

ÉTICA DEL DEPORTE
GUILLEM TURRÓ
HERDER (BARCELONA, 2016)

For those used to immersing themselves in philosophy or sociological readings, *Ética del deporte* will definitely be a *rara avis*. Throughout the past few years, Guillem Turró, who has delved deeply into Continental philosophy and sociology, has been devoting himself to researching a humanist vision of sport. *Ética del deporte* –which title is a clear declaration of intentions– is the result of his investigations.

We are in front of a book that illustrates the practice of sports: a subject matter that has been clearly rejected by academia, and an exercise whose practitioners would rarely be interested in giving up in order to read about it. That is why, precisely for these two reasons, this book is so interesting and recommendable.

Particularly remarkable is the chapter dedicated to “sport’s miseries”: here Turró reviews some of the darkest expressions of sport, such as its commercialization, cases of corruption, doping, political exploitation, racism, xenophobia and gender and homophobic discrimination. The author submits that, in fact, these expressions are just a reflection of the society that hosts them. Turró agrees with J.M. Cagigal when he said that “sport today is the society of today”.

The axiological crisis of values results in an increasingly materialistic experience of sport. The author denounces that important brands and “juicy deals” are blinding some sportsmen. Turró warns that sport commercialization undermines its moral essence, and those who devote themselves to practicing sport should never abandon their condition of *homo ludens*. That is why he proposes to “resize” sport based on “three transverse axis: education, health and social cohesion”.

Turró acknowledges different episodes throughout history in which political forces have used sport to ideologically manipulate society. From the Ancients to the Third Reich, sport has been a perfect propaganda tool. Not only that, but it has also been a way to draw attention away from serious problems and to anesthetize social unrest: the actualization of *panem et circenses*, as the author affirms.

Besides, in an era lacking representatives of ethical values, athletes become heroic models. This is good news, as long as the sportsmen and women maintain an exemplary behavior. Of course, the differential factor, as Turró emphasizes several times, is which kind of moral values the praxis

of sports sustains or lacks. Divesting sport from its evident moral content –and that is, from its necessary educative role– leads to all the cases of corruption, trivialization, fanaticism and violence that we all have witnessed.

In *Ética del deporte*, Turró highlights that promoting a democratization of sport is paramount. Sport's capacity of empowering people is defended by the author in several occasions. Sport's potential to mediate human aspirations and to create a deeper and greater self-perception is only possible if it is not bound by "alienating factors". But there is space for hope as well, as Turró focuses on cases of ethical exemplarity throughout the last pages of the book.

Blaming sport's contradictions would be as irrational as blaming humanity for its ambiguity: neither is sport a practice that should be demonized or glorified. What the author of *Ética del deporte* shows with a vast and rich range of examples, theories and spokespeople against and for sport's promotion is that, as a human creation, sports represent –or even reveal– human complexity.

It is a matter of a book that is a mature praise of sport. The chapter dedicated to the spirit of competition is a proof of that. Turró acknowledges the existence of rampant competitiveness within sport but he has a very critical opinion of it. Nevertheless, his lucid perspective about a virtuous rivalry or competitiveness must not be jeopardized: "the main value of sports competition is found in the process of overcoming the defeat after facing a worthy opponent". The pages about "fair play" are also an exaltation of the moral content of sport competition and will probably make the reader think about the parallelism with the values which should be preserved by our society. Doubtless, Turró bets on a pedagogical perspective of sport, which draws on ancient Greeks' understanding of physical activity.

Adorno, Hobbes, Plato, Epicure... some of the most well-known philosophers make an appearance in *Ética del deporte*. But also some of the greatest athletes of History, such as Robbie Fowler, Didier Drogba or Mireia Belmonte, accompany the reader throughout the reading. Bringing together these apparently irreconcilable personalities is definitely something to celebrate. It is another step in establishing the basis of a philosophy of sport and it is, indeed, a great contribution to a philosophical –or ethical– sportsmanship.

Glòria Cagigal
Universitat de Barcelona
gloria.csoler@gmail.com