
COLLOQUIUM

Translated by John Bell

GREEK AND ENGLISH SPORTS*

**Alfonso Gomez-Lobo, Claudio Veliz,
Arturo Fontaine Talavera and Ernesto Rodriguez**

The following pages take up the debate that was initiated after the conferences “The Olympics in the Ancient World” and “Team Sports: A World made in England”, given by Alfonso Gomez-Lobo and Claudio Veliz, respectively, as the framework for the seminar “Greek and English Sports”, organised by the Centre for Public Studies (Centro de Estudios Publicos) in August 1996. Both speakers and their critics – Arturo Fontaine Talavera and Ernesto

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* This present version is a transcript edited by the magazine *Estudios Públicos* of the colloquium held on the 22nd of August 1996, with respect to the seminar “Greek and English Sports”, organised by the Centre for Public Studies. See in the same volume, the talks given by Alfonso Gomez-Lobo on “The Olympics in the Ancient World” and Claudio Veliz on “Team Sports: A World made in England”.

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Rodriguez – make comments, observations and definitions that examine in depth several of the historical, anthropological, sociological and even psychological aspects of sport, as well as the character and significance of the Olympic Games.

ALFONSO GOMEZ-LOBO:

Claudio's presentation seemed to me to be not only excellent but also very entertaining with such passion and enthusiasm for the games the English play. I don't know if I have the same passion for the Greek games. Moreover something rather interesting is happening and that is, in my opinion, that there is a convergence of opinions. If you were here on Monday for my conference you will remember that essentially speaking, I am in agreement with him. Because when the Games began again in 1896 and were called the Olympic Games, the pretension existed to make the ancient games reborn but this time in a very different spirit. I have absolutely no doubt about this. Nevertheless I should like to add one or two things in any order. For example, the point about the boxing gloves. Greek boxing was certainly brutal: from Philostratus and other sources it is clear that the proposal to use gloves was, initially, to protect the hands of the fighter who had them on. It was not to protect his adversary. And as I believe I said on Monday, it was because of this that the ancient glove evolved by adding hard, metallic pieces to itself until it finally reached the stage of that terrible Roman boxing glove. In this sense there is no doubt that modern times have tended to soften the violence of Greek athletics. Obviously, when talking about origins, at no time have I pretended that absolutely everything was derived from Greece: that is far away from my thinking. Boxing and wrestling are pretty universal phenomena which can be found in very different cultures, for example in the Sumo wrestlers of Japan, who I don't think have read Thucydides or anything like him but who fight in the same way.

What I think is particularly relevant to Professor Veliz' argument is the British contribution to systemisation: to put into some sort of order a social practice that already existed and give it a shape or form which ends up being canonical: i.e. establishing rules which define what you can and can't do, the idea of fair play. This was very illuminating for me and from there I would like to add the following: to distinguish between amateur and professional, between the gentleman and the player, Claudio emphasised that the gentleman amateur didn't resort to cheating. It seems to me that he *shouldn't* cheat but neither should the professional. The distinction between

amateur and professional therefore is not about cheating: in both cases cheating is condemned.

Now the Greek intention was to win and win at all cost: the British intention, if I understand it correctly, is to play and play at all cost. With this point I am going to repeat something I said on Monday and that is in the concept of amateur sport there is a class factor which passes relatively unnoticed. Who is an amateur ?. A person who doesn't need the money which comes from the sport. Because of this we call him a gentleman. Remember that typical British toast: my lords, ladies and gentlemen in which the gentlemen are like in a third category. But, in fact, they are people with money. And on the other hand, what is a professional ?. It is someone who has to earn a living and, God forgive us, has to compete to get a prize. Even worse, someone who has to work. This is very explicit in the first rules of the Olympic Committee drawn up by Coubertin. They expressly state that we are not just dealing with people who haven't made money out of practising sport but people who have never earned money. In other words it was a way of excluding the working class at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th. There is even a document from an English journalist which explicitly says that people from the lower classes have to understand that even if they haven't earned money from sport, they cannot compete.

I have a very negative opinion about this attitude, and because of that it's very important for me to point out that amateurism, understood in this way, is not a Greek phenomenon. The Greek winners were sometimes nobles from Thessaly, tyrants from Syracuse etc. but there was also occasionally a cook. That is a very important difference.

