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To cite this article: Luísa Ávila da Costa & Teresa Oliveira Lacerda (2016) On the aesthetic potential of sports and physical education, *Sport, Ethics and Philosophy*, 10:4, 444-464, DOI: [10.1080/17511321.2016.1210209](https://doi.org/10.1080/17511321.2016.1210209)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/17511321.2016.1210209>



Published online: 29 Jul 2016.



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## On the aesthetic potential of sports and physical education

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### ABSTRACT

Even though there is a general presence of aesthetics in school curricula in most of western countries, both at the level of terminology and at the level of choice and definition of contents, objectives and skills to be developed, the approach to sports and physical education potential for the development of aesthetic education of students still does not seem to be a reality in the agenda of this subject. Moreover, it is not transversal in terms of its different didactic contents. In order to explore its relevance, the aim of this work was to deepen how aesthetics is internal and central to sports experience, and which elements of sports and physical education lived experiences can be relevant in the promotion and development of the aesthetic sensibility of students. We propose the deepening of the subject through an hermeneutical qualitative research approach, confronting the content collected in 19 semi-structured interviews that enabled the thematic analysis of its content, and through it, the discussion of viewpoints of representative subjects among those that are the main players in the consideration of an aesthetic education through sport, namely physical education teachers and researchers in the context of aesthetics and sports sciences. With the information gathered and after its processing, we could conclude that there are aesthetic elements of sport's experience that should be taken into account in an aesthetic educational point of view of physical education, namely: complexity, diversity, playability, tension between drama and accuracy, overcoming experience, risk and vulnerability, unpredictable storylines and uncertainty, technique and effectiveness.

### KEYWORDS

Aesthetics; sports; physical education; aesthetic education

### 1. Introduction

The difficulty of understanding the meaning of sport aesthetics is related to the difficulty in identifying and defining the meaning of aesthetics itself, in general, due to its comprehensiveness, polymorphy and polysemy. It is very rare that any debate on sport aesthetics, even inside a community with a high level of expertise, does not start with a broad spectrum of questions and doubts on what is, in fact, aesthetics.

Considering it as an area normally described as the theory of beauty, taste or the philosophical discipline of art, the extension and coverage of its approaches and definitions persuades our thoughts in the sense of the platonic idea that beauty – and, we could think,

aesthetics – is a ‘difficult’ subject. In fact, the definition of aesthetics has not been consensual throughout history, and still is not today (Bayer 1978).

Concerning sport aesthetics, literature includes relevant works that gather extensive and detailed analysis on the elements and categories that support it.<sup>1</sup> It is not our purpose in this paper to enlarge or deepen the massive enumeration of those aesthetic categories or elements of sport, because more than redundant would be probably impossible to do in complete, general and broad ways. We rather chose to search for those elements that help to question and consider how internal and essential aesthetics is to sports, and which educational consequences this consideration can bring with it.

If sports can promote aesthetic experiences, and if physical education has a role on the development of the aesthetic sensibility of students, so important to a global education (Patrício 1993) – as it seems to aspire when we look at most of western physical education programmes, even though not that much in *praxis*, where this seems to be conveyed only to dance and rhythmic activities – then we need to deepen the aesthetic potential and criteria of several sporting activities, and to search ways of taking it in account in physical education classes in a more wide and concrete means.

Due to its nature, a research of this kind asks for a hermeneutical, not essentialist but phenomenological approach of the subject, one that enables its clarification or interpretative deepening. Thus, an interpretative journey on the debate of sports aesthetics is not a choice. It is an unavoidable path, since the access we have to the subject comes from the representation and description of reality by the individuals involved in the phenomena (who give to reality its thoughts, meanings and senses), which simultaneously leads to its interest and intersubjective point of discussion. Hence the need – or even the obligation – of interpretation (Innerarity 2009).

We propose, then, the deepening of the subject in an hermeneutical approach, confronting the content collected in nineteen semi-structured interviews that enabled its content thematic analysis and discussion, expressing representative viewpoints of subjects among those that are the main players in an aesthetic education through sport, namely physical education teachers and researchers in the context of aesthetics, philosophy and sports sciences. With the information gathered and after its processing, we prepared a hermeneutic and argumentative analysis on some of the main aspects that enable the understanding of physical education as a vehicle for aesthetic education through sport.

The 19 interviews were conducted with three different groups of individuals that, considering their relationship with aesthetics, with sports and with physical education, can make different contributions and complement the study problem. These were: (a) ‘Outside Sport Sciences’, teachers/researchers from the areas of aesthetic education outside sport sciences, who work in areas in which this subject has long been approached (art, philosophy, theatre, music, dance, etc.) referred to as OSS; (b) ‘Inside Sport Sciences’, teacher/researchers inside sport sciences whose work reveal aesthetic concerns in the context of pedagogy and education through sport, referred to as ISS; (c) ‘Physical Education Teachers’, physical education teachers who could then provide a more focused and practical look on how these dimensions are implemented in physical education classes, referred to as PET. In order to guarantee the anonymity of their discourses, the quotes included throughout the text are identified with theses acronyms, so that it is possible to recognise the group from which they come but with a random numerical order.

Crossing the existent information provided by the literature in the field with our study group points of view we could associate and merge some aesthetic elements of sport which can somehow explain how internal to sports aesthetic is, and how an aesthetic approach of sport's experience can have pedagogical interests.

When we tried to understand what our interviewees considered aesthetics of sport is about, their answers showed an effort that is more hermeneutical and phenomenological than epistemological. That is to say, they preferred to identify examples in their world where it can or cannot be found, identify practical or empirical contexts and situations where it can be experienced, rather than provide a descriptive, analytical or essentialist definition on what aesthetics is.

Returning to the previous question about aesthetic concepts, our interviewees described it as at the same time impulse and result of an affective relationship with something, integrating and welcoming the dramatic/poetic sense of our affective relationship with the world and with world things (OSS0; OSS1; OSS5; ISS3). Thus, on the one side, it evades from the exclusive belonging to the appreciation capacities of the subject and, on the other, from the object qualities, which makes it difficult to identify its wandering place. So, it is a mutual demonstration of a *continuum* that results from the assessment interplay between subject, appreciator or experimenter and the object, with its qualities and characteristics (OSS6; Eco 1965; Lacerda 2002). This interaction results in an embodiment or materialisation of thoughts, ideas, emotions, feelings or experiences that, based on sensible and rational guidelines, extrapolates them according to the execution interest, expression or interpretation of the subject, leading to a heterodox meta-reality that largely surpasses the causality limits of sensory real appearance (OSS0, ISS1). Thus, aesthetics concerns what we generally call sensorial areas, such as seeing, listening, touching but, mainly, through these to the processes of significance of human experience that lead to metaphysic elements such as feeling, drama, quest for meaning, coherence, and search for the good, aspects that comprise the path between sensorial expression to the meaning and interpretation of life and the experiences that comprise it and affect our sensibility (ISS6).

