

# The need of an Olympic Charter for a sport's ethic

Bernard Andrieu

Staps University of Paris (France)

*bernard.andrieu@u-paris.fr*

## Abstract

A sports ethic has its roots in the spirit of play and celebration. The pleasure of playing is an attitude of mind founded on ethical principles that aims first of all to promote respect for the opponent considered as a playing partner. Having a sporting spirit is not only trying to be a good player, but also a good player respectful of the rules, of the opponent, of the referees, while being modest in victory and without rancor in defeat. From an individual point of view, self-control is to be acquired. Self-control is about knowing your limits and your strengths. Sport must above all be a celebration. It serves to develop sociability, in particular a team spirit, made of solidarity on and off the field.

It is in this context that the sportsman emerges, the one who puts the rule before victory and extreme commitment. It is an ideal where socialization precedes war. Sports practice then allows a sportsman to release his impulses while controlling them. The sportsman becomes the actor and the author of a pacification of beliefs and values. The main objective of sports education is not to develop a perfect body but to moralize the wild dimensions of the body. Sport is therefore not an excessive expression of the wild dimensions of the body; it is a space of freedom and morality in which the civilized body of a person is revealed.

## Keywords

Olympic, ethic, sport

Andrieu, B. (2020). The need of an Olympic Charter for a sport's ethic.. *Diagoras: International Academic Journal on Olympic Studies*, 4, 45–59. Retrieved from <http://diagorasjournal.com/index.php/diagoras/article/view/89>



## Introduction

A rule in sport is an arbitrary convention that applies to all participants in a sport (Andrieu 2013). If it is a convention, it is therefore a relationship of obligation (the obligation is based on compliance with the rule). The moral attitude of the athlete is at stake. So a sport is a school where we respect the rules. Why? Because sport is a school of respect for rules, it's a school of life. So we don't obey to our trainer, we are in a relationship of obligation. Sport teaches us to respect these rules because these rules are not laws. What is provided for in the law is transgression; when sport has based its rules on the respect of shared values. Between the players and the coach, beyond a contract, the rules of the game (Butcher, Schneider, 1998) are the force of law and promote the recognition of a universal sport ethic. This was developed by Pierre de Coubertin who was the composer of an Olympic spirit that concerns individuals at every moment of their lives and which is intended at all members of a human community (Dobbs, 1973). Six major universal values compose, in part, the partition of an Olympic spirit taking into account the immutable foundations of changing societies.

1. The fair play is where a person respects both the rule and the spirit of the rule. In other words, if I win by making a hand, I cannot say, "it was the referee who decided but "I cannot win sportively". The player must be in the spirit of the rule.
2. Respect and dignity of people. Dignity is about speaking to people with respect.
3. The right to the image. We do not have the right to use someone's image without their authorization. Athletes own their image.
4. Awareness of the rule associated with the knowledge of the rules. The fault of the players is that they lose the knowledge of the rule. Either they do it voluntarily or involuntarily.
5. Amateurism valued within a sports community by the free dimensions of the game, which produces the pleasure of practicing a bodily activity within a human collectivity.
6. Self-control, which allows a dialogue between the bodily dimensions, the psychological dimensions and the cultural dimensions of the human phenomenon. It's the action that reveals this in a constant search for a balance between a healthy body and a healthy mind.

These six fundamental values are the foundation of a humanist morality, which is based on the search of non-violence, of equality (=it is justice for all) and equity (= it is a proportional justice, i.e. depending on the act performed). This morality takes on its meaning by the quality of the acts of peace that recognize situations of inequality and discrimination (Pawlenka 2005). Within sports cultures, relationships between athletes are also relationships between people of different nationalities. The sports phenomenon thus allows peaceful confrontations between nations to develop. The existence of an Olympic charter allows an ethics of sport to be anchored in the historical and cultural dimensions of sport. It is on this condition that the Olympism becomes a philosophy of life that exalts a balanced set of qualities of the body, the will and the spirit. Combining sport with culture and education, Olympism aims to create a lifestyle based on joy in effort, on educational value of good example and on the respect of universal fundamental ethical principles (Simon, 2000). It is at the heart of Olympism that sport is an educational fact that cuts across all dimensions of the human phenomenon.

