

Achievement Motivation and Enthusiasm

Authentic commitment and enthusing participation in sport and education

Hans Lenk

I. An Olympic climax of achievement enthusiasm

"Encore quatre minutes!" The loudspeaker sounds across Lake Albano, echoing back with a hollow grumble reflected from the crater walls. The Olympic final in the eights is just about to start. The shells are arranged at the take-off marks. Dull feelings in the stomach. Pull yourself together - now or never! *"Partez!"* The signal cuts the silence, releasing a hustling, bustling noise of coxswains' piercing cries, of cracking sliding seats and hasty water splashes. The great, the last race is under way. Looking back: for four years, we had lived only for this goal. For four years, there was hardly time for anything else except daily workouts, travelling to regattas, races, times, diet and exercise, trimming boats, variations in condition and shape, tactics, strategy and so on. Rowing seemed to be "the most important thing in the world". The sporting "myth" caught the imagination and built up motivation. To participate, to be in the swing of things, totally involved in this fascinating endeavour, all that seemed to be the greatest adventure of an active life. It has been a cooperative endeavour, consummated by the crew and its coach (Karl Adam), highlighting and fulfilling a "mythical" dream. *"The eights - it is the team per se"*, wrote the German poet Hagelstange about our Olympic race as of 1960 on Lake Albano in the mountainous vicinity of the Olympic City, the eternal Rome.

"One thousand metres, half way. Stay tough!" Ten hard strokes against Canada's intermediate spurt. Three quarters of a length. And still five hundred metres to go, the last quarter of the last race. Muscles and tendons strain with pain, pushing, treading against growing resistance. Air! Breathing and coughing.

Arms, legs but clumsy obstacles. A glance out of the boat shows that Vancouver is falling back: one length. The final spurt: *"still 15!"* The boat jumps on again, accelerates once more. All the energy into this stroke - and again in that one! Darkness, buzzing ears, hoarse and coarse throat. The clumsiness seems unbearable. *"14, 15 - through"*. Falling, dropping. Breathe! Darkness, points of light - exhaustion. *"Stay moving!"* Slower paddling on, panting, gasping. Relaxation. Gradually the environment reappears. The brown shells, the coloured racing suits, the roaring grandstands.

The last, the greatest race. A dream came true, a "myth" became reality. "The structure of top-level performance is the same in any realm" (Karl Adam). Is life but a race?

Being a, or even *the*, climax of achievement and life, such an accomplishment would determine practical walks of life already a long time in advance by training, shaping mentality, personal commitment and devotion. What is the meaning of such at surface value rather useless accomplishments and achievements records rendering – at least in former times – neither bread nor pay nor rent nor sustenance nor even scholarships? Does such an Olympic success make sense in itself or just by being applauded by many?

Indeed, one does not live on bread and sustenance alone. This might – superficially speaking – already convey a partial answer. Humans seem to be the beings for whom the seemingly superfluous accrues towards a sort of necessity, amounting to or even constituting culture – at least this is Ortega y Gasset's basic philosophy of civilisation, life and sport. More specifically, culture would according to him be "the daughter of sports" and of the free exuberant activities of life thus following Schiller's and Spencer's philosophy of life being creative exuberance of energy release and play of all kinds. Ortega would not – as many authors usually do – think that it is primarily not work and toil as well as self-discipline and self-overwhelming, if not self-victory, which would lead to creative achievements, but the sporting free exuberant active creativity like play and energy expenditure for fun, so to speak. Anything valuable for and in higher cultural endeavours would result from the surplus of this sort of joyous life, the overflowing of power and the spending of energy not necessary for sustenance. Today, we are far from such a philosophy of life which reigned for a long time in idealistic times of optimism and exuberance of this sort of really authentic and creative personal activity only despising any work and toil and self discipline. Indeed, we cannot identify anything barren, mechanical and oriented at aims and usage just with work and, by contrast, see anything vital, interesting, valuable and cultural as accruing by and originating from sport and games and play. Did not Beethoven see 5 % of any creative arts as inspiration and 95 % as transpiration and hard work-outs?

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Sport indeed is vital life. It consists of actions, achievements, accomplishments, which humans perform. These accomplishments cannot be surreptitiously pretended or conducted by betrayal, make-shift etc.; they in the final analysis cannot be delegated or reorganized just by orders from top. You cannot command somebody to

¹ Ortega would expand the concept of sports far to broadly. Any effort undertaken for itself or the exuberance of power and vital impulses would be "sport" for him. Any arts or culture – at least higher civilisation – would amount to sport: "*disportare*", a sort of distraction is a Latin linguistic root of the concept –, would be sport *a fortiori*. Even life itself would be meta-physical effort just for itself, a sort of overflowing of energy. Ortega even talks about "the sportive, festive meaning of life" (1954). However: life is not in itself and by itself just sport and play.

establish a world record in the marathon or to climb Mount Everest, though you may be able to command people to march in line in military formations.

In sport, notably in athletics as well as in any sort of top-level creative accomplishments whatsoever, you have to identify with your own activities and decisions as well as plans. Training and workouts require a sort of devotion and personal authentic identification. Sport is but an exemplary realm for really conducted authentic achievements, personal proper accomplishments which I would like to call “*eigenactivities*” and “*eigenachievements*”² (*Eigenhandlung* and *Eigenleistung*) being proper authentic self-motivated actions with which the agent would personally identify under standards of judgement and valuation as being top- or high-level, better, excellent or, on the other hand, worse or a failure. These evaluations are conducted - and judged - by the acting person her- or himself as well as from others in teams, groups and societal subgroups or even the general achieving society (McClelland).

“The structure of achievement would be the same in all areas” did our coach of the Olympic rowing team, Karl Adam, emphasize many times. This is certainly a bit exaggerated, but in any case, the pertinent structures are rather similar indeed so that many an experience from sport, top-level athletics in particular, might be transferred to other realms of *eigenachievements*. Nevertheless, the phenomenon of *eigenactivity* and *eigenachievement* is of course much more general than just referring to the area of sport itself.

II. Excursus about achievement motive and achievement motivation

Achieving action and achieving are always oriented at a standard of performance or even excellence. This is true for the achievement motive (McClelland, Atkinson) as well as for achievement motivation in the narrower sense.

