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Physical education as an aesthetic-ethical educational project

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Abstract
Commencing with a discussion of the various conceptions of education for the development of humanity, this essay articulates four essential vectors of educational processes – epistemic, ethical, aesthetic, and political, as they are instantiated in Physical Education. Drawing on philosophical literature, it is argued that the sporting activities that typically comprise physical educational curricula can afford opportunities to experience and to open the athletic self to epistemic, political and especially aesthetic notions, and not merely ethical ones, as recent scholarship has tended to focus on. This essay explores the four vectors in the context of the modern urban self.

Keywords
Physical education, aesthetics, ethics

Introduction

Relatively little recent philosophical work has penetrated the Physical Education profession by contrast with other disciplines such as psychology, sociology and pedagogy. What has been discussed has often focused on issues of educational status (Green, 1998; Kirk, 1992, 2013) or justification (Carr, 1979, 1997; McNamee, 1998; 2005). Earlier work had focused on aesthetic (Carlisle, 1974) and epistemic issues (e.g. Carr, 1979, 1997), specifically relating to the nature of practical knowledge, though a minor resurgence has been noted of late (Hopsicker, 2009; Stolz, 2013). In this

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essay, starting from a historical thesis regarding the classical educational aim to develop happiness, goodness and nobility, we argue that physical education has an important axiological role in the development of children and youth, where aesthetic and ethical values also have significance. We discuss how these two fields can be materially related in physical education curricula. We offer a critical reflection that starts with a reference to education as a cultural intermediary for humanization and then explore physical education as an aesthetic–ethical educational project, concerning the development of human sensibility through sport in four different, but related, levels: epistemic, aesthetic, ethic and social. Finally we develop the idea of the relational experience with the modern world, understood as one that treats the person as a lived-felt-body, overcoming the mere intellectual transmission of knowledge, in the search for a pedagogy founded on the construction of global citizens.

1. Education as humanization: four essential vectors

For Beresford (1994), education is a cultural process intended to humanize the learner. Etymologically, culture has its source in the Latin term *colere*, which means 'to cultivate'. Even though this term was traditionally associated with agricultural activities, a more comprehensive notion of culture is associated with the development of humans' formation and their relationship with the world. Through culture we learn how to question, engage in dialogue, and understand and explain sets of signs and symbols concerning how humans relate to themselves and the world.

According to Boaventura de Sousa Santos (1982), educating means giving a world to those who lack it, 'worldizing' them so to speak, and providing learners with the possibility to create their own world. Thus, educating humankind means providing it with the required elements for 'worldizing' humanity in the quest to achieve a significant human form of being in the world. This consideration makes us understand that man is 'per-fect', in the etymological meaning of the expression[1]. This is, unfinished, an improvable state that can be developed in order to reach its *telos*, its perfected form or goal. In addition, this idea requires an educational approach as a relational experience with the world, not only rationally and intellectually, but holistically human. This means considering man as a lived-felt-body, extrapolating the mere transmission of knowledge, in the quest for a po(i)etic[2] pedagogy, based in the construction of the whole person (Pereira, 2006).

Thus, the main question associated with education is the characterization of human form; that is: what kind of person is it desirable to form in each human learner? This is an extremely difficult question since the quest for an answer necessarily draws on fundamental ontological and existential questions: what does it mean to be a human being? What is humanity? How do we create humanity in human beings? And, somewhat paradoxically, if humanity is not merely a biological label but a desirable human quality (Williams, 1995) what forms ought this humanity to take in the face of global cultural diversity?

Savater (1998: 29) tries to explain this paradox, noting that "We are born as human beings, but that is not enough: we need to become one". Savater believes we are the only species that needs to live a process in order to really become who we are – humans. While this may sound distinctly postmodern, it is worth noting that Kant (1996: 15) himself expresses the same view when he says "Man can only become man by education. He is merely what education makes of him".