Centring now on the aesthetics of sport, the focus of this paper, a short common sense conversation and a more detailed analysis of the literature in the field, underlines a trend for the dominance of discourses on sport aesthetics around three central aspects: (i) comparisons with art; (ii) concerns regarding the human body; (iii) a certain aestheticism that overvalues the appearance and the ornaments that can be found in sports environments, whether or not these are related to body, movement, spaces, material or events and sport settings. One of the aspects that justifies our work lies on the fact that the content of the studied matters, as well as the interviews conducted, point to an approach that considers sports aesthetics in other directions. This point of view that also points to a different look over sport itself is focused on the attention given to aspects that are beyond the visible and outward form of sport and refer to the awareness and understanding of its meanings and contents, regarding the role aesthetic elements play in our understanding, involvement and relation with sports, and specially in an educational perspective.

We have then, drove efforts to overcome the cosmetics and the superficial side of sport appearance, in order to deeply explore its aesthetic meanings, following a pathway that leads us to an understanding of sport that, moving from the form of the appearance to the form of experience/existence, is plural and contextual (OSS1). It is in this sense that some of our interviewees reinforce what has already been said by Best (1988a, 1988b) and Wertz

(1988), that the aesthetic contemplation of sport, as well as that of art, cannot be focused on an out of context analysis of its forms and gestures, moving away from the understanding of its content and internal structure. If that were the case, football teams would hire jugglers to guarantee a more intense show as, in their words, 'some ball jugglers are much better than many football players.'<sup>2</sup> (ISST, 41). Also a physical education teacher states: 'I do not see aesthetics only related to ornaments, a beautiful outfit or a beautiful hairstyle ... I prefer to look to movement storylines than to its appearance.' (PET1, 2).

In this sense, movement seems to acquire, on the one hand, a visible and physical character, and on the other hand a sensible and understandable character that is also supra-visible or metaphysical. This idea meets what ISS3 stresses when he states that, by looking to sport gestures, to the body in action, we capture much more than fragmented parts of the skin, muscles, bones or ligaments. What catches our attention in sport performance is, precisely, the extrapolation of those physical aspects that invite us to take part in an expressive, communicative, unitary, non-fragmented and, thus, continuous universe.

While trying to identify the aesthetic elements of sport that are most valued by our study group in pedagogical terms, we were challenged by the interviewees to, besides appointing the aesthetic elements of art, sports or the world, that are in fact largely changeable, rather try to understand in each moment which are the elements that enhance and enrich our view in terms of sports pedagogical potential. This enrichment does not necessarily have to be pleasant or positive, neither intellectually explainable nor describable. What we expect from an aesthetic world is that, by combining beauty and ugly, clear and ambiguous, complex or simple, fascinating or boring elements, we enrich the content of the affective experience with the world and, in this case with sport.

In this sense, more than defining precepts and canons on beauty or art, we increasingly see that the aesthetic effort focuses its action mainly towards deconstruction and not towards normalisation: aesthetics 'has an independent life, such as thought, and thus it is constantly at the forefront of critical judgment of each era' (Bayer 1978, 44).

Starting from and accepting the idea that art and sport<sup>3</sup> have different aesthetic natures and that, besides the symptomatic exclusivity that common sense assigns to art, as far as aesthetics is concerned, we can state that sports can be analysed under the same aesthetic view (as this is also possible for the sunset, the rain, the maternal relationship, war, fire or any other natural or cultural aspect submitted to the contemplative human look) and that view is also critical and deconstructive (OSS0; OSS1; OSS3; OSS5).

For the elements of our study group from outside sport sciences, art and sport are, therefore, cultural aspects with an interesting deconstruct potentiality considering the accepted stereotypes, ideas and paradigms, in which the openness to innovation seems to be an unavoidable prerequisite. However, this idea goes against the largely constitutive nature of rules and norms in the field of sport.

How is it, then, possible that an activity that is highly normative, such as sport, can claim to be considered as deconstructive? In arts, as in sport, the break with the canons and innovation do not emerge from vacuum. It results from the basic principles that work as the support for non-canonical, innovative, personal and even ambiguous realisations. For instance, and the same happens in arts, when an artist defines himself as a painter, he self-imposes a series of rules, for instance bidimensionality, space, materials, instruments and techniques and then he can seek for a realisation that surpasses the constitutive nature of painting (OSS0). In the field of sport, the sportsperson also submits himself to the constitutive

norms of his sporting discipline, in terms of equipment, spaces, time, practical structure, etc. However, there is room for each one to express himself in a more or less differentiating and innovative way (ISS4; ISS6).

Thus, the aesthetic process primarily seems to require access to a structure that is known and dominated, so that it enables the later appearance of surprise and the meeting with unknown elements that are not initially dominated (OSS0). This is how, sometimes, the norm does not apply and reality surprises and enriches us with the appearance of new and unrepeatable styles of exceptional and innovative performances, within the existing and well-defined practices (Lacerda 2007). It is also through the same procedure, even though at a different level, that new practices and sporting disciplines appear, based on movements and techniques that are already known and dominated but that, at the same time, are changed and adapted to fit new aims and goals, for instance parkour, sandboard, slackline or tchoukball.

According to the huge range of types of sports activities, can we state that aesthetics is, then, something transversal to all sports? Is it equally applied for different sports? Do all sports hold the aesthetic elements as something deeply internal to its nature and experience? What is the role of aesthetics in our understanding and our relation with sports, and what are the pedagogical consequences of taking it in account on physical education classes? These are questions we will try to explore on the next chapters of this paper through discussion in two main chapters: the first chapter on the aesthetics as an internal element of sports experience, and then, a second chapter that covers the pedagogical potential of physical education by taking in account in a more conscious way, the aesthetic experience of sport as a clue to an aesthetic attitude towards the world.

## 2. Aesthetics as an internal element of sports experience

Several sport's philosophers have already considered and debated about some sport's elements capability of turning sporting experience as an aesthetic experience (Lacerda 2002). For some of them, these aesthetic elements are the main and profound motivation that leads the sportspersons to be part of sport's contexts (Luvisolo 1997; Wertz 1988; Witt 1989).

Deepening this questioning, we have tried to explore near our study group how relevant and central aesthetics is to understanding sport's nature. Is it, then, possible to understand sport neglecting its aesthetic dimension?

Our sport experience is always also an aesthetic experience. I believe it is impossible to understand sport ignoring its aesthetic dimension. Maybe the clear understanding, the intention and the obvious presence of that aspect are not always consciously present. Sometimes it is present in such a way that we don't even notice ... but it is there! In my opinion, it is impossible to live a sport experience without being influenced by it. (ISS1, 13).