Membership of a sports club is a testament to this crossbreeding that allows sports education to work with the quest for excellence and access to personal development. The respect for a Charter, however, is not enough to allow the Olympism to adorn itself with all the virtues of a universal education. A sports ethic is a facet of the human phenomenon, which cannot be distanced from a charter of the Olympics (Grupe, 1997).

A sports ethic has its roots in the spirit of play and celebration. The pleasure of playing is an attitude of mind founded on ethical principles which aims first of all to promote respect for the opponent considered as a playing partner. Having a sporting spirit (McIntosh, 1979) is not only trying to be a good player, but also a good player respectful of the rule, of the opponent, of the referees, while being modest in victory and without rancor in defeat. From an individual point of view, self-control is to be acquired. Self-control is about knowing your limits and your strengths. Sport must above all be a celebration. It serves to develop sociability, in particular a team spirit, made of solidarity on and off the field.

It is in this context that the sportsman emerges, the one who puts the rule before victory and extreme commitment. It is an

ideal where socialization precedes war. Sports practice then allows a sportsman to release his impulses while controlling them (Starkweather, 2010). The sportsman becomes the actor and the author of a pacification of beliefs and values. The main objective of sports education is not to develop a perfect body but to moralize the wild dimensions of the body. Sport is therefore not an excessive expression of the wild dimensions of the body; it is a space of freedom and morality in which the civilized body of a person is revealed.

### **The fair play crisis reveals the complexity of the ethics of sport**

It is a lifestyle, a reason for being rather than a simple means or a game. We will use it as a construction method. It's because we incorporated the rule that we embody it in the face of the world. We were forced to appoint referees when certain athletes did not incorporate written rule in the same way. Sports loyalty promotes recognition of fair play (Keating, 1995) by incorporating shared cultural rules. It is through exercise and training that we gain this recognition. It was in 1856 that Mont Alembert used the concept of fair play for the first time. He then spoke of sportsmanship. In a universal language, this notion translates as "well done" in the sense of nice game.

Originally fair play is an expression, which is related to the vocabulary of crickets as opposed to unfair-play, which consists mainly of a fault the pitcher whose ball is deemed dangerous to the safety of the opponent. Fair play is what makes it possible to achieve the logics of sporting play. Unfair-play (Heringer, 1993) is the dangerous gesture that jeopardizes a person's bodily and psychological integrity. The multiple perceptions of these notions of fair play and unfair-play makes it possible to reveal a constitutive element of what founds an uncertain humanity. This carries within it the foundations of existential postures where the risk of going beyond sports loyalty leads to the achievement of extraordinary performances. Two moral problems then become inherent in a polymorphic definition of the concept of fair play:

- First moral problem: is it possible to win by being loyal? There has to be equality between the opponents (the situation, the material) so that we can be on the same level. Then the best wins. It is a utilitarian and pragmatic morality that allows victory to be combined with the yardstick of loyalty.

-Second moral problem: is fair-play compatible with the excessive logic of competition? Fair play is often evaluated depending on the faults made by an athlete and not in regards of his gestures and good behavior. So, the term “respect” replaces the notion of “fair-play”: fair play is no longer that I respect myself as an athlete because I respect the rules; but it has become the fair play of others. It has become an external rule when it is basically and internal rule. From the moment the rule becomes external, we are no longer in self-control. We are in control and monitoring processes.

The common point between these two moral problems is a psychosocial process where the incorporation of the rule goes with the interpretation of the rule. It is on this occasion that the concept of fair play evolves towards that of “be sport”: it is then the sporting spirit that is summoned. On the one hand, we have outsourced the rule and on the other we maintain a kind of sports ethic around this expression. We multiply the values that must be respected to have a sporting spirit (arbitration, elegance, loyalty, equality). The fair play attitude then becomes a pretext for cultural rewards. Learning by imitation is part of an educational process where an extrinsic motivation takes priority over what is at the heart of the athlete’s body (Holt, 1992). Exemplary strengthens the obtaining of a medal. Another symptom testifies to the disappearance of fair play: the fight against social discrimination in sport reveals a hiatus between declarative values and an active morality that moves away from these.

