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Education and Corporeality: Contributions from the Philosophy of Sport

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Abstract. Corporeality is a subject strongly present in educational discussion nowadays. The purpose of this paper is to present an outline of issues we may address from the philosophy of sport that could foster a fruitful dialogue with the philosophy of education. It is understood that the philosophy of education can benefit from reflections on corporeality and human movement, namely from sports and games. Initially, the article introduces the philosophy of sport as a field of study that addresses reflections on human movement from sports and games. They highlight elements that are not specific to such practices and foster reflexions on different areas. Afterwards, it explores the experience of corporeality and the dialogical dimension of human movement based on Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology. Human movement indicates a unique way of being communicative. Finally, it presents some reflections on playing games as an experience that helps us think about our relationships with others and the environment. From this perspective it is possible to seek some critical features to understand education in the experience of human movement, namely from playing games, such as experience, dialogue, and expressiveness. Thoughts on human movements may reinforce the role corporeality plays in education as a collective experience and the recognition of the body's expressive potential in constructing knowledge.

Keywords: phenomenology; corporeality; human movement; philosophy of sports

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Introduction

Corporeality is a subject strongly present in educational discussion nowadays [1; 2]. The attention to the human body highlights its expressive dimension. However, the instrumentalization of educational programmes raises questions on

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human fragmentation and the absence of the bodies. Dilemmas in a high-tech society also bring to the table human corporeality and the social impact of technology on human relationships. We constantly face questions such as the ambiguity of being and having a body, being present in the moment or extending corporeality to virtual realities, submitting life to a chronological time or living time. Curiously many descriptions of the human body refer to the idea of a machine, but reports of human movement use art as a metaphor. The human body brings together the paradoxes of the world of life, and thinking of the human body in movement may help enlarge our concepts. Hence, studies on interdisciplinary investigations are extremely relevant to bring fresh perspectives [3]. This paper seeks to highlight possible contributions of the philosophy of sport to discussions about the presence of the human body and movement in education. The restrictions imposed by the COVID 19 pandemic also drew attention to elements of corporeality, the need for movement and bodily approximation in social relationships.

The French philosopher Gabriel Marcel [4] suggests that incarnation is a critical element for thinking about the being and emphasizes our engagement with the world. The French anthropologist Marcel Mauss [5] talks about "body techniques" and points out the relationship between biology and society, the culture inscribed in our corporeality. He makes great contribution focusing on the human body as a subject of interest for humanities. Merleau-Ponty [6], another French philosopher, goes beyond culture and describes the body dimension as the primary source of meaning. The philosopher suggests that the body organizes itself and recognizes itself in space through an effective engagement with the world. This inherent relationship with the world takes place through perception as something that happens by exercise. In other words, in our daily relationships, we exercise a way of listening, looking, and above all, feeling the world. Perception is thus a way of relating to beings and the presence of things. Such perspective has been present in accounts that consider perception as a central principle on educational learning considering the significant role embodiment plays in education [2]. The concern that the sensory aspects of education are under-theorized is explicit in introducing a recent special issue on the philosophy of education. Authors highlight the aesthetic dimensions of education, reminding that educational practice is always already embodied and multisensorial [7].

Assmann [8] proposes to re-enchant education emphasising the substantial value of contributions of corporeality for the educational field. He defends the idea that corporeality is the first and main radiating focus of educational criteria. Moreover, it has been emphasised that the dialogical character of our relationships is a fundamental element of learning [9]. We argue that it is possible to seek some critical features to understand education in the experience of human movement, namely from playing games, such as experience, dialogue, and expressiveness. In that sense, we suppose we have a lot to learn from our corporeality, including about the learning experience itself.

Philosophy can help to replace some questions and, by reformulating them, suggests new paths. Merleau-Ponty [6] draws attention to the fact that philosophy, and thinking, is relearning to see the world, and seeing is action, an intertwining with the world. Furthermore, the world is what we see but we need to learn how to see it. This philosophy supports thinking that is also an exercise of dialogue. Such a way of thinking suggests a reflection committed to and inspired by the world of life.

Based on Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology, we intend to explore what the experience of the human body is, and how movement can help us think about education. The purpose of this paper is to present an outline of subjects we may address from the philosophy of sport that could foster a fruitful dialogue with the philosophy of education. Initially, the text presents the philosophy of sport as a field of studies that welcomes reflections on human movement from sports and games. From that, we move to understand the relationship between corporeality and the dialogic dimension of human movement. Finally, we present some reflections on playing games as an experience that helps us think about the relationships we establish with others and the environment.

