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## Sport and Politics in the Twenty-First Century

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### ABSTRACT

In this article, we address the aporia(s) of the Olympic discourse produced by the troubled split between sport and politics. To start our argument, we will show that sporting governing bodies continuously insist that they are still on the other side of any kind of politics. Guided by Aristotle, who presented the reciprocity of ethics and politics, we will unveil the fallacy of this discourse. In a short genealogy of the relationship between sport, ethics, and politics, we will highlight the Munich Olympics 1936 and Mexico Olympics 1968, where political engagement of sport was exposed clearly. At the same time, the supposed political neutrality of sport manifested an aristocratic preference for radical right regimes. After that, we will analyse the contemporary relation between sport, ethics, and politics in the light of recent developments, including sport's ambiguous reaction on the Ukraine war. Further argument will be that sport's in- and external politics, supported by sport ethics and the inherited mantra of the split between sport and politics, is more than just a hypocrisy. At the start, modern sport claims autonomy of governance to keep away from state domination, yet this very autonomy also freezes sport's ethical core, forbidding athletes, coaches and others active in sport, to express any political engagement, other than passive acceptance of the regulation by governing sport bodies, as the only politics to be respected without deliberation. In the final part an alternative understanding of the dynamics between politics, the political and sport's ethical core, will be presented to be included in the philosophy of sport and fully developed in following articles.

### KEYWORDS

Sport; politics; ethics; governance; agency

To build up our argumentation, we start with shedding a different light on the Olympic discourse, and political engagement of sport governing bodies under IOC regime. Why is the separation of sport and politics still considered to be undisputable, and how has this split been introduced in sport initially? And how come sport governing bodies still believe themselves to be on the other side of any kind of politics?

### A Different Genealogy

*'No kind of demonstration or political, religious or racial propaganda is permitted in the Olympic areas'* (Olympic Charter 2021, Rule 50.2, 93).

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If we walk slowly, enjoying the surroundings, there is no awareness of breathing. But the moment when we start to run and adapt our breathing to the fact, awareness of breathing arises and starts to occupy a running body. The same goes for politics. Once we gain insight in the politicized nature of modern sport, the constitutive element which has always been considered as a neutral position on 'the other side' of politics, shall be unveiled as politics itself, and a need for change comes to mind. This awareness seems to currently hit the IOC community of sport, facing the fall of the bipolar system of political balance on a global scale<sup>1</sup>; sport's so-called political neutrality, even split from any kind of politics, is revealed to be deeply politically affected. And not by any kind of politics, but merely by radically conservative, aristocratic, and non-democratic politics. How did this ever happen to our precious social practice?

The first reason to consider is the transformation of global political powers, as a result of the fall of the formerly binary division between the Soviet Union and the West. A cynical response could be, that history is over because there are no choices left but the prevailing (neo)liberal way of politics. During the process of adaptation to this new global political reality, new constellations of values and ideologies come together, with renovated old and emerging new superpower pretenders. Such shifts need and cause new understanding of what is actually taking place, as '... historical reality is changed from an epoch to another together with modifications on the scales of values'<sup>2</sup>. Sport authorities until now, did not adapt by reconsidering the attitude which made their conservative right-wing politics detectable and visible, although they can no longer hide their political preference behind an overlay of political neutrality.

Let us return to the beginning. Rule 50 in the Olympic Charter is very concrete and narrows the field of strict separation to 'Olympic areas', which function only during the Olympic Games, and puts the political at the same level as religious or racial propaganda. It thus contains a certain conception of what politics is about. The most comprehensive declaration of political positioning of the Olympic Movement can be found in the Fundamental Principles of Olympism (5): 'Recognising that sport occurs within the framework of society, sports organisations within the Olympic Movement shall apply political neutrality'. (Olympic Charter 5; 11). Political neutrality which can be applied to governments, civil administration, or nation-states' attitudes, respectively means that the person neutral is above conflicts—in this case, above political conflicts. This implies autonomy from all conflicting political positions and powers, and that is exactly what the Olympic Charter defines, as a specific promise: 'They (sport organizations and associations) have the rights and obligations of autonomy, which include freely establishing and controlling the rules of sport, determining the structure and governance of their organisations, enjoying the right of elections free from any outside influence and the responsibility for ensuring that principles of good governance be applied'. (Olympic Charter 5; 11). The separation of Olympic sport (including the Olympic Movement as a global community of sport organizations and associations) from politics is not an absolute principle, but a fundamental condition to introduce autonomy of sport governance and management from political interference, and to disable political demonstrations in sport events. However, it also works the other way around: sport accepted autonomy and in return gave up its political potential. This dialectical reciprocity between sport and politics is the object of our research. We need some genealogy to comprehend its implications an open up to the future.