We found within our interviewees the general idea that sport has an aesthetic nature which is essential and inescapable. As such, for most of the elements of our study group, if we do not consider the aesthetic nature of sport we compromise and prevent sport itself, because we are ignoring a central and structural aspect. For these interviewees that commitment could be compared to an attempt of trying to understand navigation without knowing the rules and tides behaviour. Is this possible? Maybe it is, but it is certainly not desirable or credible. Thus, aesthetics does not seem to represent an external element that

we can add to sport's experience, but appears to be something inherent to it. Considering it, to what extent or in which ways, does aesthetics contribute to the understanding of sports?

Aesthetic view enables us to interpret sport in such a way that considers how Man lives, plays, enjoys life and learns (ISS2). Therefore, it promotes the exploration and construction of a meta-discourse on the essential nature of sport, its bases and purposes, in addition to its pragmatic, immediate, functional, hygienist or therapeutic justifications (ISS2; ISS5).

Due to the input that it gives to sport, the aesthetic approach also provides a better understanding of ourselves, our sensibility, our deepest expectations and ideals, what touches us and what touches us in the interaction with the world. Even a sportsperson or coach that expresses his convictions saying he gives no relevance to the aesthetic side of sport, in some way he does it, even if unconsciously (ISS2; ISS3): it can be by the way he tries to give form to the performance, the way he works which in fact is the expression of the way he values sport's aesthetics, and how he is involved or is driven by it.

It is also through the aesthetic analysis that we can understand the reasons why, as human beings, we go to stadiums, love sports and feel so attracted to a good competition or sporting challenge (ISS6; PET2). Why are we so much attracted by the clarification of our competences by testing them? Why are we so much attracted for trying to understand things that touch our senses and our sensibility? What do these attractions reveal about our nature? There is something in testing us that captivates human nature and aesthetics can help to explain it: 'We like the way they feel, we like the way we experience it, we like the dramatic difficulty that the test provides: 'Can I do this?'; 'Can't I?'. And so a good test presents us with what I call a delicious opposition of 'maybe I can do it but maybe I can't'. (...) 'Embedded within the test I see a two-level aesthetics. One is the drama of the difficulty, the story line, the testing venture, the testing project from the beginning to the end. We are starting to swim across a long body of water and... can we make it? (...) But the other part is to ask 'why water?'; 'why swimming?'; 'why doing it that way?'. And for better or worse we are embodied creatures and we like to feel the water in our skin, we like the feeling of power and moving through water, with a good kick and a good arm stroke.' (ISS6, 3).

Obviously, the criteria that characterises the way we aesthetically assess sports are different and not always universal. They strongly depend on how we interpret its structure and values. And so, the hermeneutic path seems unavoidable. The struggle to become aware, to understand, and to give meaning to the aesthetic experience of sport seems to ask for a suitable language and specific interpretation processes (Edgar 2013).

Torres (2014) considers two special types of attitudes that lead to an aesthetic experience of sport in two different directions: the internal and the external one. An internalist attitude assumes that each sport has its own internal spirit, with its own aims and purposes that shapes its aesthetic expression. According to this line of thought, performances which adversely affect this spirit, also deplete the aesthetic value of sport. In its turn, the externalist attitude is based on the idea that sport is not an independent source of values and, thus, any performance that falls within the limits of customs and traditions and accepts the consequences of the rules imposed is ethically and aesthetically acceptable as it is also the expression of contextually accepted values (Torres 2014).

The impact of these different attitudes can be seen, for instance, in the way an internalist can repudiate a strategic foul if he considers it depletes the aesthetic–ethic content of the game while, for the same foul, an externalist makes a positive assessment in terms of the aesthetic interest it added to the game (ISS4).

If aesthetics is something inherent to sports and an internalist attitude necessarily considers it, then, it makes sense to ask ourselves about the internal elements of sports that provide this markedly aesthetic nature.

However, it may not seem prudent to talk about the aesthetic value of sport in general if we consider that it simultaneously includes boxing, chess and formula one racing, as well as horse riding, surf, rugby, jogging or trekking (OSS1). For our interviewees, even though the variety of existing sports seems to make it impossible to make general aesthetic considerations that can be applied to all sports, an interesting part of the aesthetic potential of sport clearly comes from this element: the diversity that constitutes it and that, consequently, can achieve a wide variety of sensitivities and accept the subjectivity of human aesthetic appreciation.

Within our study group we found the general idea that not all sports have the same aesthetic potential and diversity is not only an important aesthetic element of sport in general but also within each sport. The distinction between sports according to their aesthetic potential has been largely discussed by different authors that have studied sport aesthetics and this is why we can find the traditional designation of *aesthetic sports* (Best 1988b; Corder 1995; Marques 1990; Parry 1989). Nowadays, our study group follows this distinction and holds that the aesthetic possibilities of a sport seem to depend on the range and diversity of movements it includes. Thus, for example, considering weightlifting has a limited range of movements and techniques it seems to have a shorter aesthetic potential than football which includes techniques that require different body parts and different forms as well as a huge variety of movements and tactical geometries of teams that largely extend the possibilities in terms of movements, thus increasing the aesthetic value of that sport (OSS6; Lacerda 2007). Consequently, the aesthetic interest of sport is highly dependent on the comprehensiveness and complexity of its movements. So, the less diverse and more linear are the techniques, the shorter is the aesthetic interest of a sport: 'I think all sports have a mixture (between aesthetics and purposes) and so it is a continuum where there are different degrees. But I would say that weight lifting, for instance, has less aesthetic value than gymnastics.' (OSS6, 3).

How can these differences be analysed? How can we try to make an aesthetic analysis of sport, carefully envisaging its differences? One of our interviewees helps us to settle this question:

When I talk about sport I include martial arts, dance, I include a recreational approach, and it does not have to be competition sport. I mean the activity and movement within the sport environment which enables to experience the world in interesting ways. (OSS3, 3).

The concept of sport includes a huge diversity of activities that makes it extremely difficult to define. Besides that, each sport has its own internal nature and structure that results from traditions, culture, habits, values, norms, practices, techniques and gestures (OSS3). Thus, the aesthetic expectation of Man regarding any sport, depends on the specific aesthetic criteria that makes sense for that sport in particular. In the specific literature we find the idea that the relevance and importance of aesthetics in the different sports activities requires the contextualisation, interpretation and differentiation (Best 1988a, 1988b; Boxill 1988; Kirk 1984; Kupfer 1988; Lacerda 2002; Marques 1990; Wertz 1988). It would be childish to think that the criteria that assesses the aesthetic nature of a gymnastics movement are the same of a tactical-technical rugby movement. This happens because its senses, aims, logics and purposes are also different and it is grounded on the idea that sport aesthetics depends on

the understanding, incorporation and respect of those senses (ISS0; ISS1; ISS2; ISS5; ISS6; PET0; PET1; PET2; PET3; PET4; PET5). One of our interviewees clearly exemplifies this point of view: 'The aesthetics of a rhythmic gymnastics competition (...) has nothing to do with football aesthetics. But, does this mean football has no aesthetics? It has, but it has to be interpreted in a different way.' (ISS0, 3). If from a gymnast we can expect lightness, grace and delicacy, from the football player we expect weight, strength and aggressiveness (Lacerda 2002). If a dance piece stimulates us to focus our attention more on line movements, football also invites us to enjoy the tactical geometry of teams. And these elements do not provide a higher or lower aesthetic potential, they only represent a contextualised and particularly relevant aesthetic value. Besides that, for sports in which the main reward is the efficiency and effectiveness of sports gestures, the harmony and the fluidity of movements are not sufficiently satisfactory criteria, as stressed one of our interviewees: 'Sports have different aesthetic criteria. For instance, in football the movement itself has a small meaning if it is not effective. But in rhythmic gymnastics or synchronized swimming a unique gesture has an effective meaning – like in dance, if you want another example. So, even though all sports have aesthetic potential, in my point of view there are different aspects between them all, that make them interesting and object of interpretation in different ways. (...) You can think a player has a very beautiful style, you can appreciate that but then, if he is not efficient, everything changes.' (OSS3, 4).