The *achievement motive* is a personal rather prominent need disposition or motive to generally orient oneself at high goals and to strive for these, to propel oneself forward in order to top one’s former achievements. Characteristically, the respective actions would thus refer towards a standard or even an exacting scale of performance “goodness” or effort. *Achievement motivation* can be summarized as the personal tendency and general disposition to strive for a specific goal if the achievement motive is the decisive propelling disposition. Those motives and dispositions are usually seen in context with the person’s craving and striving as well as a special motive for her or his recognition by others and in one’s own eyes.

² Quantum physicists talk of “*eigenvectors*” and “*eigenvalues*” of the state matrix or observables (characterizing the projected possible experimental values of the observables “projected in Hilbert space from the quantum theoretical state function). The terminology of “*eigenachievements*” is by analogy devised after this partial translation from the German reminding us of the characteristic features of self-authored, i.e. authentic and autonomous, personal achievements proper with which the very originators really identify themselves.

In short: The achievement motive is a relatively stable personality trait, whereas according to social psychologists achievement motivation is by contradistinction the *actual(ized)* tendency or disposition – dependant on the immediate situation and therefore being rather variable – to strive and attain a distant target and success to measure one's own performances with criteria of excellence and performance standards, once the achievement motive furnishes the impetus.

According to Atkinson and McClelland the most important axiom of the social psychology of achievement and motivation would be: The effective achievement motivation depends on the (level of the) achievement motive, but also on the (subjective and objective) probability to reach the goal by one's own activity and in addition on the special valuation and/or attractiveness of this goal: probability and attraction of this success together with the achievement motive would determine the strength of the respective actual achievement motivation.

Correlatively, according to this approach, the tendency to evade and avoid failure would grow together with the amount of the motive to avoid failure as well as with the probability of failures and the respective measure of discouragement (the second basic axiom of a simple theory of achievement motivation).

Everybody would be subject to *both* motives: the achievement motive as well as the motive of avoiding failure, indeed, however to rather different extents. The main thesis of the mentioned theory of achievement motivation would state that the overall tendency to take over and fulfil the task or achievement would originate as the difference between achievement motivation and the respective motivation to avoid failure – as well as from external motivations like, e.g., the affiliation motive and motivation.

We might hypothesize that success would be conducive or at least favourable to the expectation of further success experiences, failure would decrease this expectation; therefore failure in rather easy tasks and challenges would in the case of highly achievement motivated persons decrease the achievement motivation whereas successful performance in rather difficult and hard tasks would motivate these highly achievement-motivated subjects. By contrast, success in easy tasks would motivate rather anxious persons mostly oriented at avoiding experiences of failure, whereas failure with hard tasks would discourage them. All this seems to sound rather plausible: Easy success is not interesting for persons high in achievement motivation: The Olympic champion would not find it very attractive to compete at a local school contest.

Easy tasks however would render the rather anxious athletes more self-confident: They would take a little more risks and go on to accept slightly higher challenges.

From this theory we may derive a few simple consequences that have been multiply confirmed by many experimental tests and practical experiences:

If the probability of success and the respective attraction are the same or similar, the strength of the achievement motive would thus decide about the amount of achievement motivation. (A respective insight would hold true for the motive to avoid failure.) The (higher) the net balance between achievement and failure motivation thus decides about the overall motivation to initiate and perform an action.

The attractiveness of an highly valued success is greater for an achievement motivated person than that one of minor successes and also stronger than for rather anxious persons. (And the other way around for subjects motivated to avoid failure.)

Satisfaction with success is usually higher on the side of highly achievement-motivated subjects – particularly within a rather uniform group of achievement-motivated persons (the social appreciation of achievement would strengthen the attractiveness).

Achievement motivated subjects would put in more effort in a situation or contest within a achievement-oriented environment than in a rather relaxed atmosphere, and they would do so more often than rather less achievement-motivated subjects. On the average, they would generally perform better in particularly achievement-oriented situations than in relaxed ones.

Being or getting accustomed to success would seem to become boring. Achievement-motivated persons would then set their standards higher (take over a higher level of aspiration – as already confirmed some 70 years ago by Hoppe and Lewin). By contrast, with ongoing failure one would tend to lower one's aspiration level.

In general, , as compared to highly achievement motivated persons, the motivational dynamics would be the other way around if somebody tries above all to avoid failure. Higher achievement-motivated subjects would display a greater perseverance in staying with the efforts to solve the tasks³.

Except a few studies (like the one in the mentioned paradoxical case of the avoidance motivated persons – the theory of achievement motivation and the overall net balance between the achievement motive and the motive to avoid failure were rather frequently confirmed and maybe seen as rather sufficiently describing many hypotheses and dynamics of achievement actions – in particular, if choices and risks according to difficulties of tasks are concerned. As a comparative theory of “more or

³ Paradoxically, sometimes rather anxious persons would persevere at rather hard tasks, perhaps because other tasks and the impending transition would appear even more frightening to them. (One could perhaps distinguish two largely independent tendencies to avoid failure – namely one originating from the lack of self-confidence regarding one's own capabilities and another one as the anxiety to be confronted with negative social consequences (Schmalt).

less” highly (as against lowly achievement-motivated) subjects this theory seems to be rather successful⁴.

III. Principles of achievement and *eigenachievement*

The different principles of achievement in psychology, social-psychology and sociology: The societal and economic “achievement” has to be distinguished from the individual “achievement” of a creative and productive personal outcome of an action, which might in turn be the basis for social stratification or assessment and distribution of chances and pay, monetary and social. Achievement indeed in all these areas is dependent on evaluation and interpretation, requires as mentioned standards (or even scales) of capability, goodness, measures of difficulties, as well as certain favourable emotional individual or social conditions, e.g. an individualistic-activistic basic attitude towards life and self-responsibility as well as liberal social structures – being necessary for or at least conducive to the so-called “achieving society” (McClelland).

Achievement may be evaluated from different aspects: E.g. from the perspective of outcome, result, effort, input, competition, capability, talent, susceptibility and/or absence of control and intervention, safety, etc. The quantitative aspects of fulfilling these standards of achievement can be interpreted as, e.g., success on the market, productivity (output-input relation), increase of output, minimization of input, fulfilment of duties and formal tasks, individual effort and workout, the topping of others or as exhaustion of personal, social or economic resources and opportunities as well as capabilities.

