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Sports ideology and formation of the individual: contributions from the Critical Theory of Sports

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Abstract: This paper presents the debate undertaken in the mid-1960s in France, by the theoretical and political movement called Critical Theory of Sports. This perspective came amid the emerging cultural climate in that period, marked by criticism of existing institutions and proposed the unveiling of the elements underlying the hegemony of sports ideology in culture, particularly in the media, clubs and schools. The text presents the main arguments of its creators, especially those designed by Jean-Marie Brohm, bringing their concerns with contributions from authors that marked the first generation of Critical Theory of Society, notably Theodor W. Adorno, Max Horkheimer and Hebert Marcuse. The text focuses on the criticism leveled by the authors in order to understand the fundamentals of the sports movement, conceived as a cultural object of wide spread and importance to the formation of the individual under the aegis of capitalism.

Keywords: sports, Critical Theory of Sports, critical theory of society, formation of the individual.

Introduction

The deafening uproar of the mass bedazzled by the carefully planned pyrotechnics, the glamorous parades of renowned sports icons during the opening of the Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro, in 2016, as well as in the soccer World Cup, held in Brazil in 2014, followed by watchful eyes of billions of television viewers around the planet, leave no trace of doubt about the impact that sporting events have on contemporary everyday life.

The fleeting moments of collective numbness, provided at the cost of billions of dollars, meet, among other things, at least three clear objectives: *operate* the dissimulation of the everyday barbarism that affects the lives of common men who inhabit the cities and countrysides of different countries; *increase* profit of powerful multinational corporations, responsible for large urban transformations of cities of hosting countries and for the production of consumer goods associated with the sports ideals; *deviate* the attention of a large portion of the population from the atrocities committed against freedom and human dignity, such as restrictions on access to information or the exercise of repression against political opposition movements. Accordingly, the Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro are analogous to other mass sporting events, such as the Olympic Games in 1936, which took place in Berlin during the Nazi rise, to the soccer World Cups in 1970, held in Mexico, and in 1978, in Argentina, the latter two occurred amidst the atrocities committed by military dictatorships in Brazil and in Argentina, and to the Moscow Olympic Games in 1980, held concurrently with the deportation

of politicians that opposed the totalitarian regime to the forced labor camps – the *gulags*.

Considering the importance of the sports movement in contemporary society, the aim of this text is to present the discussion undertaken by the Critical Theory of Sport, theoretical and political perspective that is critical of the hegemony of sports ideology¹ in culture, developed in France in the mid-1960s. Another aim is to present the contributions from authors of Critical Theory of Society, especially T. W. Adorno and M. Horkheimer, for the understanding of some of the associations between the formation of the individual, the contemporary sports movement, capitalism, and social domination. Due to the breadth of the research project undertaken by the Critical Theory of Sport, this text was organized into topics that seek to express their main contributions.

¹ It is considered, in this text, the concept of ideology presented by Horkheimer and Adorno (1956/1973): “With the crisis of bourgeois society, the traditional concept of ideology also seems to have lost its object. The world of spiritual products disintegrates, on the one hand, into critical truth, which is stripped from the element of appearance but is esoteric and alien to immediately operative social bonds; and, on the other hand, into planned administration of that which, at some point, constituted the ideology. If this heritage of ideology is understood as totality of the spiritual products that today fill, in large part, the conscience of men, then this totality will be manifested, specially, as a set of objects made to attract the masses in their condition of consumers and, if possible, to adapt and set their state of consciousness and not so much as autonomous spirits unaware of their own implications as members of society. The false consciousness of today, socially conditioned, is no longer objective spirit, not even in the sense of a blind and anonymous crystallization, based on social process; on the contrary, it is something scientifically adapted to society. This adaptation is carried out through the cultural industry products, such as movies, magazines, illustrated newspapers, radio, television, best-selling literature of various kinds, in which romanced biographies play a special role” (p. 200-201).

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Critical Theory of Sports: main formulations

In the early 1960s, according to Escrive and Vaugrand (1996), gather around Michel Bernard, then professor of philosophy in Nanterre, a group of students from the École Normale Supérieure of Physical Education of Paris. Far-left militants participate in intense discussions about physical education and sports, organizing along with Jean-Marie Brohm, Christian Lidove, Françoise Longone, Jean-Pierre Famose and, later, Pierre Laguillaumie, Ginette Berthaud, Dominique Robert and Guy Bonhomme, the group of the “Tendency of the Manifesto.” The group would participate in internal struggles in the National Union of Physical Education, between 1963 and 1964. The group kept close contacts with the International Communist organization. Jean-Marie Brohm, an exponent of that group, translates in 1966, along with Boris Fraenkel, Georg Lukács’ work *Lenin* and Wilhelm Reich’s work: *The Sexual Struggle of Youth* (reissued in 1972, in the Petite Collection Maspero). The influence from Freudian-Marxist theses would mark deeply all the movement led by Jean-Marie Brohm, becoming the central axis of a long theoretical production that would be prominent for virulent criticism of the sports institution.