For how did the IOC understand its neutrality and how did they prevent athletes from introducing their political statements into competition? The iconic and notorious example of the Berlin Olympics and all the struggles about rules of participation at these games, show how these two principals—neutrality and non-politics—were applied at the time. As for political neutrality, the Olympic Movement, de Coubertin and Brundage in front, did give their gratuitous support for the National-Socialist concept of the Olympics, with some lesser compromise concerning unwanted political messages, and finally allowed some presence of Jewish and Black athletes. Synchronizing these liberal values with an autocratic political discourse, gave rise to modern sports as the globally expanding social practice, sanctioning racist and sexist ideals. And as for athletes, those who might show some outspoken signs of criticism towards the Nazi regime and its racist and terrorist treatment of non-Nazi and non-Arian subjects, were strongly discouraged to do so. The only way to do it was by boycotting the Berlin Olympics, sacrificing their Olympic opportunities. A boycott was the only possible political stance against the legitimizing Nazi Games, because Olympic neutrality implicitly—and in the end: explicitly—meant Olympic support for the rising National-Socialist political agenda. The point of political neutrality which accepted and even elevated games of 1936 into a standard to be followed by the others was found in the muscular nationalism as a typical politics of all fascisms, but not just them. Here, the organizer of Berlin and promotor of later Munich games Carl Diem, and Pierre de Coubertin are in perfect agreement. Carl Diem: ‘I do not think I am going too far in saying that Germany is the country where we have the best approach to the goal of strengthening the national energy through the systematic practice of physical exercises’. (Diem 1943). De Coubertin: ‘... in this laicised century, a religion was at our disposal; the national flag, symbol of modern patriotism rising to the food of victory to reward the winning athlete, this is what would continue the cult with rekindled hearth’. (de Coubertin 1967 (1929), p. 114). A standard was set. Virtuousness and duty to Olympism became the constituting moral axes building the dominant *ethical* discourse in sport.

Unfortunately, the primacy of *ethics* also provided a covering legitimacy, idealizing the virtuous nature of true sportsmanship. As this moral agency of sport gained strength, producing specific concepts and methods, the political vacuum in sport grew as well, politicizing sport even more. Let us unpack this statement in two steps, before we return to our genealogy. The current body of knowledge in sport ethics is strongly inspired by Aristotle’s virtue ethics. However, Aristotle related the questioning of moral issues, virtues and vices, brought together in the discipline of *ethics*, systematically to the conception of the *political* aspect of life, simply: politics. As Aristotle says in both his Nicomachean Ethics and his Politics, morality is not just a disposition of good character, a quality of our intimate self, but this virtuous subjectivity is always related to achieving the Good, performing an activity or function in the world, both in private life, ruling a household or property (*oikonomia*), and in public life, as a citizen of the ancient *polis* (Nicomachean Ethics, 1094a1-1096a6). So the first pre-judicial ‘community’ Aristotle discerns is the *oikonomia*, the private household. And he does so in his main treatise on ethics.

The first book of Aristotle’s *Politics* is again devoted to household management, as an example of ruling the state (*polis*) on a natural basis, yet in a smaller way. As it appears, Aristotle considers both realms of life, so both the *oikonomia* and the *polis* as the political, in which we should manifest excellent virtues, be it in different ways. It is in this respect

that we should comprehend his famous statement: 'Man is by nature a political animal'. (Politics, 1253a1). One might even say that Aristotle's definitions and assumptions prelude the contemporary complex relation between politics and economy, referred to as *political economy*. To conclude for now: ever since antiquity, the striving towards virtuousness has been at the heart of political science. Aristotle's major premise on the ontological reciprocity between morality and the political, might inspire both the sporting community and the philosophy of sport to recapture the political, complementary to the prevailing moral discourse.