With respect to the modern games, I understand the first had already begun in England in 1640. The prize was 500 pounds sterling. The person who won the race was the one who took the money and many of the competitors were evidently country folk. It was as a reaction to this that amateur sports clubs were formed in London in 1867 and at the same time at Exeter College and other colleges. But don't let us forget that the distinction they made was one of class, designed so that people of another class could not compete.

Let us look now at the German gymnasium: I don't know if you have had the experience of the German Turn Halle (or Turnverein). As far as the discipline and the strictness is concerned it really is terrible. In my opinion the English did a good job in getting rid of this type of sport: when they organised the first Olympics they were arranged so as to leave them out. They reinvented the Olympics and kept some of the Classical races, leaving

out others they didn't want to have. At the same time they added others. For example they added the famous marathon where no such race existed in the Ancient world: someone invented it with the idea of having a new ceremony. And another spurious ceremony of the same type is the Olympic torch: the Greeks did not have an Olympic torch. What did happen in the oldest form of the Games, before they took the Olympic stadium away from the Altis, i.e. when the race was still towards the altar of Zeus, was that the winner of this race had the privilege of setting light to the sacrifices, the hecatomb. That seems something rather different to me. To sum up: I am absolutely in agreement with Claudio and I want to do add nothing more apart from these observations.

CLAUDIO VELIZ

I should like to add something briefly. This question of classes is rather interesting because before the first Olympics, in fact for several decades, the most popular sport in England was football, without any doubt at all. But nobody thought of including it in the Olympics for that reason. The same happened during the first half of this century when basketball gained universal popularity and was also not admitted. They were sports for the workers, that was why they were invented and that was why they failed to be admitted to the Olympics.

ARTURO FONTAINE TALAVERA

I have been most impressed with the presentations from Alfonso Gomez Lobo and Claudio Velez and I frankly admire their knowledge of sporting matters which is obviously much greater than my own. In my opinion the difference between the sports in Greece and the modern ones (and I don't know what the explanation for this is) is that winning was the thing that mattered in Greek sports. Alfonso said that the winner of the sprint gave his name to the year and events were counted from this date. It is the reference point for their chronology. He also said that Pindar, the greatest poet, obtained juicy fees for his poems that were composed in honour of the winners, paid for by the families of those winners who could afford to pay. Moreover they had the right to be sculptured, a privilege only granted to exceptional figures. That is to say that what seems to be distinctive is that Greek athletics competitions gave rise to and require a cultural manifestation at the highest level. There is an interfacing between the world of physical competition, if we can call it that, the world of

regulated physical competition, and the world of high culture and religion. We are talking about an event that reunites all this into one thing only.

Modern sport doesn't have this need: there are no great artists who immortalise great sportsman. Nobody expects the Canadian Donovan Bailey, who won the 100 metres at the Atlanta Olympics a few days ago, to be the subject of the most important poem of the year and I can assure you that no company is going to pay a poet to carry out the task. There seems to me a difference here that is worth reflecting on. This is one point.

Having said that, I can see that, nevertheless, there is a kind of modern equivalent in the television and the press. I mean for example, that basketball has been popularised so much to a great extent, thanks to television: in particular thanks to the possibility of showing in slow motion the basketball player at the moment of putting the ball in the net, a thing which in real life is very difficult to observe. Another example: we have seen in the last Olympics at Atlanta pictures of the hurdlers coming towards us, which is impossible in reality because the runners would actually pass over you and we have also seen the camera follow the runners, without interruption, for at least the last 100 metres of all the races which is also a real life impossibility. Alfonso Gomez Lobo was telling us in one magnificent moment of his presentation that the celebrated sculpture of Poseidon comes across for a brief instant as if he were throwing the javelin, which instead of being a movement full of activity, produces in the sculpture a sensation of rest. Only someone who has seen athletes throwing the javelin a lot of times could pick that moment up and keep it. Something similar happens today through video and what video implies. As Pindar is not here, there is a need, via the camera, to fix in some way what happens on a pitch or a track and that it is so terribly ephemeral. It is no coincidence that newspaper articles, although they are not like Pindar, tend to contain an embarrassing number of metaphors at times. When they're written well, for example in the *Spectator*, they become literature, i.e. good writing. Today sport provokes this type of activity, even though it's not Pindar who is in charge of it. There is a necessity to celebrate to register something for posterity, which continues to be part of the phenomenon.