Even the aesthetic criteria that are transversally valued and assess do not have the same importance for a global contemplation of the aesthetic object (OSS0; ISS0). Thus, if in some sports mastering the technique is crucially important, in others it can be minimised by the higher importance that other aspects can have, such as creativity or innovation in the aesthetic production or even the transgressive use of materials or spaces (OSS6; ISS2). In gymnastics a split jump requires a perfect coordination between take-off, elevation, legs separation, perfect alignment between upper and lower limbs and landing, characteristics that define the aesthetic value of that gesture. By contrast, a football kick does not always have to be performed with the inside part of the foot or with the supporting foot in a pre-defined angle regarding the kicking foot, we often see outside-foot shots or backheel shots that are aesthetically highly valued.

Is it possible, though, to explore and expose here some of the main elements suggested by our study group as essential and transversal to sports, despite all the specific and different aesthetic criteria between them?

Starting from the aesthetic contemplation of sport, there is an element easily and generally valued, which is the need of a *continuum*, that is to say, doing something feasible, viable, that is developed in time and space; an aspect that our interviewees named as *playability* (not only as a reference to the game, but to any sporting activity that must remain doable, workable and debatable, in a permanent suspense between dispute and imbalance, difficulty and overcoming).

The main aim of creating a set of rules and unnecessary and artificial obstacles that constitute sports, is making the game possible. In order to have interest and sense, the game must be playable. The playable composition of sport depends on the commitment, dedication and serious involvement of sportspeople in their activities (ISS1). It is the playability that attracts and catches the sportsperson, leading him to continue (Huizinga 2003; Suits 2005). Obviously, we cannot deny that there are also other aspects that attract us towards sports practice, such as the improvement of the physical condition, the improvement of

physical health, and losing weight. But here sport works as a kind of medication and its character becomes more therapeutic than ludic (OSS6). Thus, for our interviewees the ludic dimension is the one that most strengthens the aesthetic nature of sports experience.

One of the aspects that is usually associated to the notion of playability is the *flow*. The sports movement flow is responsible for guaranteeing unity, globality and continuity (OSS3). The state of involvement and immersion that makes the binomial subject-activity a *continuum*, described by Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson (1990), can be seen in the sports motor gesture when this ceases to be the sum of the biomechanical movements made by the sportsperson and becomes part of him and, thus, has a concrete sports meaning/reading. This is how race, associated to the approach to the barrier, blocking, the transformation of horizontal speed in a vertical movement, surpassing the barrier and the fall or landing, are no longer isolated and incomprehensible movements and become a specific and sequential unit, full of meaning: high jump (ISS0; PET5). The sensation of continuity, the connection of gestures in a fluid meaningful way is, then, a relevant aesthetic element of the sport experience that combines the *playability* element with the *flow* element. This is what Dewey describes as the fulfilment and consummation moment, that is to say, when different parts of the experience are likely to become a unit of meaning (Dewey 1934).

Playability also depends on the tension and competition of a sport or a game.<sup>4</sup> There is broad consensus among our interviewees that the activity is more playable, and thus aesthetically more interesting, when there is a similar capacity to play it. This requires that a game is neither simply balanced (static) nor simply dynamic in the sense of the extreme incapacity of neutralisation of one team over the other. Thus, it requires finding a dynamic point of balance that preserves the tension between the opponents.

For one of the sport sciences researcher from our study group, there is a tension between drama and accuracy that is part of the essentially aesthetic nature of sport, as has also been stressed by Kreft: '(...) playing a game can be attractive only if it is not too easy and simple to achieve its purpose' (Kreft 2012, 225). This is why when children try a game that is too unbalanced, they tend to switch teams or change the rules in order to try to find that tension that is internal to the aesthetic interest of their experience. Also in formal and competition sports we find this quest, when in sailing and golf the final scores are always indexed to handicaps that make the competition more balanced and interesting (ISS6). Therefore, this search for a tension between drama and accuracy, where things other than the absolute result are important but also an uncertain, interpretable, relative and contextual narrative, is consistent with what Kretchmar (2015) named the *aesthetic version of sports*. The fourth model of his theory is on a plural internalism considering sport, a vision that considers the existence of sport's own internal spirit that is, at the same time, plural and that must be constantly sought and respected.

Therefore, the difficulty of practice seems to be important for the aesthetic interest of a sport, as long as it does not compromise its playability, that is to say, its feasibility.

It is this tension element that, according to some interviewees, leads the sportsperson to a broader spectrum of aesthetic elements, which includes not only what is pleasant and bright, but also what is unpleasant and painful (ISS2, ISS3, PET4, PET5). Without recognising that spectrum and contrasts among its elements, the aesthetic assessment is threatened by the lack of benchmarks and comparisons. Negative feelings such as exhaustion, tiredness, pain or sacrifice, even if they represent obstacles to the flow, also provide aesthetic meaning to the performance, result, success and victory, as they include the overcoming element.

The overcoming of difficulties that result from reality, an aesthetic element largely identified by our interviewees, only becomes possible when we consider the use and enjoyment of the painful and difficult side and, sometimes, undesirable in sport. This overcoming experience leads to higher states of aesthetic relationship with the reality. It also foresees or suggests an aesthetic experience of the unlimited or the sublime, described by Kant, produced by 'the feeling of a momentary check to the vital forces (...) does not so much involve positive pleasure as admiration or respect, i. e., merits the name of a negative pleasure.' (Kant 1998, 138).

Our interviewees consider that there are levels for the overcoming of the difficulties that lead us to consider that sport has something transcendent and unlimited.