According to Escrive and Vaugrand (1996), in 1968, under the impact of anti-institutional movements in Paris, is released *Partisans* journal number 43, entitled *Sport, culture e répression*. In the preface to the journal, in Spanish Edition, Berthaud and Brohm (1972/1978) announce their goal:

Nuestra intervención se propuso hacer salir a luz la razón de la institución deportiva, es decir, el conjunto de las fuerzas sociales, económicas, políticas e ideológicas que la atraviesan y le dan su dimensión histórica, fuerzas que precisamente la institución tiene por misión negar. En particular, el análisis de los fenómenos del poder, de los sistemas de acción, de decisión, del control y de negación de la institución deportiva, no deja duda alguna acerca de que el deporte indica un proceso de integración social dentro del marco de una relación de fuerzas (p. 12).

Participants of the movement that emerged in 1968, the group’s purpose was to unveil that which was hidden in the institutions, referring in particular to the institutional analysis of sport. According to its authors, sport would have the function of conveying the dominant ideologies, their structures, their imagery, and their myths. The radical criticism of sport, after May 1968, undertakes the political clash, denouncing the ideological use of sport by the State. During this period, the then Minister of Youth, M. Roland Nungesser, suggests the expansion of sports movement as an antidote to the dissolution of

morals, a struggle against the moral disintegration of the Nation. This position was widely criticized by the authors who gathered around the *Partisans* journal.

In 1969/1970, with the end of the “Tendency of the Manifesto”, a group of militant teachers of physical education creates the *École Émancipée* group, which will fight within the National Union of Physical Education for a radical criticism, having as objective the class struggle (Escriva & Vaugrand, 1996, p. 30). In 1975, along with Marc Perelman, Jean-Marie Brohm launches the *Quel Corps?* journal which would last 20 years, publishing a total of 52 numbers. The journal developed, among other topics, a production that was virulent and critical of the sports phenomenon, understood as a total social fact, occupying various spheres of the social organization – political, economic, social, legal and demographic institutions (Arnoud, 1996). However, in the mid-1980s, this orientation is weakened, especially through the rise of culturalist theoretical perspectives in France, as well as due to the criticism of its formulations, considered unilateral because they would not have taken into account, according to its detractors, the human and emancipative potential of sport, such as *fair play*² and the importance of the emergence of new models of social relations.³

The *Quel Corps?* journal was responsible for movements that would organize the boycotts to the soccer World Cup, in 1978, in Argentina, to the 1980 Olympic Games in Moscow, and to the sports meetings in South Africa, country of the Apartheid, denouncing the complicity of sports organizations with gun violence against the populations of these countries. According to Ardoino (1996), the perspective fostered by leftist currents, in France and in Germany, during the period from 1967 to the mid-1980s, aimed at deciphering and denouncing the evils carried out by the structures defined in culture that by praise of sports virtue, of ambition of performance, promote the maintenance of social order and establish a naturalization of the sports movement as something timeless and trans-historical. Such theoretical orientation is based on a triple influence: Marx, the Frankfurt School, and Freud. It is also based on the theoretical production developed by the institutional analysis and on Reich, regarding the body (Ardoino, 1996, p. 16). Such theoretical production aims to present a series of reflections that would seek to understand the significance and the social, economic, psychosocial and educational implications that affect our society, as a result of this major phenomenon present in the culture.

According to Brohm (1995a), the research and criticism project, developed by the authors gathered by the *Quel Corps?* journal, is structured into a research perspective based on the methodological orientation that conceives the sports reality “as a totality coordinated in

2 On this aspect, see Adorno’s text (1995) entitled *Taboos on the Teaching Vocation*.

3 On this aspect, consult Horkheimer’s text (1998) entitled “Nouveaux modèles dans les relations sociales”.

instances, strata, topics, dimensions, spheres, structures, infrastructures and superstructures, metaphors, concepts or notions that designate the hierarchization of reality places within the actual totalities in motion” (p. 88, our translation). The author is founded on a “clear and distinct” epistemological axis: the analysis of concrete reality (Brohm, 1995a, p. 89). According to him, the sports phenomenon is understood as a totality, a coordinated set of social relations and of institutions determined by the organization of the competition, structured by the principle of corporal efficiency, productivity, performance, and competitiveness (Brohm, 1995a, p. 90).