I would now like to voice an uncertainty to see if I can stir things up a little and make the debate more varied. I have noticed that you haven't really considered the theme of the presence of women in sports and I believe it to be central. All sports imply a risk, the risk of losing publicly and under established rules. This is common to both the Greek world and the contemporary one. There is an outline of impartial rules that allow one to know, with a certain amount of science, who will win and who will lose.

This is something that rarely happens in human life: it doesn't occur spontaneously. You can know who is the tallest and the heaviest but normally it would be very difficult to produce a competitive situation on the basis of impartial rules: and from the moment that you do it, you are already getting close to the world of games, the world of sports.

We have an intuition as to what it is to win and lose, what is victory and what is defeat but general situations in life do not allow us to apply these intuitions. The real circumstances of life contain a plurality of aspects and dimensions, many of them particularised, many of them alien to individual responsibility, so that our intuitions of victory and defeat operate in an equal world, universally recognisable. The games thus create an artificial situation, a fictitious one where the concepts of victory and defeat are perfectly defined. The rules of the game define what it is to win and lose. The intention to win, as determined by the rules, gives sense to sporting games and athletics competitions. The rules agreed on form a contract. You make the commitment to compete according to the rules.

What this produces is the possibility of losing, the risk of losing in public, visible, precise (incomparably more precise than the ordinary circumstances of life permit), and of course, painful, and at times, shameful. Nobody who has played with a will to win has lost smiling sincerely. And this crosses a little with the idea of what is important is to compete and not to win. I don't believe this. I don't believe that I have ever run a race without wanting to win. And I would lie if I said that sometimes I lost with a smile on my face. I lost with a sensation of being demolished inside and when I won.....that was marvellous. No one likes to lose. There is chivalry and nobility when you congratulate an adversary for his victory. And there is in the same way as being subjected to a defeat hurts. To control that pain ennobles one. What you are saying is this: I recognise my defeat and your victory. I now renew, as the loser, my commitment to the rules of the game which define your condition as winner and mine as loser. There are liturgical resonances for me here. It's an effort, you have to do it because it's good but we recognise that what is operating here is the sublimation of an attitude which, at its roots, has to do with violence and whose purest form is killing. Here we are absorbing ancient rites which have been sublimated and civilised, but underlying them is a level of aggression which we can't deny. To recognise this gives more greatness and strength to fair sporting competitions, in other words, a clean game.

I don't believe in those gentlemen who give you their hand, congratulate you and who don't want to win but only compete. I believe that when you have your adversary in front of you, you want to win. The

desire for victory gives sense to a competition. You want to win fairly and the same thing always happens, you never want to win unfairly: only suddenly the body escapes, the passion flows and so on. You want to in a genuine fashion but you want to win. This wanting to win has to do with an aggressive instinct that has been channelled in a civilised way through the rules of the game. Ultimately I believe that we are talking about a taming of fear, a taming of death. It is against this background that sports are played.

It is because of this that we admire risky sports, why we are so impressed by motor racing, by mountaineering in extreme conditions, by those who fly. I.e. there is an admiration for the intelligent handling of risk that can't be left out of the phenomenon, something that is an essential part of its beauty and its attraction. And this is what unites spectators with the competitors. In my opinion it is because there are risks that our sportsmen play a sacrificial role. It is because of this that we become indignant when they do badly and shout with joy when they do well, because they are representing us. There is here a role of sacrificial victim which points to very old mechanisms, that are submerged, that have been transformed and modified by civilisation but which continue to be in contact with those mysterious and dangerous ancestral forces. There is no doubt that the shirt is not only worn by the players on the team but also by those off the pitch, shouting like madmen, sometimes insulting the players, because at bottom it is they themselves who are vicariously there.