Education must consider the basic anthropological fact that human beings are not merely comprised of reason, but also emotions, will and sensibility (Bento, 2012; McNamee, 2008; Taylor, 1989). Likewise, our encounter with reality, with the world, is not comprised of different

and distinct modes, e.g. aesthetic, epistemic, ethical, moral, social, and so on, but a holistic interpenetration of all these modes (Torres, 2012). Thus, the complexity of the relatively unified or fragmentary shape of these dimensions must be considered in forming a pedagogical programme that might achieve an overarching educational aim of global humanity.

Considering education as an anthropological project intended to help man "... to build him/herself as an individual and person, to build its autonomy based in the understanding of himself, the others and the world" (Matos, 2012: 160), we discover an axiological important role. In this sense, Werneck (1991) claims that education cannot be limited to the transmission of instructive knowledge; it must be also associated to the transmission and generation of a range of values that should be reflected on and more or less consciously acquired. This position is associated with critiques of the conservative/liberal educational lexis, whose mode of communication is essentially either transmissional or liberational, respectively[3].

Associated to these values we find in Schiller's *Letters about the aesthetic education of man* (1994) the reference to aesthetic and ethical values, where the former are consistently associated with education for human happiness and moral nobility, suggesting an aesthetic and ethical educational connection that we consider worth exploring as a social pedagogical mode.

Thus, for Severino (2002), education consists of the integration the aforementioned modes of being. Specifically it entails the development of sensibility in what he describes as four essential vectors: (i) the education of epistemic sensibility through the search of knowledge of reality, understanding this as resulting from the completeness of human capacities (thinking and feeling, rationality and corporeality); (ii) the education of ethical sensibility, seeking to develop autonomy, freedom and responsibility; (iii) the education of aesthetic sensibility, trying to develop the capacity for appreciation, contemplation, enjoyment and aesthetic judgement of reality; and (iv) the education of political sensibility (social consciousness) to form citizens properly dedicated to *polis*[4], to society and creation of common awareness, by promoting harmonious relationships among ourselves, others and the world.

How might the activities that comprise the physical educational curriculum be conceived and implemented in ways? We focus on this problem in the following sections.

2. Physical education and the development of epistemic sensibility

Beyond providing informational content by transmitting knowledge, teaching also requires the provision of adequate tools and opportunities to access a deeper reality and its understanding in autonomous and responsible ways. As such, Torres (2011) says that the main entry for the development of knowledge is the experience of reality, instead of the mere kind of knowledge we receive in an instructional mode, and so, knowledge requires establishing intimate, mutual and valid correspondences between the knowledgeable person and the object of knowledge (Torres, 2011). This means that learning processes require a network of corporal and social senses and potentials, not only intellectual capabilities (Pereira, 2009).

Physical education typically has its main focus in the development of motor skills. For example, a Portuguese national curriculum study shows the main focus is devoted to essential motoric skills in physical education programmes. The dominant approach is largely related to physical efficiency and health, hygiene and safety (Gagliardini Graça and Lacerda, 2012). This is in keeping with traditional curricular critiques of sport education and physical education in the United Kingdom (Kirk, 1984) and the United States of America (Siedentop, 1986).

Theoretical knowledge of human movement has a substantial basis in motor learning, motor control and biomechanics research. Though these domains of knowledge occupy a significant space in international research contexts for sports, they are often extremely difficult to apply in sports and physical education learning contexts. This difficulty comes from the fact that most of this research is done in highly controlled laboratory environments, ignoring the knowing movers' point of view. Thus it is often extremely difficult and even inappropriate to apply their insights into the messy contexts of a physical education class or a sport's training session (Nyberg, 2014). Also, according to Nyberg, research on comprehensive learning and teaching games and motor skills, frequently separate, at least linguistically, physical skills from the concept of knowledge, emphasizing mind–body and theory–practice dualisms, by the usage of notions such as "declarative knowledge", "procedure knowledge", "strategic knowledge", distinguishing them from "technique or movement execution" (Nyberg, 2014, p. 75).

