

Re-envisioning the Ethical Potential of Physical Education

Una nueva concepción del potencial ético de la educación física

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Abstract

Sports occupy an interesting ethical space from a pedagogic point of view, being included in physical education curricula in most Western countries. The approach of physical education to sports as vehicle for ethical education is too limited when it is restricted to their minimal functional, constitutive and regulatory goals. This essay's aim is to argue the extent to which the ethical potential of physical education can embrace more than functional purposes, or whether that will be neglected in terms of limited educational aspirations. We present data from nineteen exploratory interviews with experienced philosophy, sports and physical education researchers and teachers, from six different nations, concerning the ethical potentiality of physical education. We highlight five ethical themes: (i) the regulatory and normative structure of sports; (ii) the spirit of sports and its internal values; (iii) the right playing/doing of sports; (iv) the overcoming in sports; and (v) sports as an opportunity for a supererogatory ethics as fertile ground for future operationalization of the potential of physical education for ethical education through sports.

Keywords: sport, ethics, physical education.

Resumen

El deporte ocupa un interesante espacio ético desde un punto de vista pedagógico, integrándose en los *currícula* de educación física en la mayoría de países occidentales. El planteamiento de la educación física como vehículo de la educación ética es limitado cuando restringido a sus objetivos mínimos funcionales, constitutivos y regulatorios. El objetivo de este estudio es discutir si el potencial ético de la educación física puede ir más allá de los propósitos funcionales, que considerados aisladamente constituyen un desperdicio de la experiencia pedagógica del deporte. Para conseguirlo, presentamos datos de diecinueve entrevistas exploratorias con experimentados investigadores y profesores de filosofía, deporte y educación física relacionadas con las potencialidades éticas de la educación física. La muestra incluye individuos de seis diferentes nacionalidades, cuyo trabajo

demuestra preocupaciones con el tema. La argumentación resulta de cinco temáticas principales: (i) Estructura normativa y regulativa del deporte; (ii) El espíritu del deporte y sus valores internos; (iii) El bien hacer deportivo; (iv) La superación deportiva; (v) El deporte como oportunidad de una ética supererogatoria como contexto fértil para la concretización del potencial ético de una educación deportiva.

Palabras clave: deporte, ética, educación física.

INTRODUCTION

Ethics is a contested terrain in general, and specifically in the contexts of sports. Not uncommonly, and often in the case of the interviews conducted in this study, «ethics» is referred to as a discipline or field of philosophy that concerns the study and reasoning of normative appraisal of values and practices that drive human actions towards the common good. Many scholars, from various modern and postmodern traditions, have already defined ethics as the quest for the good life with and for the good of others (Ricoeur, 1990). Thus, the consideration of the ethics of physical education and sports exists within the frame of human coexistence oriented towards the good, individual and collective, that requires a human experience that is lived in a free, responsible, and fair way, exhibiting sufficient degrees of solidarity or communal living. This is the sense outlined long ago by Aristotle in his account of living well (Aristotle, 2009).

Modern scholarship in ethics is rooted in three key areas, namely the ethics of virtues whose focus is the personal quality of individuals and how they should be aimed towards the good (MacIntyre, 2007); the ethics of duty (deontology) that is related to the criteria and rules frameworks, more or less universal and paradigmatic, that should guide individuals in acting according rightly; and the consequential-practical (typically utilitarian) mode through which individuals exercise their reason to discern the optimal way of acting before ethical problems with a precise, specific, contextual and localized storyline (OSS3, ISS2, ISS6. PET2). The specific approach of sports in the light of these three main family of ethical theories (utilitarian or consequentialism; duty or deontological; and virtue-ethical), resulted in several works produced by sports philosophers that debated issues such as justice, integrity, responsibility and respect between players, the rules and norms for a healthy coexistence in sports, the problem of cheating, doping and medical intervention with the intent of artificially improving the performance, violence, racism, exclusion, inequality, and so on. (McNamee, 2007) In this sense, sports ethics has, in recent decades,

proved to be an area of strong scholarly growth, mastering most part of the works dedicated to sports philosophy (McNamee and Parry, 1998; McNamee, 2010, McNamee and Morgan, 2015; Torres, 2014).

Considering that there are many relevant works that set the foundation of sports ethics¹, this study arises not with the intention to exhaust the subject, but in order to get together specific arguments on sport's ethics which underwrite the ethic potential of physical education. Considering this paper as a part of a broader study in the aesthetic-ethics relations within physical education (Ávila da Costa, McNamee and Lacerda, 2015a), we focus here only on the ethical elements of this relation. The purpose of the present study, within that framework and based on our research group's aims, concerns the identification of some ethical subjects of sports, beyond their regulatory, constitutive and functional aspects, that may have relevance for a broader ethical consideration of physical education.