The Philosophy of Sport

The philosophy of sport is a widely recognized and instigating area that addresses sports issues as philosophical problems. Justice, equality, gender, doping, genetic enhancement, use of technology, sports disability, the meaning of victory, exposure to risk, adventure, sporting values, error, violence, competition, betrayal, fair play, rules, skills, are examples of some themes that, from the perspective of philosophy, provide subsidies for discussions and analysis. It expanded when philosophers and educators started to reflect on sport on its terms instead of as a means to achieve educational ends [10]. Modern sport philosophy became a diverse and multi-paradigmatic international discipline nowadays [11] but it is possible to find previous references on the subject of games and sport.

In ancient philosophy, it is possible to find philosophical references about the body and bodily practices such as gymnastics for instance. However, one of the first themes that call attention to deeper reflection in modern times are the games. The pioneering classic “Homo ludens” [12], first published in 1938 by the Dutch historian Johan Huizinga, dedicates an extensive reflection on play and games. Huizinga claims that it is in the game and through the games that civilization arises and develops. Another important text on the same topic is “Man, play and games” [13] first published in 1958 by Roger Callois. From a different perspective, Marcel Mauss [5] delivered a lecture for the *Société de Psychologie* on Techniques of the body, definitely bringing the human body as a theme for the humanities. In this text, first published in 1935, he invites the social sciences to look at the body, arguing that physiology and psychology are not enough to explain the human gesture, drawing attention to the cultural inscription and traditions in using the body.

Modern sport, as a complex social phenomenon, has aroused countless reflections, setting up a field for the philosophy of sport [10]. In the European and North-American framework in general, the term "sport" recalls the original link with games, recreation, entertainment, physical activity and exercise. Sport came to designate, in the current language, a wide range of bodily practices. However, modern sport is associated with characteristics such as institutionalization and universalization of rules. The word sport in a broader sense is present in many international organisations with which education dialogues, such as UNESCO.

The UN adopts a broad definition of the sport by including all forms of physical activity that contribute to physical fitness, mental well-being and social interaction, such as games, recreation, organized, informal or competitive sport, and games and indigenous sports [14]. Depending on the proposals, it has been said that the promotion of sport can favour tolerance and respect among people and empower historically disadvantaged groups and traditional communities by valuing the cultural, identity, and historical aspects of bodily manifestations. However, from a philosophical perspective, sport raises many questions in different fields, such as ethics, aesthetics, metaphysics, epistemology [15].

It is important to highlight that some authors from other traditions use the expression 'culture of movement' to refer to the diversity of manifestations instead of sport, considering the latter limiting or ethnocentric [16]. Regardless of the perspective, games and sports help us think about issues that are not specific to such practices: corporeality, engagement, conflict, dialogue, expressiveness, automatism and spontaneity, autonomy, dialogue and freedom. Games and sports bring elements that exceed their objective characteristics. The game has a creative potential that presents itself and guides its movement. It can generate its reasons and has the power to suggest rules and behaviours.

We identify a particular way of inhabiting space and time in many games and sports, exposing non-obvious possibilities that sustain every game's important, surprising character. The ability of some athletes to create space or to expand or contract time is constantly noted. It indicates a spatiality and temporality elaborated in the movement itself. The game can also suggest an apparent contradiction: facing an opponent, this one can instead expand our potential by offering the opportunity for further elaboration. All these experiences provide elements for thinking about the way we establish our relationship with the world and how we learn.

Enigmas of the Human Body

Surely, we know a lot about our body, but it is more a kind of familiarity than knowledge. We are not the sum of these parts about which we know more when we live them than when we see. We are not the body that we study in pieces, graphs, images, and concepts. Even high-tech equipment does not allow understanding our bodies completely. We know much more about our bodies when we consider our participation in the world. Our bodily condition allows us knowledge that does not depend on words to manifest itself. And taking part in any new corporeal activity

from yoga, sports, or even gardening may reveal something about our body that we did not suspect. We always discover some muscles that we did not know we had after any new section. Moreover, in a long term, we find out potentialities and limitations.