Following the orientation of the dialectical method,⁴ the group of authors gathered in the *Quel Corps?* journal would carry out a comprehensive investigation in order to understand the sports phenomenon in its totality.⁵ This option constitutes an attempt to propose the *sociology of research* and not the *sociology of management* (Quel Corps?, 1995). The understanding of the object in its relation with the social whole would confer a revolutionary character to sociology as, by conducting the criticism, it would recover its potential for intervention in social life. Thus, the analysis conducted by the Critical Theory of Sport comprehends the sports phenomenon in four distinct fronts. The first front of the analysis of *Quel Corps?* journal, according to Brohm (1995a), would address sports clubs, companies sponsoring sporting events, sports associations, and educational institutions, analyzing the institutions that support the sports phenomenon. The second front comprises sports practices. The author seeks to clarify the logic of sports competition that would comprehend the perverse logic of perverse effects: the psychobiological manipulation, the use of doping, the computerized modelling of behaviors and techniques, accidents, traumas, and the production of cybernetic bodies as ideal to be achieved. The third front refers to the study of sports events. The author analyzes the major international meetings, their enchanting and mystifying powers that institute, ultimately, nationalism, xenophobia, and chauvinism. On this point, Brohm (1995a) recognizes some functions of the mass sports spectacle broadcast through television: the effect of national prestige and international recognition; the effect of hiding the sociopolitical reality (for example, sports shows during military dictatorships, in South America, in the USSR or the 1936 Olympic Games under Hitler’s Nazism⁶);

the effect of massification and collective identification with the established order – which the author defines as a gregarious or consensual function allowing the rise of idols and groups; the effect of ideological diversion, having a somewhat narcotic function and, finally, the effect of drive compensation and narcissistic gratification. The last front of analysis refers to the sports discourses, by the sports media and political representatives, eminent in the historical period studied, among them Pierre de Coubertin.

The criticism of the sports ideology of Pierre de Coubertin

One of the most significant traits of the ideological use promoted by the sports ideology refers to the attempt to endow them with trans-historical attributes. According to its ideologues, the restoration of the ideals of “loyalty,” “honor,” virtues of the Olympic Games of Greek Antiquity, would endow the modern sport with human potential needed for harmonization of tensions between peoples and for the unification and maintenance of the national order. *Quel Corps?* (1995) designates this group of authors as reformists of sport. These authors, founded on an anachronistic vision, aimed at establishing a sports model endowed with virtue and ethics. They sought to recover the attributes present in the principle of the Olympic Games of antiquity for the development of modern sport. Pierre de Coubertin was the main fosterer of this ideology in promoting the first Olympic Games of the Modern Era.

According to *Quel Corps?* (1976), Pierre de Coubertin, born on January 1st, 1863, son of the Parisian aristocracy, would become the main fosterer, also, of the development of sports education in schools. Coubertin had learned of the educational initiative implemented by Thomas Arnold, in England, structured on sports education for training athletes and for a moral education designed to educate Christians. Excited about the English pedagogical reform, he visited England in 1883 to observe closely the progress made by Arnold. Back to France, Coubertin intended, on the one hand, to develop an education to prepare the children of the bourgeoisie for the international struggle for life and, on the other hand, establish, thanks to sports ideology (fair play, respect for rules, etc), social peace.

According to *Quel Corps?* (1976, p. 26), in 1888, Coubertin presides the “Committee for the preparation of physical exercises in education,” aiming at the development of school sport and the organization of sporting competitions. This committee would become, in 1889, the *Union des sociétés françaises de sports athlétiques* (USFSA), aiding in the formulation of programs for schools, becoming seminal for a pedagogical reform that would integrate Physical Education and sport in school education. According to Coubertin, the development of sport would be the contribution that the

4 The formulators of the Critical Theory of Sports use the concept of dialectic as announced by Marx in the preface to the second edition of *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy* (see Brohm, 1996).

5 According to Karel Kosik (quoted in Quel Corps?, 1995, p. 90): “Concrete totality means ‘reality as structured and dialectic set,’ in which – or through which – the facts, whatever they may be (group or set of facts), can be understood rationally. Gathering all the facts is not, yet, knowing reality, and all the facts (gathered) do not constitute, yet, the totality. The facts allow an understanding of reality if they are conceived as facts of a dialectical totality, as parts, structuring the totality, and not as immobile, indivisible and irreducible atoms.”

6 On this issue, also see Brohm (1995b).

bourgeoisie could offer to the development of a healthier working class, capable of tackling the problems caused by urban development and industrial development. Coubertin aimed not only at the development of more robust, more resistant, and healthier workers, in order to increase productivity, but also appreciated the development of sport as a factor of social stability. According to *Quel Corps* (1976), while visiting the U.S. in 1889, Coubertin observes Theodore Roosevelt and his boxing program in the most problematic neighborhoods (aiming at the reduction of violence), confirming the thesis of sport as a factor of stability of social order.