On the field the players scarcely hear if a shout is in favour or against, if it's for them or the other side, except in extreme situations: when you are playing you don't know who is shouting, you only hear a general clamour, nothing more. But you do know if they're on your side or the other. It's a kind of simulacrum of a war. In Rugby, if we are talking about the All Blacks, the ritual dance which they do and sing before the game begins makes it explicit: it is obviously a traditional war song where they invoke a combat, a combat transfigured, but in the end a fight.

I feel that what authors like Conrad Lorenz maintain is correct: there is an aggressive instinct in human beings without which we can't understand either sexuality or, as he says, a smile. Because a smile was a modification for aggression for Lorenz, in other words, when being aggressive you show your teeth. When our ancestors saw a stranger, as they probably used to live in very enclosed communities, their reaction would be to show their teeth and maybe their hands in an attitude of attack. Lorenz says that this was changed by the smile with which we greet each other, where we show our teeth and canines but pacifically, as a gesture of appeasement, like giving one's hand. By giving your hand you are saying

that this hand is not going to hurt the other person, and this is how we greet one another, a mutation that in some way is erected over an area of primordial aggression.

I think that sports take this up and sublimate and transform it. Basically you cannot understand competitiveness and the passion that is brought to it if you don't take into account these primitive elements that are in play: aggression and violence, rules and the taming of death, risk and sacrifice, victory and defeat, life and death etc.

Now obviously how to handle the primitive emotions that make sport is the educational and formative part. There are virtues - loyalty, obedience to authority, honesty, self control justice – without which the rules which define the notions of victory and defeat would not be respected. The rupture of the contract – of the rules – would make it impossible to continue the contest: it would erase the artificial definitions of victory and defeat that had been agreed. Sports make us practice these virtues and also those which are necessary to acquire skills and win: perseverance, the spirit to overcome obstacles, to be giving and generous, to love excellence, courage and boldness, solidarity and co-operation with the team, the capacity to make rapid decisions, to sense out an opportunity...regulated competition assumes that violence and aggression can be controlled, processed and re-directed. We are talking about a process of repressing and channelling instincts. If Freud is right, this consists of nothing less than civilisation.

But the source of all this is mysterious and difficult to put a finger on. After the presentations given by Claudio Velez and Alfonso Gomez-Lobo I am slightly amazed and also uneasy because the theme is a more complicated one than it appears to be at first sight.

ALFONSO GOMEZ - LOBO

It seems clear to me that Claudio is the person who should basically take of the problem and not myself but if you let me I should like to make a couple of observations, both involving some historical information.

I think it was a famous North American trainer who said "Show me a good loser...and I'll show you a loser". Certainly, the idea is that a good loser is the person who doesn't have the tenacity, the aggression and the determination of the bad loser, i.e. the person who wants to win at any cost. As far as the ignominy, the shame and the humiliation of losing is concerned, determining factors in the will to win, emphasised by Arturo, I should like to give you an interesting fact. The lists of the Olympic winners

were compiled for the first time by the Sophist Hippias of Elis: Aristotle was also paid to compile the list of winners at Delphi. Later on these lists were collected together by a writer in the 2nd century A.D. called Sextus Julius Africanus and at the same time ended up in the chronicles of Eusebius of Caesarea: i.e. if you want to read the names of the Olympic champions you have to go to Eusebius of Caesarea. Happily there is an Italian who has re-edited them, Signor Moretti, and you can find them there. If you look at them with care, the results speak volumes. For example there are a large number of Spartans who won races, especially in the first epoch of the Olympic Games. And there is practically no Spartan who won the *pankration* or the most extreme form of free style wrestling. The question is, therefore, why, when they were magnificent and spent their lives dedicated to this ?. The clearest hypothesis, which has also been confirmed in several texts, is that the Spartans did not participate in these competitions because unlike today where there are rounds in boxing and you can win or lose on points and the fight finishes after 10 or 15 rounds, in antiquity this did not happen and someone had to give in by raising a finger, something which would be ignominious in the extreme for a Spartan. And so as not to suffer this they simply did not compete. It seems to me that this confirms the idea of risk and death.