⁴ A theory however would seem to have limits regarding extremely highly achievement-motivated persons: These would set their level of aspirations higher: They would not only choose tasks of rather medium difficulty (unsure expectation of success), but they would rather tend to choose more difficult goals and tasks than inculcated by the median or average value as favoured by the theory. Besides, the self-interpretation of the acting subjects, their knowledge about their own motives and the feedback of success and failure onto the subsequent self-interpretation and achievement motivation were not yet taken into account in the earlier theory by McClelland and Atkinson.

Psychologists also know the sometimes adversely affecting or hampering role of under- or over-motivation. Once, a highly achievement-motivated, even over-motivated Olympic rower could only start with a pretended sedative tablet (which in fact just contained glucose as a placebo). With this placebo, he won a gold medal in the Olympics.

By contrast, there are also underachievers, who may only in very strenuous and strongly inspiring achievement situations and challenges display their optimal capability – but not yet under everyday conditions.

There is apparently no furthergoing unique measurement of the evaluation of achievement – in particular in comparison between different social realms and tasks as well as achievement structures and formats.

The so-called “*achievement principle*” (in social science) would describe material and social stratifications and rewards as well as chances of upward social mobility as well as improvement of living in return or in proportionate relationship with one’s actual or potential personal achievement (in particular in vocational matters). This is the achievement principle as a social attributional and/or distributive criterion).

As regards this principle, one has to distinguish the microeconomic as well as the social psychological principle of achievement, the first one relating just to economic success, the latter one describing achievement readiness or motivation in the narrower sense.

In our society, however, we have also other social principles of ascription, attribution and distribution as, for instance, principles of social support, political elections, representations, tarife conflicts, group - sub-group as well as in-group vs. out-group perspectives and assortings, heritage, traditions, etc.

For education and the philosophy of education, the social psychological principle of readiness for achievement and active authentic creative activity undertaken by oneself, authentic personally engaged achievement behaviour motivation and performance being self-motivated and self interested, is certainly the outstanding principle. This kind of authentic personal achievement orientation and action orientation I would, as mentioned already, specifically call “*eigenachievement*” (*Eigenleistung*, see my 1983) or more general “*eigenactivity*” or “*eigenaction*” (*Eigenhandlung* if no expressive increase of a scaled amount of performance or achievement is intended). There is a notable difference between self-motivated and alien determined achievement and action.

Insofar, as *eigenachievement* and *eigenaction* are essential creative phenomena and moments of life itself (in particular in Western societies), these orientations and the respective principles and motivations have to be necessarily fostered and required in education. The creative social psychological principle of achievement should not thereby be misinterpreted in an economical narrower sense only. Self-motivation should as a rule be preferable to at times still necessary compulsion for achieving. Any unnecessary attempt to compel somebody to achieve should, according to an ideal outline of an achieving society by and by be tendentially reduced, should give way to the ideal creative *eigenachievement*. Our (Western) personalities would develop (only) in and by their creative *eigenachievements*. The principle of *eigenachievement* seems to me, culturally speaking as well as societally and educationally, to be indispensable.

The other large ongoing debate by social critics highlighting a harsh criticism at the so called “achievement principle” (of all three provenances) as well as the criticism of the so called “achieving society” but the in-depth analysis of social psychological as

well as educational and societal experiences and needs led up to the result that achievement orientation and the social and individual fostering of this very mentality and the respective dispositions cannot be dispensed with. Indeed, the “achievement of principle” need not contravene every or any humanitarian society (see my 1976). However, it seems to be very important (which the social critics of the 60s had notoriously overlooked) to distinguish between self-motivated authentic and alien-oriented or imposed achievements and achievement expectations being notoriously of an other-directed provenance. “*Eigenachievement*” and “*eigenactivity*” would prominently denote the self-motivated, self engaged, voluntarily performed personal achievement and action. The concept also refers to symbolic achievements and such some which can be only realized or materialized and be expressed by interpretations as, e.g., in arts, sciences and many creative realms – and even in personal sports.

In an intriguing deep sense, human life is primarily “*eigenactivity*”, or even “*eigenachievement*”, an ever-evaluable and evaluated creative personal acting or action. It is so to speak an element and vehicle of an engaging and “real” (really active) life in its original action sense. Meaning resides in acting and achieving, in self-determined, self-structured and goal-oriented “being active”. Our personality – at least that one of western culture and society – mirrors itself and even constitutes itself chiefly in works and actions, in expressions and results, brought about and consummated by the individual – i.e. by actions and achievements in the wider sense. Activities of acting motor and psychical behaviour figure here as well as individual presentations: An individual might distinguish itself particularly by novel, creative, at times even unique accomplishments and achievements within the eyes of others, but also confronted to its own aspiration and expectation to go beyond her or his previous achievements, to prove oneself according to ones own judgement and to such of others. Of course, the personality does not merely mirror herself in achievement actions; it would be really at times inhuman, to judge everybody only according to her or his achievement, achievement behaviour or capability. However, achievements and accomplishments proffer a special opportunity for a distinction, self-development, self-confirmation and self-education. Within the society and cultural background tending towards levelation of everything, incurring no real menacing danger and requiring no activation of emergency reserve capacities within our usual highly civilized walks of life, action capabilities and requirements would gain a special meaning insofar as they reach beyond the day-to-day routines, motivating the human being and particular adolescents towards particular activities. In a society admitting of too little tension and challenge, to view tasks of self-probing and -confirmation the human beings create themselves some artificially designed, self-designed “tension” by make-shift challenges and risk seeking, by requiring something special from themselves. Humans would ask from themselves a characteristic personal and authentic achievement or accomplishment, maybe even in risk sports or extreme, at

least some extraordinary challenges and aspiring or strenuous tasks, documenting as it were effort, self-devoting, energy release, extraordinary risk taking, endurance or, in particular, creativity. Humans are the “*eigenachieving beings*” *par excellence*. However, for a whole generation or so, facts didn't look like that. The so-called “leisure and fun society” did not seem to highlight these ideals of an active achieving being – at least at first sight. Seen from a deeper perspective, indeed, many of the respective ideas of a too lenient and pleasure oriented all to smooth and civilized small world of modern pampered and feathered youngsters seem yet to display some hidden fundamental wishes for something special in terms of reaching for the extraordinary.