According to *Quel Corps* journal? (1976), in 1894 the general committee of the USFSA⁷ decides to support the re-establishment of the Olympic Games evaluating that “there is no doubt about the advantages presented by the re-establishment of the Olympic Games for athletics as well as for morality” (p. 26). Coubertin, after winning a gold medal in literature, in the 1912 Olympic Games, held in Stockholm, with the poem “L’Ode au sport”, is tasked by the then Minister of *L’instruction Publique*, Albert Sarraut, in 1915, to visit French high schools to stimulate the muscle and physical training of students as preparation for the long duration of the first World War (1914-1918). In the same year, Coubertin published *Aux jeunes français, le Décalogue de 1915*, which encouraged the youth toward development through sports and the defense of French civilization. With the end of the war, in 1918, Marshal Lyautey writes to Coubertin, considering him one of those responsible for the triumph due to the sports training of French youth. According to Coubertin, sport would aid in the moral education of youth, preparing them for the battles of life. In his words: “Muscle development and body training constitute to the youth of today the most active moral safeguarding and the most fruitful enhancement of their personality” (*Quel Corps*?, 1976, p. 28).

In addition to corresponding to moral education and corporal health, sport would fulfill the function of rationalizing the imagination of youth, preparing them to fulfill the socially ordered expectations. Coubertin saw, in sports, an appeasing element for dispersed and conflicted interests between bourgeois youth and proletarian youth, contributing to improve the relations between the different social strata, fostering more effective collaboration.

Sports and technological development

The development of modern sports seemingly cannot be understood without understanding the very technological scientific development, which is one of its foundations. One of its results appears as the development of techniques of sports training: man is reduced to metaphors of machine that, in a political analysis, reduce living processes to energy and economic processes of

production, the body is fully planned and made positive. According to Laguillaumie (1996),

as in any social reality, sports fall in the framework of production relations that fundamentally determine their internal structure. Today sports are determined by the capitalist society by class relations. However, as social practice of a determined type, sports are conditioned by the development of the productive forces. Modern sports are associated with the advent of industrial machinery and with the scientific type, technique for organization of production. Modern sports are then, definitely, in all their manifestations and phenomena, connected structurally to an economic base, to a given infrastructure: the capitalist industrial production relations. (p. 75, our translation)

The sports phenomenon is understood as a product defined by the production relations of the capitalist industrial system. This determination provides a revealing character concerning its structure and ideology, serving to maintain the dominant ideology, conditioned by the productive forces identified with the exaltation of industrial technique and machinery, elements that would lead to a technical-positivist relation with the body, structurally connected to the economic base.

According to Brohm (1992), “through the scientific and technical revolution, the body enters the technological age, the age of industrial machinery. The body becomes, then, itself, a privileged object of this revolution (techniques and services of the body)” (p. 128). According to the author, with the industrial development and urbanization, the modern sports developed concomitantly with the productive forces with the scientific and technological revolution. With the advent and expansion of ultramodern technological instruments, such as the time measuring instruments (stopwatch), the sports receive contributions that would facilitate their expansion.

The emergence of new sports training techniques results from scientific knowledge. The development of new technologies, such as instruments for measuring time, as well as the technology for relocation of spaces intended for the improvement of sports performance, constitute conditions so modern sports can develop no more as isolated manifestations of restricted groups. With the standardization of measuring instruments arise criteria that can be extended to other groups, in other regions, allowing the encoding of the goals to be achieved in each sport, which may be shared between distant groups, in different countries, thus beginning that which later would be configured as the standardization of sports on a global scale.

Scientific-technological development comprises the acquisition of new training methods and precise instruments for the measurement of performance, fundamental axis for sports organization (Laguillaumie,

⁷ Union Sportive Française de Sports Athlétiques.

1996). The record refers to the abstraction of corporal performance, established by the development of objective measurements. The mathematized, quantified body, monitored as to its physiological functions, is dehumanized for performance. Corporal submission to scientific control comes to be the mark of modern sport. According to Ellul (1995), technological development leads to change in the universe of sports practices. According to the author,

Firstly it is necessary to understand that there was a social change in sports due to the spirit of technique, that is, because of the values that the technicized society developed.... A decisive value that dominates our time is success due to competitiveness. This is derived directly from technique: it is always the search for the best way to achieve a certain result. Technique is first and foremost a calculation of success and victory. (Ellul, 1995, p. 128, our translation)

The author argues that sports, initially considered as games, comprise the ideal of winning, although it was not obsessive. Victory was related to pleasure and honor. Another important characteristic refers to its geographic limit. Only the advent of scientific development enabled a unification of measurement standards that enabled their internationalization, giving the image of sportsmen a global character through objective comparison of the performances of the best results. The technicization of the sports milieu goes beyond the development of all the instrumental technological apparatus, it also refers to the techniques developed along with psychology, communication, sports training, to the biologization and to the approach of human body to machine.