In this sense, taking part in a sports activity always requires entering a journey of overcoming, in which the starting point is ourselves, but the desired arrival point can assume different forms, namely an improvement of our personal mark, the comparison to the other, to the mark, to the record or to the absolute (OSS1). Overcoming is, then, the path for the quest of a platonic or Hegelian absolute that always seems to escape or run away, which is why the overcoming process is exponential and potentially infinite. Other interviewees support this point of view stating that, by encouraging the exercise of human abilities to the limit of his capacities, sports are mainly based in aesthetical aspects. There is something explicitly aesthetic in carrying out our abilities to the maximum of our capacities (OSS6). This exercise is not possible without a powerful motivation to improve the performance and even to achieve victory. As Boxill (1988) had already said, for one of our interviewees, the final result is not central for the aesthetic potential of sport but the motivation of athletes and teams to achieve victory is: 'Although I am a purist I absolutely want teams to be motivated by victory. (...) I find it annoying if you can feel an athlete is just showing off and not seriously trying to win. (...) For me the aesthetic experience means fighting for victory. To do that, players have to push themselves to get over their comfort zone. They have to push their body to their limits, to run as fast as they can, to jump as high as they can, they have to kick as accurately as they can. In that quest for victory those beautiful physical attributes get displayed. (...) The competition for victory is a precondition for sports' aesthetics' (OSS6, 8, 9).

Fighting for overcoming our capacities frequently requires, both in sports and in life, the disposition of entering in areas of uncertainty regarding our competence, that is to say, accepting to take risks (OSS0).

The participation in a sporting activity that, according to Suits (2005), creates the need to solve artificial problems, also requires running risks, which are also artificial. The importance of risk as an attractive aspect of modern human experience, discussed by Giddens (1999) and Lipovetsky (1989), is also important for the analysis of sport's aesthetic experience. The unpredictable and open nature of sport and, thus, the risk of failure or success have, according to our interviewees, a high aesthetic potential that, in real circumstances – not artificial ones – would be limited or would not make any sense (OSS6). This is why actions that aim to delude, mislead or even deceive the opponent within the ethical boundaries of rules and good manners of sport are, unlike what happens in normal life, not only acceptable but desirable for the aesthetic interest of sports (ISS0). There is a certain level of childishness and irresponsibility which is common among successful sports people who, in turn, usually reveal to be capable of facing and assuming important risks, who are prepared for unpredictable challenges of reality as some sort of super-man complex (ISS2). This recreational,

spontaneous and almost childish component that, as argued by Huizinga (2003), is being lost with the growing professionalisation of sport as '(...) it becomes a thing *sui generis*: neither play nor earnest.' (221). It is an element of interest and aesthetic assessment of sport and sportspeople.

Thus, joining a sport activity seems to require a deliberate and voluntary submission to a vulnerable human condition – the unpredictable, the unknown, the undominable, failure, mistake, deceive, unpredictability, lack of transparency of the others involved, namely opponents (OSS5; ISS0). Callois has also postulated that this submission to the vulnerable conditions is, besides that, free and deliberate:

We only play if we want and when we want. This means that the game is a free activity. Besides that, it is an uncertain activity. (...) By definition, in ability games the players run the risk of failing the move, a threat of defeat and without this the game would be no fun (...). (Caillois 1990, 27).

Therefore, vulnerability seems to provide intensity and aesthetic interest to sport's activity that, as an aesthetic experience does not affect our sensibility, only in a hedonistic sense but also in terms of fragility, pain, unpleasure, sacrifice, loss and failure (Feezell 2013). We could think that in the non-recreational, non-metaphoric *real life*, as well as in sports, that voluntary exposure would, apparently, make no sense since its consequences would also be real, non-recreational and non-metaphoric and thus, too serious. However, we see that different life experiences that are highly intense and with strong meaning and aesthetic content, have this vulnerability element, from which we do not run away and that in fact we seek: consider, for instance, maternity/paternity, conjugal and fraternal love, solidarity, compassion, volunteering, dedication to a professional activity or human undertakings that have impact on society and on other realities that require a human condition that is necessarily vulnerable.

Since sports are not only constituted by *agon*, but also by *alea*, vulnerability is something inescapable (ISS2; Callois 1990). All sportspeople, no matter how competent they are, voluntarily agree to submit to this random variable. A very competent gymnast can fail on the parallel bars for reasons that he cannot control, in the same way a goalkeeper can be deceived, without any responsibility, by circumstantial constraints, such as the wind or other players, which unintentionally change the ball's trajectory.

There is a certain aesthetic potential in the unpredictable, the unforeseen, the unknown, in what we cannot explain but only confirm (ISS0). Examples of this include goals that result from long shots, or when a tennis player who is in a defensive and inferior position manages to place the ball out of the opponent's reach and thus scores a point that reverses the game (ISS1). Maybe this is the reason why some of us have already lived the experience of, while spectators, supporting the weaker player or the weaker team since, somehow, we recognise aesthetic interest in the unpredictable, the illogic, the unforeseeable, the paradox and the intriguing.

This doesn't mean we naturally have an attraction to weakness and defeat, but otherwise, we tend to value human struggle to do better performances (OSS1, ISS5).

If we know that the result or the final product is essential for the sports experience, because it enables to find the sense or direction for its purpose even if, often, it is not numerically measurable, we also know that the experience that leads to it is frequently based on failure. The higher willingness for unsuccessful experience seems to be not only a requirement for the acceptance of the internal spirit of sport, but also one of the elements that contribute, based on the sporting experience, to an aesthetic attitude towards life. In sports

and life alike, the development of the ability to adapt to the unpredictable and uncontrollable constraints of reality, uses human vulnerability as a lever for happiness. The vulnerability experience of failure and underachievement makes it possible to change, improve, develop, work and flourish something that we can indeed control: ourselves (Feezell 2013). This is why some of our interviewees state that sports is for losers, even if its purpose is success and victory. According to them, only those that are prepared in most of their sporting experiences, will understand the deep sense that this failure has for the development of the aesthetic internal nature of sports. If there were not hundreds of athletes that, trying their best, submit themselves to failure in a marathon, we would never be able to recognise the aesthetic value of the winner's performance.

However, this value is only recognised when it is threatened, that is to say, if a relevant part of the losing athletes were not candidates to be winners, the acknowledgement of the aesthetic value of the performance would be lost, both for winners and losers (ISS1). This would not be feasible since the fight for victory is one of the main elements of the commitment to sports (ISS1; ISS3). The same is valid for the uncertainty of the result:

Normally, when things are aesthetically higher, when there are higher levels of performance, this means greater opportunity for success. Normally those who play more beautifully win, but fortunately that does not always happen since this is one of the attractive aspects in sport: uncertainty. (PET2, 10).

In an externalist view, an athlete or an artist that achieves no results, does not seem to exist in the visible external point of view. It is an internalist view that covers more deeply the complexities of sports internal experience, such as art and its values and that, thus, embraces and considers the personal experience of *being in a journey* and not only *being in destiny*; a journey that is often built based on frustration and failure experiences (OSS0).

However, an interpretation of sports aesthetics that does not consider the need for efficiency and success, i.e. its tactical and technical criteria, is externalist. It goes against the key elements of sport internal spirit: the fight for victory. The internalist attitude combines the permanent desire and fight for victory with the acceptance and acknowledgement of failure, without compromising the meaning of the experience (OSS0; ISS2).