I am going to make a last comment on the role of the sportsman as sacrificial victim. I think that Arturo touched on a very important theme here, which escaped me basically because lack of space, the theme that there is something in Greek sport which has to do with sacrifice. Maybe in modern and abstract terms we could say that what is being sacrificed is energy or vitality or aggression, and from there comes the connection between athletics and funeral rites. I think I said something about this, that there is a contrast in this extreme abundance of energy with someone who has lost such energy: the person who is dead.

That this has foundation much beyond my or Arturo's imagination can be demonstrated because the Greeks crowned their sacrificial victims, for example in the hecatombs, with crowns very similar to those that were used to crown the winner of the race. The idea of sacrifice is very central. Obviously sacrifice is profoundly religious and in the case of Olympia it was done in honour of Zeus.

CLAUDIO VELIZ

Yes, there is no doubt at all that there is a process of sublimation, a word which I've never liked very much but I think I finally understand what

it means: that one has to swallow hard by coming second and put on a brave face about it. But I feel that the thing is even more complicated than that. It seems to me that there is a certain lack of understanding of the basis on what we consider to be civilisation. It is the belief that civilisation rests on the word "Yes" when in reality it rests on the word "No". Yes is the way to barbarism, a whole string of "yeses". I am thinking a little about the vision many people have of nature, which is formed by television. On television you see a jungle but it's a comfortable one, there's no heat. You see the Antarctic and it's pleasant, it's not cold. You see these birds flying, something like Arturo described about the filming of the Olympics, these magnificent birds called albatrosses, gliding over the Southern ocean.... but the albatross defecates in the middle of its flight, we don't. That is to say that civilisation is "No", a succession of noes.

One of the most interesting problems of Western civilisation, of culture at the moment, is that in the countries which are in the vanguard of modern industrialisation, there is only one virtue and that is tolerance and this is very dangerous. They tolerate everything, forgetting that tolerance is a virtue only if there is "something" to tolerate because if you tolerate everything, it stops being a virtue.

Now I believe everything that Arturo has said, of course, but I am sure that he has never played cricket: a cricket player could not have said everything he said because in cricket there is not the slightest doubt that there is no shame in losing, if you've played a good game. On top of that the great majority, or if not a large percentage, of the games end in a draw. Some draws that have happened in England are really strange, I am not going to describe them now, but it is perfectly feasible that you can play an excellent game of cricket, where everyone ends up happy, and it ends in a draw, no one wins.

A friend of mine who is quite an important golf player tells me that when the game had rules for the first time, they took up one page. You had to hit the ball and get it in the holes and very little more. Now the same rule book is as thick as a telephone book. Why ?. Because the origin of all this, from a social point of view, comes from people who know what one can do and what one can't. Even though people are not looking at you, even though you look all around you and no one is looking at you, you don't cheat. Nowadays people never stop watching you while you play golf, to see if you move the ball from here to there. But the concrete thing about these rules is that they become necessary when the original idea behind the sport is abandoned, when people start cheating: when people start injecting things into you, it's necessary that they take a little blood out to see if they've

injected anything at all. We end up with an enormous list of rules and regulations when people don't play the game as it should be played.

There is not the slightest doubt at all that this has a social basis. The pupils who went to Rugby School were very different from those who went to real state schools. And the idea that fascinated Coubertin, because in fact we are already talking about his idea of sport being universal, was an ideal that came from this type of institution and that had been influenced by this type of cultural tradition: here you're right as far as sport which has already been popularised is concerned. But the experience of the person who plays sport as it should be played does not have this ignominious feeling if he loses or, at least, feels it very little.

When I was younger, at university in the U.S.A. I obviously tried to not to overdo the work too much: it got to a moment when I had to take credits and all of them were difficult, but there was one that offered tennis and I knew that if you got hold of a racket and you hit the ball and sent it over the other side of the net, that was called tennis. I decided therefore to take the course: it was for two credits or something like that. The first two weeks were pure theory: what do you do with the racket, what do you do with the ball, who invented tennis etc. Finally we went to the courts and began to play. I was enjoying myself tremendously but then the teacher arrived and told us it was a disaster. What we are talking about here, he said, is something serious: it looked like we were enjoying ourselves and that was the last straw. We had to play each point, he told us, as if your opponent was your worst enemy and that you made a point against him it would kill him. No questions: you had to defend yourself against the enemy, and if not, you weren't going anywhere. So all of us now began to bellow and play like men possessed.