Put simply in physical education, we can consider two different types of knowledge: theoretical and discursive knowledge, that is, 'knowing that'; and practical and embodied knowledge, or 'knowing how' (Ryle, 1949). The latter corresponds to a pre-discursive, embodied, incarnated knowledge, specific to the student or athlete (Breivik, 2014; Torres, 2011). Acquired through experience, through practice, reinforcing the skills inherent to each activity, it can sometimes become unconscious or even difficult to explain skilled performance in a theoretical way (Torres, 2011). This point was captured long ago by Michael Polanyi in his work on tacit knowledge (1974) and is often summarized in the pithy remark that 'we know more than we can tell'. More recently, Hopsicker (2009) has developed this line of reasoning in relation to sports participation. It is by learning the 'knowing how' that people develop capacities to provide creative and intuitive answers to the unpredictable constraints of each sport. Thus, the aesthetic experience resulting from the relation with sports is composed of an integrated mediation that results from an emotional and rational process that enables learning by enabling the development of sense and meaning through sporting experience (Gumbrecht, 2007).

Knowledge and contents communication through sports has a specific language where form and meaning are phenomenologically indivisible (Reid, 1974). The aesthetic aspect of a specific rugby team's defensive organization or flow of an offensive move is inexpressible in exhaustive linguistic terms. This is why most (perhaps all) teachers and coaches resort to practical examples, analogies and metaphors to guide their learners. These indirect modes are essential parts of their pedagogical toolkit, and are essential in order to convey the information they need to. Playing basketball, bouncing on the trampoline, climbing, or running, means feeling, understanding, being and living through these sports and through the aesthetic/kinaesthetic awareness and perception of their forms and meanings, thus enabling an embodied and corporeal knowledge. Therefore, physical education can be considered to foster epistemic development through sensibility: it provides access to the awareness of sports reality through its unique words, forms and meanings that cannot be totally expressed or translated linguistically. For Reid (1974), this incorporation of sense and meanings corresponds to a unique and irreplaceable type of knowledge of reality, which is frequently neglected in education due to a limited conception of knowledge that in turn reduces experience to common verbal language and conventional symbols. While it is true that many of the dominant theoretical forms of knowledge (in matters such as mathematics, sciences, history, and so on) can more easily be verbally explained, conveying information through words, symbols, concepts or propositions, knowledge of sports' reality more fully, by contrast, requires an alternative approach.

This prerogative should not be taken to infer that the value of 'doing' or 'experiencing' is exclusive to physical education classes. Neither is it evident that verbal communication is unimportant. We should give priority to *'knowing how'* in sports because of its specific and holistic

characteristics. But even if we believe that sport is directly related to corporeal action, this does not mean that it cannot (or should not) be debated, explained and subject to critical reflection by conceptual intersubjective dialogue (among students, and between students and pedagogues – teacher or coach). In fact, this can be an important evaluation tool for the pedagogue, since sports contents and meanings are learnt both at a behavioural and a conceptual level – the two are inter-related. The capacity that student have to conceptually express and reflect their own and their peers' performances can reinforce the knowledge that the teacher has about the learning process, in addition to being an interesting element of verbal communication within the classroom. In this sense Reid (1974) says, after Kant, that knowledge through concrete and immediate experience – without any conceptualization – is destined to bring about a form of blindness, and that conceptualization, without an affirmation in concrete experience, is condemned to emptiness (Reid, 1974).

Therefore, according to Torres (2011), sport experience has a peculiar unity between corporeality and intellect, what is often these days referred to as the 'embodied mind', in and through which thinking and actions are active and continuous processes; they are involved in the whole sport experience. This is one of the main values of sports world that physical education can and should emphasize.

Therefore, physical education must address this need and promote teaching–learning processes based on concrete direct confrontation with felt-experiences of the kind that comprise education in sports and athletic activities.

3. Physical education and the development of ethical sensibility

When we discuss education, whether or not in the contexts of physical education, the ethical aspect is clearly evident, since it contributes to human growth and, doing so, requires a strong sense of axiological hierarchy, where ethical values have the main importance (Queirós and Silva, 2012).

Ethics is, by definition, the branch of philosophy that deals with praise and blame, good and evil, right and wrong, and so on. Generally speaking, it also deals with the aim of a distinctively human life and the ways to reach it (Russ, 2000). The application of this discipline to sports is traditionally associated with sports justice (the standards and rules of each sport that regulate the sportspersons' conduct), fair play, or even the scope of sports' truth (McNamee, 2010).