Indeed, for a decade or so, for the first time again even achievement orientation and challenges of adventures, activities or at least the vicarious living of those are “in” again. This is also true for nature and risk sports in general, as well as for a considerable portion of our younger generation with respect to achievement orientation at the standards and principles of achievement. In my home country Germany, e.g., not only traditionally oriented adolescents and youngsters (at 68 %) but also the “allround interested” being the most multisided and versatile ones, are (at 63%) again rather achievement-oriented (according to the *Shell Youth Study XIII*, 2000) (in the general population it is nowadays 52% as against 43% of the West-Germans and even 33% of the under 30 year old ten or two decades earlier) that considered themselves rather achievement-oriented persons. This seems to be a real turn in the obtaining trends of the last decades before climaxing in the so-called “pleasure society” and a let-it-go orientation before.

Nowadays even orientations at modernity and hedonism, as well as pleasure, seem to imply, that a certain self-engagement in terms of achieving and action as well as risk taking and venturing is implied. Thus, the authors of this youth study covering the last decade in Germany states “a solid increase in achievement orientation” since 1992: “The older youngsters would more frequently profess an achievement orientation than the younger ones, the females more often than the males, the Germans more than the immigrants” (with the exception of the age section of 22-24 years old males, declaring that they would rather be achievement- than pleasure-oriented). These new results amount to a remarkable turn in the traditional trend of the once fashionable defeatist mentality before.

Also sociological enquiries seem to imply that the real situation is not that negative as the well known Institute for Demoscopy at Allensbach (on Lake Constance) had announced since the end of the 70s diagnosing an enlarging cleavage between achieving activists and passivists and an overall trend not to “understand life as a task” to be tackled but just as “pleasure” to be enjoyed. For instance in metal industry in the 80s Schmidtchen conducted a rather comprehensive enquiry regarding job satisfaction, leading to some interesting results: Workers, who did assess themselves to be employed in the right way and social context would regard their work more interesting and display more job satisfaction at their working

place than those who did not. Important is Schmidtchen's so-called "thesis of resources" or compensation: The more opportunities for compensation somebody has, be they psychic, physical, organisational, design-bound or other advantages besides salary, the more freedom of decisions one would have, the greater would be the satisfaction with the working place and the job, independently of one's judgement of technical progress and innovations. If anybody has many resources for compensation, this seems to be the most effective factor for job-satisfaction. According to Schmidtchen, the collaborators would then much easier shoulder special burdens, if they could avail themselves of greater resources for compensation, displaying to a higher extent a considerable job satisfaction than the others with no or less some such resources. In particular, the result showed that in conditions and situations of higher burdens on the job, personal resources like competence, value orientation, education etc. have a more significant influence on job satisfaction than just organisational resources (whether or not one is supervisor or subordinate) and even more than pay. (79% of the collaborators confronting high job burdens would assess their task as "very good" or "good", if they had many or relatively strong *personal resources* for compensation available – as against 59% or 66% regarding just financial and organisational resources.) The *personal resources* are particularly decisive. Value orientation, personal engaging and devotion, self-motivation but also the development and the extent of a respectable margin of free dispositions and self-related responsibility would play a special role besides other personal resources like health etc. if job satisfaction is at stake. (Similar results were found regarding new challenges in front of technological innovations (Schmidtchen 1986).

In general – and that is really important for education and motivation for achievement and CEOs - the result is that value orientations towards activities and tasks have a significant meaning, particularly personal resources like authentic personal devotion, self-motivation, *eigenachievement* orientation as well as enthusiastic acceptance of the respective tasks and objectives and the taking-over of responsibility and the pertinent task dispositions. Educational resources, too, have considerable influence on job satisfaction –in particular also with respect to technological innovations.

A rather simple question of education and also life in general, however, is still how to combine achievement principles with fundamental axioms of humanity. An achieving society cannot be a totally encompassing and rigorous one, just honouring only achievement in the narrower sense, but it has to be a *humane* achieving society. There is a *humanized principle of achievement* – at least ideally speaking (cf. my 1976) avoiding the extremes of achievement defeatism and total achievement fixation. This has to stay in front for education and also for the social climate within companies and firms. Certainly, engaging achievement orientation, *eigenachievement*, creative activity and notably *eigenactivity* should occupy centre-stage. Self-responsibility, the extent of the margin of dispositions as well as personal engagement are necessary for education and companies as well – in particular,

however, for any educational institution whatsoever. This humanisation of the achievement principle is all the more effective and conducive, the more qualified, responsible and creative the respective activities are.

Regarding the education for the learning and mastering of information technologies including e-learning we might distinguish between theoretical and practical aims and objectives as represented in the following tables. (The capacities and the kind of knowledge etc. most relevant for e-learning and e-technologies are in italics).

Objectives of Education (Theoretical Education)

Forstering of general knowledge

Formal knowledge in

logics,

grammatics, rhetorics,

mathematics,

computer skills,

heuristics,

systems analysis

foreign languages (*English*)

Knowledge in subject matters, e.g.

natural sciences,

social sciences

cultural history and studies

anthropology (Philosophical, cultural, biological, social)

supradisciplinary general problems

key technologies and new technologies

(Italics: Important for new technologies, IT and e-learning)

Objectives of Education (practical education)

creativity

flexibility

self-knowledge

self-esteem

initiative

motivation, especially auto telic (“Flow”)

authentic achievement motivation (willingness and morale)

responsibility (readiness for and capacity)

a) task-oriented and –specific

b) universal morale

team orientation (willingness to cooperate)

leadership (ability to delegate and lead)

objectivity

determination and purposefulness

interdisciplinary openness

generalistic interest (systems and models)

progress-orientedness

motivation and readiness for action

civil courage, virtual citizenry

orientation of human rights etc.

Italics: Important for new technologies, IT and e-learning)

IV The strengthening of motivation: team achievement as prototype.

May one – and if so, how could one - effectively strengthen the motivation towards *eigenachievements*?