Since the application of performance, efficiency and effectiveness criteria can and has to contribute to an internalist aesthetic view of sport, the internal aesthetic nature of sport also seems to depend on the technical quality as an efficiency criteria:

The greater the technic, the more intense will the aesthetic character [of a gesture] be. And we feel that. The observer feels that, the participant feels it much more. What are the moves that the participant admires? He prefers those that have such a high technical level that guarantees aesthetically strong movements. (OSS1, 37).

For the majority of our interviewees there seems to be a relationship of dependency between the aesthetic interest of sport and the implementation of the technical criteria. Technique seems to be the foundation not only of aesthetics but also of efficiency and victory, and each sport has its internal aesthetic-technical patterns:

Maybe it is not possible to have beautiful performance in swimming without swimming well, considering that we enjoy someone who swims quickly but also with a beautiful style. If someone has a beautiful style but drowns, does not move...It is not the same. (OSS3, 4, 5).

Therefore, in order to understand this relationship we have to overcome the commonplace of aesthetics as a simple decorative or ornamental element of reality that could even distract or divert the athlete from his role and his mission in the context of an internalist involvement

with sports. By contrast, we suggest a different and more informed look, one that learns and considers the internal value of sports and, thus, that contributes and enriches its meanings and purposes (ISS2): 'If we talk about technique without mentioning an aesthetic aspect, we talk about practice in a restrictive way.' (ISS4, 2).

When a sports person or musician does not master the technique, that limitation will always limit his aesthetic possibilities (OSS2). For this interviewee, technique has to serve aesthetics and, to achieve that, it has to be as much involved as possible in order to enhance its possibilities (OSS2).

Thus, we find in the universe of the aesthetic experience of sport, these elements with an important pedagogical potential, since it combines the formal, pragmatic and functional logic of sport with its non-immediate interests, supra-normative structure and values and beyond its formal quantitative result. The aesthetic look to sports combines, then, the visible appearance of human gestures and movements with the need of deepen their meanings and senses, what can be extremely interesting and pertinent in an aesthetic educational approach of sports.

### 3. From the aesthetic experience of sport to its potential on the aesthetic experience of the world

As a result of the difficulty in approaching aesthetics, our interviewees tried to avoid using the term *aesthetics* individually and they often used notions such as «aesthetic value» and mainly *aesthetic experience* to explore the subject in a more practical and tangible manner and to ensure debate legitimacy. This avoidance, which is also frequently found in the specific literature, was also present in our interviews in which, to refer to the aesthetic side of sport, interviewees frequently referred the aesthetic attitude and experience of sports which from an educational point of view refers to an aesthetic attitude and experience towards life.

The aesthetic experience is often explained by world and life realities that puts the person in a usually free, uninterested and ludic appreciation, surprise or admiration position, no matter if it is positive or negative (Dufrenne 2008; Lacerda 2002; Luvisolo 1997; Witt 1989; Pita 1999; ISS2). This kind of experience overcomes the material and temporal limits of the contact with the world, moving the subject through moments of pleasure, fear, attraction, repulse, courage or anxiety to different states, moments or places of extra-sensorial or supra-sensorial nature that overcome the frontiers of space and time where the sport experience takes place (OSS6; ISS1). Besides that, this is a type of experience that seems to be justified in itself, i.e., it is free from utility bonds, functionality or the instrumental purpose and allows Man to be led by and get lost in the experience without necessarily having to define an immediate sense (ISS3).

Thus, aesthetics does not seem so difficult to interpret when we think about human experience, particularly when we think about this specific part of human experience that embodies it: the sensible or affective experience. Through the aesthetic experience, subject and object overcome the strict epistemological relationship, getting involved, caring, finding themselves and establishing a mutual and affective relationship. If we think of sport as a vehicle for aesthetic education, title of this work, this is a crucial aspect: the development of a unique sensibility against the apathy and indifference towards the world.

According to some elements of our study group, the aesthetic experience has two essential requirements: on the one hand, a subject that materialises the necessarily aesthetic

attitude (Arnold 1997; Dziemidok 1986; Edgar 2013; OSS6), i.e. that according to the words of one of our interviewees (PET0, 1) 'captures the value of the thing' and, on the other hand, the *thing* itself that can be a material object, an artefact, an event, a thing, a doing or an experience (ISS4; OSS6).

This aesthetic attitude requires being before the thing that goes beyond a simple observer attitude and, as such, requires commitment and dedication to reality at first hand (OSS1; ISS1; ISS3). This excludes the defensive attitude of someone that, submitting himself to the non-domain and non-control, gets involved and lets himself be driven creating room for a more intense, significant and enriching experience (OSS1). Education through sport represents an excellent opportunity in this field since it provides a context in which it is indispensable to be and to learn through that involvement, in a full and complete commitment to the sport reality. This aesthetic experience can take different forms in different moments or different levels of confront with reality.

An experience like this, does not only start with the physical contact with reality, in space and time, but it requires a dramatic relationship between a thought way of thinking and a reflexive way of feeling (OSS5; ISS1). Besides that, our personal life stories, our expectations, our past experiences and pre-concepts about the aesthetic object we are facing, contribute to the creation of a pre-moment of experience through the sensations, emotions and feelings they create and that then determine its development. Thus, we could say that there is a pre-meeting with sport reality that surpasses the boundaries of space and time in a physical education lesson and that the teacher should take into consideration: the previous experience the student had with the subject under study.

But for most of our interviewees, the aesthetic experience usually incorporates the need of interpretation of lived experiences. Aesthetic interpretation is being considered, in fact, throughout art lines of thought, a pre-requirement for the aesthetic experience. Notwithstanding, for one of our interviewees from the aesthetic field, aesthetics, before being understandable (in a more verbal or linguistic sense) is to be experienced and this represents the first moment or level of aesthetic experience that does not necessarily have to be overcome or surpassed in certain types of experiences (OSS3). Some examples of this are, at a very basic level, experiences or feelings of like, dislike, appreciation, attraction or rejection in which we test our body, our sensitivity and our intuition at very basic levels but not less enriching. We all identify with this type of experience if we remember the *lightness* we felt the first time we entered a swimming pool or the *purity* we felt with the smell of wet grass while running in the park or even the soft wind hitting our faces during a cycle training by the sea.

Thus, we identify, in the stage of sports aesthetics that is related to experience, an element that is worth exploring and taken into account in the context of physical education as a vehicle of aesthetic experience: pleasure.

The pleasure that arises from the aesthetic experience of sport is often hard to describe and express and most of the times does not allow us to say much more than that *something feels good, something works*, the pleasure (or also displeasure) that we anticipate in affective or sensitive terms (OSS3). Sometimes we realise it is the fluidity or flow of the skin touching the water during a swim stroke (OSS3) or the wind touching our faces when we roller skate at high speed which makes us feel free (OSS5), when we feel fulfilled by the performance or, sometimes, the simple fact that, as spectators, we share with the performer sensations that we have not felt at first hand but that we live through observation.

