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Opinion Article

CAN PHYSICAL EDUCATION BE DECOLONIAL?

PODE SER A EDUCAÇÃO FÍSICA DECOLONIAL?

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RESUMO

O presente ensaio propõe-se a levantar reflexões acerca de formas 'outras' de pensar a educação física e nela intervir, partindo da seguinte questão: pode ser a educação física decolonial? Por meio de autores/as que problematizam a modernidade e que perspectivam um projeto decolonial com reconhecimento e valorização de corpos diversos, o texto propõe o debate reflexivo acerca da possibilidade de uma educação física justa e comprometida com a superação da subalternidade. Nesse percurso, são levantadas questões acerca da modernidade e sua face segregatória, dos traços decoloniais presentes na educação física brasileira (notadamente na década de 1990) e de perspectivas para uma educação física decolonial por meio de práticas corporificadas.

Palavras-chave: Educação física. Pedagogias. Decolonialidade. Práticas corporificadas.

ABSTRACT

This essay proposes to raise reflections on 'other' ways of thinking about and intervening in physical education, starting with the following question: can physical education be decolonial? Through authors who problematize modernity and envision a decolonial project that recognizes and values diverse bodies, the text proposes a reflective debate on the possibility of a just physical education committed to overcoming subalternity. In this process, questions are raised about modernity and its segregationist aspects, the decolonial traits present in Brazilian physical education (notably in the 1990s), and perspectives for a decolonial physical education through embodied practices.

Key-words: Physical education. Pedagogies. Decoloniality. Embodied practices.

Introduction

The question that guides the construction of this essay – 'Can physical education be decolonial?' – reflects concerns regarding 'other' ways of thinking about physical education and intervening in it, in different areas of activity, considering ethical, aesthetic, educational and social justice issues. Asking about the possibility of decolonial physical education requires revisiting how the field has historically been constructed and how different social actors have defined its identity. This path requires an understanding of how physical education is (or is not) aligned with social changes and the dynamics of contemporary social life, especially with regard to questioning and dismantling power structures and knowledge hierarchies that subjugate the knowledge, practices, and identities of peoples and cultures that have been marginalised by colonisation processes in favour of civilisational models. In other words, I believe it is necessary to understand the shifts caused by cultural changes in recent years, which have triggered different ways of operating in daily life and interpersonal relationships, as well as producing knowledge, carrying out epistemological activity, and bringing about transformations in diverse educational contexts.

Cultural changes have expanded spaces for people to speak from their place of speech/enunciation, that is, from the social place they occupy based on their unique experiences. These spaces have favoured the reaffirmation of rights and the recognition of social markers of difference (race/ethnicity, gender, sexuality, religion, disability, others), which, in an intersectional way, reveal conditions of oppression or privilege exercised in society. What is fascinating about this, in my view (perhaps revolutionary), is the fact that places of speech are now being occupied by historically subalternised groups, whose voices, previously covered up,

silenced, dormant or narrated by people who represented them (or who claimed to represent them), are now being heard. This movement has been observed in our daily lives through social relations, different media and activism, as well as in different areas of knowledge and professional fields, causing shifts in the way certain phenomena need to be examined.

With regard to Brazilian physical education, I see a very promising movement that focuses on valuing the diversity of expressions and popular cultures, as well as the need to question/revise its hegemonic white history. This movement has been supported by the evidence of the participation of black, indigenous, quilombola, riverine, disabled, transgender people, and people of African/Afro-Brazilian descent in diverse spaces that were not previously common to them, mainly as a result of struggles by organised groups, NGOs, media activism, and affirmative social policies, such as racial quotas in universities, quotas for people with disabilities in the labour sector, the Bolsa Família programme, diversity policies, among others. Despite this, this movement does not occur without resistance from those who are uncomfortable with this new configuration, trying to discredit it, especially those who adhere to traditional academic practices.

I have observed in academic circles the discomfort of certain researchers who associate the decolonial movement with fads, with a lack of rationality in questioning the hegemony of European authors, and who see political activism as inappropriate in scientific work, in a visible attempt to delegitimise this movement. There is a discomfort that displaces them in their scientific canons and puts them in a situation of insecurity, as they are not always able or willing to keep up with the social dynamics that impose new configurations and challenges, including in the field of science.

For twenty years, I have sought, together with the Body, Culture and Playfulness Research Group (GPCCL/CNPq/UEM), to engage in actions for a diverse, inclusive, culturally broad physical education that recognises different forms of existence, especially of people who have historically experienced processes of exclusion and invisibility. In this journey, we have sought to direct our efforts towards actions and knowledge production that question power relations, problematise social markers of difference, and empower and materialise decolonial physical education. Some of our recent actions include the research project 'Decolonial challenges in physical culture: ethnic-racial, gender and social class intersections', funded by CNPq (Universal Call for Proposals), with the participation of national and international researchers, as well as the '1st International Conference on Decolonial Challenges in Physical Culture'. These actions have led us to develop practical experiences and investigations with women and other invisible groups, which has provided enriching learning opportunities. Some productions are still in progress and others point to initial decolonial approaches, but they have prompted us to read, analyse, discover and decolonise our next existence and our teaching activities, following the example of Lara[1], Marques and Lara[2], Marani and França[3].