According to Ellul (1996), with the primacy of technique

man becomes also in this domain a kind of machine, his activity controlled by devices becomes technique. Thus, the technical civilization achieves its prime in this mechanization. Through sports discipline, man not only play and decrease tensions and difficulties, but also adapts without knowing, prepares for new difficulties. (p. 140, our translation)

According to Brohm (1992), the development of the chronometer and the search for records are two elements that would liken the sports phenomenon to the very industrial development, endowing it with other markedly distanced elements of what, erstwhile, defined the worship of deities and the conception of the body subject to the metaphysics of finitude. Such elements differ from what appears to be in the development of modern sports their opposite correlate: the desire of overcoming one's own human biological limitations, the denial of the idea of death, present symbolically in the

cult of the idea of surpassing the corporal limits through sports training and that finds in the record fetish one of its expressions. The glorification of scientific-technological knowledge seems to be confused with man's desire to overcome the specter of death. Modern sports express the desire for eternal life, renunciation of corporal finitude. The cult of the body, last resource before the threat of aging, is corroborated by the technological and scientific development that ends up permeating all spheres of human social development.

Modern sports, by establishing an organizational unit based on the record⁸ as reference, forges a universal character constituting concrete and objectives elements for the comparison between corporal performances. Unifying the sports system into universal rules, the record gives sports an international character, corroborating the bourgeois liberal ideal that in strengthening the hierarchical structure, inherent in the sports model, strengthens the class domination relations, conceiving sports as a concrete institution that proposes fraternal cooperation among peoples, helping to promote the ideology of sporting humanity: "universal comparison is possible, peaceful confrontation can play its political role of union of peoples" (Lauguillaume, 1996, pp. 75–76). The authors of the Critical Theory of Sports point out, also, the naturalization of corporal hierarchy, particular of sporting ideology.

Notes on corporal hierarchy

Corporal hierarchy corresponds to the institution of passage rites, grouping by skill levels, and the deification of renowned sports athletes (the sports champion). Hierarchy by corporal skill corroborates the adaptive and normalizing functions of a *status quo* based on corporal violence and training, which in the social set refer to little clarified content. Hierarchy based on corporal skill has in the development of the sports model one of its inspirations. Sport are structured on the figure of sports champions, the elite of trained bodies. This ideology had already been clearly outlined by its most famous reformer, Pierre de Coubertin. According to the author,

in order for a hundred to be accomplished in physical culture, fifty need to practice sports. In order for fifty to practice sports, twenty need to become specialized (in competition). In order for twenty to become specialized, five need to be capable of amazing performances. (quoted by Brohm, 1992, p. 92, our translation)

According to Brohm (1992), sports are the corporal poetry of hierarchy, based on hierarchization

8 According to Ellul (1995), "the record becomes a type of value itself, in the same order as the victory of a team over another one in competition sports. But it only attests the triumph of technique over the body" (p. 132, our translation).

of performances that are comparable considering objective measures, structured under the competitive model. The champion's image is the absolute reference that embodies the sporting ideal, being the very driving force of the development of sports technique. Founded on an objective system of standardized measurements and training, the sports champion defines the body images with which the mass will identify. According to Lauguillaume (1996), sports as factors of socialization and education have the same role once played by family and religion in structuring the drives of the ego and, especially, the structuring of the superego. Brohm (1992) had already problematized the importance given to the image of the body for structuring the identifications provided by mass media. The author points out that "society internalizes, embeds in the emotions and movements of individuals. Indeed, by modifying the consciousness of the muscle self that operates the influence of society on the individual" (Brohm, 1992, p. 262).

Incorporating analyses by Stoezel (1963), Brohm (1992) shares the assertion that body image is a social construct, having an important political consequence: the structural imbrication between the organism-body and the social body conceived over a model. The author bases his arguments on Marcuse, in *Eros and civilization*, when the latter states that "the corporal materialization of the superego is accompanied by the corporal materialization of the ego that is manifested by stereotyped traits and gestures" (Marcuse, 1963, p. 96), to affirm sports as cultural product characteristic of industrial society.

By constituting, through mass media, idealized models that are far from real life, the cultural industry ends up conceiving models to which individuals cannot oppose due to the lack of real proximity, which could lead them to overcome their own ideal enabling them to differentiate themselves and not just reproduce always the same. According to Brohm (1992), identification is no longer customized and mediated by the father figure, but by collective figures of authority and effectiveness provided by the cultural industry.⁹

Brohm (1992), based on Adorno (1969/1995), also notes that sports activities are structured in the form of pseudo-activities.¹⁰ Sports, thus understood, propose to

the individual a false unity between the particular and the universal. The impossibility of the freedom required by the individual is attenuated by the request of unthinking adherence to the social whole, which gives the individual a false sense of compensatory welfare. The pseudo-activity does not change that which is denied by the very social organization, on the contrary, it strengthens the ideology that maintains the consciousness in a constant state of regression.