The most outstanding personal achievements are nowadays consummated by athletes – particularly those in top-level sports, where the intensity and cardio-muscular burdens of training and competitions are the highest. In particular, wherever no financial interest (like in professional sports nowadays) is at stake, it is personal will and readiness, devotion and self-overwhelming as well as self-control that would be necessary, transpiring and effective. Since most achievements are today brought about in teams, typical requirements and processes are best studied in the team sports. From the group dynamics of top-level sport teams it is possible to transfer approaches and results to other achieving groups and teams – as also, *mutatis mutandis*, even in companies and institutions of education. At least, comparisons by studying some outstanding extreme performances would as regards cases and amount of effort and energy input turn out to be quite interesting. As a member and later on coach of top-level rowing crews (*inter alia* an Olympic 8⁺ gold medalist crew, 1960, an European Champion 8+, 1959, as an athlete; moreover another World Champion eights, 1966, as coach) as well as in the fours (1958: 4⁻ as an athlete, and, again coaching, a 4⁺ in 1965), I studied the group dynamics of crews and teams from a social psychological perspective. The respective results are discussed in my “*Team Dynamics*” (1977). Some remarkable interconnections between the internal structure of the team and external guidance as well as social environment, of competition and coaching and the development of achievement motivation are obvious. The increase of achievement motivation and the guidance of the crew or team would depend on all these factors. Conflicts and tensions within the crews as well as with the coach or leading personal are rather common. One has to take them into account and to reckon with them: conflicts cannot fully be solved once for all, but one has to try to regulate and at times moderate, if only mitigate, them in order possibly to turn the attitudes and mentalities as well as tensions into positive achievement-increasing and conducive impulses. Not only harmonious conflict-free teams were capable of the best, even world-best achievements, as social psychologists would have notoriously claimed earlier. Leadership conflicts, group tensions and conflicts, even cliques are just normal. The World Champion eights as of 1962 was dominated by an “achievement clique” of the four allegedly strongest rowers, it was emotionally split up into these two competing cliques, each under the respective leader; the crew would nevertheless increase its overall strength.⁵ Everybody had to stand out and compete against almost evenly strong spare men in the skiff and in small-boat races – in

⁵ However, there was also the second World Champion eight oar crew as of 1966, founded and coached by myself, which had only a slight competition (“leadership dual”) between two rowers vying for the captain’s role of the crew which turned out to being otherwise very harmonious and nevertheless, also conducted world best achievements.

training workouts as well as in official competition. This internal competition would render the objective as well as self-assessment within the crew much more objective, would by itself regulate and mitigate or even defuse some conflicts within the socio-dynamic structure. Relying on the internal competition in small boats we had an objective standard of comparison, acknowledged by all rowers. Clique conflicts, leadership tensions could be predicted on grounds of so-called sociometric questionnaires and behavioural enquiries and could be used to manage or solve leadership tasks of the social psychological dynamics in the training camp. (For the results, which cannot be related here, see my 1977).

However, what can be generally learned from the interconnectedness and interaction between achievement motivation and the teamwork of these crews? Internal integration and keeping together as well as external competition would vary inversely – like Homan's "laws" of microsociology, small group psychology and group dynamics would imply. In addition, however, contrary to the traditional doctrine of social psychology, clique conflicts are not necessarily detrimental, but have to be considered as normal and could be manipulated and influenced as well as used in a positive, i.e. achievement-increasing, way for the control of the group and training camp – as long as they were not that strong to really tear the respective crew apart. The success of the individual rowers is necessarily combined with the success of the crew itself: thus even internal achievement competition can be rendered positive for increasing the general achievement level of the team. Not only harmonious teams are capable of top-level, even world best achievements, but also regularly, indeed quite often, rather conflict-driven teams and crews are also. Frequently, but not always, tension- and conflict-ridden teams are more determined, more involving themselves, they seem to be more innovative, intensive and stronger: high tension of achievement orientation would express itself of course also in the social psychological relations of the crew members with one another. The rather objectifying effect of an internal competition, and - wherever this is not possible – of an open internal discussion may profitably be used to effectively regulate internal conflicts in the groups and teams. Literally as well as generally speaking, regulated internal competition would often be conducive to increasing team achievements.

The so-called "democratic" self-control of the group by using participatory decisions and the participatory style of leadership would make the regulation of internal competition more visible and more easily to handle. By this objectification many a conflict could be diffused, mitigated, regulated or even dissolved or defused. At the same time, participatory leadership would strengthen the identification with the crew and their communicative joint planning for training and races. Whoever cooperates and participates in planning would identify himself stronger with the team achievement and the cooperative planning. That very factor may – that was our hypothesis – interact with and have an impact on the thus increased personal *eigenengagement*; it might even mobilize achievement reserves, which might have been unreachable under normal motivation, say, under the traditional authoritarian

style of coaching. Internal competition and, by that, extant objectifying comparisons of achievements are therefore as a rule much more effective than just preaching or admonishing or other verbal means. The principle of *eigenachievement* can therefore be conducive to strengthen the output of the group by means of ingroup control and participatory leadership. Finally, also the self-motivating power of a self-gratifying activity rendering a sort of satisfaction and even “fun” in the face of top-level propelling drive and initiative plus stress may give an extra hype, because one would deeply identify with the self-chosen activity and psychic input. The urge of *eigenachievement* within the so-called “flow” experiences (after Csikszentmihalyi 1975) would also prominently figure not only in creative, but also in rhythmical, routinely structured activities like rowing, cross country skiing and other self-gratifying activities, rendering a certain respective auto-strengthening of motivation. This also applies to team sports and teamwork in all creative realms – and notably in group education, too. In general, the characteristics of toilsome work and energy expenditure and playful activity would become fluid at the limits of the highest authentic engagement and even self-devotion for a particularly energy consuming and demanding activity.

V. The *eigenachieving being*

What can all these experiences and social psychological results mean for the philosophy of education and for and in the anthropology of the achieving being?