To this end we identify and discuss these subjects in 19 semi-structured and exploratory interviews that enabled the data collection, analysis and discussion of viewpoints of representative subjects among those that are the main players in aesthetic education through sports, namely, experienced teachers and researchers in the context of ethics, philosophy, sports science and physical education, from six different nationalities in Western countries. We conducted a hermeneutic analysis on some of the main aspects as they enable the understanding of physical education as a vehicle for ethical education through sports.

The 19 interviews were conducted with three different groups of individuals that, considering their relationship with ethics, with sport and with physical education, can make different contributions and complement the problem under study. These were: *a*) «Outside Sport Sciences»: teachers/researchers from the areas of ethical education outside sports sciences referred to as OSS; *b*) «Inside Sport Sciences»: teacher/researchers inside sports sciences whose work reveals ethical concerns in the context of pedagogy and education through sports, referred to as IIS; *c*) «Physical Education Teachers», physical education teachers who provided a more focused and practical look on how these dimensions are implemented in physical education lessons, referred to as PET. In order to guarantee the

¹ See for example: Boxill, J. (ed) (2002) *Ethics and Sport*, Oxford: Blackwell; Galasso, P.J. (Ed.) (1988) *Philosophy of Sport and Physical Activity Issues and Concepts*, Toronto: Canadian Scholars Press; Loland, S. (2002) *Fair Play in Sport: A Moral Norm System*, London: Routledge; Morgan, W.J. (2000) *Ethics in Sport*, Illinois: Human Kinetics; Simon, R.L. (1991) *Fair Play: Sports, Values, and Society*, Colorado: Westview Press; McNamee, M. J. & Parry, S. J. (Eds.) (1998) *Ethics and Sport*, London, Routledge; McNamee, M. J. & Parry, S. J. (Eds.) (1998) *Ethics and Sport*, London, Routledge.

anonymity of their discourses, the quotes included throughout the text are identified with these acronyms, in order to recognise the group from which they come and with a random numerical order.

It is not the purpose of this work to include or exhaust every possible relevant issue for an ethics of sports in general in an educational point of view which, indeed would be impossible. More specifically, our purpose was to debate some specific ethical potentialities of physical education based on the narrative of our interviewees, were they have stressed what are particularly important and relevant ideas for physical education that might enrich this quest for well-living in sports and that can, thus, propose ways or means of living well.

Besides the permanent feeling of difficulty in handling ethical ambiguities, and also the need for coherence and completeness that are normally associated with normative theories such as ethics embodies, this subject seems not prove an obstacle to dialogue among either common citizens nor the participants. Everyone seems to have a view on ethical matters even if only a few are capable of theorizing or even systemically evaluating them. In contrast to what happens with aesthetics (Ávila da Costa, McNamee and Lacerda, 2015b), these ethically focused interviewees discussed the subject in a fearless, fluid and spontaneous way: «*Ethics....that part is probably easier to debate than aesthetics. At least for me!*» (PETT, p.16). This is because, for oss2, even though it is a subject that not all of us study is one that we all face daily. And, thus, the approach to ethics proposed in this study, taking into consideration the academic background of most of the subjects in the study group, as well as that of the researchers involved assumes a more functional, hermeneutic and interpretative nature than theoretical, descriptive, normative or analytic. This leads us to generate perceptions that may not be generalizable in their content. That is to say, based on what has been widely included in literature, we aim to understand what is nowadays considered relevant for daily life ethics in the quotidian contexts of physical education.

Thus, our framework draws on many of the elements of sports ethics in the context of physical education, as a subject with ethical potentialities that can and should be used in the pedagogical sense: the regulatory and normative structure of sports; the spirit of sports and its internal values; the right playing/doing of sports; the overcoming in sports; sports as an opportunity for a supererogatory ethics.

1. PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND ETHICAL EDUCATION THROUGH SPORTS

In the course of the study we tried to understand, together with our interviewees, the role that ethics has in sports and the importance of ethics in understanding sports and physical education.