I understand that topics such as 'decolonial project and fad', 'modernity/coloniality versus postmodernity/decoloniality', 'modernity as an unfinished project', 'breaking the hegemony of European references in favour of Latin American, African and Asian ones' are some of the knots to be untied in this new configuration. These challenges lead me to reflect on a few things: a) to what extent should topics such as decoloniality, the fight against racism and sexism, and identity politics, if taken as mainstream in science, be considered "fads", that is, is there a fleeting materiality in the constitution of the decolonial project, subject to the vicissitudes of time?; b) is modernity the original drive of coloniality?; c) is a critical decolonial pedagogy in physical education possible/desirable?; d) what role does the body play in the decolonial project? These questions guide the construction of this essay and seek to trigger

reflections on the question that guides this text, unfolded by the question: can physical education be decolonial?

This essay is organised into three basic parts. In the first, I bring elements to think about the construction of coloniality and its anchoring in the modern project, with the emptying of the body and its affections as effects of a type of pedagogy that assimilates these values and this intentionality. To this end, I take as my central reference the work 'Negritude sem identidade' (Negritude without identity) by researcher Érico Andrade[4] – philosopher, professor at the Federal University of Pernambuco and former president of the National Association of Postgraduate Studies in Philosophy. In the second and third, I discuss decolonial historical traits in Brazilian physical education since the 1990s, the possibility of decolonial physical education and its embodied practices for a possible and just existence, notably for historically subalternised groups. I hope, with this, to bring provocations and insights about the guiding question of this essay.

Modernity and its colonial face

In 2024, I wrote a chapter for the book 'Physical cultural studies and decolonial dialogues: challenges that traverse the relationship between body, culture and power'[5], co-authored with Janete Cristina da Silva, a former student and master's graduate from the Associated Postgraduate Programme in Physical Education at UEM-UEL. The aim of this chapter was to problematise the issue of blackness and whiteness from our places of speech/enunciation and the relationship we established – me, a white woman, researcher, supervisor; her, a black woman, teacher, dancer and student. The title of our chapter begins with the following questions: What violence do you practise? What privileges do you exercise? It is with this questioning that I begin this topic, motivated by the intention to reflect on coloniality, our place of enunciation, and the social role we play in a society that exalts whiteness, heteronormativity, patriarchy, and violates bodies that deviate from certain standards.

Recognising myself as a white, cisgender woman from a lower-middle-class family that supported my studies (emotionally and financially) and gave me the support I needed to graduate professionally, and being encouraged by teachers and friends in my professional life project, I realise that my historical construction is allocated in a situation of privilege. Although marked by the condition of being a woman in a patriarchal society (experiencing gender inequality, inequality of opportunity and freedom in relation to many men), I have not experienced racism. I had access to university and never had to think about how I would dress to go to the supermarket or to buy something at the corner shop so that I would not be watched in establishments. Furthermore, I did not have to ask myself if I could occupy certain social spaces, except for financial reasons (as a student), and I did not have to work to study – a reality that is quite common in the daily lives of students.

The lack of minimum conditions for living is certainly a form of violence, which is expressed in various ways: through looks, contempt, facial expressions, the invisibility of the presence of others, the normalisation of hierarchy, racism and inequality; through the discourse of meritocracy, moral framing, the denial of the body in its form of being/existing, among others. The privileges of being white, male, cisgender, fluent in English, young, fertile, having access to systematised knowledge and having the financial resources to operate on a daily basis, study and enjoy leisure time need to be rethought in unequal societies that exclude those who do not fit into these frameworks. This does not mean ceasing to 'be' or have certain

qualifications or attributes, but understanding that our experiences, in general, in a society of privilege, contribute directly to structuring a society of oppression.

This analysis, necessary as a starting point, aims to contribute to us not taking for granted certain discourses or practices that attempt to delegitimise invisible voices, especially when they defend narratives such as: 'decoloniality is a fashionable topic'; 'now everyone is talking about black people and identifying as black'; 'indigenous people have to stop speaking languages that no one understands and adapt to society'. It is necessary to unveil the issue in question and democratise access to this debate. The exploration of certain readings guided by the questioning of binaries (mind/body; whiteness/blackness; theory/practice, coloniality/decoloniality, among others) in search of answers for the construction of paths based on democracy and social justice is essential in this process of understanding how power operates socially and contributes to the establishment of hierarchies and inequalities.

The work 'Negritude sem identidade: sobre as narrativas singulares das pessoas negras' (Negritude without identity: on the singular narratives of black people), by Andrade[4], published in September 2023 by N-1 Edições, gives rise to the debate about negritude as a subjective experience, modernity and the creation of blackness in philosophy, racism in the constitution of the subjective experience of negritude, and re-blackened and singularised subjectivity. The body is very present in this work as affection and materiality, although it has been forgotten/made invisible in the construction of modern thought, as the author himself argues.

Andrade[4;31] leads us to think about what he calls the "white colour of common sense" and recalls the beginning and development of this thought in the history of Western philosophy, given that there have been many lines of thought, at least since Plato, that have sought, in some way, to separate the soul from the body. However, the researcher explains that the separation of body and soul in modernity is different from other eras – it has a certain novelty. "It rests on the construction of a subject that establishes itself as such to the extent that it recognises itself as a thinking being"[4;32]. The meditative exercise proposed by Descartes, as Andrade observes, reinforces the separation of body and soul, just as the radical nature of doubt leads Descartes to conclude, in his second Meditation, that "[...] he exists even if he is not certain about the existence of his own body"[4;33]. Therefore, in Cartesian thought, the researcher argues, if we cannot rid ourselves of our own body (because we are incarnate beings), we should not subordinate ourselves to the senses that are connected to it and that sometimes deceive us.