Any comprehensive doctrine of the human being has nowadays to encompass many perspectives. The human being is not to be covered by just one definition or formula. Its essence cannot be characterized by just one unique trait. Any doctrine of humans, any anthropology – especially “philosophical anthropology” in practice - has to cover many perspectives, has to be pluralistic these days. The Kantian question “What is man?” can only be answered in a very complex and multifarious manner. Philosophical anthropology can today only look for unity within multiplicity and multifariousness. It has to take into account results of the human and the social sciences as well as the biological and medical disciplines. However, it cannot content itself with just descriptive summaries. It should try to integrate in an overview and orientational guidelines some overarching central ideas of what a human being is and *should* be according to its self-knowledge and self-understanding. To work out these traits in a sort of united model would be a necessary and demanding task for philosophical anthropology today and in the future. In that respect, philosophical anthropology is partly a cognitive-descriptive discipline and in part a normative and value-oriented enterprise, too, having to somehow systematically integrate these different aspects in a methodologically viable manner.

The well-known characterization of humans as the *acting beings* (after Schütz and Gehlen) seems still to be too little specific. A rather special accent regarding human

action is that potentially it is not just behaviour and action, but basically also consists of improving a goal-oriented activity according to some systematic criterion standard or gauge, and methodical planning. In short, it is *achieving* activity in the widest sense of the word the idea and criteria of which would have to be met. *The human being is not only the self-responsible, but also the eigenachieving being* (see my 1983). Humans, and only they, can act by ways of methodically and systematically planning, by exercising and coaching or being coached in a ever improving better way or quality, if even quantified; they can *eigenachieve*, as I say. Voluntariness and *eigenmotivation* are necessary conditions of an authentic, in particular of any creative accomplishment and achievement. Achievement thus can be an expression of the personal freedom of action. *Eigenachievement*, depending on authentic personal motivation (*eigenmotivation*) is an expression of the active, creative personality. The personal accomplishment is thus no pure natural product of but biological inheritance or instincts, yet simultaneously or even much more also a psychical, societal and cultural, even spiritual attainment, although certainly figuring on a biological basis. *Eigenachievement* has a very special educational significance, particularly if a symbolic achievement is at stake, rendering an economically and biologically speaking rather “superfluous” result. But, as Ortega had it, the seemingly superfluous is in some respect especially necessary – for cultural and educational development – notably for humans and humanity.

The principles of achievement and achievement comparison, of competition and equality of opportunities and chances would be almost perfectly materialized in sporting and athletic contests – in any case more objectively and fittingly than in any other realm of life. Sport seems to be the particularly apt means of expression and realm of comparison for *eigenachievements*. Does this explain part of its fascination? Similar results are to be found for other realms of creative achievements like those in arts including performing ones as dance and play etc., in writing and even savouring literature, in music and even in science and philosophy. These realms of creative *eigenaccomplishments* are educationally speaking of the highest significance: They offer opportunities for (self-)distinction by one’s own achievement within a generally conformist or concurring equalizing society emphasizing nevertheless individual values and distinction. Sports and arts symbolize ideals of high cultural achievements not required by and for day-to-day sustenance, which however renders the human being to be the creative and creatively acting, the cultural and symbolically representing being; it may thereby ascend or transcend beyond the necessity of sustenance and the securing of existence by an achievement of self-wrought and personal provenance and being highly strived for and valued. Indeed, the human being does not live on bread alone. It also lives on *properly authentic personal achievements*.

Though sport can be a characteristic paragon example of such self stylised personal development and an expression of individual *eigenachievement*, any other realm of *Eigenactivity*, in particular in all creative fields of action – may figure in the same vein

as an exemplary field for voluntarily craved-for personal accomplishments and thus become an expression of the individual creative person and autonomous personality. Any realm of *eigenachievement* is in the over-administrated, if institutionalised and over-codified and over-organized world of today an important reservation for individual achievement and active engagement. Somebody had said, that in this world of institutions it is only sport in which life still remains truly to be real authentic action. I would like to extend this towards any realms of creative *eigenachieving*, because this dynamics applies to all areas of creative and re-creative personal actions. Especially democratic societies in an administrative world are dependant on authentic motivation and readiness for achievement by member personalities and should foster these in any potential form whatsoever as effectively as possible. Self-motivated, object- and task-oriented as well as cooperative attitudes and the mentality for achievements are to be supported and honoured with a particular emphasis. Personal acting, authentic achievement are an important expression and symbol of a really personal life – at least in our action- and achievement-prone Western civilisation. Creative and productive activity in arts and sports are an attractive medium and vehicle for inculcating and leading towards the disposition for *eigenachievements*; they are especially important in a world curtailed by consumerism, and they are in particular important for adolescents, because they are at times and in appropriate forms more easily accessible than, say, scientific and really creative artistic high-level production. They might, however, at times lead to high achievement levels in turn.

The principles of achievement and objective achievement comparison by competition and equality of chances or opportunities are most easily approached in sporting, training and competition. Nepotism, privileging, special relationships would count as little as property, affluence or power. It is only achievement that counts in sport – at least ideally speaking. (In professional sports as well as in any publicly impressive show-off disciplines, we have though many problems of betrayal, like doping, manipulating results, buying and pretence; this is human – all too human, indeed, but does not devaluate the ideal picture.)

Sport was understood as a societal model in which values and guiding norms as well as basic principles of the so-called “*achieving society*” (McCelland) would figure much more clearly and in a purer form than in real society. (This was for instance also stressed by the above-mentioned Olympic rowing coach, Karl Adam.) Indeed, the sporting achievement principle seems to be a purer abstraction, a rather utopian presentation of achievement behaviour and comparison, amounting to much clearer conditions, if not even greater renditions, than to be achieved in professional work, industry and economics⁶. Artistic and sporting achievement as well as any creative

⁶ The social philosophical critics of society some decades ago would therefore also criticize sport by reproaching that it would just mirror the achievement norms and compulsions of the working world and would thus deflect humans from their allegedly authentic “revolutionary interests”. One would,

activity whatsoever – have indeed much in common regarding their motivational foundation. As realms of creative activities and *eigenachievements*, they are social-pedagogically speaking of highest significance: There are necessary opportunities for (self-)distinction in a rather conformist society, nevertheless stressing individual values and distinctions. They symbolize ideals of a cultural highly valued achievement not required by day to day sustenance – an accomplishment which however really makes the human being the acting one, the cultural being it is, symbolically figuring and reaching beyond everyday necessities by, e.g., an outstanding symbolic achievement. Thus the athlete, like the artist, would symbolize even a certain “herculean” or “promethean” “myth” (see my 1972, 1976a, 1985) of a cultural exceptional achievement and a symbolically highly valued excellent accomplishment stemming from personal engagement, devotion towards a task, aspiring goals and aims. Indeed, and again, man does not live on bread alone, but would need meaningful tasks and sense-engendering goals. Without such cravings, strivings and achievements of any creative activity whatsoever, there would not be any challenge or instigation for a rather personal autonomous development of the personality. Any strong active engagement of a voluntary form is an achievement in the mentioned wider sense and should be honoured as a creative expression of the personality.

