define the changes in the female ideal of the age with the help of contemporary women's magazines and personal photos. Ilaria Mattioni presents the body-related ideas that dominated the era in Italy by analysing the decent female ideal in Catholic women's magazines.

The studies present interesting approaches to the reason and purpose of dance teaching in formal and informal education in the first half of the 20th century. On the one hand, the era was influenced by the modern dance pedagogical trends directly related to reform pedagogy and life reform movements. The ideas of the era were characterised by creative self-expression, personal freedom and spirituality. On the

other hand, reading the studies, it can also be stated that the cultivation of the body in the national educational policies of the age also served ideological and moral purposes.

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