Identity as ideality is reflected by Andrade based on Cartesian thought, being understood as "[...] abstraction from the particularities of people to retain something invariable about them; without matter, a kind of ghost [...]", a word used by the researcher in many passages of the analysed work. But what does he mean when he talks about ghosts? For him, a ghost is the formatting, the framing of people "[...] in an idea without a body that, paradoxically, has the power to standardise human behaviour"[7;35], that is, a body commanded by thought. With his analyses of Cartesian thought, added to other readings, Andrade presents how modernity was built amid the rupture with the body and, notably, with the black body.

In Brazilian Afro-Amerindian traditions, Andrade reminds us, the body is not reduced to the experience of motor skills, but involves "[...] all the spiritual dimensions of human life and the affections themselves"[4;36]. This example, added to others, leads us to understand that the Cartesian construction is flawed because it is not possible to attribute a rational identity pattern to different peoples and communities, with distinct symbolisms and imaginaries. As Andrade warns, "[...] it is not possible to think without the body" and it is not possible for a subject to define themselves solely by the desire to identify with reason. Modern identity, in this logic, would function as a kind of ideology that classifies subjects according to how close or distant they are from this identity. The modern subject would be a 'segregatory subject' in

drawing up identity criteria to divide, demarcate, separate and differentiate humans, and does so through the body. Anything that falls outside the criteria of humanity – which is associated with the use of reason (and not the body) – is classified as subhuman.

Krenak[6;11] reflects on colonisation and the construction of a standard of humanity that echoes Andrade's reflections. The writer understands that '[...] the idea that white Europeans could go out and colonise the rest of the world was based on the premise that there was an enlightened humanity that needed to reach out to the unenlightened humanity [...]'. The call for this so-called civilisation was justified by the idea of truth (or a conception of truth) that began to guide people's choices, throwing them '[...] into this blender called humanity'[6;14], which suppresses diversity, existences and habits. This creates, in Krenak's words, a "zombie humanity". It is precisely the problematisation of the homogenisation of the understanding of civilisation and humanity – by disregarding the different, the diverse and the non-white body – that needs to be activated as a possible path to change.

Andrade[4;41] aims to show how "[...] the creation of a rational subject served in modernity to subjugate humans for their bodily differences" and to identify black people as those who do not desire spiritual activities. In doing so, Andrade delves into modern philosophers who encouraged the construction of racist thought, such as Kant, Hume, Voltaire, and Montesquieu. The author observes that Kant's studies on aesthetics and religion, especially in the work 'On the Difference of Races' (and which are endorsed by his theory of race) contain violent passages in relation to black people. This observation, among others drawn from the analysis of the works of philosophers, notably Descartes, leads the researcher to the following thesis: "[...] I maintain that the construction of race within philosophy occurs in conjunction with the Cartesian division between spirit and body. The main purpose of this construction is to attribute a strictly corporeal identity to black people"[4;45]. The author also recalls how the black body appears in the history of philosophy: "[...] The black person is merely a body abstracted from their spirit; a body without a soul, an animal, while the white person embodies the race responsible for carrying out the task of humanity"[4;45].

In this way, Andrade aims to show that the philosophical discourse of modernity began to produce justifications for objectifying racism and spreading it worldwide, exalting Europe and diminishing the cultures of African peoples and those classified as savage and distant from the European model of civilisation. Black corporeality is constituted, in the philosophical discourse of modernity, as incapable of entering into a social contract, above all because it is not governed by reason and does not have the conditions to feel the expressions of beauty and the sublime. Racism took on an epistemic dimension, the black body came to be seen as the place of deficient humanity, and European culture was designed as the 'beacon for humanity' [4;45].

In Brazil, Andrade notes, the same idea of race as something inferior in the philosophical discourse of modernity continues, albeit with a new guise that leads to racism. The guiding logic is that of racial segregation, whose focus of marginalisation is the black body. In this context, it came to be understood that by removing black people from public spaces and prohibiting their expressions (as happened with capoeira, batuques, candomblé and other Afro-Brazilian practices), it would be possible to construct the representation of their non-place, legitimising white hegemony in different spaces that render the black body invisible. For Andrade[4;80], "[...] racism organises the conception of modernity in Brazil, producing an almost consensual position in the hegemonic discourse that blackness is unfit for modernity to the same extent that modernity is a project for white people". The author warns that the process of racialisation creates a unique experience of blackness built on the basis of corporeality.

Andrade's arguments and his historical-philosophical incursions enable us to perceive

how the modern project was built on the exaltation of reason (linked to whiteness) and the distancing and denial of the body (linked to the black population), triggering ruptures, racism and inequalities. Hence, it is necessary that overcoming the state of coloniality be built on a revision of the modern project. This does not mean understanding modernity as synonymous with coloniality, but rather recognising flaws in the modern project and its direct action in the construction of subalternity, which also applies to physical education, whose hegemonic history is linked to Western, notably European, practices and knowledge.

Decolonial traits in Brazilian physical education?