Goodness in sports can be analysed considering sport itself (or each sports' activity) and the subjects (whether practitioners or observers), bearing in mind these different elements are often inter-related and have symbiotic influences. A pedagogical consideration of sports, and particularly physical education, requires this mutual logic that includes, according to Torres (2011), three base principles that relate individuals (among them and with sports) that good practitioners (i.e. those engaged in the practices of sports: athletes, coaches, pedagogues, teachers) cannot ignore. Good practitioners not only accept but also respect and adopt the rules of the sport they practise, recognizing its importance for sports justice, for the performance's quality and for sport itself. In addition, good practitioners strive to achieve the highest possible performance level and promote sporting excellence by trying to overcome their own and others' previous limits in order to achieve better results, albeit within the means accepted by the sports and its best traditions (McNamee, 2008, 2012). Finally, good sportspersons intentionally abstain from unreasonably harming others, respecting the principle of nonmaleficence (non-harm) (Torres, 2011). Also, Russell (2011) argues that sport has a moral potential illuminator, materialized in a genuine and honest struggle for excellence that requires a deep respect for ethical values, such as equality, tolerance, and justice, where competitors strive in order to discover weaknesses and strengths in themselves and their opponents.

Thus emerge three sporting pedagogical vectors that simultaneously contribute to the good of students and sport: 1) the role of physical education in the development of students' sensibility and respect for internal goods and constitutive characteristics of each sport (Brown, 1984; McNamee, 1995; Morgan, 1987); 2) the cultivation of responsibility to provide learning contexts that promote overcoming, and the athletic perfectionism in students in terms of their sporting performance; and 3) the cultivation of responsibility to promote in students, by means of sports pedagogical experience, respect of self and others, and for the integrity of and through sporting activities.

Why is it necessary to respect the nature of sport? What is the meaning of respecting its internal goods and rules if it is an entertaining and metaphoric experience without application or validity in real life? And, particularly regarding the aesthetic viewpoint, can we not consider that this attitude inhibits a freer, more open aesthetic experience?

Amândio Graça (2012) opens the way to one answer to these questions when defending the view that, in sports, it is exactly through "the ways of seduction, through the meanings awareness, also through the experience of delight, that something that is not compulsory becomes indispensable and a priority; when something that is superfluous and free proves to be useful and enriching." (Graça, 2012: 109).

Hence, physical education is no longer a context where it is only necessary to keep students *'happy and busy'* with random activities. In physical education classes students must have access to specific activities where they can experience different feelings, from joy and satisfaction to doubts and frustration, that result from sport's senses and meanings, and that contribute not only to a more global and complete aesthetic experience but also to a more real experience, propitious to be transposed more generally to the learner's everyday life.

Physical education can also give students the experience of moral discernment and action through interaction and communication possibilities, both with the world and with others included in sport cultural environments (Hirama et al., 2012). To this extent, as in life, dilemmas resulting from the need to give an answer to the pragmatic motives and objectives of each sport in contrast with the available tools and processes, as well as the constraints of each sport, require an ethic prioritization of motivations, actions, and behaviours. This ethical prioritization must include the necessary respect for the integrity of every person involved in the activity, even above the desire for victory or individual success.

4. Physical education and the development of aesthetic sensibility

Historically, there have been few opportunities to learn emotional sensibilities in other disciplines of the school curricula, other than the traditional arts. Paradoxically, this opportunity to cultivate the emotional facet of experience is not always considered as an added value in physical education classes (Gagliardini Graça and Lacerda, 2012). Considering that, traditionally, aesthetics deals with questions related to the judgement of taste, sensibility to beauty and ugliness, and other categories related to the subjective capacity to experience reality, there are some difficulties in testing and applying it pedagogically (Edgar, 2013). This is due to the difficulty in objectivizing, synthesizing or generalizing aesthetic experience in and through sport and physical education. Specifically, the process of identifying its pedagogical contributions is complicated, in contrast to the teacher's concrete interventions when engaged in skill development or when attempting to enhance physical capacities such as speed, strength, or stamina. Moreover, when particularly considering its application to physical education, the vastly diverse set of activities makes it extremely difficult to make responsible aesthetic generalizations (Carlisle, 1974).