I thought about this afterwards and it was perfectly true: I was playing as if I was enjoying myself instead of pushing myself. I think that pushing yourself to extremes is the mark of professionalism: it has put an injection of urgency into these types of activity that completely spoils them. They have become paid entertainments. There is a gentleman called Roger Clemens who plays for a baseball team in Boston and whose great talent consists of throwing a ball at a bat. The guy hits the bat with the ball and his annual contract runs to 17 million dollars. I believe that he doesn't know how to read or write but he does know how to throw a ball against a bat. So, it's a farce: these guys are, as they call them, pitchers but in the end they're actors.

This has reached such a point that here in Chile, according to public opinion, there is a suspicion that it was more convenient for Colo Colo, to

lose its last game: if they had won , they would be at such a distance in points from the rest , that people lose would interest in the Championship. It was convenient for them to lose and they did so. Incredible though it may seem, a taxi driver told me this. The question is not that they did lose intentionally but that the suspicion is there. Because what are these types for?. To entertain us, isn't that right ?. And why ?. So that they can earn money. If there is a team that is better than all the other the others and starts to win all the matches, it's going to be as boring as hell, so it's better to get together and say "Now it's your turn to win, now it's mine " etc.

ARTURO FONTAINE TALAVERA

I think it's the reverse. A player earns 17 million dollars for something because it's important for us how he plays. We don't know exactly why this is, but we are talking about something which is deep inside us. In fact sport, since it has been played with the idea of attaining perfection, has almost always been paid. What you pay for, and what we the spectators are indirectly paying for, is a symptom of much that is happening in competitive sports. The aristocrats that Claudio spoke about and their draws.....well, I don't know anything about cricket, it's completely above me: I recognise it as something I know nothing about. I had an English teacher when I was young – no, he was Welsh actually – who was a great aficionado of cricket and he gave me some lessons, but I took the decision not to carry on because it was too complicated for my intelligence and it had a series of rules that I was incapable of understanding.

In Anna Karenina, Vronsky, Anna's lover, is a young officer at the time when Russia was feeling influences from Europe and , naturally enough, ones from England. One of the races that had recently been introduced, according to the novel, was the steeplechase, which also had its uses in military training. This isn't new: sport originally was always linked to war. In his presentation, Alfonso Gomez-Lobo said that the hoplites race, one of the traditional races of the Greek Olympics, could have been decisive at the battle of Marathon. Vronsky participates in this horse race: he has a mare that he loves and that he has trained himself and he knows that Anna will be among the public watching the race, and will, be in a way, his prize if he wins. He races, but unfortunately, in his nervousness to win, he makes a bad movement with the reins, the mare is thrown off balance and falls. And, on top of this, he has to shoot the mare because she has broken her leg.

This episode, which is central to the novel and is a reverberation of what is happening between Anna and himself, leaves me with the sensation that this amateurism of the officers who are competing in front of the Tzar's court for sport, in the real sense of the word amateur, nevertheless is tremendously important to them. Vronsky himself says something about this when he talks what it was like for him to kill his mare. In a sense the death acquires a premonitory character. This episode of Anna Karenina comes to mind because in my judgement it shows how can live for sport, how serious and passionate it can be. And also it's proximity to both danger and death.

I think that it's the rules that make victory so beautiful. But I do not believe that you play a game without the will to win, even when there's no money involved. I don't have this experience of sport being so gentle or passive: rather I have the experience of sports that are strongly competitive, where rules are maintained under tension. That is what gives beauty and seriousness to the business. In the opposite case there is neither drama nor spectacle. It's only this way that produces this vicarious transfer of feeling towards who is on the pitch and makes the sacrificial function of the most renowned sportsmen possible. "The shirt": there is something liturgical in the sportsman's clothes themselves that alludes to this sacrificial identification, the idea that they're there for us.

As for the idea that sport is gratis, it isn't: on the pitch no goal is gratis. Sport is important in our lives: it's one of those activities, like music or art, that we like for itself. It's one of those things that we do when we are free, i.e. in our free time. The nobility of what happens there, the beauty, is connected spontaneously with the other forms of beauty that we like and which are important to us. What is at stake in games is always to do with beauty, a beauty that stems from Eros or death or both. Sports, like the Arts, either resemble the game of life or they don't.

