



The Metaphysics of Ping-Pong: Table Tennis as a Journey of Self-Discovery

By Guido Mina di Sospiro

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When a mortifying defeat to his teenage son rekindles his lifelong passion for table tennis, keen philosopher Guido Mina di Sospiro sets out to learn the game properly.

Guido's love for spinning a feather-weight ball takes him from his local Ping-Pong club, populated by idiosyncratic players with extraordinary stories to tell, to training drills with a world-class coach. This seemingly harmless game also leads him into sticky situations in the CIA headquarters and the ganglands of Washington, D.C. Woven throughout his Ping-Pong epiphany are philosophical ruminations on Plato and Aristotle, metaphysicians and empiricists, Jung's dark shadow, Sun Tzu's war tactics, the I Ching, and much more.

As Guido's journey takes him from Big Sur to a nail-biting showdown in China against a string of elite players, he finds that Ping-Pong can teach us a surprising amount about life.

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Bibliography

- Rank: #1637236 in Books
- Published on: 2015-09-01
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 8.40" h x .70" w x 5.40" l, .0 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 240 pages

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Editorial Review

Review

"An enthralling guide to the mystery, mastery and practice of Ping Pong." --**Eric Idle**, from *Monty Python*

"*The Metaphysics of Ping-Pong* is another wonderful work from Mina di Sospiro. Examining the cosmos through the lens of table tennis provides an unexpected tour de force that cannot be pigeonholed. *The Metaphysics of Ping-Pong* is one of the most accessible books ever featured on this program, all while maintaining the loftiest of conversations with the reader. This tale of initiation and Perennial Philosophy is rather refreshing." --**Greg Kaminsky**, 'Occult of Personality'

"The sports metaphor is a tired cliché, right? Well, if that's the case, maybe being a cliché isn't so bad. Actually, sports seem to be growing in rhetorical stature; more so than ever they are used as a microcosm for examining the larger struggles of life. Possibly the most zany entry into the sport-as-microcosm category is Guido Mina di Sospiro's *The Metaphysics of Ping-Pong*. "There are two breeds of Ping-Pong players: empiricists and metaphysicians," he writes. "By adopting anti-spin paddles, empiricists declare explicitly who they are and what they stand for. Metaphysicians, on the other hand, are fascinated by the mysteries of spin." This is the world of TT (table tennis) for di Sospiro. What many Americans see as a basement game, he sees as an embodiment of competing philosophical views. This isn't you versus your little brother; this is Plato versus Aristotle. What makes di Sospiro's outlandish claims palatable, even refreshing, is his bizarre way of telling the story. Coming to the sport in middle age, di Sospiro delves into the history of TT--a slow transition toward a sport dominated by spin. As this history unfolds in di Sospiro's telling we also come to know a multicultural world of players who hang around community centers and bonafide Ping-Pong clubs throughout the D.C and L.A. areas. Di Sospiro discusses the Tao with the Chinese players--as he admires their technique. He takes impromptu lessons from a Dominican pro. He contemplates a mind-twisting Sufi parable with a Lebanese stranger. The list of characters he encounters, each imparting a bit more wisdom than the last, leads di Sospiro on a personal journey that will end up forcing him to reconsider past actions and refocus his mission in life. He is just as likely to quote Sheryl Crow as analyze the work of Carl Jung. Or shout the name of his favorite paddle: Kokutaku Blumenkirsche! When you're done, you just might order a Kokutaku yourself." --**Seth Satterlee**, *Publishers Weekly*

"At first blush, readers might wonder just how the game of ping pong can be related to the metaphysical enterprise. But di Sospiro sees in the question "to spin or not to spin" a deeply spiritual quest for understanding of the self and of one's place in the larger philosophical search for meaning and understanding. The author acknowledges no borders-- the I Ching takes its place alongside Plato in the rich tapestry of esoterica laid out here. Readers will be fascinated by di Sospiro's growing passion for the game of ping pong as he challenges remarkable players who offer him both stiff competition and an opportunity to grow in self-understanding. Breezily written, not for the scholar but for the layperson, this excellent work can constitute a perfect introduction to the vast history of humankind's quest for philosophical clarity. And where else can you find Sheryl Crow, Carl Jung, and Google mentioned side by side? Readers wanting to experience the broad flow of philosophical exploration will find this to be a gold mine." --**Publisher's Weekly** (Sept. 2015)

"A fast-footed, inspiring book about winning the inner game of life in sport." --**Iain Finlayson**, *The Times*

"Like nothing I've ever read and all the more wonderful because of it, this is a non-fiction masterpiece which

deserves a position on the sports writing podium." --**Ben Keenan**, Press Association Syndication

"Erudite, experimental and engaging, Mina di Sospiro has given us a work that breaks new ground. Whether or not you ever pick up a paddle, *The Metaphysics of Ping-Pong* provides an initiation into a visionary life, igniting the fires of inspiration through an intriguing intimacy with the mysteries of daily life that is available nowhere else." --**David Metcalfe**, *The Daily Grail*

About the Author

Guido Mina di Sospiro is an award-winning author. He has written three books that have been published around the world and maintains a blog on the New York-based web-magazine *Reality Sandwich* and on the alternative views website Disinformation. He lives in the Washington, D.C. area with his wife and their three sons and travels often to Europe and elsewhere to promote his books.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Jessica Jennings:

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