There is thus a contradiction between the evolving values of society (where the liberal competition of individuals is induced by the slogan “walk or die”) and the involutive values of sport (where competition between individuals is based on values such as respect, mutual aid, solidarity, fair play). It is this contradiction that puts athletes under pressure that outdoes them: media pressure, economic pressure and the pressure of results. What is essential when performing a sporting gesture is not the result but the way it is experienced and performed? Pierre de Coubertin said “less to gain than to take part in it” in a peaceful sports society. However, if adolescents build the sport battle action as a war confrontation, a false idea of sport (Hamilton, 1971) and its values will replace speeches that advocate peace. A paradox becomes constitutive of what founds a sporting act: when an athlete does not incorporate a value, sanctions are the symbols

of a psychosocial dysfunction. When a value is not integrated into action experienced by an athlete, a disembodied morality indiscriminately combines ethical tackles and immoral tackles.

### **Controlled release of emotions: an incomplete concept for understanding the virtuous dimensions of sports education**

When violence (Abadie, Andrieu, 2008) returns to sport and to the forums, the effect of liberation and the relaxation of tensions by the display of a simulacrum show and the victory of one side against another is no longer enough, contrary to the thesis of Norbert Elias and Eric Dunning, to cathartically regulate passions. Mimetic confrontation, a thesis taken up by René Girard, in sport contributes to the relaxation of the tensions of a biological disposition, which “can be socially stimulated and shaped” (Elias, Dunning, 1986, 80). *The English title, Quest for Excitement. Sport and Leisure in the Civilizing Process*, as the analysis Roger Chartier rests on the distinction between the relaxation of the control exerted on the emotions in an ordinary way by the mimetic character of sports on the one hand and the internalization of the mechanisms of self-restraints including in the temporary relaxation of temporary control over impulses (Elias, Dunning, 1986, 62) on the other hand.

The search for pleasant arousal, that is a biological disposition to pleasure, can be stimulated by learning while controlling, in particular through sport, the self-management of impulses. The sport would have evolved “in the same direction as the code of behaviors and sensitivities” (Elias, Dunning, 1986, 27-28): the increase in the sensitivity accelerates the process of civility by ensuring a “greater equality between the fighters” (Elias, Dunning, 1986, 28). Thus the link between ethics and sensitivity is at the bottom of the process (the term of progress is not used) of civilizations to which the “sportification” of leisure time pursues the same objective as the codification of sports. The code of behavior and sensitivity would be the ethical criterion to evaluate the process of civilization.

Pacification, or in any case “a form of non-violent and non-military competition between States” (Elias, Dunning, 1986, 30), becomes a constitutive value of sport and at the same time an ethical criterion to assess what would not be very sporty as

behavior, all violence becoming a major indicator of the ethics of a sport. The relaxation of stress and bodily tensions is necessary so that a “movement of the civilization incites the population to find violence agreeable” (Elias, Dunning, 1986, 72). The quest for pleasure then produces an emotional resonance without leading to a prescriptive ethics of sport: if “the need for the de-routinization (Elias, Dunning, 1986, 305)” is universal, the enclave of sport is always social, so that its ethics of socialization defines a “secular religion” (Elias, Dunning, 1986, 307) whose secular values nourish collective identification as a means “of constituting an identity in a modern society and giving meaning to one’s life” (Elias, Dunning, 1986, 306). But, as Eric Dunning recognizes that the ethics of socialization would not have been sufficient to give a civilized and civilizing form to the game without:

- «A complex set of written and formally instituted rules stipulating strict control over the use of physical force ... ».

- «Clearly defined internal sanctions or penalties ».

- «The institution of a specific role, namely that of the «referee» who remains outside and «above» of the game in order to control the game» (Elias, Dunning, 1986, 317).

By recognizing that the increase in instrumental violence would reduce the emotional part to technical rationality, sports ethics are not incorporated into the habitus by transforming internalized self-control into adherence to values. Therefore, can the sports actor become a sports writer who would no longer be constrained by heteronomy? The ethics of embodied sport would favor less the self-control than the respect for the rule and not because of the fear of punishment. The utilitarianism of conforming to the sporting rule by obedience differs well from the Kantian obligation of moral autonomy. Therefore, is the ethics of sport subject to a legal conformism of the rule and obedience, leading (at best) to a freely consented submission to social morality?

## **An ethical critique of sport is an Olympic requirement to be valued**

Is the ethics of sport an illusion produced by a culture to develop a moralization of the regulation of the masses? If we stick to Jean Marie Brohm, Marc Perelman or even Michel Caillat, after *Which body?* Become *What Sport?* The ethical attempt would only be a

temptation to legitimize and normalize the intensification of competition, the violence of sports packs, and the “submission of all sports to the law of the commodity, of the corruptions, of the arrangements and of the schemes as consequences of capitalist competition” (Brohm, 1993, 100).