Our experience with our own body is entirely different from a surgeon's knowledge of the human body. The understanding we have is associated with a lived body, while the physiologist is related to an objective body. Knowing our own body is not only to identify neurophysiological correlates, biological patterns or psychological characters. Our living body is related to our existential condition.

However, we do not know exactly what we know about ourselves. Polanyi's concept of 'tacit knowledge' suggests that "we can know more than we can tell" [17. P. 4]. Our corporeal condition carries with it a wisdom that is not fully controlled by reasoning. According to Polanyi, we understand the joint meaning of things not by looking at, but by dwelling in them [17]. According to Gabriel Marcel, the incarnation is the situation of a being that is opaque to itself. For him, human corporeality carries the mystery of being and having. "Of this body, I can neither say that it is I, nor that it is not I, nor that it is for me (object)." [4. P. 11—12]. While alive, our body is much more conscious about itself than what we think about it. We do not need to command or interpret signs to deal with the world in everyday life. We organise ourselves in space and time. On the other hand, we can also think about the instrumentality of our body, but not as an ordinary object. For Merleau-Ponty, our corporeality is the starting point for all our qualities, "it is that by which there are objects" [6. P. 104].

The ambiguity we live with our body allows us to live in a perceptive world that is also ambiguous. For exemplifying this question, Merleau-Ponty reminds the experience of the strangeness of touching our own hands, for instance: which one is touching and which one is being touched? However, it is not enough to say, "I am my body," to clarify our insertion in the world. I do not say me and my body, and I cannot think of myself as distinct, and even, so I say: this is my body. This confusing relationship with our corporeality is the starting point for Gabriel Marcel to think about our relationship with the world. Our body belongs and does not belong to us, which allows us to question what sense and limits we are the masters of our life.

By studying perception, Merleau-Ponty investigates our connection, or affinity, with the world. Perception does not come from things, from beings, nor is it the result of an intimate elaboration; it takes place in the world. It is our experience of participating in the world. Considering the identification between visible and invisible, Merleau-Ponty [6] points out that one cannot be a seer without being visible. We cannot be strangers to the world. This *adherence*, according to Marcel or *intertwining* according to Merleau-Ponty, express our relationship with the world. This power to see and be seen, or even to perceive oneself being perceived, indicates a unique movement of belonging to the world. This movement allows our activity to be similarly a kind of passivity [6]. It helps understanding the notion of experience.

We do not just address or receive the world; we are confusedly entwined with it. We have the privilege of an unstable position, guaranteed by our corporeality. We are both required and guided by certain flows of events, as we can also invest objects and other beings with our projects. Our action in the world is not just a reaction to signals or stimuli, a historical determinism or a psychological reaction. It is in the world that we perceive our body, but in the same way, we perceive the world because our body reveals it as a possibility. We, therefore, recognise our potential anchored in this body-world intertwining. It is a constant movement, such as inspiration and expiration. Human body is neither object nor subject. The same ambiguity, which is present in our body, can be expanded to our movements: I can say that I move myself, but also I can state that I do not know where some movement came from. It is necessary to consider the human body in relation to the world as a happening. This understanding of our corporeality has powerful consequences to think about the relationships we established in education.

The body is the presentation of a subject who does not need to represent himself to exist. It is an "operating I", an "I can" invested in the action [6]. This experience of the body takes place in relation, and every relation is or suggests movement. It is important to remember that for us, in our daily lives, there is no movement "in-itself", just as there is no "body-in-itself". There are men and women who play, dance, fight, express desires, and so much more. Every movement is immersed in meanings, senses, history and future. This movement speaks for us, a speech that is always original. The body shows us the presence of a past, moving, in turn, reveals the presence of expression, a dialogue with the world, which allows the body another actuality. Thus, we elaborate a history that is also collective, based on a past that assists us and does not necessarily determine our actions but goes towards them. The body is our way of being in the world, origin and condition of possibility of wisdom, knowledge, speech, or any form of human expression.

Bodies in movement: dialogue with the world

Human movement is an experience as primordial as our existence, about which we know as much as we know about our bodies. The wisdom provided by our body in movement is not limited to its representation. Biomechanical formulae or even models are not enough to describe our experience. Just as body parts are not separated elements added to form a whole, our movements are not a linear sequence of steps or consequences of a particular story or context. Instead, our movement indicates a unique way of being communicative; our gesture defines our position as a being-in-the-world. Furthermore, we can think about the way we live space and time from the experience of playing games.