The genealogy of post-colonialism was addressed by Ballestrin[7] based on two central understandings: a) the first addresses the decolonisation of the 'third world' from the mid-20th century onwards, focusing on the independence and liberation of societies exploited by imperialism and neocolonialism, notably in Africa and Asia; b) the second focuses on the theoretical contributions of literary and cultural studies, which began to gain resonance in universities in England and the United States. Despite these reflections, the researcher's focus falls on the emergence of the Modernity/Coloniality Group in the late 1990s, based on the break between researchers and the so-called subaltern studies (Latin American and Indian), cultural studies, and postcolonial studies. The researcher explains that this group carried out a movement aimed at the critical and utopian renewal of the social sciences in Latin America, with the radicalisation of the postcolonial argument through the decolonial turn, "[...] a term originally coined by Nelson Maldonado-Torres in 2005 and which basically means the theoretical and practical, political and epistemological resistance movement to the logic of modernity/coloniality"[7;105]

The postcolonial argument was not "[...] the prerogative of diasporic or colonised authors from peripheral universities", argues Ballestrin[7;91], based on the 1972 publication by Marcel Merle and Roberto Mesa entitled 'El anticolonialismo europeo'. The author explains that anti-colonial expressions were present in European, Europeanist or Eurocentric thinkers. In her reflections on postcolonialism as an epistemic, intellectual, and political movement, she draws on Franz Fanon, Aimé Césaire, Albert Memmi, and Edward Said; she also mentions the formation of the Subaltern Studies Group (in South Asia) in the 1970s, led by Ranajit Guha. Ballestrin observes that, in the 1980s, subaltern studies gained momentum beyond India, especially with the contributions of Indians Partha Chatterjee, Dipesh Chakrabarty, and Gayatri Chakrabarty Spivak. According to the researcher, literary criticism and cultural studies began to take over the postcolonial debate in England and the United States, strongly represented by Homi Bhabha, Stuart Hall, and Paul Gilroy. In 1992, the researcher explains, a group formed by "[...] Latin American intellectuals and Americanists founded the Latin American Subaltern Studies Group" [7;94], inspired by the South Asian Subaltern Studies Group, whose demarcation occurred with the publication of the so-called Inaugural Manifesto of the Latin American Subaltern Studies Group in 1993, in English, and in 1998, in Spanish.

The connection between Argentine semiologist Walter Mignolo and the Latin American Group of Subaltern Studies is mentioned by Ballestrin when recalling his criticism of the imperialism of cultural studies and postcolonial and subaltern studies for failing to break with Eurocentric authors and for mirroring only Indian and Americanist arguments, rendering Latin America invisible. Mignolo's criticism focuses on the idea that the group was unable to break with an American and Indian episteme, nor to free itself from thinking centred on Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Antonio Gramsci and Ramachandra Guha, thus rendering subaltern studies unviable. Given the theoretical differences, the group was dissolved in 1998, and from

then on, some members of this group began to meet and, later, together with other researchers, formed the Modernity/Coloniality Group, which gradually took shape through various meetings and the support of new researchers[7].

The Modernity/Coloniality Group seeks to understand and dismantle forms of power, knowledge, and cultural and political-economic dependence established during the colonial period and continued after that stage was overcome. This group was formed in the 1990s by Latin American researchers (mostly) from different fields of knowledge, such as sociology, cultural studies, semiotics, philosophy, education, among others. Some of the members of this group are Aníbal Quijano from Peru, Walter Mignolo and Enrique Dussel from Argentina, Ramón Grosfoguel and Nelson Maldonado-Torres from Puerto Rico, Catherine Walsh, an American living in Ecuador, Edgardo Lander from Venezuela, and Arturo Escobar from Colombia.

Although it is not the focus of this study to investigate the genealogy of decolonial studies, Ballestrin's[7] contribution in doing so, even if briefly (as the researcher announces), contributes to the understanding of part of this movement. Logically, the incursion into works written by the members of the Modernity/Coloniality Group themselves is something that enables immersion in the theme, in its complexity and unique nuances that embody the arguments and theories of each of its members. I recall here, among many others, some publications by Grosfoguel[8], Mignolo[9], Quijano[10-12], Santos and Meneses[13], Walsh[14], and Maldonado-Torres[15]. In addition to the authors who are part of the Modernity/Coloniality group, there are certainly researchers who, by directly or indirectly problematising coloniality, are engaged in the valorisation of local knowledge, the legitimisation of historically excluded or invisible knowledge, the dismantling of power relations that generate hierarchies and exclusions, the eradication of patriarchal society, the construction of feminist thought, and ethnic-racial, gender, and social class studies. I highlight here the contributions of Bernardino-Costa[16], hooks[17], Davis[18], Butler[19,20], Ribeiro[21], Hollanda[22], Gonzalez[23], Carneiro[24], and Bispo dos Santos[25]. I believe that these theoretical contributions had practical implications and, in many cases, contributed to Latin America, which until then had been invisible as a producer of knowledge, taking on a leading role and seeking autonomy. Within this movement, there are people who have been empowered by it and have begun to build their own history, recognising their value in different social contexts, including physical education.

In the initial reflections of this text, I stated that I perceive a promising movement in Brazilian physical education that pays attention to the diversity of bodies and practices and to the need to revise its white history, especially in recent years. However, this observation does not disregard the contribution of Brazilian researchers who sowed the seeds for the unveiling of a hegemonic white physical education, which I intend to highlight. In the 1990s, these researchers promoted ways of producing knowledge that transcended usual practices in the field of physical education. Such actions/productions caused shifts in the way Brazilian physical education was configured, although still timid, given that their echoes had little reach, especially amid the predominant "sounds" in the wider field and the power relations that led the scientific community to value certain types of knowledge over others.