ERNESTO RODRIGUEZ

I am going to remind you of something that Braque used to say: I love the rule that contains emotion. If you want, you can substitute violence for emotion. Or the instinct of death. I love the rule that contains emotion: that is to say that terrible emotion that fundamentally is the splendour of the world and that touches us like our ephemeral passage through the world also touches us. We come in and we go out and we want to spend our time here in splendour: that is our emotion. And so that we don't go astray in this world that we love so much, we invent rules to delay things and we call that delay sport. We invent a political society so as not to destroy ourselves, we

make a pact and we invent these rules. Eating has a rule and desire – so that it's not destructive and lasts – also has a rule and the name of this rule is the same: it is art, the art of eating or the art of desire. Because of this, the ephemeral beauty of sport touches us as much as the beauty of art does. Arturo pointed at this impressive thing that allows a slow camera shot on television and video. Those photographs of the finals of the 100 metres sprint are also impressive, in that you can see how the bodies of the men have reached a level of perfection which in fact strikes a chord in us and at that moment it doesn't matter if they're famous or not. This kind of spell or enchantment, between life and death takes place in art and in games. Why is it so important in games: because it has to do with the body.

But in order to allude to the extraordinary series of suggestions made by Claudio, I should like to approach the idea of games in general.

How do we play the game of life ?. In the game of life we want there to be an essential objective, but we only know that there is a beginning and an end. All the purpose of knowledge and metaphysics has been to point out a fixed something on which reality is based. A game is the negation of this. In a game the ball is permanently moving, and if there is a ground, which also means a reason both in English and German, the ground is not a fixed one but one on which the movement is being unfolded. In this movement we are not alone. We have others or another in front of us. I confront the other person as if in a mirror. There are 11 players here and 11 over there. Whoever has played tennis, football or rugby knows that on the pitch or the court there is someone facing you. The person in front of you is your mirror and at the same time your adversary. And you have to clash with him with all the force in the world. Like a rugby friend used to tell me: you get the ball at top speed and you have to go even faster. At the same time you have to guard the ball like a treasure trove so that the game keeps permanently moving. There is therefore, in a manner of speaking, a purpose to allow a certain freedom in the game, together with an intent to decide on the science and reason behind it. It is not by chance that the English, who have been the great inventors of sport, have always had reservations about Metaphysics, particularly the metaphysics that wants to account for the whole world. In Queen Victoria's court, Prince Albert, who was German, said in a conversation with the Prime Minister and other persons of importance: "But, well, what is the system behind all this, how does one understand it:::" And the English began coughing and clearing their throats. This is what does not happen .

Now, how we are going to replace the notion of good and bad within a game. We start with a concept that is very difficult to translate, namely the

idea of good intentions or fair play. There are two ways of going outside the game. One is to attack someone on the other side without the ball, i.e. to attack them directly and not in the middle of a scrum, for example: that's a foul. The other is to take unfair advantage, i.e. to play offside, even though we know that in every game you are playing on the edge of being offside, like having vertigo.

I should also like to point out that the English say that one of their vices is a love of nature. The Greek games were played in stadia that were enclosed or fenced off. The English games all have their pitches as their playing fields: you play on the field in such a way that nature, the world itself, becomes the scenario for the games. You live everything outside.

What about war, the Industrial Revolution and the class system ?. Claudio's observation is perfectly clear: the appearance and organisation of these games took place in parallel to the Industrial Revolution, which signified a very great transformation in social relationships and social classes. There is something here, I believe, which shows how English culture parts company from other European cultures. Because the English gentleman, unlike his French, Italian, Spanish or Russian counterparts, didn't refuse to work. Some of them were idle, but in general they worked. It was quite common, even before the Industrial Revolution, for the sons of a noble family, for example the Russells, to enter the world of business and travel abroad. In the same way that there was an impulse to do things and exchange things that can be found in the origin of sport, I think that the same impulse can also be found in the origin of commerce. Sport and commerce are not easily separated.