Human movement cannot be completely reduced to figures and points, as they are devoid of horizon and intentionality. For the player in action, the field is not an 'object' but an invitation to a certain mode of action, as Merleau-Ponty suggested [6]. The field is not the objective space but the lived space, the space we embody and to which we assign meanings. Merleau-Ponty [6] distinguishes between

spatiality of position and spatiality of situation. The first is the abstract space, and the second is the lived space, guided by our own body experience. When we move, we elaborate a spatiality based on our bodily experience. For instance, a running race in a game is different from running to catch a bus, even if it's the same distance. This question refers to the intertwining body-world suggested by Merleau-Ponty.

The example of playing a game also converts the notion of linear time by presenting a temporality that is elaborated in movement. We easily recognise how different it is from chronological time. Playing elaborates the experience of time itself. It brings a temporality in which minutes and seconds sometimes unfold or contract, following the vitality of the game itself. If for the clock, one minute will always have the exact measurement, and in that sense, it will always be the same; in the lived world, every minute is unique. In a game situation, for example, what often determines success is not necessarily "the faster, the better", but finding a rhythm that allows us to respond to opportunities at the right moment, which in turn is associated with letting be carried by a flow that gives precision to the movement. It is consistently mentioned the experience of feeling present during a game. The present is this horizon of coexistence between a requested past and a future that already presents itself. Playing, for example, elaborates the experience of time itself. This notion of temporality helps us recognise our human condition, which is not an objective body, but a body that inhabits space and time and thus reconfigures them [6].

If our body individualises us according to our projects, on the other hand, these projects take place in a world of relationships. I can say that specific projects are mine, as they are incarnated in the way of being, but I cannot say that only I participate in them as an isolated entity. Paradoxically, it is our relationships that allow the elaboration of individuality. So the experience of myself that I have is coextensive with my experience of the Other. Consequently, the corporeality of the other is a factor present in my existence. I reach the projects of my lived body through a continuous encounter with other corporealities. This other corporeality can be faced as an obstacle or an instrument and the occasion for authentic dialogue and mutual realisation. We have an encounter, so this project is not free of confrontation because the other has the same power as me. The conflict participates in the elaboration of a dialogue. Besides, we can face the other of ourselves, which announces our unfinished condition, and the ability for learning and changing.

Learning requires a change of position, and it is necessary to put ourselves in motion. It means looking for answers to questions that our cultural horizon cannot handle, which requires creation. We learn with a body open to a horizon of possibilities, from an intelligence that is also incorporated. It is necessary to share a kind of passivity that occurs, at the same time, through participation. Learning is about putting oneself in the direction of a question or a provocation. This shift towards the world manifests learning in the face of alterity that positions us as expressive beings. The notion of experience includes openness, availability, and receptivity to the other.

It is interesting to note that sensitive experience, necessary for any otherness relationship, is close to what traditional communities have struggled to preserve. Therefore, this perspective is not a novelty discovered by Western philosophy, as Irobi [18] points out when he states that the African tradition, with music, dances, songs, and performances, was transmitted from generation to generation and conveyed through intelligence of the human body. Furthermore, the corporal dimension has been central in many other cultures, including Afro-Brazilians and indigenous ones. In these cultures, orality and corporeality are fundamental in the process of developing knowledge.

Every movement, spontaneous or voluntary, everyday or unusual, sporting or not; in each form of presentation, we are weaving a story, sustaining a past, or creating new directions. History inscribed in the human body, more than that, is written in movement.

From playing games to dialogue

Games are present in all cultures, in different formats, but it is always an invitation and provocation. It is a socio-cultural phenomenon with deep meanings, and beyond a cultural perspective, it exposes desires and potencies. Huizinga [12] suggests that the play is a cultural element and older than the culture itself. The author describes playing games as an autotelic activity guided by rules freely accepted within the limits of space and time, under an atmosphere of tension, joy and awareness that it is different from everyday life. However, beyond the cultural dimension, the plays and games help us live with an incompleteness, constantly demanding a posture, above all corporal, elaborated in our gestures.