Although I run the risk of possibly leaving out studies from the 1990s that contributed to the construction of decolonial traits in Brazilian physical education (even when this term was not yet known or appropriate), I list some research that I identify as driving forces behind this historical moment. Some of these studies were even part of the research I was conducting at the time, focused on the body that dances in Candomblé terreiros[26]. Therefore, the research I list here does not claim to be the only one that announces initial decolonial traits in Brazilian physical education, but it is the one that, in some way, marks my contact with a physical

education that is open to different bodies and possibilities within the scope of culture. This research also reveals some of the paths I chose to follow in Brazilian physical education.

In 1997, I began my master's thesis at the State University of Campinas (Unicamp), which I defended in 1999 with the title 'The dances of the sacred in the profane: transposing times and spaces in Candomblé rituals', later published in book form[27]. The study discusses the body, dance, black history, myths, and Afro-Brazilian religiosity. Through field research in Candomblé terreiros in the city of Campinas-SP, I problematise the exemplary models in dance based on the gestural representation of the orixás and also point out ritual-educational intentions through the transposition of the dances of the terreiro to the educational sector, given their gestural, mythological and cultural richness. In 2000, I continued the theme of dance and Afro-Brazilian culture, also at Unicamp, although at the Faculty of Education, defending, in 2004, my doctoral thesis entitled The ethical-aesthetic meaning of the body in popular culture[28], later published as a book[29]. The thesis addresses the construction of the ethical-aesthetic meaning of the body in popular culture, using empirical research on the Afro-Brazilian maracatu manifestation in Recife, Pernambuco. The aim was to understand how bodily practices in popular culture communities are collectively normalised and how they become part of a complex web of social relations.

During my master's studies at Unicamp, I came across the book 'Ginástica Afro-aeróbica' (Afro-aerobic gymnastics) by José de Anchieta, published by Shape in 1995[30]. With a degree in physical education, Anchieta became known for innovating in the field of gym practices by creating a method of work guided by Afro-Brazilian culture. The book addresses the history, principles, and basic technical elements of this modality, offering a variety of body techniques aimed at improving cardiovascular health, motor coordination, rhythm, and body expression. The author brings elements of African culture and orixá dances into the time-space of gyms, decharacterising the reckless meaning that has historically been attributed to Afro-Brazilian cultural practices. His work inspired me in the final stages of my dance studies at a Candomblé terreiro, when I was trying to problematise the transposition of these dances into the educational context.

In 1995, Edilson Fernandes de Souza[31] defended his master's thesis, 'Social representations of black culture through dance and its actors,' at Gama Filho University. The researcher investigated representations of black culture in Brazilian society, notably Afro dance performers in the city of Rio de Janeiro, through interviews. He sought to understand how these performers construct their identity and social consciousness through their experience with dance and also sought to support a proposal to include Afro dance in the Physical Education degree curriculum. In this regard, reflections related to the identity and social awareness of belonging of these actors were fundamental, especially with regard to a given context of black body culture. At the end of the 1990s, Souza began his doctoral studies at Unicamp, at which point we found ourselves with common topics of interest. He defended his thesis in 2001, whose research aimed to contribute to the knowledge of "[...] Afro-Brazilian culture based on batuque practices – recreational activities of a religious nature that involved singing, dancing and the incorporation of African deities"[32;112] in the context of the city of São Sebastião do Rio de Janeiro in the 19th century.

It was only after completing my doctoral studies that I became acquainted with the work of Luiz Cirqueira Falcão. The researcher defended his dissertation 'The schooling of vagrancy: capoeira in the educational foundation of the Federal District'[33] at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ). This dissertation analyses the actions and conceptions of the subjects involved in the capoeira programme of the Educational Foundation of the Federal District (FEDF) and identifies the predominant trends in physical education in the programme,

considering the understanding of students, teachers and principals. In 2000, the author continued his research on capoeira with his doctoral thesis, 'The game of capoeira in play and the construction of capoeira praxis'[34], defended in 2004 at the Federal University of Bahia. In this journey, Falcão proposes theoretical and methodological elements for dealing with capoeira in the professional training curriculum in formal and non-formal educational spaces in Brazil and abroad. The author understands capoeira as a qualified praxis and articulates the fundamentals of action research with pedagogical possibilities.

On the subject of indigenous peoples, I note the master's thesis entitled 'Memórias do guerreiro, sonhos de atleta: jogos tradicionais e esporte entre jovens Kadiwéu' (Memories of the warrior, dreams of the athlete: traditional games and sport among Kadiwéu youth), by Marina Vinha[35], begun in 1997 and defended in 1999 at the State University of Campinas (Unicamp). We were contemporaries in our studies at that institution. The author conducted field research guided by ethnographic procedures based on her immersion in the daily life of the group for intermittent periods, with analysis supported by Discourse Analysis/DA. Her doctoral studies continued on the indigenous theme with the thesis 'Kadiwéu body-subject: games and sport'[36], also defended at Unicamp in 2004. The author aimed to record the state of the art of traditional Kadiwéu games, the emergence of sport, and the relationships between body culture and sport. The study was theoretical-empirical in nature and took place in a village in the Kadiwéu Lands, Mato Grosso do Sul, involving elderly people, adults, athletes, sports coaches, and sports leaders.