Our second justification is derived from the thought of Alain Badiou (1937 -). Badiou critically addresses the tendency in modernity to absolutize ethical discourse, isolated from the political, creating an ethical doctrine, religion alike (Badiou 1993). In this paradigm politics is considered to be a derivative of ethics. The 'canonisation' of supposed universal, yet strongly politicized concepts like human rights, fairness, freedom and equality are examples of this ethical ideology. Badiou unveils the modern concept of both deontological and virtue ethics as a semi-religious dispositive, in which our own perspective (dominantly Western, masculine, neoliberal) determines the norm, and 'Evil' is placed with the Other, even under the guise of 'recognition of the other'. The Other is only acceptable if it confirms itself to the dominant moral regime, to the appropriate as defined by the ruling majority. This ethical ideology is based on the principle of *identity*; the morally preferred corresponds to the demand and morality of a transcendent, virtuous subject, setting the standard. The persistence with which any difference is disqualified from this sacred self, even from the principle of diversity, can be seen, for example, in the fight against radicalisation or populism. From our Western perspective, we firmly condemned the Chinese regime during the Beijing Winter Olympics, thus demonstrating an unprecedented, rather elitist example of 'Eurocentrism'. Why accept that things can be different, based on a moral standard that we do not (wish to) know? Difference is allowed, as long as it fits in the dominant Western tradition, meeting our superior moral standards.

This ideologizing, almost sacred concept of ethics is clearly constitutive for modern sports. The primacy of morality is expressed in concepts like Fair Play and sportsmanship, and values like equality or integrity. The prevailing sport ethics tradition, combining Kantian deontological ethics (collective duties) with Aristotelian virtue ethics (individual behaviour) might be seen as the ethical ideology Badiou uncovers to be nihilistic: 'The power of ethics is a symptom of a universe ruled by a special combination of resignation to the necessary... The modern name for necessity, as we know, is economics'. (Badiou 1993). As the field of economics has no intrinsic ontological value, besides a financial aim, an ethical ideology is desperately needed to add morality, obedience, and intrinsic values to *political economy*. Famous studies in our field of knowledge, like '*Ethics in Sport*' (Morgan 2001) and the more contemporary '*Sport and Moral Conflict*' (Morgan 2020), state that moral reflection is the best thing to do, to find a response to distortions and moral debilities of sport, like corruption and the use of doping. The Olympic ideals are described as intrinsically constituting sport, which puts the moral congruence of the IOC to strain. Instead of turning the problems modern sports are facing into a *political* inquiry, the authors argue that we should stick to an even more intense moral scrutiny: 'And if we are going to be successful in plying that moral scalpel, we will need to be able to see sport both for what it really is and what it is capable of at its best'. (Morgan 2001, Preface). This discourse, like many others in our field, admires sportsmanship as a moral *extraordinaire*.

In this approach, the essence of sportsmanship cannot be derived from a legalistic code; it is a pure spirit, a special attitude, a unique manner of living by the rules. Another classic in this respect, McNamee's *'Sports, Virtues and Vices'* (McNamee 2008), situates ethics at the very heart of modern sports, offering an aretaic, virtue-ethical account. Although neoliberal phenomena, like the MacIntyrean interpretation of Aristotle's virtue ethics, rule-based moralities and the tendency towards codification, are taken into question, the central purpose again is to strengthen sport's inherent *ethical* core and improve *ethical* development in and through sport, as the way out of a highly politicized field. It will not come as a surprise that in both publications, the index does not contain the word 'politics', nor the lemma 'political'. To summarize, the prevalence of morality in sport created a '*sport-economic trinity*' between modern sport, ethics, and (the lack of) politics.

With these concerns in mind, let's take up our genealogy. The Second World War profoundly changed what political neutrality meant, merely by adding those fundamentals which were included in United Nations basic documents: condemnation of fascism and Nazism, and establishment of human rights as the most important international guarantee of individual and group freedom, and restriction of state and government unrestrained abuse of power. Under these circumstances, and during bipolar political division of the global world, the case of the 1968 Mexico Olympic Games can demonstrate on the kind of political neutrality, on the kind of prohibition of athletes' political statements in competition, and what kind of attacks against Olympic monopoly over global sport appeared at that time. Let's try and comprehend this case in critical philosophical terms.

Ciudad de México in 1968 became the first Latin American city hosting the Olympics, the first city from developing and non-aligned countries, and the highest location of competitions, but also the first city with typical third world conflicts. Government under president of Mexico Gustavo Díaz Ordaz had a history of long repression of trade unions and farmers movement. The possibility that public unrest would deny the glory of organizing such a complicated and luxurious event, conditioned the explosion of state violence against protesters (mostly students), culminating in that unbelievable Tlatelolco massacre against unarmed people 2 October 1968: only ten days before the Olympics were to start. The number of killed and wounded was and is still disputed, but a conservative assessment says that several hundred died and at least 1500 were wounded. In a most cynical sense, sport and politics met at a distance guarded by guns and tanks, just to embrace each other at the opening of the Olympic Games. The freedom to speak up, denied to those revolting students, was not allowed to athletes either. At the 200 meters medal ceremony, Tommie Smith (gold medallist) and John Carlos (bronze) appeared, raising their black-gloved fists, and wearing black socks instead of shoes, to show support for the civil rights movement. Australian white athlete Peter Norman (silver) did not raise his hand, or followed the attire of the other two, but he also wore a civil rights badge. Smith and Carlos were expelled from the Olympic Village and persecuted some-time later as well, and Peter Norman's career ended because of his gesture of solidarity: he never made it again to represent Australia. A second standard was set.