According to Berthaud (1996),

the sports system, through its objects and its manifestations, offers to individuals a particular libidinal investment support that deserves to be analyzed, which would not be so but for its ability to "set" the less social drives (sexuality, aggressiveness) in its sectors aiming to ensure the cohesion of the social set. (p. 214, our translation)

Freud (1929/1997), in *Civilization and Its Discontents*, had already pointed to the function given to partial objects instituted by culture. Cultural objects constitute partial objects and favor the change of the drive-related original purposes, fundamental operation for maintaining the cohesion of the social set. Sports can be understood as a compensatory element for the limits imposed by everyday life. Sports activity offers a collectivization of substitute satisfactions (Brohm, 1992) that prepare individuals to better withstand that which in the social ordering they are refused. Sport converge, thus, to the maintenance of social unity, diverting or replacing the repressed aggressive or sexual potential, transforming them into harmless activity.

Therefore, it is possible to understand how sports work on the formation of subjectivity, by instituting body models that come to fulfill the function of ideal of the ego, with which the ego must identify. According to Berthaud (1996): "the objective is to enable the drives to crystallize in objects in which the explosive force of desire comes to be abolished" (p. 219, our translation). Sports function as one of the cultural objects that fulfill the role of channeling the sexuality repressed in the repressive social organization. According to the author, "corporal activities are sources of anxiety, both for those who practice them and for those who direct them" (Berthaud, 1996, p. 220). If the principle of reality is imposed by culture, libidinal drives carry the specter of something terrible, leading the individual to seek protection from that which generates anxiety. The corporal control provided by sports is a sort of protection from the outburst of anxiety concerning the possible release of sexual drives. Sports would offer an excellent deviation able to divert the drives from their initial object. It is configured as object, culturally valued and useful for the social unity threatened by the release of threatening impulses: "sports are a socially accepted sexual activity" (Berthaud, 1996, p. 219, our

9 On the status of the ideological content of sports, Horkheimer and Adorno (1956/1973) comment: "The concrete study of the ideological content of mass communication is all the more urgent when you think of the inconceivable violence that their vehicles have over the spirit of men, in conjunction, apropos, with sports, which came to integrate, lately, the ideology, in its wider sense" (p. 202).

10 According to Adorno (1969/1995), "pseudo-activity is misguided spontaneity. Misguided, but not by chance, but because people sense deafeningly how hard it would be for them to change that which burdens them. They prefer to let themselves deviate to apparent, deceptive activities, to institutionalized compensatory satisfactions, instead of becoming aware of how hindered this possibility is today. It seems evident the hypothesis, among others, that through the efforts required by sports, through the functionalization of the body in the team, taking place precisely in the favorite sports, people are tamed unknowingly to the more or less sublimated forms of behavior that are expected of them in the labor process" (pp. 78-79).

translation). Sports are a substitute, deviating sexual pleasure to others that would bring neither anxiety nor excessive guilt.

For the established order, violence regulated by sports activity is accepted as fact inherent in competitions. It is not directed to social challenge and does not put at risk norms that are socially established under the repression of desires. This corresponds to the analysis by Brohm (1975), highlighting the correlation between sexual repression and the strengthening of the death drive. According to the author, the weakened sexual drive can no longer associate the death drive to cultural work and death triumphs, either symbolically by the anxiety of the depressed population, or really by war, crime or competition sports (Brohm, 1975, p. 167, our translation).

From this perspective, sports fulfill a dual role: as cultural object, in the service of sexual repression, reinforcing destructive drives that are directed, in the interior plane, to the formation of a strong and severe superego. In the individual's exterior plane, it releases aggressive tendencies, and may take violent forms, something that can be prominent in the behavior of fanatical supporters in sports stadiums or in the violence directed towards the submission of those that are physically weaker. Brohm (1975) points out that the greater the repression suffered, the greater the possibility of the individual developing a certain tendency to identify with the prescriptions of superegos that are more severe and with stricter corporal standards. According to Gantheret (1978), "la apetencia por una 'cultura física', por la musculatura, por el dominio corporal, es manifestación de una fantasía de restauración, de 'reconstitución' y de reunificación del cuerpo que se da entre los sujetos que se sienten en peligro" (p. 87).

If sports are founded on the development of strong and healthy bodies, at the same time it deviates the individual from threats represented by the lack of control of drives, hiding the repression needed for their perpetuation. The construction of rigid bodies and the education to resist body pain urge the individual toward the unthinking acceptance of repression. According to Brohm (1975), "the individual is thus forged into a muscle fortress that represents the corporal defense against drives" (p. 165, our translation).

