42 - SPORT, NATURE AND ETHICAL CONSCIENCE: ABOUT THE ROLE OF MÍMESIS IN THE EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY OF ERASMUS OF ROTTERDAM

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INTRODUCTION

Erasmus of Rotterdam was a philosopher and Netherlander Franciscan priest on 15th century, responsible for the production of a series of works basically focused on three themes: the dominant theology, political science and education. In the case of the last branch, education, his writings may be classified as pioneers, because, based upon the universal humanistic trends predominating in the period, they considered the existence of men as having an own absolute value. In accordance with this idea, Erasmus has developed the thesis that every person is unfinished, and, therefore, incomplete. In order to this, the education is the major resource making possible the spiritual, moral and physical increase.

The following sentence of the author, says Feracine (2008), illustrates with mastery this idea: "o homem não nasce homem, mas torna-se homem." Erasmus has believed that the biological aspect of men was, in formal terms, a source of uncontestable potential, but needing intense pedagogical work to become effective. If this element is not present, mankind remains undeveloped, and the weight of instincts tend to predominate. The philosopher used to affirm that a man without education corresponds to the most harmful of the animals.

The arguments of Erasmus in defense of this premise are presented in minutiae in the texts De Pueris and A Civilidade Pueril. They strategically place childhood as the stage of life more fruitful to the improvement of mankind, because in such period the receptivity and incorporation of information are at the maximum availability.

Particularly, in A Civilidade Pueril, Erasmus writes in the 6th chapter a reflection on the attitudes, behaviors and acts that should be present in the practice of sports. Adopting a moral speech, the philosopher advises:

> Na prática do esporte, mostra vivacidade, mas não aquela garra que provoca brigas. Fica distante tanto da fraude como da mentira. É dos pequenos desentendimentos que a gente se predispõe para as injúrias mais graves. É muito mais nobre deixar-se vencer numa disputa que levantar a palma da vitória. (...) Nunca deves reclamar do árbitro. (...) Se, na disputa, teus competidores são menos hábeis e tu estás em condição certa de vencer sempre, então saibas também permitir a tua derrota de modo a tornar o jogo mais divertido. (...) Se tiveres colegas de classe inferior, então ignora tua superioridade. (...) Deve-se praticar o esporte pelo prazer do espírito e nunca pelo intento do lucro. (...) Dizem que a índole da criança se faz transparecer por ocasião dos esportes. Com efeito, se alguém está propenso ao ludibrio, à falsidade, às rixas, à ira, à violência, à arrogância, então será justamente na competição esportiva que a natureza desnuda seus pontos fracos. (...) Em suma, criança educada comporta-se no esporte com a mesma postura que demonstra, quando está à mesa. (Erasmo de Rotterdam, 2008, p. 183).

It is noticed that, in the opinion of the philosopher, sport serves as a measure of the temperament and values of children actions when they are placed under tension. On the other hand, bringing up a series of mitigated feelings, the sport also contributes to indicate which attributes need to be enhanced or maintained for the constitution of balanced attitudes.

From this diagnosis, the following questions arise: which teaching strategies one should offer to transform or maintain, if that is the case, the moral conduct of the student? How to proceed? Is it admissible to affirm the existence of a secure model to be followed? The philosopher treats to propose answers to these queries in another classic work devoted to the study of education, the essay De Pueris. Between the 34th and 39th sessions of chapter 1, Erasmus argues that the imitation of what wild animals do should be exploited as ecological model for pedagogy. In fact, although De Pueris was first published in 1529, it is undeniable the relevance of the contents of this book concerning the relationships involving sport, ethics and environment. It is worth remembering that, according to Tubino (2001), the moral involvement of sport with the environmental conservationism is an imperative of contemporary times, whose social relevance is justified because of the crucial problem of the maintenance of life on Earth. Therefore, Erasmus, at the time he lived, has already advocated, in his own way, a kind of intuition that only nowadays begins to be theorized. In this sense, the objective of this paper consists on an inquiry about the arguments of the author, getting while theoretical reference the concept of mimesis. Done this task, the next step will be the description of the formal role that sports get in his philosophical and educational thought.