In 1999, Beleni Salete Grando began her master's thesis, also on the theme of indigenous peoples, a study that led directly to her doctorate. I did not meet her at that time, but only in the following decade, when we had the opportunity to work together during one of the editions of the Brazilian Sports and Leisure Award for Social Inclusion, organised by the Ministry of Sport. In 2004, she defended her thesis 'Body and education: intercultural relations in Bororo bodily practices in Meruri-MT'[37], at the Federal University of Santa Catarina. The author started from the training of indigenous teachers in Mato Grosso to understand the relations between the Bororo and society, as well as between them and the Salesian missionaries present in the Indigenous Territory of Meruri-MT. The research was carried out in the village of Meruri, focusing on everyday bodily practices. The study points to perspectives for intercultural education between Bororo culture and non-indigenous culture, with possibilities for interaction and education.

These examples draw attention to researchers who contributed to the design of decolonial traits in Brazilian physical education. They indicate that themes of Afro-Brazilian and indigenous culture were developed in the 1990s by white, black, and non-indigenous researchers who highlighted issues that were still largely invisible in academia. Their research and subsequent entry into professional training fields were essential in stimulating new studies related to topics that were not widely accepted in the field, mainly due to the power relations that determined which bodies and knowledge were superior and worthy of existence. These researchers also created educational spaces for black and indigenous students to study, research, and tell their own stories and the stories of their communities.

It is worth noting that there are black researchers who are currently recognised for their contributions to topics involving blackness and anti-racist struggles – although I choose not to name them here – but who, in the 1990s, did not take on these topics as a research focus. This is because 'whitening' was the least tortuous path for social spaces reserved for white people to be, in some way, occupied by black people, especially in academia, and because affirmative action, the struggles of black movements and identity politics had not yet reached great proportions in terms of empowerment and appreciation of blackness.

In observing that the history of physical education has been told mainly by male, white researchers with a European-oriented education, I do not intend to deny their historical, pedagogical, and social contribution, especially if we remember the difficult times experienced with years of curtailed freedom and democracy due to the military dictatorship and the changes necessary for physical education during periods of redemocratisation in the country. However, it is worth noting that a new social context is emerging and calling for a modus operandi that recognises other social configurations and struggles. Such struggles involve collective forms of resistance and projects in favour of communities, populations and researchers who are subalternised and invisible (especially in academia) and who, in recent years, have strongly demanded spaces and rights in physical education. I highlight here the creation of the Ethnic-Racial Relations Working Group at CBCE in 2021 as an important action to recognise and value the diversity and rights of students and researchers from subalternised peoples and communities. This represents a legitimate and visible opening of academic spaces so that black, indigenous, quilombola, disabled, and other researchers can be actively represented.

As scientific director of CBCE (2017-2021), I was responsible for coordinating the work of the commission appointed by Ordinance No. 04/2020-CBCE to analyse the request for the creation of the Ethnic-Racial Relations Working Group (GTT)[38]. The arguments that guided the creation of the GTT and were presented by its proponents mention the increase in academic production in physical education focused on ethnic-racial issues; the increase in the number of papers presented at Conbrace; the increase in the number of research projects with ethnic-racial themes registered with the CNPQ; the 'current dispersion of the theme of ethnic-racial relations in communications and posters from various GTTs'; the ethnic-racial identity construction of research in Physical Education and Sports Sciences; the urgent action to confront the " 'harmful logic' of Brazilian racial democracy that hinders the development of themes related to slavery and racism in Brazilian epistemology and, in particular, in physical education"[38;3]

The opinion issued by the Commission analysing the request to create the GTT, in its final paragraph, indicates that by including ethnic-racial issues in its scientific policy, the CBCE "[...] becomes the main means of constructing, accessing and raising the visibility of research and work focused on this theme in the field of Physical Education and Sport, democratising epistemologies and positioning itself in favour of anti-racism"[38;15]. The final paragraph of the report considers that the creation of this working group can "[...] favour actions of social visibility of knowledge, practices and know-how focused on historical resistance silenced by dominant groups" [38;15] in the sense of creating spaces for the production of knowledge within the CBCE itself and beyond.

The creation of the Ethnic-Racial Relations TWG was a fundamental step for Brazilian physical education to broaden its perspective on issues that were still invisible within the field and for ethnic-racial issues to finally occupy the agenda of physical education and sports sciences. Of course, the creation of the Ethnic-Racial Relations GTT did not occur without resistance from those who believe that its creation contributes to further fragmenting the CBCE's GTTs, as these themes permeate other GTTs, such as 'Body and Culture', 'Gender and Sexuality' and 'Social Movements'. There are also those who believe that the global (rather than particular) discourse already covers differences and that it is sufficient and legitimising, with no need for further fragmentation. The aforementioned GTT was materialised at Conbrace/Conice held in Fortaleza in 2023 and continues its work with unique and powerful contributions to the construction of an open, diverse physical education, marked by its own enriching stories that can impact the training of people, especially in the educational context. With regard to publications, I note researchers who have contributed to the project of decolonial physical education, such as Mattos and Monteiro[39]; Sousa et al.[40]; Bins and Molina Neto[41];

Santos Júnior et al.[42]; Palma et al.[43]; Coelho et al.[44]; Chiés[45], to name just a few. These publications have responsibly and competently driven the debate in this area, covering a myriad of topics that make up its broad, complex and multifaceted field. However, we still have a long way to go in terms of recognising and valuing embodied practices and a decolonial project for physical education.