Since the Greek educational model, the essential substantiation of sports is deeply ethical, in the sense that it leads Man to search for the *areté*, understood as human excellence or perfection. Pestalozzi (2009) advocated the pedagogical importance of exercising the will, coordinating the intellectual and moral education of subjects for which sports can greatly contribute. iss5 supports these tendencies, arguing that sports is a vehicle for the education of will, against a contemporary logic of a hedonistic and painless ethic (Lipovetsky, 2010) saying:

I think there is no other justification for sports. Teaching sports or physical education is only justified in two ways. The first is that (...), the reference that human beings are artistic, that become human as they acquire that art, the *arete*, from which they are born naked, deprived, as they are born without doing, due to the neoteny in the body, feelings, values, etc... (...) The second justification, for me, is still the education of the will, explained by the substantiation of Pestalozzi's corporal exercises that aim the moral. (...) At a time of painless ethics, (...) sports is clearly a pedagogy of will since it leads us to do things that make us sweat, it is necessary to train and practice to acquire competence, to learn what we don't know (iss5, p.4).

In our interviews, however, oss5, iss4, iss5 and PETT add that ethics is not only the ground to consider these goals. In sport, ethical considerations on the one hand, lead to the practical configuration of normative, constitutive and regulatory structures that make sports practicable: «For instance, if suddenly football had no rules it would not be football and it would be a bit more difficult...what are they doing? Where are they going?» (PETT, p.18). On the other hand ethics is constitutive of the identity or essence and sense of any sport.

Moreover, oss6 and iss1 agree with what had already been stated by Morgan, that the awareness of the ethical nature of sports and how central it is, requires from the subject a deep knowledge and involvement with sports (Morgan, 2007). It would be difficult, according to these interviewees, that someone deeply involved in sports is not immersed in its ethical nature, even if in an unconscious way: «You can ignore it if you haven't thought about it, but it is a bit like aesthetics. The more you look and the more you learn about it, the more you will see the aesthetic values. The

same happens with ethics» (oss6, p.7); «(...) I think that people are not aware of that but they act according to some values such as not hurting others and so one, respecting the rules, playing in a fair way, etc... (...) I think that even those persons that cheat this aspect, that try to cause damage, that play in a violent way, that use other means...even those persons are aware that they are contravening, that they are ignoring what would be correct.... what they are expected to do» (iss1, p.13).

In this way, when they are asked about the possibility of understanding sports ignoring the ethical dimension, our interviewees were unanimous in stating that for any quest in the understanding of sports, ignoring the ethical dimension may be possible, but nevertheless represents an artificial way of approaching sports, impoverished, limited and lacking what is essential in, or partly constitutive of, its identity.

Nevertheless, if one aims at a specific ethical pedagogy of sport, one must be aware that it is permanently conditioned by the social reality that pedagogues and learners are dealing with: «You can't understand ethics in the abstract. (...) And so, situating ourselves in a meaningful storyline is a fundamental step for the understanding of the right, that is, behavioural ethics» (iss6, p.5). Thus, for example, an ethics of sports has boundaries and critical aspects that are different from art ethics. If, in sports, the aspiration of an ethical experience in its different levels is apparently common and foreseeable, the same does not happen with art which frequently claims for the independency and the transgression of any axiological framework; this kind of autonomy also supports claims for its being amoral (osst). That is to say, art is not intended to be moralised and its frequently transgressive nature is also revealed in the domain of an ethics of transgression, shock, rejection and rupture with values, independently from their positive or negative, universal or particular nature (osst).

With this we do not mean to say that art does not have either more or less ethical reference, but only that it is different from sports in a special way, with a permanent questioning and confrontation with the axiological benchmarks of each era and their ethical criteria often iterating between universality and particularity. Nowadays, art is characterised by personal values that can naturally trigger critical and conflicting reactions that are sometimes ethical in character, but this does not constitute any threat to the development of its space and place in our world.² Such ethical trans-

² An example of this openness of the art world to works with a highly debatable and ethical content that is open to criticism is the exhibition by Guillermo Vargas Jiménez, entitled «Exposición nº1», in Nicaragua where, for a long period of time, he tied up and displayed a starving dog.

gression – as an artistic or aesthetical value – is open to question and always debatable, rejected and accepted, by different interviewees (oss1, oss1).

This does not happen in sports, at least not this way, where the normative and regulatory structure present stricter and more tightly. The formal or constitutive rules (Reddiford, 1993), are defined and the ethical paradigm seems to require minimal universality criteria, that are reproduced in the practices of physical education. This means that, even if ethical transgression is frequent and relevant in sports world, it is not accepted in such a ready way as in art. Thus, in sports, ethical particularism, sometimes even relativism, is generally considered as a problem to overcome or solve (oss1, oss3).