MIMESIS, NATURE AND LEARNING

In the 34th session of De Pueris, Erasmus of Rotterdam presents the central thesis of his reasoning about the need to educate children morally: “Sim, a natureza premia, de modo peculiar, a criança com a facilidade para a imitação, mas, por vezes, aquele pendor volta-se mais para o mal do que para o bem. Será que para a pessoa digna a torpeza alegra mais do que a retidão, principalmente em se tratando dos filhos?" (Erasmo de Rotterdam, 2008, p. 47). If the child has a facilitas imitandi, i.e. a faculty to imitate much richer than the adult, this characteristic is not proportionally accompanied by a commensurate ability to discern what seems to be good or not to be imitated. Soon, children can supposedly reiterate attitudes and behaviors considered negative, able to lead to unpleasant consequences.

This is the reason why the gift of imitation need pedagogical support, invokes the philosopher in the 36th session:

> Fosse a criança educada entre indivíduos, gagos ou coxos, seu corpo ficaria afetado por força da imitação. Ora, os defeitos da mente são menos visíveis, mas, de outro lado, de propagação mais célere. Por isso, com maior eficácia, os males do espírito se arraigam. (...) Essa verdade aplica-se, com maior justeza, às crianças. Aristóteles, consultado sobre o modo de tornar um cavalo exímio em qualidade, disse: “Basta tratá-lo em meio a cavalos de raça.” (Erasmo de Rotterdam, 2008, p. 48).

The exposure of the child to contexts where proliferate bad habits will fatally lead them to repeat those. For this reason, it is urgent to offer situations providing not the delay, but the moral and spiritual growth. Taking into account that such experiences, except in rare exceptions, do not happen spontaneously, it seems obvious that some type of pedagogical mediation must address them.

In the 37th session, Erasmus says that examples of animal behavior meet very well the educational role of mimetic stimulus able to fertilize the learning of actions morally correct. "Nada há (...) de vexatório em aprender deles coisas úteis para o dia a dia, uma vez que, desde velha data, o gênero humano tem sido instruído por eles em muitas práticas vantajosas." (ibid. p. 48). The many species of birds, reptiles, amphibians and mammals, in their daily struggles for survival, teach lessons about how we can solve problems apparently difficult and uncomfortable.

> Assim, (...) o uso do clister, tão recomendado pelos médicos para crianças, foi demonstrado pelo íbis, ave egípcia. Dos cervos, aprendemos como a força terapêutica da erva chamada "orégano" age na extração das setas. Deles ainda somos alertados para o fato de que comer caranguejo é medicina contra picada de tarântula. (...) Da esperteza dos lagartos sabemos que o orégano também alivia picada de serpente. (...) Foi a doninha a nos indicar o potencial curativo da arruda. (...) O javali indica que a hera cura certas doenças. As serpentes que o funcho aguça a vista. (...) A andorinha, como aplicar lodo em parede. Enfim, para não ser prolixo em excesso, pouco ou nada existe na vida humana sem ter a natureza dado um exemplo por meio dos animais selvagens. (Ibid. p. 48 – 49).

The philosopher does not limit his evaluations to cases related to the field of healing. More valuable to all men are the occasions where older animals teach their sons and daughters the abilities and skills required for the configuration of an autonomous and emancipated life. "E os cervos? Não adestram, eles, suas crias tão logo nascem? É (...) com tais expedientes que (...) se safam (...) dos caçadores. Dos rouxinóis aprendemos as funções de mestre e de aprendiz. Aquele, enquanto toma a iniciativa, repete e corrige; este enquanto refaz e aperfeiçoa-se." (ibid. p. 50). With these reports, withdrawn from the 38th session, Erasmus assures that the animals have specific inclinations to survive on their own account since the earliest ages. However, he remembers they need some type of effective training to convert such natural trends into an effective feature. Without this circumstance, the purposes each animal species have in the context of nature remain not reached. Erasmus extrapolates such reasoning to the human world, in the sense that persons can built himself as living entity only accomplishing their natural virtues. "Do mesmo modo que o cão nasce para caçar, a ave para voar, o cavalo para caminhar, o boi para arar, assim o homem nasce para o bom senso e para as ações honestas." (ibid. p. 50).