Decolonial physical education and embodied practices

In this part of the essay, I discuss the challenges of the relationship between decolonial physical education and embodied practices. As I mentioned earlier, coloniality translates into epistemic, Eurocentric, and hierarchical domination that strips subjects of their narratives and history. Such domination manifests itself in forms of subalternity that are inscribed in the body, which strip subjects of their critical, creative, and liberating potential, especially non-white bodies. Therefore, it is essential to think about one's own unique production, valued in its local constructs and forms of popular expression, as well as practices that value the body in its modes of existence, recognised in its various social markers of difference and in the power relations that place different subjects in societies of privilege or oppression.

When discussing what she calls multidimensional embodied experiences as paths for the revision of critical pedagogy, Fullagar[46] mentions three dimensions that constitute them: the material, the discursive, and the affective. According to her, the material dimension leads us to understand how bodies are inscribed and signified based on social markers such as class, gender, race, and sexuality. This dimension also makes it possible to question the regulatory processes of the market forces of global capitalism and neoliberal constructs. The discursive dimension highlights how our experiences of movement are socially constructed and how we perceive our bodies amid the discourses in circulation that dictate truths and, with that, shape subjectivities. The affective dimension, on the other hand, is guided by an understanding of how we move and how our emotions are built in diverse cultural contexts, leading us to question (or accept) the power relations that make people feel ashamed and/or excluded for not fitting into certain normative patterns, especially in a capitalist society guided by individualism, competitiveness, and the dominance of others.

The construction of multidimensional embodied experiences (or embodied practices, as I call them here) requires the unveiling of the effects of power in everyday life and in the production of knowledge in order to avoid social exclusion and discriminatory references. Such practices can empower people, value the diversity of their existence and the diverse modes of coexistence and solidarity. They seek to combat models of social existence in favour of living, diverse narratives, materialised in different bodies (black, indigenous, quilombola, riverine, oriental, feminist, disabled, white, others), in the care of oneself and others in a respectful relationship with nature.

When talking about embodied practices as a way of confronting the colonial model forged in modern thought, I recall the 2023 dossier of the magazine Espaço Acadêmico, entitled: 'Decolonising epistemology: towards enjoyment without paternity', organised by Alexandre de Oliveira Fernandes (UESC), Rafael Haddock-Lobo (UFRJ) and Danilo Pereira Da Silva (UESB). In the dossier, I highlight the article "Every brain has an ass", by Renata Lima Aspis[47] – PhD in education and professor of philosophy at the Faculty of Education/UFMG. The author questions the idea of episteme as the production of intellectual knowledge understood as rational in the Cartesian sense and evokes other ways of thinking and creating knowledge, that is, dissident epistemologies, made through the body and in connection with other elements/bodies of nature. The researcher proposes a critical analysis of

Cartesianism, colonialism/coloniality and other philosophies with a view to fostering new experiments in the human, as expressed in the following excerpt:

> We must not forget: every brain has an anus. A brain alone, a cogito, ideas, discernment, the intelligible intellect, are nothing without the body. The whole body, every little artery, every drop of saliva, every bowel movement, an epidermal cell, everything, everything that this body eats and has eaten, where it touches and has touched, what it sees and has seen, what it smells and has smelled, what it hears and has heard, what it imagines, feels, dreams, where it raves, all encounters with other bodies, all of this composes it, from birth to death, composes and decomposes, in incessant movement. [...] Thinking in other ways has to do with thinking with the body[47;59].

Aspis's argument that the brain is not an autonomous entity and that its existence is linked to the body is in line with Andrade's[4]. The author, through a unique journey, offers us highly provocative, creative and intelligently linked reflections that lead us to reflect on the materiality of our existence and to perceive it bodily. The body exists in its physical, rational, affective, sensitive, aesthetic, symbolic, historical, coercive or liberating form, capable of bringing varied existences to life and, for that very reason, of great value. To recognise that 'every brain has an anus' is to unveil the processes of fragmentation and social framing that are imposed on us daily in order to determine who has the right to life and who should be mourned, as Butler denounces. This recognition and the actions to be taken from then on can offer appropriate modes of intervention that echo in our classrooms, in our research, in our daily lives, and in the social relationships we establish with a view to dismantling all forms of binary thinking, hierarchisation, discrimination, and racism.

Among the various topics the author draws on to make her critique are modernity and the violence that this model has generated.

> The legacy of 'our' tradition (from the European Renaissance and the Enlightenment) is precisely this: those who can think are men (males), white, adults, Christians, excluding others. In fact, this is where the idea and practice of determining who the "others" are comes from [...] And since everything that is not a mirror is ugly to Narcissus, the thinking being despises, subordinates, uses and destroys bodies with vaginas, racialised bodies, non-binary gender bodies, child bodies, the bodies of indigenous peoples from colonised territories, bodies with disabilities, transgender bodies, fat bodies, "crazy" bodies, that is, any and all bodies that are not him[47;62].

The author argues for the need for a dissident methodology that leads us to invent the body as an act of resistance and re-existence, with everything that affects it, rehearsing other ways of life and counter-colonising Cartesian thought. This experience takes place as a collective and liberating practice, with visceral epistemologies and the invention of ways of life that question so-called universal essences and enhance unique ways of living and knowledge.