For oss3 and oss6, grounding the debate on ethics in the context of a polarity between universality and relativism embodies a too simplistic dichotomisation of ethics: «You can have a bit of both sides. (...) There is an adequate answer that changes according to time, situations and people, in particular. (...) You cannot simply apply the rules from top to bottom and say that this answers everything. It is always necessary to interpret the situation, the motivations, the consequences and so on. (oss3, p.8); (...) It is not an entirely subjective experience, but it is not simply objectivism. If there were no human being there perceiving the world, I don't think there would be ethical values. It is a mutual manifestation of the object of ethical evaluation and human perceiver» (oss6, p.6).

For oss2, the ethical patterns and the concepts of right and goodness, depends on the internal characteristics of the reality we experience. Thus, «In music, I think that the ethics of each style is different. There are great difference in the ethics behind jazz, for example, and classic or popular music. One person plays guitar in a totally different way depending on the music styles. The way he plays, how he holds the guitar, the way he approaches the music is totally different. In classical music we are much more formal and this determines many things, not only how we dress on stage (...), but also how we approach the written music. In popular music or jazz there is much more freedom of interpretation. In classical music there are also requirements related to a certain ethics that we must respect to a certain degree and that defines the shades. (...) The way entertaining music faces a musical score would be considered wrong, for us, classics» (oss2, pp.3,4).

This means that the ethical consideration of reality is not abstract or blind, it requires a deep understanding of the nature and internal structure

of the object under consideration. The same happens in physical education when we define the set of sports contents (knowledge, skill, rules, etc) that will be taught. The ethical criteria of a basketball game are, obviously, different from those of a rugby game.

Considering the aim of this study that was to investigate the ethical nature or aspects of sports as a pedagogical tool in physical education, we propose a more specific approach to the most relevant ethical elements and criteria that characterise sports. If, for instance in a sport such as basketball, defensive actions forbid, both from the cultural and regulatory point of view, great physical contact with the opponent, in rugby, the tackle is a compulsory technical gesture and, thus, the ethical legitimacy of that technical gesture that can, somehow, physically attack those involved, is highly different in both realities (PETT).

In the quest for a more specific ethics applied to sports, more specifically to physical education, we discussed what we considered to be the key elements for an ethical debate on physical education, that is to say, the main discussion of the threads of identity within pedagogical sports. Despite the broad boundaries of this subject, we attempt to map the contours of ethical concern in sports, as a key element in terms of: *a)* the regulatory and normative structure of sports; *b)* the spirit of sports and its internal values; *c)* the right playing/doing at sports; *d)* the overcoming in sports; and *e)* sports as an opportunity for a supererogatory ethics (i.e. one over above compliance with ethical duties).

A) THE REGULATORY AND NORMATIVE STRUCTURE OF SPORTS

Sports represent a highly regulated social reality. Each sport has a set of constituent and regulatory norms that characterises it and provide its identity (Torres, 2011). Normally this structure corresponds to one of the first contents that are provided when we wish to teach any sports in physical education lessons. Thus, it is an artificial reality, consisting of artificial criteria and norms that create unnecessary obstacles, deliberately invented and handled by man, to answer his desire to meet that challenge or take a test (Suits, 2005).

«While Suits says that sports creates artificial problems, for me sports itself «is» a great artificial problem that we have created to make life interesting» (oss3, pp. 8-9). The creation of a symbolic conflict that becomes a practical conflict requires that the human relationship assumes itself as an

ethical relationship (iss2). For this reason, the participation in a sports activity requires the previous acceptance of the entry into an ethical universe: «And the reason we face these unnecessary obstacles is so that sport can be played, and so if you are not going to obey the rules it is almost as you are opting to be out of sport» (oss6, p.7).

The setting of rules in sports is mainly related to the type of challenge that man wishes to face and, also, to the way he wants to answer it. What is the challenge? How ought we to overcome it? Which criteria are used to provide answers to that challenge? Do we wish to challenge ourselves individually or in group? Do we wish to compare our answer with that of our counterparts? The answers to these questions will then result in the type of sports activity in which, for example in a physical education lesson, we decide to take part, as well as to create an opportunity of making sports a place of concrete evidences of our virtue (iss6).

In the type of education of sports that is mainly functional, namely in the context of a physical education lesson, these are, however, questions answered and provided to students. Sport activities are selected and pre-determined in (e.g.) the national curricula and presented to students along with its most frequent norms, regulations and techniques and skills.

In contrast to this didactic, iss1 in line with Meakin (1986; 1990) and McNamee, (1992) suggests the importance of creating a space in physical education lessons for raising questions of this nature with students in order to promote a greater awareness and participation in the ethical activities in which they take part. This way, regulations are not something that is only externally imposed, they can be internally incorporated and become the result of a choice. Thus, for instance, if the student chooses an activity whose challenge entails the impossibility of individually carrying the ball, he knows and accepts that he is not going to play football or basketball but that he can choose volleyball, for example. The same way that if part of the challenge corresponds to including physical contact with the opponent, the tolerance of the student for accepting a one-to-one battle will be higher in sports such as handball or rugby. According to the interviewees, when we ask students to think about these questions, we are necessarily promoting a more deliberate and involved attitude with the ethical content in classroom activities, thus making greater advances in terms of ethical education.