Personal acting, *eigenachievement*, authentic personal engagement, self-responsibility are amongst others essential criteria of personal development, an expression of individual freedom. Regarding the fashionable *baisse* of any self-motivated aspiration for achievement in many branches of the public opinion lasting for some decades before the last one, we would and should postulate the revitalisation of a positive treatment of achievement, a rather new cultivation of the creative concept of *eigenachievement* and self-acting. Indeed, it is especially democratic societies which are dependant on these dynamics and presuppositions of self-motivation and readiness for personal actions and achievements. These latter premises and the very conditions should be particularly fostered in our educational institutions.

To be sure, achievement is not everything and achievement as such, taken just in the abstract or by formal and external evaluation (e.g., pure athletic records as such), barring social meaningful objectives, would not be recommendable as a panacea for

moreover, imply wrongly that sport would make humans just machines or equivalents of machines, it would only serve for “fitness for work” (Adorno) and for the adaptations towards a technicalized world. It would always reside “within the empire of unfreedom, wherever it is organized” (Adorno). These critics notoriously overlooked, however, that athletes and sporting people are characteristically identifying themselves emotionally and personally with their own achievement at training, in exercising as well as competitions and that they conceive of their activities and the respective results as their own personal accomplishments, because sporting activity – like any artistic one, too – is explicitly and exclusively conducted according to the principle of self-motivation and *eigenachievement* and not just according to alien compulsion.

education and behaviour in general. But *without* authentic personal striving for accomplishments and achieving, without the strong will for particular achievements, for personal improvement, for creative activities, higher civilisation would not be possible at all. The cultural being is the *eigenachieving being*. This ideal comprises as mentioned a value and ideal expressing the human striving for the better. Personal authentic action, *eigenachievement* is an important expression of creative life.

It has to be stressed, that *primary* motivation should go in front of secondary (indirect) motivation characterised by just being assigned gratifications, opportunities, chances etc.. We need object-orientation, enthusiasm for tasks and work to be done ("*Sachbegeisterung*") instead of only secondarily looking for indirect gratifications. There is a danger within the over-administrated society and even its formalized institutions of education that primary motivation is played down instead of or by secondary motivation, checks and controls and the perfection of curricula and administration as well as over-sophisticated differences in grading. Over-administration tends to produce a narrow job mentality and would almost kill personal initiative deriving from enthusiasm for real tasks and challenges. This would exacerbate a social dilemma in education (see already my 1976): Society is dependant on the mobilisation of enthusiasm for tasks and objectives as well as personal devotion which by itself cannot possibly be engendered but may in turn more easily – all too easily! – be destroyed or, at least, emasculated by over-administration, red tape and bureaucracy. Personality and particularly the creative capacities are not the products of administration. Here initiative, inspiration and trust as well as freedom are much better than perfect control and checks. Young aspiring personalities and co-workers should not lose their enthusiasm and autonomous initiative as well as primary motivation in difficult job situations as well as intensified job competitions. The more one identifies with his self-chosen task, the more one can achieve and accomplish in fulfilling this. Perhaps this rather sceptical perspective may open a way of saying farewell to exaggerated self-indulging thoughts of safety and complacency and to give us a chance for coming back to really authentic striving and *eigeninitiative*.

VI. Summarizing theses regarding *eigenachievement*, personal initiative and enthusiasm

1. Only the human being can personally act, "*eigenact*" in the authentic sense of the expression. Acting however is not specific enough: Humans frequently and characteristically try to improve in their acting, according to precise gauges or

standards of goodness, amelioration, proficiency, efficiency and comparative achievements. They would like to act better and better. They would like to achieve something, to distinguish themselves by the results of one's own acting and accomplishments. The human being is not only the acting being as traditional philosophical anthropology would have it, but also and characteristically *the achieving being*, i.e. the authentically achieving, *eigenachieving* being. Only authentically engaged achievement can be creative. One could talk of a "principle of creative *eigenachievement*". This kind of achievement principle is not outdated or useless as many social critics thought some decades ago. Achieving and achievement orientation as well as the pertinent motivation is necessary now and in the future. Society is even existentially dependant on them.

2. Education towards meaningful authentic achievement-orientation is indispensable. Since and insofar *eigenachievement* is creative, many opportunities of any kinds should be offered to youngsters and be made accessible to them. *Eigenachievement* should be considered and fostered as a personality developing activity of great pedagogical and social significance. It has to be learned and exercised time and again. This is true for any of its multiple sorts: Any creative form of *eigenactivity* has to be recommended, developed and exercised again and again – in arts, music, writing, sciences, adventurous enterprises, sports, in symbolic activities like science and technology as well as other "creative ventures" (Weiss 1992) – even in voluntary social services etc. The chances and opportunities for personal acting and *eigenachievement* should everywhere in society be improved and simplified: Manifold forms of offers and ramifications are necessary – especially for adolescents. *Eigenactivity* should be instigated and fostered in a much more multifarious form than hitherto – in particularly for youngsters and adolescents as well as trainees of whatever kind.
3. In strict and harsh competition, the orientation at teamwork, cooperation and even at communal achievement should not be underrated. Even if we need internal competition for raising an increase of achievement levels, primary motivation and enthusiasm for the task as such ("*Sachbegeisterung*"), teamwork and group orientation should be equally valued and fostered, respectively. We need motivation for competition, but combined with cooperativeness and real primary task orientation. Team achievement should be especially fostered. Competition should be combined with cooperation and objective engagement in real tasks and by primary motivation.
4. Enthusiasm for a task as such ("*Sachbegeisterung*") is decisive for the art of *eigenachieving*: Primary motivation is in the last analysis much more important than secondary motivation (this latter one only being an auxiliary means for instigating the less motivated ones). The essence of enthusiastic achievement-oriented life seems to be: *Only the enthused ones may enthuse others!* (Merely) Enthusiasm carries away. Achievement enthused (should) lead the way.

