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In our investigation, we consider the growth of the eco-touristic sports universe related to the theme of adventure and risk as well as how the rational, sensitive and symbolic knowledge relates to that. We assume that there is a founding discourse of sacralization of these activities. Our investigation is developed within the field of knowledge of the Social Imaginary of the persons who are involved with eco-touristic sports activities, such as leisure in the mountains.

The qualitative research had two aims: (a) to investigate the meanings of adventure and risk expressed in the discourse of lovers of nature sports and in adventure sports advertisements in tourism publicity sites; and (b) to evidence the symbolic and mythical elements that emerge from their discourse.

The situation was defined by the persons involved in the investigation. The research is directed to the meanings they attributed to risk and adventure in nature.

Due to the complexity of the studied phenomenon, we adopted different strategic methodologies in order to grasp different aspects of reality. So, the study guideline was a multi-reference methodology. We used interviews, association of ideas with mountain sports adventurers, and analyses of images from mountain adventure sports publicity sites. In order to deal with this ensemble, we have developed a methodological strategy that goes and comes in dynamic moments: at first we approached the theme, then we built a theoretical reference, went to the investigative field, remade our references, sought the sites, dived in the universe of interviews and followed our route.

As they deal with practices related to bodily activities accomplished under the sign of risk and uncertainty, adventure sports, especially when carried out in nature in the scope of leisure and eco-tourism as a free-time practice<sup>1</sup>, are characterized by a serious attitude regarding its recreational feature. That serious perspective demands extensive dedication that includes time<sup>2</sup>, and dedicates a state

of interaction with nature elements and its variations (sun, wind, mountains, rivers, dense vegetation or deforested areas, moonlight, rains, storms), to which there is an attitude of admiration, respect and preservation.

But what is it that makes people go into the jungle, climb mountains or go down river rapids? What is it that encourages people from a relatively low socio-economic level to leave the comfort of urban life and dive into an adventure of a simple life that imposes audacious and courageous behavior, constant attention and a lot of restrictions? What is it that makes them get out of the profane world of safety and comfort to dive in the search of a non-ruled universe, transposing their own limits in the pursuit of sacrality? How fascinating are these activities to their fans, to seduce them to the point of making them spend so much time in their lives testing their own limits<sup>3</sup>? How can we find those answers in a

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characteristic is that the adepts develop a leisure career, according to the author's understanding. They feature a commitment to long-run activities and growing involvement dedicated to the acquisition and improvement of their skills, to their knowledge and meaningful experiences, molded by the surrounding contingencies, by the strangling points that threaten their success and by the special accomplishment stages. The agents invest in a perseverance life. In addition to material goods, the planning of an expedition demands a physical training compatible with the accomplishment of the activity. They have to have physical conditioning and body's adaptation to altitude so they can cross and conquer far or high points. The challenge to reach new spots, other people and different scenery, and to exercise self-control in the face of obstacles that hurdle their goals constitute stages that they have to overcome. Self-enrichment grows out of the their personal accomplishment feelings and self-confidence that motivate them to go even farther and higher. Overcoming those constraining situations implies negotiations at the level of social relationships. Many of those amateurs are forced to negotiate the time they need for their leisure with their bosses, relatives and mates. That negotiation is used by Stebbins at the level of relationships, but for other authors (Scott, 1991; Kay and Jackson, 1991; Crawford et al., 1991) the meaning of leisure constraints negotiations is to acquire conditions to accomplish the activity in order to avoid the non-participation in the activity. A negotiation process involves changing one's own behavior as a negotiator: in order to reach the leisure objectives a person can change the activity (interrupt it, put it off, call it off) or the time spent on it, or modify the non-leisure aspects of one's life in order to create conditions to develop the proposed leisure objectives. Stebbins attributes the same meaning to the term, in a certain way.

<sup>3</sup> Roger Callois (1988), in his book *O Homem e o Sagrado*, states that two abysses limit the profane world of safety and comfort and that two vertigo attractions seduce people when that comfort and safety no longer attract them, when the submission to the rule becomes too heavy a load. By understanding the rule only functions as a kind of barrier, people realize sacrality lies out of their reach and struggle to eliminate that limit in an endless pursuit that will involve

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<sup>1</sup> Since the Physical Education and Sports International Charter by UNESCO was issued in 1978, the concept of sports, which was only related to the concept of results, has increased its scope to include the physical education and leisure manifestations. The basic assumption was that everyone has rights to sports practice. By assuming that approach in his book *Dimensões Sociais do Esporte (Social Dimensions of Sports)*, Tubino (1991) presents in his typology a view according to which man develops sports in direct relationship with nature, developing contacts full of meaning. In this paper we sought those practices that have assumed sports as leisure, leaving aside the ones that are related to institutionalized competition.

<sup>2</sup> Using criteria created by Stebbins (1992) as a reference, one can state that lovers of sports in nature demonstrate features of engagement with serious leisure. The main

text produced intentionally by the interviewees for the researcher, who provoked them with questions about something they have always accomplished, but perhaps have never stopped to think about their feats? How can we break the speech agreement established between those interlocutors (interviewer and sportsmen)? How can we understand what is and what is not said by deciphering the enigmas in the discourse of those who challenge the gods in order to approach them?

The practice in this wild environment<sup>4</sup> is associated with the idea of adventure, with a strong symbolic value. It is a motor adventure that touches one's imaginary; that connects us to a ghostly representation of the environment, influenced by the myths and symbols that move the culture where the activity is developed.

This study included the motor adventure in a wild environment, especially when practiced in the mountains (walking, climbing and canoeing). This motor adventure is not only a physical practice, but also an exercise of determination of the subjects who experience it, of their imagination, of their reasoning and of the sacrifice to reach their major objective: the ecstasy.

Climbing a mountain or going down a river are not mechanical acts. They demand a ritual that sets the climber, the tracker or the canoeist apart from common mortals (those who are not related to that practice) and brings them close to the divine by making their lives sacred<sup>5</sup>. The more they climb the mountain or go down a wild river, the more they are ready to win and the closer they are to a religious feeling that hides the present time and allows them to live a personal adventure of freedom and transcendence. One approaches the divinity that is inherent to oneself.