One notes in the previous excerpt that the virtuosity to honesty is an inner condition of men, but this predisposition does not become something real by itself: it needs the impulse of education, of course. "Tal como cada animal aprende, com facilidade, aquilo que lhe é natural, assim o homem capta (...) os parâmetros da virtude e honestidade. Com sua força, a natureza deposita nele algumas sementes poderosas de sorte que a função do educador vai ao encontro daquela predisposição." (Ibid. p. 50 – 51).

In the 39th session, Erasmus starts the conclusion of the reflections, weaving again analogies between humanity and the way of life of the animals. Now, he emphasizes that, in the same way the animals do not forget the obligation to take care of their offspring, men must always plan the best education opportunities for children. In the last session, the 40th one, the philosopher concludes by comparing the childhood with the destiny of the well cared plants:

> A natureza consigna, em tuas mãos, um campo inculto e vazio, por certo, mas um solo risonho. Caso, por tua incúria, seja abandonado ao mato e espinheiros, então, só com enorme esforço, poderá vir a ser recuperado. Em suma, árvores gigantes estão ocultas em minúsculas sementes. Que profusão de frutos, quando elas se desenvolvem. Toda aquela produção se perde a não ser que jogues a semente no sulco; que cuides do broto em via de enrijecimento; que o domes até a enxertia. Em se tratando de planta, eis que te desdobras em atenções. No que tange ao filho, por que estás a dormitar? (Ibid. p. 51 – 52).

RATIONALITY, RENAISSANCE AND HUMANITY: TESTING INTERPRETATIONS

The understanding of the claims of Erasmus demands, as starting point, the examination of his condition of Renaissance thinker. One knows the intellectual atmosphere of the Renaissance of the 16th century have produced a lot of thinkers proposing differentiated philosophical approaches about the origin of knowledge and the purposes of education. Despite such variety, there are some common epistemological structures which were practically present in almost all the theories developed, a characteristic that gives them certain homogeneity.

According to Giles (1983), the Renaissance has spent an immense effort to put up a new anthropological concept of man, opposed to the general medieval worldview, where the dependence on divine will determined the ontological status of humanity. Renaissance thinkers asserted that the value of men was inherent to them, not belonging to God's power. To support this revolutionary thesis, the major names of Renaissance (Paolo Vergerio, Viotrino Feltre, Leon Alberti, Francois Rabelais, Pico della Mirandola, Michel de Montaigne and others) retrieved the most important texts of Classical Antiquity, especially the one observed in Athens (Grifi, 1989).

In this return to the Athenian period, the philosophy of Aristotle has emerged as a standard of the Renaissance reformation of knowledge. With property, one must recall that Aristotle (cited by Vaz, 2006) outlined four parameters of humanity, namely:

1) A biopsychical structure, or psyche. It is a vital principle that is the perfect organization of all living beings, from where come their abilities to produce themselves. In man, it implies in singularities, whose most important is the faculty of understanding;
2) The man as zoon logikon (animal logic). By the way of the psyche, men and other living beings have something in common; but, on the other hand, only those are endowed with speech and logical thought (logos). Because of this singularity, they exceed the imperatives of physis (nature) too. This transcendence reaches its highest level in the manifestation of human rationality, whose aspects Aristotle differentiated into three categories:

i) the noûs, assimilated to the proper activity of the intellect. This category is divided into a receptive function, who records the things potentially received by senses, and an active function, according to which the intellect makes the sensitive apprehensions an intelligible act.
ii) The télos (aim) of reason. Aristotle assigns to the intellectual action, depending on the end wanted, the production of a certain type of science. The contemplative purposes, pursuing the truth of things, result,

according to the nature of the contemplated object, in three theoretical sciences: Physics, Mathematics and Philosophy. But if the aforesaid purposes are guided by an action driven to the welfare or the excellence of fellows and community, we get the Ethics and the Politics. In the case of purposes which objectify instrumental tools, utilitarian means and the obtainment of pleasure, they found the Rhetoric and the Poetic.