It is in this sense that sport is an arena where Man feels free to experience aesthetic pleasure through the corporal experience of the other, and the same happens with physical education, as a result (OSS6). For instance, when as spectator, or as a colleague during a physical education lesson, the student observes and finds room to express himself through emotions with the fineness, elegance, agility and flow of a sport activity which he knows is difficult and demanding he is interpreting its exceptional meaning (OSS3; OSS5). By contrast, the aesthetic experience is not always that easy to identify and sometimes we can only identify fruition levels that are not possible to be verbalised. In this case experience simply *is*, despite the absence of *insight* or phenomenological explainable relationships (OSS3).

However, part of the intensity of the aesthetic experience is only achieved after a, sometimes persistent, process of exploration and interpretation of reality (OSS2):

We can read a poem without clearly understanding what we are reading and we can be touched. And then, we can read it again and stop at every word, every line, analyse, get a deeper understanding and then feel more or less touched. Or, sometimes, after one or two years, we hear or read it again and since we already knew it, we feel deeply touched. (OSS2, 6).

Thus, the aesthetic experience can include, and it often does, a phenomenological process of apprehension, exteriorisation, reflection and questioning of the reality that in a different stage, after the first contact with the aesthetic object, enables greater maturity, enlargement of the understanding, assignment of meaning or even a revision of conceptions and ideas regarding that experience (OSS5). Our interviewees argue that, the deepest, most sincere and *digested* is the experience, the more intensely it is registered in our lives in a significant and long-lasting way (OSS2). However, to ensure that this decision process of rendering meaning is really aesthetic, it must consider and have in mind the first aesthetic moment that consists of sensations and emotions, otherwise there is a risk of jeopardising the aesthetic nature of the experience, making it a purely rhetoric, descriptive, narrative or deliberative process (OSS3; ISS1).

Besides the definition of its different moments or levels, as it has also been referred in the literature (Arnold 1997; Coelho, Kreft, and Lacerda 2013; Fernandes and Lacerda 2010; Kuntz 1985; Lacerda 2002), it is important to distinguish the different start plans/points that are possible in the aesthetic experience and that despite being complementary, are completely different in their nature: the experience at first hand, i.e., as a subject active/participant in the aesthetic artefact, or the experience in the second person, the one who externally observes and lives the experience (OSS3; OSS5; OSS6; ISS1; ISS2). The first has access to a kinaesthetic dimension of the experience and the second, does not. This changes the character of the lived aesthetic experience (OSS3).

While a spectator searches for entertainment, the athlete seeks performance, a teacher looks for training, a student searches knowledge, a judge/referee seeks justice and law enforcement and a coach looks for the materialisation of his technical-tactical ideals.

The way we look to reality and what we value in it is highly affected by the roles we assume and, thus, by what we are prepared to contemplate. Each teacher, for example, first values the dimensions and characteristics of the theoretical aesthetic models he has studied and learnt and, then, those he has experienced and chosen as, in his point of view, they are close to his taste criteria. Also the sportsperson, the student and other participants in the sport reality face similar process (PET2).

The idea that the aesthetic experience justifies itself is old and so it does not depend on any purpose or aim then itself (Bayer 1978). Something that is not clear for us (and apparently

neither for our interviewees) is if the existence of other purposes in the action, no matter if they are practical, pragmatic, sensitive, emotional, etc., prevent the aesthetic experience. This means questioning if the tactical purposes of a coach, the aims of efficiency of a player, the passionate purposes of a spectator or the legal purposes of a judge or referee compromise their aesthetic experience during a sports event.

There is a primary and immediate aesthetic experience that may be inescapable for the different players in the sport experience (OSS6):

Suppose you score a goal and you immediately get a sense that you have done something beautiful, then you could have almost a kind of involuntary aesthetic experience. So even though your purpose is not to be beautiful or produce beauty, if you have been involved in that experience maybe you are able to start having an aesthetic experience. (OSS6, 5).

One of the physical education teacher from our study group reinforces the idea that has already been stated by Lacerda (2002) that the sense of purpose does not prevent or compromise the aesthetic experience of the athlete/sportsperson during his performance (PET1). In fact it promotes and enhances it by shaping the internal characteristics of that discipline:

We only have to watch an NBA game! For the player, a throw or a dunk are part of the aesthetic experience (...). He could do it in a thousand ways, but he chooses the one that gives him most pleasure. Players have pleasure in what they do, a gymnast gets pleasure from his movements, the coordination of all movements. At rhythmic gymnastics, for example, the manipulation of the pieces of apparatus is directly related to the aesthetic experience of the movement. (PET1, 2).

In this sense, for most of our interviewees, if sport was just a question of purpose, product and result, sportspeople would not dedicate themselves in such a creative way to the execution of their performance. Likewise, spectators would not be willing to go to stadiums and halls and it would be enough for them to see the final result, in the media, after the sports event.

However, in physical education we find room for the development of the aesthetic sensibility at these different levels thanks to the different roles that are possible during a lesson: the direct participant of the activity (which in some team sports requires the capacity of observation and analysis during the performance), the observer, the referee, the judge, the coach or helper, the team captain, the media reporter, etc., with the conviction that the diversity of roles enlarges, enhances and multiplies the aesthetic experience promoted in the context of physical education thanks to the variety of purposes involved.

Another aspect that limits the nature of the aesthetic experience of sport, and that should be taken into account when we want to promote the aesthetic sensitivity through physical education, is associated to the relationship and type of relation that the subject has with the object. The assessment and the aesthetic experience of a sport is inevitably conditioned by the subject involved in that sport. According to most of our interviewees, their sensibility, their background and relationship with sport, their knowledge and experience are very important elements for the intensity of the aesthetic assessment that the subject makes from sports (Kirk 1984; Lacerda 2002):

I can say that a coat is nice knowing nothing of fashion, just by looking and considering what is beautiful to me, what pleases me. This is a more basic form of appreciation. Here it is not the same. I am assuming the role of someone who knows something about sport. When I make a comment like that I mean that the beauty associated to the action has given me pleasure, it was beautiful. (PET2, 6).

This question becomes very clear when, as a gymnastics coach, one of our interviewees realises how some spectators that view his competition are not properly informed which, according to him, prevents and compromises some crucial aspects of the aesthetic appreciation of this discipline (ISS0): 'In artistic gymnastics, when athletes make a mortal jump [some members of the public] start to scream 'Goal!'. They watch rhythmic gymnastics but they cannot understand it' (ISS0, 4).

As has already been stated by Witt (1989) and Takács (1989), the aesthetic appreciation of a sport event is also strongly conditioned by the affective involvement of the subject and, thus, we tend to consider more aesthetic those sports with which we have more connection or are socially or culturally linked (OSS3): for a Portuguese,

A game that we could describe as lacking interest or meaning can become very interesting when, for instance, the Portuguese national team is playing, or if a Portuguese tennis player is playing at Wimbledon. Suddenly the game becomes much more interesting. As this makes you feel interested. There is an emotional connection. (OSS3, 9).