The fact that this coexistence takes place in nature, especially in the mountains, entails a *continuum* that ranges from nice magic-religious feelings towards nature, to an aesthetic, playful, instinctive emotion<sup>6</sup>.

According to Schiller (1997), enjoying the beauty of the scenery means relaxation for the tense

and stressed individual. The beauty of nature in the surrounding scenery — a place where few people have been to — is full of an intense energy that makes it sublime. It awakens in the individuals a feeling of freedom to enjoy all that energy available and enables them to have the peace of harmony and equilibrium that structures their being.

The symbolic attributes of the snake and the bird are an evidence of that evolution. From the lower layers of the Earth, man starts moving up the mountains towards the sky, provoking a long evolution of man's consciousness and improvement to integration into a harmonic synthesis. The opposition of the symbols (snake and bird) depicts the movement of man along the axis that connect the earthly world and the sky above: in our study, the mountain plays that role.

This explanatory activity in the wild environment becomes a process of reunion to oneself. It is the abolition of the historical time and space that leads man to grasp the dimension of sacrality, rediscovering the universal structure of myths, rituals and symbols.

However, there seems to be a hiatus between the idea of eco-tourism sports activities of adventure and risk, as it is offered by publicity, and the instinct of a game against one's own limits. In the latter, the agents satisfy their creative imagination by mapping the mountains with trails, ways and rivers, proving to themselves their capacity of self-control, of self-overcoming and of self-perfecting. They experience freedom as a manifestation propelled by desires, dreams, fantasies born from the internal need to accomplish expression and creativity.

Publicity constructs speeches that present these agents as radical people, people turned to extremes, an identity that they do not seem to take as true.

Rationally, the agents know they are mortal; they love life, preserve themselves but seem to be ready to direct their adventure towards challenges against a stronger element: nature. Excited by the uncertainty of reaching the proposed objective, but encouraged by the certainty of its feasibility, it becomes a game against nature, a challenge, defiance of danger, and a fight against oneself and against nature, in a real and metaphorical combat. Seduced by the beauty of the scenery, by the involving energy, the agent feels comfortable and gradually starts feeling in harmony with nature. By using their intelligence and shrewdness, by developing adaptation mechanisms and overcoming the obstacles around, their whole beings climb the mountain.

These agents apply their power in their actions in the mountains, synthesizing in their own bodies the symbolism of the ascension, of the pursuit to spirituality in their beings. The experienced adventure seems to be founded in representations and myths that lead one to meet oneself by means of internal self induction. The adventurers control themselves in order to reach the home of the gods and by doing so, to experience the condition of divinity.

However, publicity seems to try to show them the opposite side of that internalization by emphasizing the outward expansion, the extreme, the spectacular.

So, we question how much the idea of eco-tourism sports of adventure and risk, as offered by publicity, converts or diverts from the instinct of a game against one's own limit. In this kind of game, do

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them either with sanctification or condemnation. Then, some of the people set apart from those who have never dared go so far, who have never experienced an abyss, and build their own path.

<sup>4</sup> See Parlebas (1988,1998). This author develops his motor practice studies along the concept of game and sports as a system of interactions between co-agents and the environment. The environment is understood as the supplier of the information to be grasped by the sports lovers so that they can make decisions on how to intervene in the environment for the sake of interaction. This environment is classified as tamed, half tamed and wild, and it has an organizational criterion that is the control of the information by the agent.

<sup>5</sup> All the preparation for that "trip", for that "expedition" reminds us of the sense of an orgiastic ritual: the quest for a final ecstasy. It is an orgy in the Greek sense, in the sense of fruition, of ecstasy. That is not a simple expedition. There is something more to it: he/she may die tomorrow (even if it is an unconscious death). Nothing can be more pleasant. Nobody wants to die. Everybody wants to die in full enjoyment of life. It is the final ecstasy, one of the meanings related to risk sports.

<sup>6</sup> See Schiller's Aesthetics (1995,1997) in the books *A educação estética do homem* and *Textos sobre o belo, o sublime e o trágico*.

the agents satisfy their creative imagination by mapping the mountains with trails, ways and rivers, and do they prove to themselves their capacity of self-control, of overcoming and self-protection?

So, we have sought answers to the following questions:

- (a) On what myths and symbols are based the adventure and risk representations transmitted in the discourse of the nature adventure sports lovers?
- (b) On what myths and symbols are based the representations of adventure and risk transmitted in the sites of nature sports tourism?
- (c) How are the ideas of limits expressed in the sportsmen's discourse and in the publicity sites of sports eco-tourism?

As a methodological strategy, we have adopted the approach based on Bachelard's and Durand's premises and in Eliade's and Caillois's assumptions to reencounter sacrality. Duvignaud and Caillois have subsidized the ideas on playfulness and game. Schiller has provided the aesthetics basis.

From Bachelard we have learned about the ideas of disruption, supplementary sides of epistemology and poetics, instant reality and discontinuous time, motor-symbols and Jung archetypes. From Eliade we have grasped the relevance of sacrality as an irreducible phenomenon of human consciousness, the notion of *illud tempus* (primeval time-space); hierophant condition, the mountain as a connection that supports both heaven and the earth, the divine world and man's world, and nature, which always carries a religious value.

Gilbert Durand has supplied the great theoretical support of the study. The sense of images grouped in constellations; the fundamental notion of anthropological route; the image as a dynamical component of that route; the reflexology-oriented triple partition (posture domination, digestive downturn and rhythmical sexual gestures); the heroic, mystic and synthetic structures; the regimes of the symbolic experience (related to the day and to the night), and the ascension symbols, the descend and swallowing and dramatization of time are some of the thesis which backed our research. The basic components of the dynamic of the symbols – *schème*, archetype, symbol and myth, supported by Durand, have guided the analyses.