iii) The formal knowledge processes. In the books gathered in the collection Organon, Aristotle tries to manage the logical tradition of Greek thought since the Sophists, Socrates, Plato and the mathematical philosophers. "Ao codificar a forma do pensamento (teórico e prático), Aristóteles assegura ao predicado da racionalidade, (...) os instrumentos (...) decisivos para que [o homem] possa plasmar seu mundo conforme as exigências da razão, ou seja, (...) fazer da ciência o centro de seu universo simbólico (...)." (Vaz, 2006, p. 38).

3) Man as an ethical-political being. Considering the praxis as specific and autonomous domain of rationality, Aristotle can be considered the organizer of Ethics and Politics as fundamental dimensions of men knowledge about themselves. The unit of ethical and political domains resides on the fact that men are fated to spend their lives inside collective bodies, because without this constraint they don't carry out their rationalities In other words, as zoon logikon, man must be zoon politikon, in the sense that ethical and political life imply the obligation to direct his own existence according to reason. Aristotle insists that the virtues defended and investigated by Ethics, notwithstanding they are legacies of the customs of the polis or values acquired by teachings, find only in the political life their authentic range of practice. Ethics and Politics match instances responsible for the realization of the men aims, gotten by the exercise of reason or the primacy of the logos.

4) Man as a being of passion and desire. Even having received little attention from scholars, this aspect of the philosophy of Aristotle is not less important, because in his conceptualization of psyche, the Greek philosopher admitted the possible intervention of the passion (pathê) and desire (órexis) in ethical-political praxis. The debate concerning the dimension of pleasure in human life rises in several moments of the ethical theorization of Aristotle, as we can notice in the 7th and 10th Nicomachean Ethics books.

The combination of these four parameters defines humanity as a quality animated by an primordial impulse responsible for their proper production (psyché), which men share with other living beings. However, humanity exceeds this common point, since fellows, endowed with speech and speaking capacity, are able to articulate, through the power of intellect, rationality or science, the reality in logical bases Due to this logic dimension, people must live in an ethical and political manner, but this does not mean that the passion and the desire does not have an influence on the practice decisions.

Following these observation, one should ask: how does Aristotle relate the factors previously cataloged with education? Grifi (1989) posts a clever answer when stating that Aristotle parameters only acquire meaning if comprehended under the premise of agents of human happiness: the most plausible reason for a personal recreation mediated by logos, knowledge and passions is the need and desire of a good life. Thus, educating for happiness means to live according to a fully satisfactory manner. For this reason, it is important and strategic to stimulate men in the art of imitation of respectable skills and attitudes.

> Para Aristóteles, a educação parte da imitação e visa levar o educando a adquirir hábitos que formarão nele uma segunda natureza. Entretanto, trata-se de um processo que exige, como condição prévia, a existência de disposições capazes de se desenvolverem, como também de meios para fazê-lo. O educando só pode realizar possibilidades a ele inerentes. O processo educativo o levará a realizar essas possibilidades. (...) Trata-se de uma educação integral que leva em consideração todas as faculdades que integram a natureza humana, para que o educando alcance a finalidade específica de sua existência, isto é, a felicidade. Mas esse ideal só se realiza dentro de quadros morais e políticos. Portanto, o processo educativo deve visar inculcar-lhe o tipo de comportamento social que se equilibra no justo meio, no modelo da virtude, o que se faz pela formação da vontade. (Giles, 1983, p. 66 - 67).

One notes that men find happiness through the search of virtues. In fact, one can't deny the similarity of the thoughts of Aristotle and Erasmus of Rotterdam. Despite the concordance of imitation as pedagogical method, another point joins them: in the 2nd chapter of De Pueris, happiness is displayed as a dependent variable of three combined parameters.