Putting politics apart from sport, legitimized by the acclaimed autonomy of sporting governance bodies, meant that athletes were not allowed to politicize at the field of competition, or they could expect harsh sanctions. Now where did the principal of human rights go? Jacques Rancière (1940 -) introduces the axiom of equality as the

rise of the political, against all differences of race, sex, gender, class, nation—whatever. Universality of equality's appeal cannot be reduced. The principal of human rights as the moral *archè* of Western politics shares the same faith. Political discourse presupposes undisputable principals, not belonging to politics. As Rancière clearly states: nothing is political by itself (Rancière 2017). In modern sport this double political vacuum—the ban of politics and sport's not politically validated principals—easily produces a hegemonic order, proclaiming moral superiority sanctioned by absolute principals like equality, fairness, and human rights. Again, stressing sport's ethical core and the primacy of sport ethics merely rendered a harmless, attractive cover up, reinforcing the ongoing political-economic exploitation of modern sports.

### Contemporary Situation

The first generation of executives in modern sports had aristocratic roots, and governed this booming social practice in an autocratic manner, being involved in all kinds of in- and external politics. Collectively they showed sympathy for nation-state leaders of similar regimes, namely autocratic inclination. Together they shared a view that nation states would turn decadent if democracy and individualism should rule. People need strong muscular role models, reaching excellence under an autocratic discipline, to stay open to any kind of collective nationalist sacrifice. To those first executives, the power and the glory of sport should be grounded on a strong regime, controlling and perfecting human bodies. Horne and Whannel (2012, p. 128) state three broad categories in the politics of recent Olympics: boycotts, 'reputation promotion' (that is, image enhancement) and 'neo-liberalisation' of the Olympics.<sup>3</sup> If we include exclusions from competitions into the boycott-category, and agree that neo-liberalisation is the ruling governing power in modern sport, this listing is contemporary enough. Yet we need to take one step further; what at first appeared as the Olympic involvement in conflicts over racism, colonialism and capitalism versus supporting socialism in a bipolar world, nowadays is fought in terms of financial calculations, about deals with corporations, and in relation to new media appearances. As stated earlier: politics has turned into *political economy*. But why is economy qualified to be political? Because neoliberal economy turns relations between people into relations of things, community human relations into market competition of commodities. And these transactions are deeply governed by politically validated objectives.

In sport we see this reflected in the primacy of business models. For instance, it may be argued that the future success or failure of the initiative to establish a separate Football League of champions, following the example of USA major leagues, does not depend on ideology or sport-intrinsic values, but strictly on financial calculations. To be more specific, on the interests of the most important UEFA partners (national associations and partner corporations) with a special attention to broadcasting and new media reaction. This is politics as well, but now political power is not manifested within nation-states or their legislative and executive bodies, but in corporations of which sport associations are the intersection of one among many. The most important political body to decide who will win (and thus be in power) is a complex media algorithm, counting virtual attendance, not elections. Besides that, the ongoing post-bipolar struggle seems to be developing into a continuous fight, to decide which of the most powerful states and corporations will

stabilize their global influence after the former bipolar world disappeared. This turbulent situation creates an extremely instable theatre of powerplay, and sport is willy-nilly included into this global fight. But how?

This growing tension also shows in the political agency of athletes and sport organizations in the case of Black Lives Matter, and in the fast IOC response on Russian attack on Ukraine. While sixty years ago those who demonstrated for equality and human rights of black people, were persecuted in the name of the separation of sport and politics, nowadays this divide provokes 'taking the knee' at the start of sport competitions by all athletes, and strong political support of the audience. Those who did not want to consent to such practice had to face contempt of other athletes and public. No sanctions were applied against those who did bring politics in sport, even directly on the pitch. Quite to the contrary, all sport leading bodies hurried to share this fight against racism. Thus, the massive support for Kaepernick's iconic gesture seems to represent an important actual turning point in global sport. However, the IOC banned the slogan appearing at athletes' apparel, because race was not among general principles allowed by the Olympic Charter. Those allowed are peace, respect, solidarity, inclusion, and equality; universal values validated by the dominant tradition in sport ethics.