A further problem related to a tradition of sport's aesthetic approaches in physical education classes is the reduction of the objectivization/materialization of the human body, which highlights aspects related to shape, appearance or its utilitarian approach (Queirós and Silva, 2012). In fact, this phenomenon occurs in line with the objectivization/materialization of the aesthetic approach to sports, which only tends to consider and analyse its shape and surface, ignoring its contents, senses and meanings (Gagliardini Graça and Lacerda, 2011). This is witnessed most clearly in sports such as gymnastics, diving or trampolining – what Best (1978) referred to as "aesthetic" or "non-purposive" sports – since these kind of sports, where the corporal appearance of the performance is central, are more often referred on the aesthetics of sport discourses.

Considering these difficulties there are two possible attitudes: either we turn our backs on the issue and ignore the importance of the subject, thinking it is nigh on impossible to approach; or we try to understand it by deepening our comprehension of the activity. We attempt the latter approach here.

Both traditionally and contemporaneously, the heterogeneous value of sports and physical activity is often occluded by their potential to develop positive effects for health and well-being, or at least the amelioration of the negative effects of sedentariness and poor diet. This is a problem for the recognition of sport value: it exploits sport and physical education under the dominant instrumental, scientific – mainly anatomical and physiological – terminology and methodologies. It is imperative to recognize, identify, and celebrate, the inherent value of sport practices such that it goes beyond its organic effects, exploring the importance of the pedagogical perspectives including and beyond its corporeal qualities (McNamee, 1994).

Thus, physical activities that are something more than a therapeutic product for healing or preventing diseases and illnesses must be taught, contemplated, and experienced in terms of their inner goods and by the particular experiences they provide (Kretchmar, 2000; Loland, 2006; Torres, 2011).

In this sense, it is fundamental to learn to love sports and physical education and to learn to appreciate the sensibility for its aesthetic content, nothing else than the result of the full and faithful experience of its inner goods.

How is it possible to achieve this aim when the main purpose of sport is normally described as purely practical and pragmatic? That is, how is it possible to achieve success through processes that respect a rigid system of rules (Reid, 1974)? Is the individual structure of each sport aesthetic itself, or do the processes that result from its practice lead to aesthetic values in a random way? For Reid (1974) this distinction is crucial. But is this not a false question?

If each sport's nature is largely determined by its internal structure (which includes both norms and regulations), and considering that this structure markedly limits the development of processes that lead to success, to victory and to the pragmatic aim of sport, is it not legitimate to say that this internal structure is responsible for the aesthetic manifestation of each sport, making it attractive and an object that is experienced, contemplated and enjoyed by human beings? Is not success the result of the process that leads to it, but that it may take various forms? What is the logical argument underpinning the idea that success, the result of sporting activities, is random or independent from preceding processes?

These questions force us to consider whether educating learners towards a sensibility and sensitivity of aesthetic values in physical education corresponds to a dimension that is missing in many (perhaps most?) sports classes. Might it be antithetical to the dominant modes of self-identity of sport pedagogues and physical education teachers?

In contrast, we maintain that it results from a pedagogy faithful to the inherent characteristics of the activities of sports themselves, though their pattern is neither uniform, nor equal in pedagogical

potential. This is perhaps the most important point that Best (1988) made in his analytical distinction between aesthetic and purposive sports. Any human activity may be viewed in terms of aesthetic qualities (both as performer or spectator), but this recognition does not entail that they are equally positioned to afford growth in aesthetic sensibility. That much said, a dance lesson in the hands of a narrowly focused rugby or football coach is less likely to afford aesthetic development than an ice hockey lesson led by an expert with an eye to the beauty of defensive and offensive patterns. How, then, might we best proceed?

One might think that sport's structure, rules and regulations restrict the aesthetic action in sports by limiting players' freedom. However, as Reid (1974) points out, in sports persons are free to express themselves in terms of movements and expressive behaviours as long as they respect its functioning.