Playing games reveal a motricity that presents itself in a dialogic way. To play, we displace our corporeality towards the game, but we also allow ourselves to be led by the flow of movements [19]. Thus, this experience will enable us to explore this movement of perceiving oneself as a subject and feeling oneself conducted. The game's provocations guide our gestures, requesting references from the past and suggesting new elaborations. This challenge reveals belonging to an intercorporeal community that promotes dialogue and provokes engagement.

We see that it is possible to use different examples from sports and games to exemplify the intense relationship with the world through perception. Dialogue elaborated with the world requires participation that exceeds the own being. It requires expression.

Sportive or artistic movements exemplify the capacity of a body to manifest itself as unconstrained. Flow is associated with a mobility that is not imposed, but "it unfolds as if it were an expansion of its centre" [20. P. 59]. Many are the situations in dance or sports where the movement emerges at that moment, and the dancer follows a flow. What we see is not the execution of steps after steps but a unity movement. In this case, the dancer becomes the movement; she "is the miraculous forgetting of her knowledge of dance" [20. P. 66]. The movement

inhabits the dancer's body. It seems that something happens without authorship. The player feels the movement that comes as the expression of himself. This movement is the elaboration of the expression. We recognise at these moments our participation in a flow of movement that is not a private one. It is a shared experience, a happening, a dialogue [20]. We need to allow ourselves to live the situation to establish a dialogue. In these situations, we discover that we are not always the subjects or merely objects, but that we can live a kind of teaching passivity. This experience reminds our dialogical condition and the necessity of the other for our elaborations.

The future requires our habits, but these habits are open to something new. Our habits are brought up to date and given new historicity, in other words, expression [6]. Such expression does not present something that we already have 'inside' ourselves but is a re-elaboration; it demands creation afresh. For this to happen, it is necessary to allow that the flow discloses another corporeality, and the expression organises the body by itself.

When playing, it is necessary openness to the game and full attention to the connection with the environment and with other beings. We have to be present. Presence is related to the possibility of discovering oneself as an experience. This exposure implies risk and vulnerability. This commitment that teaches us to play also invites us to rethink relationships. Every game is a form of intense coexistence with the environment, with other beings, with culture, with yourself and possible others of yourself. Thus, we are absorbed by the dynamics of relationships and provoked to present the best we can be through our dialogical condition.

Conclusion

The human body still surprises science, opens up fields, motivates philosophy and shows that there are always new questions to explore. Our intertwining with the other in the world allows us a special kind of participation that is not explained by objective data. Human movement plays with temporality and spatiality, and like music, speaks for itself.

Our bodies in movement celebrate our dialogue with the world. Human movement aggregates tradition and freshness, technique and expression, science and poetry. Recognising this ambiguity could empower a being with no shame of its corporeality, giving a chance to a wisdom that presents itself not only when we express opinions but mainly when we become gestures. Our movement in the world teaches us that we share a world that reveals the possibility of a dialogue. Learning is not just about respecting models or the ignorance of a tradition, but above all, searching for movement. In this dialogue, we confront a difference that demands creation and positions us in the world as expressive beings. Thoughts on human movements, such as playing games, may reinforce the role corporeality plays in education as a collective experience and the recognition of the body's expressive potential in constructing knowledge.

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Образование и телесность: вклад философии спорта

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Аннотация. Тематика телесности активно обсуждается в образовании. Автор задается целью очертить круг вопросов, которые могут быть рассмотрены в философии спорта, и которые могли бы способствовать плодотворному диалогу с философией образования. Отмечается, что философия образования может извлечь пользу из размышлений о телесности и человеческом движении, а именно из областей спорта и игр. В статье представлена философия спорта как область исследований, в которой рассматривается проблематика человеческих движений в спорте и играх. Выделяются элементы, которые не являются специфическими для указанных практик, и способствуют рефлексии по разным направлениям. Исследуется опыт телесности и диалогическое измерение человеческого движения на основе феноменологии М. Мерло-Понти; движение указывает на уникальный способ быть коммуникативным. В заключение автор рассматривает некоторые размышления об играх как опыте, который помогает задуматься об отношениях с другими людьми и окружающей средой. С данной точки зрения возможно определить ряд характеристик, значимых для понимания образования в сфере человеческого движения и игр, таких как опыт, диалог и выразительность. Размышления о человеческих движениях способны усилить роль телесности в образовании как коллективного опыта и признание выразительного потенциала тела в построении знаний.

Ключевые слова: феноменология, телесность, движение человека, философия спорта

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