This IOC intervention also sent a clear message: anything goes, but on the Olympic Games only the most abstract and meaningless political declaration may be expressed by the Olympic Charter and approved by the Olympic authorities, being the IOC. Thus, the split changed from the one between sport and politics in general, to a new divide, namely between the Olympic political authority and individual athletes' rights to express their political positions. Quite ambiguous; there's politics ruling sport to exclude politics. So, what did change over the years is the common political agenda against racism, and what did not change is that political declarations only come from the IOC-supremacy down and not the other way around. Consequently, the politics of sport still seems to be the politics of authoritarian power, which can give in to political demands and positions arbitrarily, if it only keeps the subordinates of sport subordinated, and strengthens the grip of leadership over athletes.

Furthermore: how did the world of sport respond to the Russian invasion of Ukraine? Global public opinion clearly supported the Ukrainian people. The IOC had an example from the case of former Yugoslavia during the nineties, allowing athletes of 'new countries' to compete as individuals, while introducing the ban on Serbian teams, appearing at international championships, even if they qualified beforehand. But there was also another example: the abundant use of doping among Russian athletes, under political pressure from Russia, culminating at Olympic games. The IOC allowed some of these athletes, if clean of doping, to appear as representatives of the Russian Olympic Committee, yet without the formal Russian State insignia. If the IOC now, in the case of this aggressive Russian war against Ukraine, wanted to act, they might be expected to introduce something much stronger. So, they did. Olympic truce (*ékécheiria*) in ancient Greece was an agreement between states not to attack Elis as a host city state during the Olympic Games, and to provide a safe journey to and from Olympia to all athletes and their entourage. Yet it was never meant to provide that all wars should stop, or that new wars were not started during the Olympics. In 1992, the IOC decided to renew this tradition, and got support from the United Nations, including the Russian Federation. Since then, the Russian Federation violated this Olympic truce three times: in 2008, when



it was engaged in Russian-Georgian war, in 2014, when it occupied Crimea, and in 2022, when it started the aggressive war against Ukraine. While there were some minor reactions to 2008 and 2014, the last is the first time IOC and sport associations came with a general reply. The use of the Olympic truce to introduce measures against Russian athletes, sounds a bit strange, not for its purpose, but because of its ritual and conservative pretext. But is it keeping a position of neutrality as sport's political position? What makes IOC and other bodies' position is exactly the multipolar global situation, which is not important from the point of view of aggression of Russia against Ukraine but must be considered because of another war—the cold war between Russia and the West. For neutrality, the declaration for peace would be very abstract, but with a multipolar world where the Western view of globality is not accepted by many other global or local powers, it would be understandable from an inherited position of a split between sport and politics. The declaration of the IOC from February 28, International Olympic Committee (2022), states first that 'The current war in Ukraine, however, puts the Olympic Movement in a dilemma', and concludes in the next paragraph 'This is a dilemma which cannot be solved'.<sup>4</sup> Now what was this dilemma and why could not it be solved, but was still cut through? One side of dilemma was that '... the Olympic Movement is united in its sense of fairness not to punish athletes for the decisions of their government if they are not actively participating in them ...'. Another side is that '... athletes from Russia and Belarus would be able to continue to participate in sports events ...', but '... many athletes from Ukraine are prevented from doing so because of the attack on their country'.<sup>5</sup>

These are not *ethical* criteria to overcome a (supposed moral) dilemma, they are *political* criteria. One side of the dilemma is dubious: many Ukrainian athletes decided to join the armed forces, but those who keep appearing in sport competitions are numerous as well and keep repeating that their presence encourages Ukrainian soldiers and Ukrainian people to resist. But this is not decisive point of critical approach to IOC's dilemmatic attitude. Also, it is not decisive that the IOC did not keep neutrality as its main principle because the post-bipolar world does not allow for the point of neutrality. Neutrality becomes a realistic position, only when all vectors of power produce a balanced resultant, or, if there is just one dominant source of global power. In the contemporary world, we are not there. The IOC's dilemma is caused by this situation, and they decided to follow just one source of power. They created a political explanation for such resultant, insisting that this position is not politics and is not taking sides in the cold war between aspiring empires. It is the IOC's problem, how to survive as a dominant global manager of sport, after taking sides in the cold war. The challenge for a future political philosophy of sport is to analyse the prevailing sport governance system as one of global political powers engaged in the cold war.