I understand that physical education has much to contribute to this process through critical pedagogies that value different bodies, struggles for rights and democracy. After all, as Giroux[48] reminds us, critical pedagogy – as a practice of freedom – goes beyond the transfer of knowledge, as it presupposes that students are driven by their passions and motivated by their identifications, commitments and experiences. It is not a fixed set of principles and practices to be applied indiscriminately to different pedagogical settings, but must be attentive to the specificity of contexts, conditions, and problems in which education occurs, because it is an open practice subject to constant revision. Critical pedagogy is always power, because there is

no way to separate it from the way subjectivities are formed, desires are mobilised, and some experiences are legitimised (or not). It bridges the gap between learning and everyday life, as it recognises the connection between power and knowledge, between rights and democratic identities.

Fischman and Sales[49;120] refer to "[...] critical pedagogies as a conglomerate of perspectives that borrow principles and guidelines from the ideas of John Dewey, the Frankfurt School of Critical Theory, Antonio Gramsci, Paulo Freire, feminist perspectives, anti-racist models and even popular education, and apply them to the analysis of educational institutions". The authors understand that critical pedagogies have developed a large repertoire of concepts and practices with the challenge of constituting themselves as "[...] a realistic and viable alternative to oppressive educational systems (whether neoliberal or not)"[49;120]. However, to be effective, they need to be measured by a sense of hope, responsibility, and commitment. Such pedagogies need to be affective, liberating, embodied, attentive to social dynamics and emerging problems.

Decolonial physical education is anchored in pedagogies focused on democratic and dignified (re)existence, capable of resisting autocratic and repressive regimes. In this process, a creative, critical production of knowledge is materialised, valuing local knowledge, which does not need to be inundated with European references in order to have value. This does not mean denying the production of knowledge and the European foundations that built histories and awakened us to fundamental themes of existence. However, decolonial physical education invites a dialogue that activates different voices, bodies, and knowledge, notably those that have been historically invisible. In this journey, protagonists are expanded and divided, undoing hierarchical scales that attributed respectability and value only to European models. In this way, the body and its embodied practices have an important social function, above all because they reveal an existence long denied by standards of science and reason.

Given the reflections made so far, I ask: Would it be feasible for physical education and its critical pedagogies to articulate classical formulations with cultural changes and the decolonial project to confront societies of privilege and oppression? Is it plausible to build embodied practices that activate, respect, make visible, and value the diversity of human (and non-human) existence in the pedagogical practice of physical education?

Decolonial physical education needs to be attentive to contemporary issues raised by societal dynamics that point to its reconfiguration. It is essential that it be in tune with the process of transforming the relationships that generate domination and be open to social dynamics and struggles for recognition. There is only a need to struggle, says Honneth[50], because there is invisibility. Therefore, triggering embodied experiences, as I understand it, is one of the challenges for recognition, for a physical education that proposes revisions to the modern project and for a decolonial education to be triggered as a counterpoint to forms of invisibility and social subordination.

Conclusions

By questioning rationality as the main form of knowledge in the modern project and its consequences for the subordination of humans, I sought to bring reflections to other ways of thinking about existence, the body in relation, notably in the context of physical education. This does not mean, however, the pure abandonment of the identity demarcations of modernity, given that, although they present problems, they were not only colonial. There are elaborations of human rights (such as the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, approved in

1789 by the National Constituent Assembly during the French Revolution) and non-Western philosophies, for example, that were important in legitimising ethics in defence of life, democracy, and social justice, although often flawed or incomplete in the materiality of equality, freedom and fraternity.

The process of denaturalising subalternity requires an ethical-moral and aesthetic reorganisation of life and a pedagogy attentive to these transformations, culminating in a decolonial project and, consequently, in a decolonial education that considers the intersections of social markers of difference and the power relations that affect them. As Oshie Curiel[51] – a feminist theorist and Afro-Dominican social anthropologist – notes, the recognition of difference occurs between intersecting categories, in which race and gender, for example, present themselves as axes of subordination that separate at some point (with some level of autonomy), even though they are intersectional.

Designing a decolonial physical education does not imply aborting authors in their European traditions, but questioning and denying practices of epistemicide that they may exercise. An emancipatory, embodied, empowered practice takes care to engage Latin American, African, and Asian authors, making them visible and bringing them into tension with other references from the global north. In this way, the decolonial project can challenge traditional pedagogies in favour of critical pedagogies that contribute to rethinking and transforming frameworks of inequality and subalternity. Critical pedagogies can therefore contribute to recognising subalternised groups in their struggles to build freedoms, knowledge and agency, including affirmative action (racial quotas, specific calls for applications, scholarships, etc.) that contribute to empowering people and materialising their embodied experiences.

Decoloniality is not a fashionable project, because there is no fashion when it comes to the struggle for rights. However, we must be vigilant about its use for different purposes. These issues need to be problematised and debated in order to confront impoverishing narratives that announce the obituary of social themes that should never be buried as long as forms of oppression and domination exist. Thus, I understand that each of us has a particular task. The path to be developed and the role to be played in the field of physical education (and beyond) need to be discovered in a self-reflective way and through praxis. Perhaps we can begin by reviewing our history and our place of speech, embodied by the questions I raised in the opening pages of this essay and which I return to here as a final provocation: what privileges do you exercise? What violence do you practise?

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