This ideological criticism of sport, which has since become an ideology of sport criticism (see the regular and reciprocal attacks developed by Georges Vigarello and Jean Marie Brohm (Brohm, 1993, 117-119)) is accompanied by the association of deviant phenomena, which shake up the process of pacification of sports arena: sexual harassment, burnout, violation of private life, doping, racism, violence, eugenic selection of athletes, marketing of image rights are phenomena that become phenomena of society, as soon as they are denounced in the public square. It is the moment when the fair denunciation of these cases finally confirmed the thesis: “the current crisis in sport has become endemic through the dialectical combination of three sets of factors” (Brohm, 1993, 68): on the one hand, the contradictions of a hypermodern social system, on the other hand the combinations of these with those of the class struggle, and finally the challenge of an epistemology and critical didactics of sport.

By asserting that an ethics of sport is possible starting from the analysis of bodily practices and the conscious and unconscious experience of a social agent, a risk lies in the wait for the relevance of this analysis: that of the criticism of “speeches of authority” “And” legitimist speeches” ( Brohm, 1993, 200). However, the same Jean Marie Brohm, without reaching the ethics of sport but the philosophical ethics in his Levinasian conversion of the Pretontaine project, seeks “the internal process of a practical subject (political, epistemic, desiring ..)” (Brohm, 1993, 545). Although alienated, used and exploited, does the sports subject have no freedom on the uses of his body? Should we only find in the incorporation of norms, the subjectivation process that a phenomenological analysis of the lived body would at least allow?

To try to describe with Christian Pociello and Alain Loret, “followers of postmodernism sports” the ethical alternatives of sports cultures is to make “the apology of ethno-identity supportism and community belonging” ( Brohm, 1996, 364). The ethics of sport cannot therefore escape criticism of sport, since any proposal to get out of it would be impossible. But what does this



critical movement offers us as ethics? Should we remove sport and return to a fun physical education by promoting a participatory body practice only without competition? Marc Perelman analyzes sport precisely as barbarous, thus targeting the very essence of sport: "Sport, in a few decades, has become the biggest mass phenomenon in the world of the XXth century, undoubtedly the new and true religion of the XXIst. Sport always draws its great and its main strength from a global adhesion, an adhesion of all; sport mobilizes huge masses coagulated in stadiums or solidified in front of television screens, masses which then pour out and vaporize on the city streets to celebrate victory, their victory. Through its local, national and international structures, sport has risen to the height of a world power in the sense of an authority which tends to cover, overhang and penetrate all the activities of a society plagued by greatest distress. Sport is thus constituted as the spearhead of an army in battle order against which, curiously, those whom are confused are crushed by it" (Perelman 2008, 45).

A steamroller of decadent modernity, sport rolls everything in its path and becomes the only project of a society without a project. The stadium itself becomes barbaric (Perelman, 1998) as an architecture that unleashes sporting fury. The emotional plague (Brohm, Perelman, 2006) that would be football, compared to sport in general and the barbaric use of the stadium, even though athletics and rugby, among others, demonstrate the presence of values other than those denounced by this architectural critic. Criticism of Norbert Elias' reflections opposes the civilizing character of sport. Michel Caillat, founder of the Center for Critical Analysis of Sport, underlines the confusion between sport and physical activity; this confusion makes it impossible to analyze a physical practice. Sport is political as a conception and a vision of the world whose values are neither neutral nor objective.

In 2005, in the issue of *Public ethics devoted to the ethics of sport in debate. Doping, violence, spectacle*, Philippe Liotard and Joel Monzée notes that "the regulatory authorities and institutions specific to sport are supposed to guarantee the purity of the practice and the honesty of the actors of the sport system" (Laberge S., Liotard P., Monzée J., 2005, 4); purity, or else the purification of sport by eliminating excess (cheaters, doped, rapists, stalkers, racists, homophobes and hooligans), maintains the illusion of an ethics to be found. Sport would be lost in excessive use of the body to the point that equity and health could be guaranteed around the

boundaries between the lawful and the legitimate, the acceptable and the unacceptable.