> A explicação para a felicidade plena do ser humano depende de três fatores: a natureza, a razão e a aprendizagem. Denomino natureza aquela docilidade e inclinação inseridas na pessoa para as coisas honestas. Designo razão como sendo a instância doutrinal que adverte e preceitua. Chamo de aprendizagem o uso do hábito oriundo da natureza, mas aperfeiçoado pela razão. Sim, a natureza postula a razão. A aprendizagem, fora do controle racional, fica flanqueada a muitos erros e perigos. (Erasmo de Rotterdam, 2008, p. 53).

Although Erasmus and Aristotle enhance the issue of imitation as a pedagogical strategy, the first assumes a more peculiar position when we realize his defense of human copy of animal attitudes as a mean of virtuous behavior. A hypothetical explanation for this association alludes to the special place occupied by animals, plants, minerals, seas, rivers, mountains, etc. in the general principles of Renaissance.

For many theorists of Renaissance, all entities were, metaphorically speaking, characters of a great mystical book, written by the own hand of the Creator. This book was entitled "Nature", understood as the presence of beings animated by the Aristotle physis plus the inanimate objects. The words of Giordano Bruno (cited by Abbagnno, 2000, p. 266) illustrate this notion: "A Natureza ou é Deus mesmo, ou a virtude divina que se manifesta nas coisas". Another famous author of Renaissance, Nicholas of Cushan (cited by Abbagnano, 2000, p. 266), used to say: “É o Espírito difuso e contraído por todo o universo e por cada uma das partes que se chama de Natureza. Portanto, de algum modo, a Natureza é a reunião de todas as coisas geradas através do movimento." It follows from the foregoing that Nature lay across all men in a state of latency. Anyone who wants to know the deepest secrets of things should employ the intellect and the rationality. The desire to make life morally better presupposes the same procedure, because in Nature we find the divine virtue, which is perfect and omniscient.

Analyzed through this bias, the imitation of the animals put by Erasmus, even if they do not possess intellectual and rational faculties, represents an efficient instrument to reduce the gap between the moral dispositions of men and the divine virtue. In other words, the option in favor on mimesis allows the discovery of the divine virtue in the sphere of everyday life, making it familiar and, in consequence, easy to be corroborated. As a corollary, the mimesis, in these circumstances, pushes

the possibility of a moral development whose summit is happiness.

END NOTES: THE ROLE OF SPORT IN ERASMO DE ROTTERDAM

In the continuity of the exposure finished at the previous session, the imitation of behaviors of animals opens to individuals, by indirect paths, the chance of encountering the divine greatness. The methodology of mimesis matches the vector providing the assimilation of values and the maturation of the moral provisions necessary to a happy existence.

Then, what role does sport get at this context? Remembering Aristotle, by the fact that virtues learned or assimilated require the ethical and political spheres to be exercised, then sport is relevant to Erasmus of Rotterdam because it works as an ethical-political space promoting the achievement of moral purposes. After all, sport presumes normative codes and the aggregation of people in collective bodies. In the case of fellows, the actual state of their latent moral impulses rises inside sportive situations, becoming an act during their free participations. Through this immersion, one may know what kind of action, behavior and beliefs need to be enhanced through the mimetic methodology.

The sports environment then operates as an ethical test, capable of promoting a rational examination of the characteristics that personality tends to show under pressure. On this basis, educational initiatives of behavioral correction gain legitimacy in their tasks of addressing the search of happiness.

Finally, one more element deserves to be highlighted. Erasmus of Rotterdam, along his explanation about the sport, frequently underlines the importance of the practitioner to be fair, balanced and controlled. One perceives that four centuries before the starting of the modern Olympic Movement by Pierre de Coubertin, Erasmus already raised his voice in favor of sportsmanship. However, the complex concept of sportsmanship grounds countless contemporary studies dedicated to the Olympic ethics. The category of informal fair play, which encompasses all sorts of actions subjectively correct beyond the mere fulfillment of specific sporting rules, holds an undeniable cultural meaning (Tavares, 1999; Lenk, 1976). This observation, endorsing the pioneering spirit of this author in educational issues, enhances the inclusion of his name it in the debates that have at informal fair play their object of research.