Best (1988) draws on Kant's metaphysics to express the same point regarding artistic creativity: "The light dove, in free flight cutting through the air the resistance of which it feels, could get the idea that it could do even better in airless space." (Kant, 1999: 129). Of course, the friction experienced by the dove is the very precondition of flight. Analogously, then, sport's rules enable creativity, without them there is no freedom but mere anarchy and meaninglessness.

Thus, these different forms of expression enabled by the rule and normative structures and cultures afford the potential for the development and display of aesthetic sensibility. For this reason Lacerda (2004) observes that seeing, listening, discovering, knowing, interpreting, experiencing and creating in sport requires cultivation; sports can be open to a teaching domain that leads to learning and continually invites us to re-envision teachers' roles in this learning process. But who will do the inviting? Without a developed vocabulary, aesthetic education is unlikely to inspire learners into the world of aesthetic sensibility. Perhaps this plea is not entirely without hope. Some teachers will need opening up to this new vista, others will merely need to rephrase or displace older technicist vocabularies with pedagogical attention that promote a learning context that promotes aesthetic values and sensibility development at different levels, namely through contemplation, empathy, understanding, fascination and experiencing/experimentation/creation (Björn Funch, apud Barros Marques and Fróis, 1999). This re-languaging (as opposed to reskilling) can help to overcome the mere and often alienated perspective of sports, meeting the development of affectivity and sensibility in lived and intimately and personally perceived sports' experience (Lacerda, Gagliardini Graça and Pereira, 2012).

Finding the language here that learners can identify with will be a key challenge, but not an impossible one. One has only to think of the way that alternative sports such as parkour, skateboarding, and snowboarding – with their attention on personal style and expressive capacities – have challenged dominant traditional sports cultures to know that this is possible too in formal physical education. This reveals one possibility then for the focused development of aesthetic sensibilities by choosing movement forms that lend themselves to aesthetic modes – whether in terms of content and skill, or the social narratives surrounding them.

Another way may entail shifting focus within traditional activities in which aesthetic elements are not central. This way of approaching and teaching sport reveals a balance between the two extreme attitudes characterized by Mumford (2012): the "partisan" (fanatic) who only takes profit from sport's pragmatic and self-promoting quantitative result; and the "purist," whose aesthetic approach to sport is relatively independent from their personal motivations and results. As such, physical education has a prerogative to provide students a sporting aesthetic sensibility that simultaneously respects its nature, purposes, and pragmatic aims while promoting enjoyment and satisfaction.

The teaching and realization of sport should not focus solely in a technical and tactical sport instrumentalization. Rather it should also emphasize, awaken and deepen the aesthetic aspects of the activity that simultaneously leads to lifelong enjoyment, to a dialogue with ourselves, with others, and with nature; to the development of creativity and to the exercise of freedom as a humanizing experience.

5. Physical education and the development of sensibility to political values (social awareness)

The experience of corporeality through the harmonious complementarity between body and mind, feeling and thinking, and – more widely located – in a network of human capacities and potentialities, makes physical education a particularly valuable educational vehicle where humans can be seen in their wholeness (Lacerda et al., 2012). Thus, in this discipline different dimensions of human capabilities (physical, intellectual, emotional, and so on) are welcome and find their *commonplaces* in cultures around the globe, unified in their diversity. Bento and Constantino (2007: 27) put the point well: "Sport is the cultural artefact of excellence, created by our civilization to correspond to the desire of instituting the body as an instrument of socialization of principles and values that improve and qualify person and life". This approximation to *commonplaces* of sports is not only related to individual processes for creating meaningful identities between body and soul, or even between the polymorphic possibilities of self-consciousness. On the contrary, according to Lacerda (2002), it initiates the human being in the encounter with the other, in sociability, in ethic and aesthetic ways, considering that the best education enables persons freely to behave in an intrinsic as well as extrinsic motivated ways. After Bento (1990), this process is not built in the void, or in the ephemeral, nor ought it be artificially added to sports by means of pedagogical motivations. It results precisely from the realization of sports' essential meanings, functions, inherent principles, and objectives, and that in itself promotes otherness by looking for a perfect realization of its requirements, whether they are technical, tactical, strategic, psychological or biological.