The idea of playfulness found in the research is related to the maximum reach of the experience of complicity between the subject and his/her body, symbolically transforming the fantasy into a playful body experience. The subversive polo and normal polo of the game bring up the Dionysian and Apollonian aspects.

For Caillois the game is full of spontaneity, which directs us to the participants' personal involvement. It shows two ways to play: *paidea* and *ludus*. It indicates the prevalence of the roles: *agon*, *alea*, *mimicry* and *ilinx*.

Schiller's aesthetics anchors the idea of beauty that permeates that practice. Due to its exuberance, both in reception and intensity, nature promotes beauty, richened by energy in which man dives and reaches the sublime.

Beauty is the object of the playful impulse, a form that lives in our sensitiveness. In the playful impulse, both reason and sensitivity act together and

give man a state of freedom face to beauty because then, before beauty, man plays and expands the satisfaction of the playful impulse. That attitude accounts for the unity between the formal and the material impulse. It is the manifestation of that unity without the tyranny of one or of the other.

In order to find answers to those questions we carried out 11 semi-structured interviews with mountain climbers, climbing representatives, river canoeing and trekking representatives. All of them were male adepts who practice those sports as a leisure activity. We have applied Eny Orlandi's speech analysis.

We have also analyzed six publicity sites of eco-tourism sports presented on the Internet. We considered the symbolic organization in visual images and in the texts of the sites. Fourteen images were distributed along three structures that make part of the day and night regimes (Durand, 1989): heroic (4), mystical (2) and synthetic (8).

## - The Speeches of the Publicity Sites

### . An Interpretation of the Images

A large number of contemporary images circulate and saturate large-scale consumption, encouraging people to attribute value to the mandatory routines that they experience in their daily lives. The breach in their everyday life, the bodily practices, and the change in the environment allow people to experience a feeling of freedom and pleasant invigoration of the energy spent on everyday stress.

In the middle of the general feeling of indifference pervasive in this mass society, the proximity between tourism and nature shows the singularities of the subject who witnesses the beauty of the scenery and the uniqueness of beautiful and regenerating nature. That proximity becomes a factor of social difference. Experiencing an adventure trip and calculated-risk leisure in nature demands, among other things, social prestige and distinction.

Cultural industry in Brazil publishes periodicals whose titles provoke human imagination and make the readers willing to seek the activity that is shown so naturally in texts, offering the possibility of access to those fantastic adventures: "*Family Adventure – The Emotion Of Discovering Life Outdoors*", "*Spirit of Adventure*", "*Earth*", "*Adventure and Leisure Outdoors*", "*Enthusiasm – Sports and Adventures*" and others.

According to Durand (1998), the images published on the media are everywhere at all levels of representation and *psyché* of western man. The media image is presented all along one's lifetime dictating the intentions of hidden or secret producers, either as information, advertising ideology or as seducing publicity. This is the iconic manipulation on which the other values depend, implicating a cultural revolution. Reports suggest the imaginary formation of an adventure, with titles that provoke imagination and desire: "Paraglider: Realizando o Sonho de Voar" (Paraglider: Making the Flying Dream Come True), "Aventura Fora da Estrada" (Adventure Off The Road), "Rapel nas Alturas" (Rapel at the Heights), "Adilson Morales: No Topo da África" (Adilson Morales: At the Top of Africa), "Loucos por Aventura" (Crazy for Adventure), "Radicais por Natureza" (Radical by

Nature), "O Caçador de Desafios" (The Hunter of Challenges), "Rafting Selvagem no Sul" (Wild Rafting in the South), "Lavando a Alma" (Washing Out One's Soul), "Queremos Conquistar" (We Want to Conquer), "Caçadores de Emoção" (Emotion Hunters), "Destino Aventura" (Destination Is Adventure). Publicity involving nature seduces the public with paradisiacal reports: "Os Defensores da Vida" (Life Defenders), "Férias na Montanha" (Vacations in the Mountain), "Mundo Incrível" (Incredible World), "Quando a Natureza...Chamega" (When Nature... Woes You), "Natureza Sem Limites" (Nature Without Limits).

The current interest for topics related to the environment and the demand for leisure-sports practices associated with adventure and calculated risks gave way to tourism specialized companies that adopt the scenery as nature representative and as a stage for human actions. That will provide people new ways to enjoy this panorama. The Adventure market is now having an exceptional development in those travel agencies.

The destination of those routes lead to exotic, exuberant places of great ecological interest, protected by sustained environmental development and low-impact tourism, a clean, non-polluting service, which preserves<sup>7</sup> nature.

This segment is known as eco-tourism and every leisure sports activity accomplished in those sites incorporate that meaning: sports activities of eco-tourism leisure. The companies adopt an efficient marketing strategy that silences about their motivation: commercialization of nature and leisure.

In order to explore the polysemy of meanings in publicity for that kind of companies, we have decided to understand the meanings usually conveyed by the written speeches and the site images of companies that have this profile. We have opted for understanding their advertisements on the Internet<sup>8</sup>, their symbols and their myths<sup>1</sup>.

The analysis of the sites and their respective speeches indicate that climbing to the top of a mountain or going down a river are not mechanical acts. They require a religious attitude from the person who practices it, the experience of a personal adventure of freedom and transcendence. The more one wins, the more one recognizes oneself in nature, the closer one is to the natural being, to the divine that exists in oneself.

The speeches of the *sites* feature a religious background, talking of a heroic-mystic imagery reference<sup>10</sup>. They promise to open up the way to the ecstasy at a far and sacred spot, another world from which the agents return as if they had been reborn. They are committed to leading their way and guaranteeing their safety and return to the world of mortals. The speeches written by the companies that

were studied<sup>11</sup> show images organized in such a way to reinforce and harmonize the intention to anchor the value of those practices in the imaginary.

The meaning of the challenge that seems to be associated with the adventure experience of the wilderness carries the ambivalence of having to face nature obstacles (lack of comfort, threats, environmental variations) and to meet one's own nature, one's sacred land. It also emerges from the idea of diving into oneself before one can rise, of having to go to the end of the world to be reborn, to find the wealth promised by the promoting company.