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SPORT, NATURE AND ETHICAL CONSCIENCE: ABOUT THE ROLE OF MIMESIS IN THE EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY OF ERASMUS OF ROTTERDAM

ABSTRACT:

The objective of this paper consists on an investigation about the arguments of the Renaissance thinker Erasmus de Rotterdam in favor of the thesis that the imitation of animal behavior represents a secure pedagogical strategy for the improvement or corroboration of people moral trends considering how they actually behave in sports practices. For this purpose, the arguments of the author displayed between the 34th and 39th sessions on the classic book De Pueris were commented, accounting Renaissance as a philosophical movement. Then, based on this understanding, one defined the formal positions assumed by sport in the thought of Erasmus.

KEYWORDS: Sport; Mimesis; Moral Education; Nature; Erasmus of Rotterdam.

SPORT, NATURE ET CONSCIENCE ÉTHIQUE: SUR LE RÔLE DE LA MIMESIS DANS LA PHILOSOPHIE ÉDUCATIVE DE ERASME DE ROTTERDAM

RÉSUMÉ

L'objectif de cette étude consiste en une enquête sur les arguments de la penseur de la Renaissance Erasmus de Rotterdam en faveur de la thèse selon laquelle l'imitation du comportement animal représente une stratégie pédagogique sûr pour l'amélioration ou la corroboration des les tendances morales des gens de la façon dont ils se comportent dans les pratiques sportives. A cet effet, les arguments de l'auteur s'affiche entre les 34 et 39 sur le livre classique De Pueris ont été commentés, compte tenu la Renaissance comme un mouvement philosophique. Puis, à partir de cette compréhension, on a défini les positions officielles assumées par le sport dans la pensée d'Érasme.

MOTS-CLÉS: Sport; Mimesis; L'Éducation Morale; La Nature; Erasme de Rotterdam.

DEPORTE, NATURALEZA Y CONCIENCIA ÉTICA: SOBRE EL PAPEL DE LA MIMESIS EN LA FILOSOFÍA DE LA EDUCACIÓN DE ERASMO DE ROTTERDAM

RESUMEN

El propósito de este trabajo es una investigación de los argumentos del pensador del Renacimiento Erasmo de Rotterdam en favor de la tesis de que la imitación de la conducta de los animales es una estrategia pedagógica correcta y segura para ratificar las disposiciones morales de las personas de acuerdo a la forma en que se comportan en las prácticas deportivas. Para ello, se expusieron y comentaron las colocaciones que el autor expone entre las sesiones 34 y 39 del libro clásico De Pueris, considerando las bases del Renacimiento como un movimiento filosófico. Luego, a partir de esta aclaración, se establece las funciones formales asumidos por el deporte en el pensamiento de Erasmo.

PALABRAS-CLAVES: Deporte; Mimesis; Educación Moral; Naturaleza; Erasmo de Rotterdam.

ESPORTE, NATUREZA E CONSCIÊNCIA ÉTICA: SOBRE O PAPEL DA MÍMESE NA FILOSOFIA DA EDUCAÇÃO DE ERASMO DE ROTTERDAM

RESUMO

O objetivo do presente ensaio consiste numa investigação dos argumentos do pensador renascentista Erasmo de Rotterdam em favor da tese de que a imitação das condutas animais é numa estratégia pedagógica segura para corrigir ou ratificar as disposições morais das pessoas a partir de como elas efetivamente se comportam nas práticas esportivas. Para tal, foram exibidas e comentadas as colocações do autor nas sessões 34 a 39 do clássico tratado De Pueris, a partir dos fundamentos do Renascimento enquanto movimento filosófico. Em seguida, com base nessa elucidação, tratou-se de definir as funções formais assumidas pelo esporte no pensamento de Erasmo.

PALAVRAS-CHAVES: Esporte; Mimese; Educação Moral; Natureza; Erasmo de Rotterdam.