## To a Political Philosophy of Sport

Both contemporary cases illustrate another disturbing phenomenon. Modern sport is not only 'capitalism at play' (Collins 2013, p. 13); this economic game-playing is enabled, exploited, and even governed by an expanding global political system. How come and what are its implications? Giorgio Agamben (1946 -) unveiled western politics as a process of the politically validated encapsulation of persons, activities, and domains, turning

democracy and state politics into repressive biopolitical regimes (Agamben 1998, 2016). The global political community represents an autarchic mode of government, ruling all forms of life, even those considered insufficient or inappropriate. The birth of modern sport is constituted on the prohibition and exclusion of inappropriate drives and attitudes, facilitated by specific regulation and sport ethics. In return, sporting governing bodies were 'allowed' to create their own internal politics, the much-appraised autonomy of sport governance. So following Agamben, what is still considered to be a unique achievement, ruling sport autonomously with specific regulations, disciplinary law, and intrinsic values, should be reframed as a deceiving veil for a brutal biopolitical takeover. Sport as that precious social practice in which intimate communities are born, where bodies mature and excellence is cultivated, seems to be a field par excellence to be politicized. Biopolitics is involved for the purpose of an enormous controlled and coordinated activity, manifesting at the same time a global commodity production of tremendous economic proportions. To conclude, the package deal at the start of modern sport, between mainstream state-politics and the first generation of sports executives, to grant sport its own autonomy in terms of governance and regulation, created in return a situation of 'free play', exploiting the precious field of modern sport to strengthen political economy in a global political world.<sup>6</sup>

Now how to proceed from here? The aim of this article is not to put together proposals for the reform of sport's internal politics, addressed to sport governing bodies. What needs to be developed in the first place, is a critical conceptual framework as a starting point for a complementary *political* philosophy of sport. This framework should enable the debunking of sport's *ethical* ideology, mapping the field of sport as a place where individual and collective actors consider their positions from an apolitical, 'universal' point of view, distinguishing right from wrong. To do so, we should take into consideration the field of in- and external politics, ruling sport. As such, we enter the field of powerplay, where those without power try to find a way to survive and function without being totally subdued to power(s). And sport has become an eminent field of power, struggles between powers, and tactical conduct of those with less or no power to manage sport —namely, athletes.<sup>7</sup> The mapping of power in sport generally exposes the fact that power is concentrated in IOC and specific sport bodies, with more power in those associations which represent big sport business. On the other side, it marks the position of 'everyday athletes' as subjected to the power hierarchy. This distribution of power is a political activity and must be studied and eventually criticized as such. It has its ethical consequences, including that of the existence of two ethical universes, that of power and that of lack of power to decide.

In completing the conceptual framework presented here, built from relevant insights by Aristotle, Badiou, Rancière and Agamben, we will now add the position of Michel de Certeau (1925 – 1986) in *The Practice of Everyday Life*: 'I call a "strategy" the calculus of force-relationships which becomes possible when a subject of will and power (a proprietor, an enterprise, a city, a scientific institution) can be isolated from an "environment". A strategy assumes a place that can be circumscribed as proper (*propre* in French, meaning "*être propriétaire de*" – "to be the owner of") and thus serve as the basis for generating relations with an exterior distinct from it (competitors, adversaries, "clientèles", "targets", or "objects" of research). Political, economic, and scientific rationality has been constructed on this strategic model'.<sup>8</sup> The governance model imposed by IOC or FIFA, with

abundant power of associations to manage most popular sports, should be qualified as an *enterprise*, representing a hegemonic source of power politics in modern sport. The split between sport and politics was needed to establish the independence of this political power, creating an institutional dependency to all other carriers of external political power (international organizations, nation-state governments, global media nets, global corporations . . .). And then there are those 'targets' (athletes and players), who need to be owned by proprietors (subjects of power), if they want to be an active part of the field. Their activities mean devotion to sport in their everyday life under rules and conditions established and managed by 'subjects of will and power'. As stated earlier, those are the very features of a *biopolitical* regime of power, ruling modern sport. The devotion is not just limited to the game, its rules and values, but also affects other components of their everyday life. This was revealed without reservation and concealment after the introduction of anti-doping control out of competition which, instead of oppressive discipline, introduced a system of continuous surveillance.<sup>9</sup>

Still, the relationship between subjects of power (proprietors) and those subjected to power is much more complex, because it entails the tactics of everyday life under subjects of power. Whatever this power relation wins, it does not keep. It must constantly manipulate events in order to turn them into 'opportunities'. The weak must continually turn forces alien to them to their own end and benefit. Those who are objects of power produce *invisible* forms of resistance; invisible until the power's inability to continue to manage the field is exposed as unmanageable, clearing in the heart of power. This invisibility conditions everyday tactics as non-political, merely conditioned by moral concepts, like duty and virtue. Its precondition is that power is unsophisticated, primitive and in love with its own perception of the reality as something mastered and under control. Modern sport, with its own governance, regulations and values, seems to fit perfectly in this understanding of global power politics.