I remember that Viña del Mar, which is the native city of both Claudio and myself, had a large racetrack that the English and the Scots built at the end of the last century. It isn't called the Hippodrome but the Sporting Club. It was full of pitches in the middle and at the end of the week, the employees from commercial firms went to play on them, because sport was part of the business culture. And as there is cheating in business, so there is in sport. To know everything about how you do things, against whom you're playing and with whom you are doing business is a typically English thing.

It is also said that English society is very class ridden and I believe that to be true although I am no expert in the matter. Curiously this aptitude for the nobility for working takes place together with a class system that is more rigorous than anywhere else. The English say that recently, and somewhat paradoxically, the government of Mrs Thatcher has managed to undo the rigid class system in society, which has always been based on how

you dress or pronounce each word. You might have seen a film, from the days of my youth that was taken from *Pygmalion* by Bernard Shaw and made into a musical comedy called *My Fair Lady*; it deals with both of those themes.

But at the same time I should like to point something out: that in sport, although the class structure is clear enough, there is also simultaneously a connection between classes. One of the sporting vices that I haven't had is Horse Racing, but it made an impression on me because of the years I lived in Viña and I used to show up at the races. Horse Racing is the sport of kings, of businessmen, of the upper and lower middle classes, of drunks, of travelling salesmen, of everyone coming together because of a sport. Trevelyan said that it is possible that the English never had a French Revolution because, although there was such a rigid class system, there was also a certain mobility in it, which allowed movement from one class to the other, and a large amount of hypocrisy.

I hope the rugby players present are going to forgive me because I am now going to quote from a source which isn't Labour but ultra conservative. It's the *Spectator*, a "Tory" magazine, that a friend lends me every week and for which I have a special liking. It has a very short Sports page, very well written by one Simon Barnes, who could be the brother of Julian Barnes, because he is an extraordinary writer. For example he begins an article with a paraphrase of Eliot and from there he goes on to rugby. I have found very interesting observations there, which if they were in a Labour organ, would make one think that they would inspire a profound social resentment. But no, they are made in a magazine that represents, among other things, what the English call the Establishment. The first is one I should like to talk about later with the rugby players here: the difference between Rugby League and Rugby Union, i.e. between professionals and amateurs, something that is disappearing everywhere in the world. Already in Argentina (I don't know about Chile) there are teams that all of a sudden offer to get work for players and say "Come and play with us and we'll get you a job". Rugby League used to be played by workers in the North and there was a clear separation of classes between those who played League and Union. It's curious that the *Spectator* is an advocate of suppressing this difference, which already doesn't make much sense.

Another interesting observation now, about polo, which has always been a sport for well-educated gentlemen or at least for very rich ones: it costs a lot of money to play polo. This same Barnes says, in one of the latest issues, that he has watched a game in detail and talked to a polo player. He goes on to say that it is the most violent and ferocious sport in

existence, but he doesn't say it as a criticism but as an eulogy. There is a moment when we have to bring to the surface that unwanted aggressive desire, which basically happens when we are walking along and someone places themselves in our way.

A last observation. As Claudio pointed out so well, using an adjective that helps us to understand, it is certain that the community that is formed during a game is an imagined one. When we go on the pitch we know that we are leaving our daily life and entering an imaginary one. This is so important that we change our clothes, put on shirts and colours and play an imaginary game and incredible we become friends. Afterwards life separates us but what it means to have been in this imaginary game, spending a part of our life in it, is imprinted on us forever, even though the moment was ephemeral. The relationship between sport and war is very obvious. Without doubt, the steeplechase is a race which has to do with the cavalry charge and what are rugby and football but attempts to occupy the enemy's camp.

Nobody is happy losing a football match five nil or a rugby match fifty nil. Because of this we know that it is a serious mistake to sneer at your opponents after scoring a goal against them. It is characteristic that this game was spread everywhere by the nation that had the strongest empire in modern times. Sportsmen, ministers of State and businessmen were formed on the fields of the English Public Schools as were the soldiers who went off to dominate the world and teach a fixed way of living in it. It also means that confronted with this, we all have such mixed feelings.

Well, I think that it's now time to finish. Many thanks to all of you. ☐