B) THE SPIRIT OF SPORTS AND ITS INTERNAL VALUES

But if the creation and regulation of sports arise only from rules that are explicitly described, then the ethical debate would be much more straightforward, simple and objective than it seems. There is something endlessly debatable in the ethical dimension of sports that in turn leads the quest for the good in this field to become prominent and often without definitive answers, in the reflection and discussion by its main social players. This ethical element that goes beyond explicit regulatory and normative criteria, that generates further complexity in our understanding of the ethical nature of sports is, entitled «the spirit of sports and its internal values» (Simon, 2000) and emerges with the intention of searching for a better and more enriching way of living sports, with a better interpretation and not only considering the minimum criteria that make it possible (ISS4, ISS5). Without contemplating this spirit that is mainly ethical, there is a negligence of sport itself and of aspects of its nature that are essential (OSS3, OSS6, ISS1, ISS2, ISS4, ISS5, ISS6, PETT, PET1, PET2, PET3, PET4, PET5).

As an example, OSS3 refers that even within the explicit set of regulatory and constituent norms, some are more central than others and must be respected in order not to deprive that sport from its characteristics: «Football rules have changed a lot throughout the years, for example the offside. It is still football and rules continue to change. Some rules are more basic and central. If you decide that in football you cannot use the feet anymore, unless you are the goalkeeper, then you are totally changing the nature of the game. You can keep calling it football, but it will be a different version of football. (...) you must be aware that, even though you use the same name, it is not the same activity» (OSS3, p.10).

Nevertheless, it is possible to identify ethical aspects that are common across sports and that go far beyond its explicitly normative dimension. The notion of fair play is a good example and this subject constantly arises in physical education lessons (ISS1, ISS2, ISS4, ISS6).

For instance, for ISS1, «the idea that we can live collectively, even if we have different views (...) and we can share the same world» (ISS1, p.19) is crucial to the spirit of sports, especially when considered as a vehicle for an ethical education. This supra-regulatory understanding, and independent from the different roles and point of views that we have, seems to be part of an internal spirit of the verbally inexplicit sport, and it can then set the basis for extremely rich learning situations during physical education lessons: «I think that for us, in the field of sports, the ideal would be that

one day we could play without a referee, isn't it?» (*iss1*, p.19); «(...) [In a game], if we could ensure that everybody raised their hand when there is a foul, we would contribute for justice and for fairplay» (*iss5*, p.7). This is why physical education lessons, in contrast to what happens in more strictly regulated competition contexts, where regulatory aspects are stricter, are a valuable space for the promotion of this spirit that, in a certain way, results from the legal and regulatory understanding of sports.

In recreational sports, from which we can learn lessons for educational contexts, there is even a tendency to break some regulations in order to promote the internal values of sports. For instance, in handicapping contestants, or when we create teams with different numbers of elements, contrary to the normal regulations, we artificially create balance in the confrontation and dispute so that it is real and has potential for growth through challenge of sufficiently similar capabilities: «The fundamental idea is that the sports relationship requires treating people with equality and trying to ensure that it is a relationship of equals. Equals does not mean that they are equal, it means they have the same dignity, the same credit and thus they can have an equal treatment» (*iss2*, p.8). In this sense, sports ethics in physical education is a highly relational concept and provides references and norms on how we relate to our counterparts, creating what we can call a social ethics, where the displacement of ourselves and otherness, that is to say, the sensitivity and availability in relation to the place/role of the other, are crucial (*oss3*, *oss5*, *iss1*, *iss3*).

This equitably-conditioned environment calls for another internal and common value of sports, the idea of mutual commitment (*iss3*). The idea of a mutual search for excellence via competition (Simon, Torres and Hager, 2015) is, for our interviewees, a non- or supra-regulatory ethical requirement of sports that requires specific pedagogical commitment: an engagement where teachers and learners deploy all their skills, strengths and energy to their maximum capacity. There is something deeply ethical in this full dedication to sports challenge that human beings can make and think about and that, besides that, reflects the consideration of the other (opponent, teammate) as someone that deserves that mutuality of commitment and dedication (PETT). Hence, there is a mutual logic in the ethical requirement of commitment, without which, even if we comply with all the regulations, we can disrespect the other or the sport itself in which we engage. One interviewee captures this mutuality with particular insight: «(...) since when we try to do better, we also enable the others to do their

best. We create room so that the other can offer his best and vice versa» (iss3, p.15).