Adorno (1971/1995) highlights the need to eliminate from education the promotion of virility and resistance to pain. According to the author,

the praised goal of "being hard" of such education means indifference against pain in general. In which one does not even differ much the pain of the other from the pain of oneself. One who is severe with oneself acquires the right to be severe with the others as well, avenging the pain whose manifestations one had to hide and repress. (Adorno, 1971/1995, p. 128)

According to Adorno (1971/1995), the manifestation of the ideals that promote fear and indifference against pain is one of the characteristics of the *manipulating* character (highlighted from the study *The authoritarian personality*) that, among other dispositions, develops a tendency to treat others as amorphous mass, "treats all that exists as object" (Adorno, 1950, p. 715). The *manipulating* character is characterized by giving too much importance to the technical aspects of life, appropriating the technological orientations as a way to manage the existing. According to the author, the fetishization of technique blunts the ability to love. The development of sports ideals finds in technological dispositions one of its most important supporters. The reduction of the body to biological or cybernetic orientations (models of input, output, information transmission, perceptual mechanisms...), the technicization of the control of movement, the development of exhausting training programs, based on repetition and maximum effort, constitute fundamental elements for sport development. The coldness and the total incapacity to carry out direct human experiences (Adorno, 1971/1995) are made available by the oppressive culture that favors the emergence of the false projection¹¹ operation in which the subject loses the capacity of reflection.

The resistance to pain, "going to the limit" and even crossing the limits urge the individual to an education that aims to eliminate what could still represent traces of humanity. The marketing propaganda of the "do it yourself," the praise of effectiveness or the propaganda of active man seem to converge to the formation of the individual on foundations on which prejudice and violence develop. Adorno (1971/1995) characterizes the manipulating type as a result of a reified consciousness. According to the author, "in the beginning people like that become so to say the same as things. Then, as they manage to do so, they make the others as things" (p. 130).

Adorno (1969/1973) comments that "en una sociedad cosificada nada que no se haya a su vez cosificado puede sobrevivir" (p. 17). The result of the very development of the mode of production, the organization, classification and ordination of the relations of production, eventually invaded all spheres of human relationships. The reduction of the thought to what is immediate cooperates with the very principle of optimization of resources that establish the domination and the permanence of the human spirit in a stage of minority. The reified thought presents not only as product of the very process of development of the capitalist mode

11 According to Horkheimer and Adorno (1947/1985), "according to psychoanalytic theory, pathological projection consists substantially in the transfer to the object of the socially condemned impulses of the subject. Under the pressure of the superego, the ego projects in the exterior world, as bad intentions, the aggressive impulses that come from the id and that, because of its strength, pose a threat to itself. Thus, it can get rid of them as a reaction to this exterior world, either in an imaginary manner by identifying with the would-be villain, or in reality under the pretext of a legitimate defense" (p. 179).

of production, but also as methodological reduction of the real that is manifested in the different areas of culture, as in education.

According to Horkheimer and Adorno (1947/1985), the adaptive mechanisms lead man to blind and unreflective submission and to identify with the ideals of consumption standardized and conveyed by the mass media. Individuals develop a way of thinking and feeling in their emotional relationships and leisure activities that are compatible with the rationality of the alienated work. Thus, according to the authors, “technical rationality turns into the rationality of the very domination. It is the compulsive character of the society alienated from itself” (Horkheimer & Adorno, 1947/1985, p. 114). The reified consciousness is the basis of authoritarianism and is based on commodity fetish¹², perpetuated in cultural objects fostered by the cultural industry. By promoting a false reconciliation between the particular and the universal, the cultural industry universalizes a false reality, leading man to the accomplishment of an illusory happiness.

On the other hand, sports, conceived as pseudo activity, object fetishized, worshipped and diffused by the mechanisms of the cultural industry, provide the necessary conditions for the promotion of collective values that are imposed as corporal models and moral values that seem to correspond to the concerns of social integration. Just as the body is expropriated as a result of the reproduction of capital by the labor sphere, the principle of performance, represented by the production of performing bodies, corresponds to the institutionalization of the capitalist mode of production in the sphere of the body. According to Brohm (1992),

the sports system does not consider the concrete personality of individuals, but their force to produce performances. Individuals are not concrete personalities in sports, but actual or potential bearers of performances, in the same way that workers are not man, but an agent that bears a function, a place in the production process. Capitalism is a mode

of production in which concrete individuals are replaced by abstract agents, numbers, spokesmen, relations of production. (p. 166, our translation)

Sports performance corresponds, in the world of work, to the same process of depersonalization that deprives the individual from those attributes that could, still, confer any trace of humanity. The individual reduced by the productive system to reproductive potential of the workforce and, in the sports system, to their capacity to produce performances, succumbs to regressive adaptive processes. The performing body corresponds to the reduction of the individual to the attributes required for the promotion of social cohesion. The performing body, ideal sports model, urges the individual toward the uncontested conformation to the social reality. This confers importance to the body, endowing it with exchange value in the system that produces records. In these terms, the hierarchization based on corporal performance, ideology also present in Physical Education classes (Casco, 2003; Daolio, 1995), seems to indicate an unthinking adherence to the social ordering that through its cultural products promotes the violence and domination of those considered physically fittest over the weaker and more unskilled. Conversely, the critical perspectives emerging in the academic discussion and in political life have the possibility of constituting and democratizing the access to the corporal culture oriented to promoting human happiness.