By contrast, Mumford distinguishes two types or relationship with sports that totally condition the viability of the aesthetic appreciation: purists and partisans (Mumford 2012). According to this author, the first do not care so much of the result of the sport, the victory or defeat, the athletes, teams or clubs since the only thing that matters for them is the aesthetic nature of that sport; the second are totally separated from the aesthetic experience since their relationship with the club, team or athletes is the desire for victory which forces them into a partial, biased and incomplete view/appreciation of the aesthetic elements of the game.

Overall, our interviewees did not agree with this analysis as they considered there is a rich intermediate area that includes both attitudes. For most of our interviewees, there is a very large spectrum between these two extremes that includes subjects (namely most of our interviewees) that combine their emotional link with sport, sportspeople, teams, show and simultaneously their capacity to recognise the aesthetic value and potential of movements even when they are performed by opponents, sportspeople or teams with which we feel no affinity:

The general public [between the purist and the fanatic] is missing in that analysis, since it does not belong to neither of the groups. (...) But the purist has an aesthetic appreciation that is also purist, i.e., it is based on his perspective and not in the common spectator's perspective. I am particularly interested, in this situation, in what is common, the ordinary citizen, and the ordinary spectator. (OSS5, 24).

Besides that, our interviewees also suggest other type of distinction: involved and separated (and, again, all the large spectrum of attitudes that lie between both extremes). The first have a relationship that is consistent with the sport they appreciate, eventually because they also practise it, they have learnt it or have experienced and lived it intensely; the second inadvertently get contact with the concerned sport and they appreciate the visible side of the sport gesture without necessarily understanding its purposes, senses or aims. We recognise an epistemic sensitivity in the first, a level of expertise and special affinity regarding the sport with which they deal that results in higher interest, motivation, attraction, commitment and aesthetic capacity that lacks or is more limited in the second (OSS5; OSS6).

In short, we can argue that, nowadays, the diversity of existing sport practices reveals an unlimited range of complexity and intensity levels of the aesthetic relationship itself with those practices. In the aesthetic relationship with sport, as in any other aesthetic relationship,

there is a permanent and mutual retro fit between reason and emotion, between feeling and thinking, between experiencing and understanding. The depth of the relationship directly depends from the complexity of the concerned experience. However, part of the aesthetic interest of sport comes precisely from the contemplation and integration of this large spectrum of experience typologies, from the most simple to the most complex, that includes both the irrationality of a certain level of aesthetic experience, as well as the construction of a more trained, informed and reflexive view/feeling/experience (OSS0).

#### 4. Final considerations

Considering that there are so many aspects that diversify and multiply the aesthetic experience of sport, thus making its analysis more difficult, we still consider it is crucial to continue looking for its explanation, description and understanding. The growing consciousness of the internal aesthetic nature of sport increasingly reinforces the need of taking it into consideration, mainly when we think about education through sports.

We know that each human being lives the world in his own way and with his experiences builds an unique fingerprint. We also know that this assumption applies to the aesthetic experience no matter if it is in terms of arts, sport or any other human activity.

Sport, as well as the way it is lived, is the image and aesthetic manifestation of the identity and characteristic of each country and each culture (OSS0). At the Olympic Games, for instance, we can often identify examples of the American diversity and multiculturalism, the oriental discipline, the seriousness and toughness of central Europe, the eastern plasticity and the Latin creativity. But we also know that, even considering these aspects, we all have different point of views and all generalisations influence the, sometimes erroneous, cultural stereotypes.

There are transversal thoughts on the aesthetic consideration of sport within our study group, although we can see in our interviewees different narratives, probably regarding the group they belong – we see that OSS interviewees are freer from pragmatic and functional aspects of sport's performances, as opposed to ISS and PET interviewees, who can not detach aesthetic value of sport from its specific internal and formal structure, showing, the PET interviewees, deeper worries concerning its pedagogical consequences.

Notwithstanding, we humans tend to have similar aesthetic answers before similar objects and events and this tendency must also be considered in an education through sport (OSS6; ISS5). There is a kind of convergence that justifies the sense of getting together and debating the aesthetic value of things and trying to promote it through physical education. Otherwise, that is to say, if this was totally accidental, this type of debate would make no sense and would lead to no relevant conclusion. It is this universal trend, included in the natural subjective divergence that provides sense and meaning to the agreement or disagreement regarding the elements and the aesthetic experiences of the world (OSS6). There is a subjective universality of the judgement of taste which provides pertinence and validity (Kant 1998). It is based on this assumption that we reinforce our trust that it is worth studying, exploring and promoting the practice of sports aesthetics. For instance, in gymnastics, we all tend to agree that an aesthetically well achieved handstand requires perfect alignment of body parts, gluteus and abdominal contraction, perfect extension of upper limbs, etc... These aspects constitute a quite consensual aesthetic reference – which also corresponds

to efficiency and meaning patterns – within the gymnastics lovers community, no matter how diverse are the handstands that are considered as aesthetically more valuable.

With the development of an aesthetic sensitivity in sport we are contributing, not only for a better understanding and learning of its most internal aspects, but also for a better understanding of ourselves, our affective relationship with the world (OSS5).

In sports, as well as in arts, an experience that is only limited to the measurable and functional part of the performance is not enough, and it is precisely in this aspect that is based the relevance of the aesthetic view over reality and, in this case, over sport and physical education. Seemingly, for a contemporary experience of sport, the canonical, traditional and structural definitions are not enough and it is urgent to search for the prevalence of more open and emotional, singular and divergent principles.

If sport's reality is so many times referred to as an image of the values of each society, also can be stated that the way we interpret, live and teach sports can promote certain ways and attitudes towards the world, namely the aesthetic attitude which can have a so significant impact in every human way of being in the world.

## Notes

1. See for example: Aspin (1983), Corder (1995), Hemphill (1995), Kuntz (1985), Lacerda (2002), Masterson (1983), Moderno (1998), Sumanik and Stoll (1989), Takacs (1989), Witt (1989); among others.
2. See, for example: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oqrSK5t9MVU>.
3. Even though we consider this is an interesting debate, the aim of this work is not to thoroughly explore the debate over the differences and similarities between art and sport in terms of aesthetics. We consider that besides overextending the scope of the analysis we wanted in this work, the aesthetic legitimation of sport or the aesthetics associated to any human reality is independent from that debate and it has already been widely demonstrated in the specific literature of this field.
4. The use we make of the notion of game includes not only sport practices traditionally defined as games, but also all those that have a structure and own set of, formal or informal, rules that we have to follow to promote our performance. Thus, we include sports such as swimming, gymnastics, dance and even practices that are not so institutionalised as jogging or trekking.

## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

## Funding

This work was supported by Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia [grant number SFRH/BD/79884/2011]

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