Going across boards, imposing the passage from one place to another demands a ritual. This ritual implies a life of sacrifice, metaphorically, a descent to hell, to a subterranean place where metamorphosis takes place. The entrance into nature symbolizes the territory beyond "hell", the entrance to the embryo world of existence.

Between the common world, the world where we live, and the other world, the sacred, paradisiacal place, there is a frontier time and space that offers a passage. And *Terra Nossa (Our Land)*, an ecological-sports tourism company offers to act as a demiurge<sup>12</sup> who is able to carry out the passage ceremonies. It fulfils that social function, the semi-god, Plato's world craftsman who creates a world similar to the ideal reality. With that seducing tone, the company states it has conditions to carry out the mediation from the common experience world to the ideal world where the inner being is strengthened by complicity and solidarity ties.

The demiurgic characteristic of mortality is seen when the tourism pack recommends a life and trip insurance.

The art of Adventure and Venture is to make a dangerous passage with the certainty that there is a safe return.

Seeking transcendence, meeting the divine, imposes death and a rebirth to another life. The company guarantees the return with the safety it offers. Even when they offer that safety, they know that there is a risk of death in the expedition and they make an attempt to guarantee the earthly aspect. This is an antagonistic point of view: even when they promise all that, they know they are human. They play the role of the demiurge, ready to mediate the passage, but they know they are mortal and must take all the safety measures. Due to the fact that they are entrepreneurs in the human world, they are responsible for the safety they sell.

<sup>7</sup> See "A corrida por paisagens autênticas: turismo, meio ambiente e subjetividade no mundo contemporâneo", in the book *Viagens à natureza: turismo, cultura e meio ambiente*, (Serrano and Bruhns, 1997).

<sup>8</sup> The publicity of those companies is also to be found in specialized magazines.

<sup>9</sup> This study is based on the concept of myth presented by Gilbert Durand.

<sup>10</sup> Regarding the image speech analysis, references mainly used are the ones by Gilbert Durand and Yves Durand; Bachelard and Chevalier and Gheerbrant's *Dicionário de símbolos* was also employed.

<sup>11</sup> The sites of the companies Terra Nossa Viagens Ecológicas, Venturas e Aventuras, Alaya Expedições, UGGI Turismo de Aventura, Pisa Trekking and TrilhaBrasil were examined.

<sup>12</sup> They make believe that they are able to carry out the passage competently. Plato states that men live in the world of appearances, the world of *doxa*, in opposition to the truth that is in the world of the *epistémé*, the world of ideas. Through the exercise of reason, men can rise until they have contact with the world of the ideas. Only the demiurge can do that, because the demiurge is the one who helps men leave the world of shadows into the world of light, leave the world of appearances into the world of essences. *Terra Nossa* introduces itself as a demiurgic company, a company that enables the passage from the world of *doxa*, from the world of profanity to the world of wonders, the world of truth, a world of sanctified pleasure.

The company introduces itself as a guide, that is, as someone who has experience in the activity. But nobody is ready to lead without having taken the path first. The myth of Prometheus emerges at this point: he is going to steal the fire and lead the men, lighting the way.

Prometheus is prudent, someone who sees, perceives or thinks ahead of time.

The work (written text and site pictures) mixes the heroic stress of antithesis, the antiphrasis nostalgia and the past and future made present in time reversibility. Although they are tourism companies, the word business is not found along the texts. An euphemism is created with the word mission. Since it is a sacred speech, the term business is not applied because it is profane. Mission is part of the religious vocabulary.

Meanings pointed to an epic heroic dimension and to a mystic vision of the nature path. They adopt the religious speech, whose characteristics are found in Orlandi (1987). The speaker (in this case the tourism companies) incorporates God's voice: immortal, eternal, infallible, all-mighty; the tone of the speech is appropriation, the company becomes the one who occupies the place. This relationship makes it take over the heroic form of the demiurge, sharing with the humans who are a mortal, ephemeral, fallible audience, all endowed of relative power only, the possibility of transcendence.

Stemming from Durand's theory (1989), we can say that those sites feature a mixture between day and night-oriented regimes, between the ascension-dominated aspect to a personal transformation way with an heroic return, and the cyclic notion featured in the circular space figure where a new time starts again. Time repetition manifests an intention of integrating oppositions: sacrifice, submission to enjoy, to delight; to die to be reborn; integration that promotes a dramatic global harmony of Time. The sacrifice of the effort and discomfort demanded in the walks, in the climbing, in the rafting is not for ever; they are only moments that are nullified by the pleasure of restarting a new time. This is the lunar archetype, obsessively connected to time and death. The moon highlights a rhythmical vision of the world accomplished by a vision of contraries: life and death, form and latency, being and not being, wound and consolation.

One of the most important symbols in that speech is the "snake" because of its temporal transformation, its regeneration properties and its metamorphosis. It disappears through the cracks in the earth, "it goes down to hell" and recovers itself. Beneath the earth it gets to know the secrets of death and time, it becomes the owner of the future and ruler of the past.

The opposing symbol is the "bird". The "bird" serves the relationship between heaven and earth; it represents the soul that gets free from the body, it is a symbol of the heavenly world in opposition to the "snake", symbol of the earthly world. We can say that that these sites offer a promise of rebirth, freedom, and reunion to one's own regenerated nature.

Nature presented in the sites introduces a speech ready to reach eternity; nature becomes the image of God. It is also shown as a place to reflect, to motivate thinking and value life differently. Senses move from nature to people's personal lives; and when meanings move, their lives may be full of new

meanings. The announced adventure is mystical, it moves toward men's inner world.

The risk of the activity is silenced by the high infrastructure announced and by the life and trip compulsory insurance policies that come with the travel pack.

The sites point at each one's possibilities to free the Icarus that exists inside everyone.

Icarus was defeated by the idea of safety. Our stronger threat is to venture flying closer to the sun. Men's proximity to the divine conditions depends on men's disobedience. Fear, submission keep them away from God. The western world imaginary represses men, makes them carry the burden of guilt.