Final considerations

The theoretical perspective championed by the Critical Theory of Sport maintains its political force as cultural criticism. It presents important elements for understanding the enchanting processes massively conveyed in the social institutions, specially by the media and educational institutions. Such understanding is necessary for the political struggle that aims to tackle reifying and dehumanizing processes, still present in social life.

Ideologia esportiva e formação do indivíduo: contribuições da Teoria Crítica do Esporte

Resumo: Este ensaio apresenta o debate empreendido em meados da década de 1960, na França, pelo movimento teórico e político denominado Teoria Crítica do Esporte. Essa perspectiva ocorreu em meio ao clima cultural emergente naquele período, marcado pela crítica às instituições vigentes e propunha o desvelamento dos elementos subjacentes à hegemonia da ideologia esportiva na cultura, particularmente na mídia, nos clubes e escolas. O texto apresenta os principais argumentos de seus idealizadores, sobretudo os concebidos por Jean-Marie Brohm, aproximando suas inquietações com contribuições oriundas de autores que marcaram a primeira geração da Teoria Crítica da Sociedade, notadamente Theodor W. Adorno, Max Horkheimer e Hebert Marcuse. O ensaio incide sobre as críticas tecidas por esses autores com a finalidade de compreender os fundamentos

¹² “Marx describes the fetishist character of the goods as the veneration of that which is self-fabricated, which as exchange value is alienated both from the producer and the consumer, that is, the “man.” Marx writes: “the mystery of the commodity form consists simply in the following: it gives back to men, as a mirror, the social characters of their own work, as natural and social properties of these things; as a consequence, the commodity form also reflects the social relation of producers with global work as a social relation of objects existing out of them” (1932 quoted by Adorno, 1999, pp. 77-78).

do movimento esportivo, concebido como objeto cultural de ampla disseminação e importância para a formação do indivíduo sob a égide do capitalismo.

Palavras-chave: teoria crítica do esporte, teoria crítica da sociedade, ideologia esportiva, formação do indivíduo.

Idéologie sportive et la formation de l'individu : contributions de la Théorie Critique du Sport

Résumé: Cet article présente la discussion menée au milieu des années 1960 en France, le mouvement théorique et politique appelée la théorie critique Sport. Cette perspective est venue au milieu du nouveau climat culturel d'époque, marquée par la critique des institutions existantes et a proposé le dévoilement des éléments sous-jacents à l'hégémonie de l'idéologie de sport dans la culture, en particulier dans les médias, les clubs et les écoles. Le texte présente les principaux arguments de ses fondateurs, en particulier ceux conçus par Jean-Marie Brohm, apportant leurs préoccupations avec les contributions des auteurs qui ont marqué la première génération de la théorie critique de la société, notamment Theodor W. Adorno, Max Horkheimer et Herbert Marcuse. Le test se concentre sur les critiques formulées par les auteurs afin de comprendre les fondements du mouvement sportif, conçu comme un objet culturel de large diffusion et de l'importance à la formation de l'individu sous l'égide du capitalisme.

Mots-clés: sport, Théorie Critique du Sport, théorie critique de la société, formation de l'individu.

Ideología deportiva y la formación del individuo: las contribuciones de la Teoría Crítica de Deporte

Resumen: En este trabajo se presenta el debate llevado a cabo a mediados de la década de 1960 en Francia, el movimiento teórico y político llamado Teoría Crítica del Deporte. Esta perspectiva se produjo en medio del clima cultural que emerge de ese período, marcado por la crítica de las instituciones existentes y propuso la presentación de los elementos que subyacen a la hegemonía de la ideología de los deportes en la cultura, en particular en los medios de comunicación, clubes y escuelas. El texto presenta los principales argumentos de sus creadores, especialmente los diseñados por Jean-Marie Brohm, con lo que sus preocupaciones con contribuciones de autores que marcaron la primera generación de la teoría crítica de la sociedad, en particular Theodor W. Adorno, Max Horkheimer y Hebert Marcuse. La prueba se centra en las críticas de los autores con el fin de comprender los fundamentos del movimiento deportivo, concebido como un objeto cultural de amplia difusión e importancia a la formación de la persona bajo los auspicios del capitalismo.

Palabras clave: deporte, Teoría Crítica del Deporte, teoría crítica de la sociedad, formación del individuo.

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