In competitive sports the levels of commitment are normally associated to the competitive needs of that moment. This means that the maximum commitment may not be necessary when the aim of winning does not require that effort. In physical education, where we often realise that students' performance is very weak due to their limited sports literacy, the mutual value of this commitment of showing the best performance of each one and, mainly, the best group performance, is pedagogically priceless.

C) THE RIGHT PLAYING/DOING OF SPORTS

When we think about ethics, especially in common sense conversations, we often run the risk of finding moral perspectives on the notion of good in sports. Sports goodness includes, but is not limited to, fair play, justice, and the kindness of players' actions and character. There is an essential aspect in sports goodness that is related to more technical, tactical and/or pragmatic aspects of sports performance that lead to an adjustment of the gesture to the requirements of each moment, which we call the right playing/doing of sports (iss2): «For me, when I am watching [sports], of whatever kind, it is important that gestures are well performed» (issT, p. 15). The right performing of sports gesture is not only related to the technical criteria, it also includes the ethical dimension that should be pedagogically analysed more in depth in physical education. In this sense, for iss5, the right playing/doing is an essential aspect of sports ethics since normally the sportsmen that most break rules and do not respect the sports' spirit are usually the technically less skilled professionals, which have a shorter range of legitimate tools to reach their objectives: «The improvement of the gesture is important because of ethics, for example. The best we teach the gesture, the less players need to cheat or use violence to reach their ends, since they acquire tools that enable them to reach them in a legal way» (iss5, p. 14).

Normally, the good playing of sports is thought to require the correct performance of the technical movements, the correct use of sport materials, their functionality, a concern for efficiency and effectiveness, and are based on standardised criteria even those criteria can be altered from standard competitive forms to those more apt to the teachers' pedagogical goals (osst).

Thus, the technical domain is the support and the basis of any right (i.e. rule-observing) playing/doing, whether it is sportive, artistic, technological or mechanical (ossT). In this sense, we can find here a link between ethics and technique that can be relevant for an ethical interpretation of sports teaching through physical education, since technical competences enable the sportsman to overcome the challenges created by sports.

It would be too simplistic, therefore, to say that for an ethical concern in physical education it is only necessary to respect its normative structure and its internal structure, since the respect for the rules and the maximum commitment and good will of students is not enough. For our interviewees it is essential that, besides the incorporation of normative criteria and a committed mutuality, there is also the serious work of learning technical and tactical knowledge that are specific of each sport and without which not only the technical aspect would be jeopardised, but also the ethical considerations.

D) OVERCOMING IN SPORTS

For oss3, sports is an arena for «human betterment» (Hämäläinen, 2014) at different levels. When they submit themselves to a sports challenge, sportspersons voluntarily embark upon a path of personal and/or collective improvement, challenging themselves, the others, or a result/record: «The sportsman (sic) has an interesting problem – no matter if they are opponents, or a very difficult wave, for a surfer – and he managed with his skills and right-doing to overcome himself, to achieve something unexpected» (oss3, p. 12). This overcoming notion is not only a practical one, but it has a symbolic meaning too. When overcoming a sports challenge, individuals (more or less self-consciously) wander a path of personal growth and overcoming (Lacerda and Mumford, 2010).

Yet for issT and iss6, this dimension of sports overcoming is not always straightforward or easy to judge, and the ethical nature of the sports challenge changes considerably according to both practical and formal criteria of that specific challenge. For instance, the overcoming capacity and the capacity of performing at the best of his ability for a student in gymnastics, as it is an individual activity and not performed simultaneously with opponents, is totally different of that of the student that takes part in a relay race and that can permanently compare and adjust his performance, in real time, according to the performance of his opponents. In this case, the stu-

dent can decide not to do his best, in case something below is enough for succeeding. This raises ethical questions related to each one's duty of performing his skills at their highest level and, at the same time, the right that each one has to manage their own efforts (ISS1).

Moreover ISS6 reports that the ethical value of competition, simultaneous with the performance of others - parallel and shared tests (Kretchmar, 1975) - cannot be compared to that of non-simultaneous competitions, where one performs alone or against our previous results, since: «(...) my historical self, the person who performed yesterday and run in two hours and twenty two minutes does not have the chance to try harder against myself today. So it is the same thing as you swimming against an historical record and if you finish one minute shorter time you can say «I won, I beat», because you beat the record. But who did you beat? Because the person who did that record didn't have the chance to adjust a strategy or to know that you are a little bit ahead of them» (ISS6, p.4).