## - The Interviews.

In the social imaginary, the truth finds its way in the clues found in linguistic speech markers, that is, in the language markers which organize the speech of nature adventure and risk sports adepts. They sediment the meanings and their effects on adventure, risk, nature and limit aspects.

Therefore, the game introduced at this moment is to hunt the markers present in the meanings that the sports lovers apply to their speeches, markers that show in the action, desires, fantasies, silence that support and go through the words they utter sometimes to me, the researcher, sometimes to themselves. A real game starts at this moment: a human game of intentions and words<sup>13</sup>.

The context and the social status of the speaker guide the sense that the word takes in the speech. Adventure and risk to the agents — sportsmen who see sports in nature as leisure — have a singular meaning that circulates in this micro-group.

Making a map of the multiple meanings allowed the following linguistic markers to emerge from their speeches: escaping, winning, conquering, playing, and meeting again. The connotation of escaping is related to the senses of *positivity*, *complement* and *reaction*. The positive meaning of escaping is manifested in the *affirmation of life*, and relates to the different senses of *winning and conquering*. Escaping also appears as a complement, as *denial of death*, of *monotony*, that is connected to meanings of *playing*. Reaction is the constant exercise, the *rescue of something that is socially lost*; it is the *meeting*.

The sense of a conquest that the mountain climbers have in relation to the mountain and its top is a game of seduction, made erotic by the beauty of the landscape and by the feeling of the personal command of the novelty. The propelling dream of an upward-moving conquest is the symbol of verticality and of ascension. Elevation and power are contiguous images.

The ascension symbols are inspired by the concern of re-conquering a lost power. One of the ways of accomplishing that is by ascending the

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<sup>13</sup> Incidentally, Gademer (1960) quoted by Buytendijk (1977), states that every game fascinates the participant, involving him and making him the real subject of the playful activity. So, hunting the disguised meanings takes over a mediation characterization through which one can join the game, making it a real playful come and go, alternating between stress and relaxation: the stress to hunt it, and the relaxation to have delineated it.

verticality along the mountain made sacred by men (Durand, 1989).

Conquests are slowly constructed and every little stretch conquered deserves the celebration of a small victory. But the definite conquest gives the mountain climber a feeling of power, competence, and self-accomplishment, a feeling of having met oneself, but it also makes the mountain climber have a sensation of how little he is when confronted by the huge dimension that appears before him and by the existence of a power that is bigger than his own. That is where ambiguity lies: big/small, strong/weak, powerful/vulnerable.

There is something above us all. It is the experience of the religious symbolism of God Creator, Lord of the Height, The Divine Creator of the World, of the One who is in Heaven.

Body communication seems to develop between the mountain and the climber, and it is deciphered by both to offer adaptation and allow the passage, ecstasy moments.

The reason that motivates the climber indicates that he is moving towards his own center. By moving towards nature to experiment an ascension body experience, a climber walks towards a high point and, mainly, towards himself. The beauty of the landscape, the loneliness, the fear, the self-satisfaction, the desire, the courage, the audacity, all lead him to self-knowledge. The climber's way into nature is double: he goes through an initiation and sacrifice ritual, for the way is full of obstacles. On the other hand, this passage helps him concentrate and revitalize in his consciousness something that had been lost with the social pressure: the awareness of some primeval symbols. Eliade (1991) states that this person evidences a human situation that he denominates *nostalgia of paradise* - the desire of escaping and meeting himself again.

This personal construction can happen either through his aesthetic choice, or through the mental constructions that support meditation in some oriental practices. So, we can understand that the discourse of those eco-tourism sports people, especially the ones that we are studying, is marked by nostalgia, but their determination leads them towards a self-meeting through playful aesthetics and games, which transforms every little step into something sacred.

The discourse of the agents seems to approach what Orlandi (1987) considers a playful speech, totally polysemic, introducing disruption and sometimes moving slightly into an authoritarian discourse that is presupposed to be sacred.

Risk, for example, was omitted in their speeches and when it appears, it is shown as inherent to life, as if they were indifferent to it. Game and plays are made explicit, risk remains implicit, emerging in the form of safety, predictability. The exaltation to life was explicit in the love for nature as a live matter and men as its great builder and, at the same time, its likely destroyer. The denial of death is implied when he refuses the monotony in society life and starts his search for nature-being.

The resource of free associations<sup>14</sup> adds to the study of the context of the imaginary, the subjectivity

of the agents that were invited to express spontaneously what isolated words reminded them. They were requested to say the first idea that came to their minds at the stimulus of a word. If nothing came to their minds, they were requested to raise their hands and we would move on. This procedure favors the manifestation of latent emotional ties that will be used for the interpretation of the evoked symbols. This procedure allows the "non-said" to become apparent in the discourse made by the mountain eco-tourism sports lovers.

The second part of the interviews with the agents was made up of verbal associations, freely accomplished in association with eight selected stimuli: 1) adventure, 2) risk, 3) fear, 4) limit, 5) power, 6) nature, 7) sports and 8) courage. These inducing words have come from the first exploratory interviews. Therefore, it is important to highlight that everything we found is part of the social agents universe: inducted effects and associations. This may have been the factor that guaranteed the closing and continuity of images we found here.

We took into consideration the cognition elements that were promptly remembered. We adopted the collective nature criterion represented by the frequency the agents mentioned them. We have also opted for the individual nature criterion. In this study two semantic categories that apply to this double criterion were adopted: the ones more remembered and the ones promptly remembered.

Due to its aesthetic and playful features, nature provokes and quiets the sports lovers. Participation in their images go beyond form and splendour. Because of its untamable nature, it seduces and fascinates them. It claims for a hero. Its beauty and simplicity brings them peace and tranquility and its energetic beauty leads them to sublimity. Thus, eco-sports lovers adore the universe and its creations. According to Eliade (1992), the aesthetic view of nature has a "religious prestige" (p.124).