The fragility of ethical arguments is revealed in the face of the regulation of fair play conceived as a priori, where the law prohibits certain practices such as doping. The essentialist and teleological ethics of sport, even in the Olympic *motto* “*altius, citius, fortius*”, seems to reduce an ethics of competition whose utilitarian tendencies go as far as maximization and improvement. Isabelle Queval has rightly analyzed how to accomplish oneself well or the surpass of oneself (Queval, 2004, 188) must maintain a conflict between on the one hand the costing of the exercise, the specialization of the gesture and the rational efficiency and on the other hand a complete and balanced motor skills, the self-knowledge and body ecology.

But the discernment of “good” and “best” is not so easy to operate without the prudence of a bodily experience: for the lack of a reflection of the bodily subject, which Richard Shusterman, describes as a consciousness of the body (Shusterman, 2008), the self-knowledge involves surpassing oneself. Competition with oneself and its staging in the sporting show, do not usually find a sufficient mode of regulation to constitute a body knowledge. The physical habit of exercise transforms repetition into habitus, the ethos of which fades to the point of seeking a stronger experience. This bodily intensification, if it promotes the quest for a crescendo, finds no ethical goal for lack of a value to be attained. The indefinite search for performance precipitates the sporting subject in medical rituals and in genetic improvement of performance. Should we respect our own body according to an effective sport or seek ecological health (Andrieu, Parry, Porrovecchio, Sirost, 2018) and well-being?

## Conclusion

The essence of sports ethics is not to force athletes to respect the rules in terms of constraints and obedience. From an ethical perspective, it is a connection with internal sensations that promotes the adherence of sports subject to the values of sport. An ethical act is thus rooted in bodily actions, which reveal the values of sport. However, the appearance of ethics committees produced instances of judgment, which became systems of sanctions, and pretexts for prohibitions. Ethics is a complete and

pragmatic adherence to values, while the individual sportsman believes that it is only enough to respect explicit rules.

By believing that the rules are external to them, these individuals are not transformed by the rules, when only the result counts. There is a contradiction between the values of society (the liberal competition of individuals “walking of dying”) and the values of sport (a competition between individuals but within values such as respect, mutual aid, solidarity, fair play ...). The individual sports person becomes a hostage who is asked to bear alone the pressure of the media, the economic pressure and the pressure of the result.

However, the moral problem encountered by the individual sports person is not the result obtained but the way in which it is obtained. When sportspeople see a sporting confrontation as a war confrontation, they are going to have a false idea of sport and its values. A labyrinthine quest for meaning is offered to an athletic individual when an ethical value brings to life an embodied action. For this, he needs to learn to distinguish ethical tackles and immoral tackles that punctuate a sports dramaturgy. However several conditions must be met for a value to be embodied in a bodily action:

- Self-monitoring testifies in an athlete of his competence to respect effortlessly and without constraint an ethical code.
- Knowing how to lose is a skill that an athlete accepts to come into contact with when self-control takes the form of a loss of control in the analysis of kinesthetic, cognitive and emotional situations that have become too complex to manage.
- The pacification of a society is a constitutive value of the sporting gesture, which enables an athlete to become a citizen of two worlds: the intrapsychic personal world and the interpsychic cultural world.

Self-control, knowing how to lose and the conciliation with a sports society are three facets of the sports ethic that is developed in sports spaces like cybathlon (Richard, Andrieu, 2019). It is from this triad that an Olympic Charter can allow itself to be part of an approach that values the dignity of a man within an education for sustainable human development. This education, which concerns a human being at every age of his life, does not consider the body as a machine, but rather as the symbol that allows sports equity to participate in the development of justice, which recognizes

the contradictions of an ethics of the competition. It is in the contradictions of a society that is reflected in the Olympic spaces that an Olympic Charter becomes a scene where two partitions echo: a universal sports ethics and a personal sports ethics.

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## **Author**

**Bernard Andrieu**, Philosopher, is a full time professor in the faculty of sport in the University of Paris and the President of the Francophonie's Society of Sports's Philosophy. He has published the following studies: as an Editor, *Body ecology Emersive Leisure* (Routledge, 2018), *The Cybathlon experience: beyond transhumanism to capability hybridization*, *Journal of the Philosophy of Sport* (2019 with Remi Richard) & as an author with Akira Kurashima A. (2018), (in English & In Japan) *The Body behind the spectacle: Capturing Emersion of the Living Body of Circus Performers*, *Japan Journal of Sport Sociology*, 26-2, p. 25-53.