5. Moreover, one should not forget about the special attraction of the fascinating challenge provided by prototypes and paragon examples of excellent achievements for activating and instigating achievement motivation. Paragon achievers are much more efficient than just preaching and citing laws and regulations. Extraordinary achievements are not a result of only dressage, drill or compulsion. This is true, even if tension, exhaustion and frequently monotonous repetition are characteristic for sportive or artistic exercising. Without special challenge, without devotion and self-overcoming, if not self-overwhelming, no really extraordinary genuine personal achievement, no autonomous development of the personality would ensue. You cannot command self-superation. Top-level achievements are not just rendered by compulsion, commands or regulations. The same is true for really creative achievements in all realms of autonomous achievements. Top achievers figuring as paragons would fascinate, would thus function in an educational way – and this will also hold true for the future. (However, supporting social and political as well in particular educational measures are necessary.)
6. Of course, society and its development are dependant on proper authentic achievement and the development of achievement motivation. We have to develop a general positive education for self-determined authentic achievement, of self engagement and personal responsibility in that respect. In short, we need a societal fostering of the principle of creative and self-responsible authentic achievement, *eigenactivity* and *eigenachievement*. All this needs incentives and a positive instigating training of self-determined creative action – particularly in all institutions of education. We definitely need a new cultivation and support of free and voluntary *eigenachievements* of whatever kind.
7. The principle of authentic achievement should be combined with the idea of humanity and humaneness: The *eigenachievement* principle should be a *humanized principle of achievement*. If and insofar as it is an essential task for the future to conceive of and design *eigenactivity* as a “*humanism*” this is true also for the orientation of achievements in sports: In top-level achievement athletics as well as in everyday exercises the orientation at a really “human” performance and at conditions of humaneness should not be forgotten in the situation of often too harsh a competition and orientation at solely the victor and victory (see my 1983,1998): The just one and only orientation at the victor and / or champion (“Winning is not everything, it’s the only thing!”, as the American coaches Tatum and Lombardi had said) should in highly competitive areas be downplayed a bit, which might turn out to be very difficult indeed. Achievement and competition should be socially meaningful and be humanized in some form. (This applies in particular to mass media and the over-emphasis of the winner and winning only as well as records in sports and also to the artificial manipulation of winning by doping and other forms of betrayals or unfairness.)

8. Our society, which already now and in the long run will need less and less working force and is more and more confronted with the structurally induced problems of unemployment, should modify the traditional Protestant working ethics only appreciating professional and paid job activity. Voluntary achievements and social activity, free citizen engagement as well as self-active artistic designing, the devotion to an *eigen*achievement just for itself should get assigned much more social value and emphasis than hitherto. In its *eigen*activity only, the human being probes and confirms itself as an individual. The difference and borderline between work and meaningful leisure activity will and should become much more fluid than nowadays. Democracy needs engaged *eigen*achievements, it even lives on these – also and especially some such ones which cannot be rendered in compulsory form. Societally speaking, *eigen*achievement and voluntary authentic activities are absolutely indispensable. They should however also be appreciated from a social perspective. Authentic achievement should be socially honoured as such.
9. For group and team achievements, we may summarize: Motivation psychology has hitherto incorrectly neglected group situations and specific group factors for the development and strengthening of the achievement motive and achievement motivation. It is indeed important for the practice of teamwork and group achievements to study and deal with the interplay of achievement motivation and team conditions because group factors in achievement-oriented teams are considerably influential for achievement motivation, the increase of achievement and (the probability of) success. Barring extensive practical analyses one may transfer experiences from top-level team sports to other sorts of achieving teams. Sport and athletics figure as a rather extreme paragon example in which the dynamics of achievement and teams would combine with each other rather neatly.
10. According to my own experiences and social-psychological (sociometrical) analyses, the group situation and its feedback seem to be much more influential than any just individualistic exhortations. One may learn from dealing with sports teams: Preaching and verbal appealing is much less conducive or useful (if at all) than the instigating incentive of achievement comparison within the group – according to the appropriate structure of the activity by a sportive or even direct internal competition. Mere verbal summonings go idling.

All this may be generalized to any objectifying procedure of achievement comparison being much more efficient than just verbal admonishing. The same is true for realistic exercises with planning in groups. The systematic exploitation of group dynamical interconnections seems to be much more practice-oriented and realistic than – and is as well as efficient as - just verbal appeals. Generally speaking, in psychological research and philosophical interpretation of achievement motivation, the role of team situations and the feedback onto the shaping of motivations, have not enough been taken into consideration – in particular those group dynamical interconnections and

factors which can directly (by their very action structure) be used for incentives and instigation of achievement-orientation. Practical experiences and “rules of thumb” may be transferred from top-level sports to other realms of achieving activities – particularly also in creative and scientific-technical as well as entrepreneurial contexts – as far as the respective personal engagement and authentic achievement motivation is at stake here, too. The dynamics of the achievement process is rather similar everywhere - as already quoted from the world renowned rowing coach Karl Adam in his only slightly overstated insight: “The structure of achievement is equal in all fields”.

Generally speaking, within the philosophy of education and the anthropology of the achieving being the insights and results of social psychology, practical experiences with top-level achieving teams as well as philosophical interpretations of the human being as the authentically personal achieving being (*the eigenachieving being*) can be integrated in a particular plea for developing a positive new cultivation and sophistication of the social and psychological factors of achievement orientation – above all in education. Social and philosophical anthropology have thus far erroneously neglected or downplayed these rather practice-oriented factors and the very dynamics of achievement orientation and personal authentic acting. Indeed, at least for Western societies and world views, *eigenactivity* and *eigenachievement* are an essential component of the self-interpretation of the human being. The human being, being not only the rational-cognitive, but also the social and cultural as well as creative being, is *the authentically eigenachieving being* at the same time.

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