How can we understand, for example, that a sports lover can prefer the isolation in the mountains, the sacrifice in uncomfortable situations, or even submission to unexpected dangers, to the adoption of the most common sport practices in society, such as soccer or volleyball, in which the safety offered by the constructed semi-domesticated space, would offer sports lover more intimacy? Which symbolic attributes can be associated with those options?

Whenever scientific explanations cannot be found for unexpected situations, representations are created to tame the strange<sup>15</sup>. A mediation between known and unknown is established, in an attempt to find the frontier between the two worlds: the concrete, explainable world and the world of mysteries - enigmatic and undecipherable.

The meanings of power that these agents have shown are connected to the earthly reveries of overcoming smashingly destruction, to the characteristics of a profane world in which the existence of men overcomes, conquers, controls, self-controls. It composes a deep dimension connected to these internal and external movements that shows up

<sup>14</sup> This association technique or free evocation was considered by Abric (1994) as an important technique to grasp elements that constitute the content of a representation. For him, free association allows the updating

of latent elements that can be disguised in discourses. It's a matter of understanding the metaphors that are revealed through discourse silence.

<sup>15</sup> Function of social representation presented by Moscovici (1994).

and fades down historically, that foresees, calculates, and extinguishes, where no presence of the divine can be inserted. While the constellation that gathers around nature relates to a sacred time, eternity relates to an "indefinitely repeatable time" (Eliade, 1992, p.60).

The symbolic substratum that we can see emerges in these associations. Considering Durand's theory (1989), it is the cyclic concept of the imaginary of those agents, ruled by the moon. The moon is the archetype that turns up as the great dramatic epiphany of time: it is a heavenly body that shows up, grows, decreases, disappears and reappears after three nights to start a new regular cycle. The moon is the one that rules the natural movement of time, and makes renewal possible. This adventure-sportsman in nature lives this renewal with audacity, self-control, overcoming, prudence and serenity.

That constellation, moon / time-epiphany, gathers the image of the woman in the shadows, "Terrible Mother", the one who threatens and because of that demands victory, self-control, control, predicability, prudence, conquest. This image of the mother is combined to and euphemized by "Mother Nature", who brings tranquility, coziness, intimacy, which can be translated as harmonious cohabitation.

According to Jung (1968), the archetype of the mother, including the personal mother, manifests secondarily in the figurative aspects of the mother as a goddess. It also manifests in abstractions such as the target of redemption, and in objects that inspire devotion and respect: the sea, the mountain, the moon, the forests, as well as in those that represent fertility, such as gardens, for example. For this author, the archetype of the mother has a positive and a negative aspect. The former presents her as being lovely, associated with solicitude, wisdom, sympathy, spiritual exaltation, instincts of help, growing and fertility. The negative aspect shows her as the terrible mother, associated with secrets, darkness, seduction, with the world of the dead and with poisoning.

We are going to show below the speech of one of the interviewees. By liberating his imaginary, he reveals the presence of the ambivalence of the mountain, using the symbolism of the mother that, at times, gets irritated and expels people and of the mother who shelters an snuggles:

*"Consider the mountain... even though it seems to be an absurd idea, as a live entity, and... if you consider a global concept of nature, a concept of Gaia, that the earth is a live-being, I, like the Mountain, would have days of good and bad humor, days when I would not like to see mountain climbers before me, offering me temptation, bothering me,...and there would be days that I would receive them with open arms, would not send any storm, winds at 100km/h... I would receive them well, depending on my mood."*

Other interviewees see it from the perspective of an advisor: "you can use it, but do not spread trash, do not destroy the local nature and I will lead you to the top in the best possible way." In other words, behave well and you will receive my support and love, but if you act inadequately, you will be punished with my bad mood.

The symbol of light, of the warrior hero, brings equilibrium to the lunar symbolism of the time epiphany, making it weaker. It raises in the counterpoint of the attributes of its opposite: light/shadows, requesting to the sun the positive value of elevation, the golden being, comparing it to the victory over night. And, among the associations found here, there is the figure of the one who deals with the adventures of a character. This character spends a great part of his life dedicated to a task that challenges him, that takes him away from the ordinary world of mortals, that initiates him in the mysteries of loving, surviving in sacrifices with nature and enjoying the peaceful and beautiful environment that will involve him, allowing him to feel restored at the return. This is the mythical dimension of the epic and tragic heroes, whose specific function is to develop in the individual the awareness of one's strengths and weaknesses.

He is a typical hero in his conquers when he claims the creation of the primeval happening: the adventure and risk in the nature sports. He is a tragic hero when he returns to his every day life.

Because of human ambiguity, the sports lover deals all the time not only with the internal, external, sacred and profane oppositions. So, he is always connected to the possession of nature itself.

And by taking hold of nature, he takes hold of himself. He's the inner man of the sacred and the outer man of mockery, pleasure, orgy, game, playing. It's his inner religious self and the outer profane self, because I am myself and my world, I am myself and the outer world, I am a "social self", I am a "nature self".

The associations also evidence the power men have to seek pleasure and tranquility, to break everyday routine, to escape sameness. The image of monotony brings about a fundamental anthropological theme: the fall. And by treating it dramatically, those informants tend to make a kind of destiny out of it, a kind of death. This fundamental painful experience brings up the idea of a moment of total explosive destruction.

The theme of the fall connects the images to the victory over the revealed reality: death, and makes him determined to stand, to rise, to take an upright position. The use of determination that goes beyond imagination and becomes an action. The sports lover move to nature to accomplish his activities and there he distinguishes and develops his soul's virtues: an audacious, brave, self-controlled, creative, watchful man.

These elements, images and symbols, make up the mythological core units for the reconstitution of the myths that result from the imaginary symbolic organization. The mythical substratum found is also supported by the basic mythological units that close the semantic field of idea association: overcoming, activity as challenge, self control/self domain, control/predicability/prudence. The figures of Hercules and Apollo emerge from them. Hercules who represents the combat strength, symbolizes victory (and difficulty of victory) of the human soul over its weakness; and Apollo, a sun god who crosses the skies guiding the sun in his car, ruling over the dawn and the sunset of the day. He has a playful feature, represents harmony and balance, and guides the human impulses towards progressive spiritual status.