However, to get at the emergence of *the political*, a political subject must be produced, not given by the institutionalized framework of politics. Even Aristotle's major premise on the ontological reciprocity between morality and 'the political', might convince us to develop a proper political philosophy of sports, complementary to modern sports' dominant moral discourse. 'the political' in late modernity is a result of a battle for political recognition and comes from involvement in fight when it becomes clear that some politics has to be developed for the sake of a successful outcome. The political together with the political subject emerges when those demanding better conditions become aware that without being recognized and included as political subjects, they can win a few and lose a few battles, but will never overturn the absence of their political power.

Why not analyse what's currently happening in Qatar during the World Cup Football? Our struggle with this bizarre event derives from the continuous tension between a football regime (FIFA) that pretends to be outside politics, but at the same time plays plenty of politics by bowing to Qatari rulers. This tension becomes more and more visible and unbearable, resulting in a growing number of incidents that debunk the current relation between sport and politics. To cite just a few examples, what about the 'JFK' speech by FIFA president Infantino, in which he presents himself as gay, migrant and all those other identities at odds with both football culture and the political preferences in Qatar? This Kafkaesque speech was immediately followed by the FIFA-ban on wearing

'One Love' bracelets or shirts that refer to diversity and inclusion. Here, we see FIFA taking credit for the political mores of the Qatari regime, enacting a sporting punishment: the yellow card.

And there is more. Even Sepp Blatter recently distanced himself from the 2010 decision to keep the World Cup 2022 in Qatar. In doing so, the former FIFA president once again embarrassed us. If this man now turns away from Qatar, how can anyone else defend innocent consumption of this World Cup? Blatter demonstrates the double standard in football; on the one hand, the promise of connection and world peace, on the other the reality of corruption and self-interest. Because Blatter et al. at the time did not heed Kant's '*categorical imperative*' (moral duty) surrounding the allocation of the World Cup to Qatar, this vacuum has travelled with our perception of this event. In other words, where the Kantian moral law is not respected, a debt arises that must be repaid sometime. This debt is now surfacing in the present, as players, coaches, and all of us struggle with the question of whether it is morally acceptable to enjoy this World Cup. This collective guilt unveils the shame that Blatter et al. did not feel in 2010.

The lesson we learn from this: athletes have no political rights in sport. The second is that if they address their grievances to the general public, they will be punished by the sporting regime. This is a point where athletes must start to think about their status and rights, which they do more and more often. Athletes and players compare the damage done by opening Pandora's box of the fight against internal sport politics, if compared to the peaceful continuation of their sport lives, or, perhaps, leaving sport forever. Up to now, the emergence of the political in sport was rare, and when it happened, it was either punished as in cases mentioned above, or 'accepted' by sport authorities in a way which put athletes again under command of sport authorities—as in the recent case of Colin Kaepernick's gesture and 'black lives matter' in sport, which emerged as a spontaneous reaction but was very quickly put under rules given by highest sport authorities. This ability to depoliticize new political demands, like those for equal treatment of women of farewell to false amateurism, of taking the ecological side of sport events, sport transportation, or building of grandiose sport architecture—they were all turned from sincere political engagement of athletes, into accepted politics, not decided upon to regulate equality, but to keep inequality of political power untouched. But some of today's problems in modern sport are grave and demand fundamental change of institutionalized structure of decision-making for many reasons. Two of the most visible are the concentration of enormous capital in hands of few who do not submit to democratic control, and the growing appetite for cooperation of sport authorities with the most authoritarian and totalitarian regimes. In the last decade we experienced too many repetitions of the Berlin Olympics trauma. These conflicting issues call for a stronger political status of athletes themselves, and for converting toothless 'democratization' of sport into a resilient and functional sport democracy.