Physical education requires a special and intensive occupation of places and spaces, where each of us lives and encounters others, their places, and their particular ways of living. In this sense, if physical education is a welcoming place, it must be not only a place for the appropriation of space, but also one that affords students a creative and fecund experience that promotes the subjective and intersubjective convergence of human potentialities, as well a collaborative dialogue between its actors.

If it is true that the world is becoming increasingly urban, to pedagogically think about sportspersons, in their human condition, inevitably leads us to think in the dominant sporting space, the urban condition (Pereira, 2009), where humans must be inhabitants of the *polis*, that is, *politikos*[5].

A philosophical consideration of the modern human condition, as predominantly an urban condition, necessarily leads to the concept of education for diversity, of a harmonious and responsive coexistence between identity and otherness in the 21st century's global *polis*. We each have our different ways of being. We are very different between ourselves, and between ourselves and others. Therefore, we only create an open consciousness of ourselves when we do the same regarding others. This is particularly important in sport where, for instance, in handball or basketball, we can identify our skills and put them into practice from the moment we start interacting with others and this reveals our possibilities. We could think that this only applies to collective

sports, but the pedagogical approach of individual modalities at school reveals that it is not true. The new approaches in gymnastics – training by event/apparatus or teaching students spotting methods (hand spotting) – where collaboration plays a crucial role in the process of teaching–learning this modality through physical education, are good examples.

If one of the main characteristics of postmodern behaviour is the theoretical and practical worship, in ideology and customs, of narcissism and the decadence of the autoscopic emphasis (Savater, 2008), then the loss of the common is also frequently expressed by a generalized particularism that replaces the notion of common good by occasional solidarities among groups, or specific situations, threatening real multiculturalism. The notion of otherness is worthy of critical exploration beyond the space permitted here: it opens infinite possibilities in education, and these can be found precisely when we break the isolation of the self – even if this self is partly comprised by the collective or group – and when we open ourselves to the diversity of the 'other', of the world. By contrast, if like Gonçalves (2009) we consider the plural identity of persons and groups, and the recognition of cultural difference as a major value of modernity, then the biggest challenge is no longer the need of dialogue with the 'other', which despite everything seems quite consensual. Rather, it is 'how' that dialogue can occur to promote the strengthening of social ties in the *polis*, fighting against exclusion by finding mechanisms to promote integration, social reconstruction, and the configuration of new forms of solidarity for the common good.

For Pereira (2009), experiencing space, spatializing, can convey the meaning of giving to the other, of opening the space to the other, of living and promoting otherness. In learning contexts such as the afforded by physical education, based on the continuous need of exercising motor skill in the relationship between persons (which is not only physical, and also expressed by a unique corporeality) represent an important and valuable instrument for creating social identities and new ways of living that harmoniously, considering the development of a self-identity, respect and care for the other. This type of relationship is frequently expressed in sports through the variety of dynamics between cooperation and opposition that it includes. Consequently, we can find in physical education what Pereira describes as ''thinking society in contemporaneity'', that is, progressively learning to live side by side with difference (Pereira, 2009). Physical education thus conceived, we conclude, still has important ethical and aesthetic goals, concerning social and cultural relationships that can help students grow as persons in the realization of human possibilities.

Notes

1. The Latin prefix 'per' means 'movement', 'through'. Thus, the word 'per-fect' refers to the process of doing, the path we have to follow to become who we are or to become who we should become.
2. Po(i)etic is a special term for Pereira, that attempts to express education as a poetic and creative process, since the word 'poetry' itself has its origins in the term 'poiesis', which means to make, to create.
3. Regarding the critique of transmissional modes of education (Kleinig, 1983); and in relation to sport and physical education (McNamee, 1998).
4. Polis (plural, poleis) is the Greek word for city-state, the basic political entity.
5. Politikos is a Greek word that means a citizen that is pro-active and participates in polis life, in society and in the community.

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