He is one of the most beautiful symbols of the rising of the human soul.

The questions I asked myself at the end of the study were why, in such a materialistic century, when technology has improved to the point of providing prestige, safety and comfort, why are there sports-dedicated individuals whose discourse is so obviously oriented to religious perspectives? Why is it that, at a time when man takes upon himself the recognition of his existential situation as the main agent of History, a time of exaltation of positivism science that controls substances, and a time of rejection of the models of humanity out of that established condition, why are there people that go against the flow of history, moving towards nature? A nature whose cosmic symbolism is Eden, a place full of mysteries that presents itself as a reintegration of phenomenon to its principle. A place that claims to be sacred.

According to Eliade (1992), whether he wants it or not, this a-religious man who lives in the 20<sup>th</sup> century descends from *homo religiosus*. He was constituted from situations that were lived by his ancestors. The a-religious man, this profane man, who has long been trying to desacralize aspects of human existence, has been striving to get rid of the feelings of religiousness and trans-humanity that involved his ancestors.

Believing only in what he sees, motivated by the objectivity of the facts, man has been getting away from nature, and has been improving techniques<sup>16</sup> of survival and development that threaten the survival of the planet itself. But even if he doesn't like it, the a-religious man keeps religious behaviors and re-acts them in his social practices: in New Year's festivities, weddings, and child birth ceremonies, cultural taboos, at the decoration of a new house, in the mythologies that appear disguised in shows, and mainly in sports which are the topic in this study.

The epic and tragic heroes exalted by the sports media, the combats, the initiation acts in competitions, the rituals, the parties to which sport adepts and fans submit to, they are all manifestations of religiosity. **"No matter what a man does, he is a heir. He cannot abolish his past" (Eliade, 1992, p.164-165).** So, the author emphasizes that the a-religious man cannot deny his ancestors no matter how materialistic he intends to be. Better saying, man's life is full of religious behavior.

An athlete, a sportsman, for example, has to do physical exercise tests that will lead him to the top, he has to go down deep into himself, he has to recognize his own limits, his passions in order to control them, to be able to extend them. He has to go down to hell and fight the monsters, to defeat the obstacles, the difficulties and to resurrect afterwards, glorious and purified. This happens, to a certain extent, both to amateurs and to professionals.

The totally rational man does not exist. Men are all constituted by rational and irrational experiences, by feeling, passion, by imagination.

Not fully satisfied with everyday life, anguished by the lost anchors and assaulted by references to an archetypal unconsciousness, man starts a quest. That process leads him inwardly, to his inner self.

And nowadays, in his search for the lost being, he experiences adventure in nature through the sportive eco-touristic activities.

And by diving into nature he starts a process whose meanings go from ME VERSUS NATURE, in which he tries to defeat the obstacles, the hindrances, the unexpected, to reach levels which once seemed unattainable. When he realizes that he can overcome them, he reflects and ventures to go even higher.

In the meanings of ME AND NATURE there is a period when he discovers the pleasure of "not going against" but "moving along" nature. He is in harmony with nature and starts playing together with it: he explores, discovers, seduces, and deciphers riddles. He plays with opponents created in his imagination: other sportsmen, and nature itself (mountain, river or waterfall). He conquers the paths, the mountain, the rivers. He seduces them in order to conquer them. He hides from others the paths that he has conquered, he pretends to be the pioneer in those explorations that are conquests for him, deciphers the riddles, but keeps the secret to himself and to his partners, challenging the others to decipher them too. He gets involved in the mystery of deciphering the environment and himself. He uses Nature energies, its winds, its rapids.

By leading his path to the sacred world, the playful game starts having an aesthetic meaning and starts harmonizing with Nature as the mountain climber moves towards his own nature on a path that will take him to his own emotions. The climber starts abandoning the world of the game, moving towards the world of ecstasy. The playful impulse that had motivated his path is kept under the manifestation of different meanings: game and aesthetics. By re-encountering the domains of Nature, this risk and adventure sports adept covers himself with the vest of sacrality, sacred in cohesion. Beauty becomes sublime, the excitement is the pleasure of ecstasy.

Then, the sportsman reaches the ME-NATURE, a stage when he discovers himself as a being that belongs to it, to the Cosmos, and understands his role. He meets himself again. There is a fusion of the being-nature that had been fragmented before. The one who is ready to follow the way reaches totality and feels free. It is a sacred process of purification, of transcendence.

The sportsman enters Nature and meets his own nature again, his unity. This search is an existential need. Man is born to be free, complete, and when his potential is restrained, he moves towards the quest for freedom that he feels he has lost.

The sports lover enjoys a primeval pleasure with the mountain. At moments, the mountain does not want him, she keeps him away, throws him out. But there are others when she offers him shelter, holds his hands in perfect cracks in the rocks, provides support for his feet, helps him. At that moment, he takes hold of her and experiences a primeval pleasure. It is the pleasure to be with the Earth, with the symbolism of the mother.

Considering that the mother is sometimes a Terrible character and sometimes a Seducing character, its homology with the mountain and the forest leads us to an incestuous character.

The need to take hold of the mountain, of the forest or of the rapids is so strong, the need to carry out the act of pleasure is so intense, that at the

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<sup>16</sup> Would it be reasonable to talk about development when the use of techniques can lead to the destruction of the planet?

moment it materializes, it gets satisfied, the adventurer feels that he has not only defeated the risk, the climbing, the rapids, but also, internally, he has overcome the Oedipus problem. Whenever he completes the cycle, he has overcome the incest taboo.

And how do these agents overcome incest without becoming mad? How is it they do not exceed? The contact with nature's primitive energy breaks the incest moralizing vision. The meaning of pleasure is disconnected from that issue. In metaphysical terms, those adventurers reencounter the essence of "pleasure by itself". It is pleasure for the sake of pleasure. It is so primordial and so intense that it can be detected in different ways: in overcoming the incest taboo, in transcendence, in vertigo. It is a more spiritualized pleasure, more Apollonian pleasure. Since it has overcome bodily conditions, it is no longer under the influence of a moralization vision. And this is the pleasure they express as freedom. By reaching this full state of ecstasy, adventurers feel they have reached freedom - a state that is intense, complete, and free from taboos and chains.