These aspects raise relevant questions related to the fairness of sports challenge, the merit of the overcoming process and its didactic utility.

Thus, competition constitutes an important part of the ethical dimension of sports. For PET2, the commitment to ethics becomes increasingly more difficult the higher the competitive level is, and the higher the number of other aspects that are considered beyond sports entertainment and the mere aspects of winning or losing. The dominance of the competitive aspect of sports often compromises its ethical experience, according to OSS5, PET4 and PET5, since it is also necessary to learn to compete, including the value of the fight for victory and success in its correspondent axiological hierarchical place.

Equally, OSS5 and PET5 argue that sports must be a place of inclusion and that, often, particularly at high level, it becomes just the opposite, a place of exclusion: «It is essential that people respect each other's differences. As it is also important to respect our skills, doing our best» (PET5, p.6). Also for PET4 the selection process of athletes in school-age (children and young people) contributes to the marginalisation of those that are less skilled for the benefit of the absolute value of performance.

When we speak of physical education, these questions should not be raised in this linear way, since it should be a place from all and for each individual, where in this aspect we can make the difference.

PET5 adds that the non-acceptance of the weakness of others' performances, mainly in an educational context, is more serious in ethical terms than accidentally breaking some of the strictly regulated rules: «(...) [the

ethical attitude in sports] also depends on understanding that the others fail independently of complying or not with the rules. (...) The misunderstanding of others' fails is a lack of respect in ethical terms, because as human beings we all fail» (PET5, p, 5).

Thus, physical education, as a space for the teaching of sports that is loosened from the shackles of competition-dominated or supremacy-performance, is then an excellent place for learning situations and different performance criteria that increasingly value the ethical content. Here the pedagogues strives more for the inclusion of all than for a blind achievement of numerical results, as already stressed by Manuel Sérgio: «The transcendence and overcoming (namely in group, team, community) of what we are, towards what we should be: this is the sense of sports!» (Sérgio, 2014, p.80).

E) SPORT AS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR A SUPEREROGATORY ETHICS

As argued so far, in sports as in life, ethical problems are not solved always by the respect for and compliance with all regulations. «We cannot reduce sports ethics to rules. (...) Ethics includes the idea of supererogatory, when someone goes beyond his duties. And this is what we most admire» (oss3, p.10).

An important part of the ethical experience and sports spirit, is based on the experience of a supererogatory ethics, that is to say, an ethics that goes beyond formal requirements of right conduct (Feinberg, 1968; Feldman, 1986). As pointed out by oss1: «(...) because the rule has a very limited scope of action. (...) It is the administrative aspect. I can follow the rules but, for example, be unpleasant to my opponent ...(...). Thus, ethics is not at all limited to the compliance with the rules nor to their existence» (oss1, p.15).

It is broadly consensual in the totality of our interviewees that there is a fundamental ethics not limited to rules and regulations. This ethical space is unregulated not merely because it is difficult so to do, but rather because its values depend properly on the fact that they are not imposed:³ «It some-

3 See another interesting example in this field, when the athlete Iván Fernández Anaya refused to take advantage from the runner that was ahead of him when this one stopped before the finishing line thinking he had already crossed it: http://elpais.com/elpais/2012/12/19/inenglish/1355928581_856388.html

times happens in cycling. Someone has a flat tyre and we can try to run away or wait while his tire is changed. We do not have to wait. And there isn't any ethical norm that says that. And it would be impossible to define procedures for each situation. We have to interpret. And then there are things that ethically cannot be requested. They are beyond what we should do. But they have ethical value! They can be appreciated, we can say that it was morally and aesthetically beautiful. But I think it is dangerous to try to put that down in writing, because that is when we see an aesthetically more boring side of sports, in which we want to foresee all situations and control every element» (oss3, p.10).

According to iss1, the strong regulatory nature of sports can promote something that can be considered to be very dangerous because its ethical dimension: the fulfilment of ethical criteria only because they are externally imposed and not because they are internal and part of our convictions: «The higher the competition in terms of performance, the more rules it has up to the smallest details, with the aim of finding increasingly thorough assessment methods. There we find a relation between ethics and law. Law tries that sports remains in an ethical relation between participants, that it has the regulatory aspect (which is not necessarily ethical) and it can even frequently lead to strategic behaviours that may be questioned from the point of view of sports virtue. It is possible to take advantage or profit from a situation that, at first, had the aim of punishing but that was then taken as an advantage» (iss2, p.7).