Political philosophy of sport should not choose a specific position in these deliberations, but clarify some basic concepts like already mentioned difference between strategy and tactics, and between 'dirty' politics and the political. As the first one is taken from de Certeau, this second duality was developed by Jacques Rancière. His 'Theses on Politics' start with a decisive distinction: 'Politics is not the exercise of power. Politics ought to be defined on its own terms, as a mode of acting put into practice by a specific kind of subject and deriving from a particular form of reason. It is the political relationship that

allows one to think the possibility of a political subject(ivity) [in French: “le sujet politique”], not the other way around’.<sup>10</sup> This is clarified further by Thesis 7: ‘Politics is specifically opposed to the police. The police is a “distribution of the sensible” [le partage du sensible] whose principle is the absence of a void and of a supplement’.<sup>11</sup> The political emerges from the immanent truth that ‘... equality is not a common measure between individuals, it is a capacity through which individuals act as the holders of a common power, a power belonging to anyone. Equality does not arise from the *tertium comparationis* between individuals, it is already there before any comparison. And the promise to be “free” is just like the proposition “equal”: it does not designate a property of individuals’. (Rancière 1998, 2017, 2022). The so-called ‘police order’ of society which is colloquially called *politics*, divides between those who belong and those who do not, yet ‘another community’ is always imposed over the police of our social order. Sport philosophy is involved in defining the conditions to (not) belong to the field of sport, and thus the ‘distribution of the sensible’, creating inequality. If we are ready to accept this uneasy truth, we should critically reconsider our power in this ‘police order’ to express sport’s political potential.

When we add the difference between police and the political to the difference between the strategy of power and the tactics of the powerless, we can conclude that under contemporary circumstances of communication it becomes even harder to proceed from complaining and demanding to politicization. The embrace between subjection and subjectivation, and—especially in sport—demand of total depoliticization of the field, using the assumption that anything political is dirty and unhealthy for sport, keeps the sport field safe from open and direct politicization. But this will sustain the outburst of the political in sport until all things proceed as usual. In troubled times (and we are in troubled times, be it in global disbalance of imperial powers, which is developing into more and more bloody wars: be it in consequences of ruining nature; be it in growing, socially and politically unbearable precipice between growing extreme poverty and an elite of super rich, an economic power most nation states do not possess), these developments are harmful for sport as it is, a domain of big corporations and authoritarian leadership, but also of extreme nationalism which promoted sport (especially but not exclusively football) into a cradle of organized extreme right violent activism—proving that similar attracts similar.

As stated earlier, we believe that a new, critical political philosophy of sport should not become a kind of politics to substitute what only the emergence of the political in sport can do. But under contemporary global circumstances, it will argue against the false principle of that sacred divide between sport and politics which is not respected by authorities anyway, it will warn against the use of sport ethics for gaining more political power over modern sport, and it will debunk the so-called ‘sport-economic-trinity’. In order to do so, we will introduce recent and contemporary philosophies of the political into sport philosophical considerations, debates and dialogues.

## Notes

1. The bipolar stability that ruled global politics: the American hemisphere, ruled by liberal democracy and capitalism, versus the Russian hemisphere, autocratic regimes and state

controlled economic surveillance. This bipolar stability was shattered during the Post-Cold War period.

2. Goldmann (1978), p. 42.
3. Horne and Whannel (2012), p. 128.
4. International Olympic Committee (2022).
5. *Ibid.*
6. Those who are familiar with Judith Butler's thought, might see similarities with her concept of politics as a 'constitutive outside' (Butler and Athanasiou 2013). Yet, seen from the side of politics, the domain of sport also represents the Agamben 'reincluded outside' (Agamben 1998, 15–30), legitimizing modern politics.
7. Against the military practice to understand tactics as use of strategy in the field of combat, this difference between strategy and tactics is defined very subversively by.
8. de Certeau (1984), p. 17.
9. In *Discipline and Punishment*, Michel Foucault speaks about subordinate bodies that obey the regulations and rules of power: 'Generally speaking, all the authorities exercising individual control function according to a double mode; that of binary division and branding (mad/sane; dangerous/harmless; normal/abnormal); and that of coercive assignment of differential distribution (who he is; where he must be; how he is to be characterized; how he is to be recognized; how a constant surveillance is to be exercised over him in an individual way, etc.). On the one hand, the lepers are treated as plague victims; the tactics of individualizing disciplines are imposed on the excluded; and, on the other hand, the universality of disciplinary controls makes it possible to brand the "leper" and to bring into play against him the dualistic mechanisms of exclusion. The constant division between the normal and the abnormal, to which every individual is subjected, brings us back to our own time, by applying the binary branding and exile of the leper to quite different objects; the existence of a whole set of techniques and institutions for measuring, supervising and correcting the abnormal brings into play the disciplinary mechanisms to which the fear of the plague gave rise. All the mechanisms of power which, even today, are disposed around the abnormal individual, to brand him and to alter him, are composed of those two forms from which they distantly derive'. (Foucault 1977).
10. Rancière (2001).
11. *Ibid.*

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