The playful impulse that has come along the whole process of self reencounter, initially moved by the *agon* of winning, of the conquest, is gradually being replaced by the *ilínx* of heights, and the *mimicry* of the heroes' fantasies, the conqueror, until it gets consolidated in sublime aesthetics. Nature is translated in a live form of beauty and this is the object of a playful impulse, a form that is inherent to human sensitivity.

Schiller's aesthetic reflection helps us understand the idea of beauty that permeates this eco-touristic sports practice carried out in nature. Because of its exuberance, receptivity and intensity, nature promotes beauty full of energy, in which man gets confused and into which man merges to reach the sublime, the ecstasy.

The ecstasy experienced by the actors does not allow them to reflect about it. They simply live the experiences. When they reach the ecstasy, they enjoy this huge orgiastic pleasure, a great personal surrendering, which gives them the experience of primeval pleasure.

Another point this paper has highlighted about sports of risk and adventure in nature is that this experience is one of the few situations when life and death drives harmonize in the least distressing way. The process that the agent starts in this activity enables the harmony of oppositions: life, that is the denial to death, death that is the denial to life.

This study eliminates the mythical idea according to which, for most people, these agents are mad, suicide. They are not seeking death, they seek life - a full and human life.

The way they play with their bodies, with movement, with imagination is directed either to *paidia* or to *ludos*. It tends to *paidia* when the sports lovers face and overcome obstacles, carry out great feats. It tends to *ludos*, the standardized and integration polo, when they metamorphose *paidia* by applying self-control, self-discipline in the training of the adaptation to the environment, by resisting to fatigue and suffering, or still by means of meditation, in a symbiotic relation with nature, by adopting a state of quietness and calm.

Another discovery in this study is that the adventure sportsmen do not resist the mountain

appeal, either when they climb it, go down a river, or walk. They may face the greatest danger and still not get intimidated. They always resume their activity.

Mountains, rivers, forests, all of them, sing the Mermaid's Song to which the sports lover cannot resist, and sets into adventure. Adventure is somehow instinctive. The adventurer abandons rationality without any resistance, and yields to the seduction of the mountain and to the taste of flirting with danger. Magic and hallucination take hold of him. He knows it is a great risk. The uncertainty about the end of the accomplishment is invaded by the feeling that his luck is beside him, by a taste of victory. He faces the Mermaid's Song and many do not return. Many of them do not know how to escape from the pitfalls of excess, as Ulysses did, and go beyond the *métron* and as Icarus, who flew so close to the sun that its heat melted the wax on the wings that his father, Daedalus, had devised for his flight from the island of Crete. The mountain is seducing. It is a mermaid, a mythical figure.

Although it does not seem to be so, these agents yield to the Song, but they are closer to the *sophrosyne*, a healthful frame of mind, state of moderation and prudence, respecting all that is sacred in those who are devoted to the heroes' *hybris*. *Hybris* means "all that goes beyond the measure, the excess" (Brandão, 1991, p. 558), violence. It is a form of vertigo, but its meanings are vitally related to feeling of pride. According to Jung, *hybris* is blind pride, and as man wants to compete against the divine, he moves on and goes beyond the *métron*, the individual measure limits, and he is, then, taken to destruction. Because they love life, those adventurers recognize their limits, they keep to their *métron*, to their own limits, but they always practice and try to extend it.

Among the myths that give meaning to the life of those who practice eco-touristic sports, we have found Prometheus, Ulysses, Icarus, Dionysius, Hercules, but the myth of Apollo can also be taken as an impregnating factor. Apollo is the oracle God and his symbolism is spirituality. His warnings have been a great help to bring meaning to those adventurers' lives - "*Know thyself*". Sports in Nature are ruled by the archaism and the modernity in Janus, the lord of the passages.

Another remarkable aspect is that risk and adventure sports have the pedagogical dimension that is fundamental to the 21<sup>st</sup> century man, a globalized being who slides from one field to another in a world that will not be made into sectors, a man who has to face the mountains of life. The man who was created according to the ideals of permanence, safety, is now being deconstructed in the contemporary world. He no longer has as many references as his ancestors did in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In a world of apparent safety, stability, in a world of multiple anchors, where and how will this 21<sup>st</sup> century man, a man who will live in a planetary world where safety is not fixed but rather mobile, where and how will this man be formed, how will he reconstruct himself? His construction will only be possible if he anchors safety to himself.

And risk and adventure sports are one of the best practices available for this man. In order to educate somebody who can live passionately and be anchored to himself, there must be an audacious, bold, playful man who is ready to decipher problems and undergo experiences full of constraints. These seem to be the essential categories for man's

upbringing at the turn of the century. Even surfing in a virtual world of communication nets demands people's imagination. People must free themselves and build their own ways. Experiencing these sports is not simply a leisure practice, it is more than that, it is the experience of a pedagogical dimension.

These men may be the last survivors of a struggle for a genuine life, a real human life, which is man's life as a Nature's being. They may be the pioneers in the paradigm of a new education.

The contribution of this paper is, we believe, to draw the attention of parents, teachers, administrators and politicians to the fact that education in general, and physical education in special, are going through this reenounter with Nature, through the rescue of this nature being, this cosmos being that exists inside each one of us. The way the subject is incorporated in our society leads to the death of this aspect of life. All our social and pedagogical practice leads us to safety. We avoid falls by means of safety. We prevent the others from developing their natural defenses, the natural features inside his inner self because Nature is the place where man must develop and use those defenses. Physical education, which deals with the body and the senses, must apply methodologies that enhance the scope of senses because that is the way to find solutions to people's inherent nature-being aspect. If this does not happen, the only thing that will be left will be the machine-being man, the simulacrum-being man, the dead-being man. And these agents witness their struggle against death, against routine. It is not a struggle for survival, but a struggle for a human meaning to life.

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