In its turn, rather than imposing a normative structure with well-defined, strictly applied rules enforcing only minimum limits, a supererogatory ethics is transformative because it makes us think, reflect, and interpret the world and ourselves in a more holistic way, promoting ways of being that are built and grown internally. Physical education lessons seem to be a privileged space for this experience (oss3). oss5 and issT reinforce this idea, adding that what is imposed by the law, that is just equitable and faire, even being good, is not enough for us. This is why there is something especially interesting and attractive in an ethics that extrapolates the mere duty and that sports promotes with the idea of *fair play*: «For instance, when one player is about to score a goal and offers that goal (...) to a teammate (...) or to the player who plays less time or that is still in an integration process in the team [or class] (...) I think this is a demonstration of an ethical value...» (PETT, p.17).

The notion of *fair play* includes the active participant in the ethical process, providing a great opportunity for exercising his freedom, his cons-

sciousness and autonomy in the process of thinking/building the ethical universe of practice that just extrapolates the minimum requirements, the duty, the fair and the equitable (ISS1, PET4, PET5). It is through this notion that we can understand the distinction between the rule and the spirit of the game (Simon, Torres and Hager, 2015): «We can abide the rules of the game by the limit and have tricky tactics, throw ourselves on the floor, kick the ball out of play...» (ISS2, p.10); «In many occasions I can enter a game and respect all the rules but without respecting the other, because I don't recognise him as someone that can create challenges...» (ISS3, p.15).

An equally interesting aspect in applying the notion of the supererogatory ethics to sports and physical education is that, as it is not descriptive nor explicitly defined, it is tacitly created and negotiated between the participants: «There is always a negotiation in every game. Teams enter the game and start to analyse one another: how are we going to play this game? Will we play clean or dirty? This relationship is developed through a dialog and events reveal that» (ISS2, p.11).

Sports, and more specifically the physical education lesson, is then an arena of opportunities where man can exercise and communicate this supererogatory or meta-ethics, in which he is highly qualified, an ethics that leads to overcoming and transcendence, that extrapolates law and duty requirements, that overcomes justice and equity, that makes us think beyond the minimum limits, and an ethics that is not ordinary: «Sports is also a place where man can transcend himself... I think that this attitude leads him to make a difference» (PETT, p.20).

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

«Sports should do good and in order to do good it (sic) has to be linked to the idea of good» (ISS5, p.7).

Ethics appears in sports when there is also a need of preservation, defence and mainly persecution of its essential nature and of places, functions or roles of its participants (ISS6). This need is even more urgent when we consider a sports education through physical education that is based on the idea that sports is a fertile ground that contributes to a meaningful life (Feezell, 2013; McNamee, 2008; Reid, 2010).

No matter how arguable, variable and apparently intangible the nature of sports may be, largely due to the huge diversity of forms it assumes (different sports and practices) and the different contexts where it is per-

formed (competition/high-performance, entertainment, teaching, training) there is an idea of sports that constitutes its identity and before which we feel the need of a truthful relationship: *«A key question in sports is the existence of a relation of truth, not in the sense of an absolute truth but a relationship that is genuine in terms of the respect for an idea of the sports practice. Virtue appears in sports because it always challenges and places people in competition, and there are two sides in a competition that try to obtain a favourable result. This result involves a conflict of interests. And in this relation of conflict of interest, in order to promote a truthful relationship, honesty and courage have to stand out (...), the respect for the opponent, the recognition of the opponent, that is to say, seeing the opponent as equal»* (iss2, p.6).

In the pedagogical context of physical education we can, thus, conclude that an interesting part of the ethical potential of sports, as stated by our interviewees, is based on the didactic contemplation, treatment and use of the ethical vector presented here, namely, the regulatory and normative structure of sports; the spirit of sports and its internal values; the right playing/doing of sports; the overcoming in sports; and sports as an opportunity for a supererogatory ethics. These are not, as we have seen, external or optional elements to add to physical education classes, but intrinsic features of sports' contents that can and should be treated and promoted in physical education classes by an ethical pedagogical lens.

Notwithstanding that our purpose was to identify, according to the main concerns of our study group, a relevant start point for promoting sports ethics in a physical education lesson that goes beyond the legal, regulatory and functionalist boundaries of the teaching of sports in this class, based on the idea that «universal values, linked and associated to effort and sweating, help to create different and unique persons and individuals, in terms of body and soul, spirit and mind, ways of feeling and thinking, understanding and assessing» (Bento, 2010). We conclude, however, that the ethical potential of sports is not limited to these technical aspects and that, naturally, some relevant aspects of sports ethics in general have yet to be systematically exploited.

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