

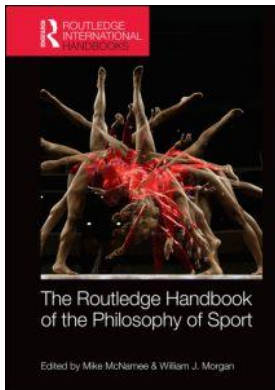
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THE RADICAL CRITIQUE OF SPORT

Lev Kreft

In this overview, radical critique of sport is understood as critical theory of sport set in the framework of allegedly agonistic and tragic crisis of humanity, where sport has, if not the main, then an extremely important place among those pillars which support existing state of affairs. Four radical critique cases of different cultural, geopolitical, and philosophical origin were selected for examination: Ljubodrag Simonović (Serbia), Roman Vodeb (Slovenia), Jean-Marie Brohm (France) and Douglas Kellner (USA). Because of its connectedness with the 1960s, the most important aspects of the New Left legacy to radical criticism of sport (ideology, alienation, manipulation) are identified in all four cases; global media spectacle is presented as a universal target of radical criticism; and the curious attitude towards emancipation of body, gender and lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) is exposed. From indebtedness of radical critique of sport to Marx and Marxism, appearance of the most quoted Marx's metaphor "opium of people" is analyzed. The next, and final, presentation concerns a radical criticism of Olympism. In conclusion, some contradictions of the radical critique of sport are discussed.

Introduction

Modernity and modernism

At the peak of his glory, Louis the Great, or the Sun King, had just one problem: what would happen to his empire after his death. He decided to give the dauphin (his heir) the best education possible. One of the people in charge was Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet, who had to teach the dauphin about his responsibilities to humankind and its universal history, from the Creation to his father. Starting with divine providence as the motor of eternal human progress, he wrote a textbook in which, in spite of all troubles and catastrophes, one can discover that the flow of human history climbed to more and more perfect heights, to reach the highest point of all times with Louis the Great and keeping doors open for further progress under his heir and successor. Bossuet's book on universal history appeared in 1679. During the early 1670s, members of the French Royal Academy were involved in a quarrel between the ancients and the moderns. On the surface, it was a struggle between those who claimed that art was not part of progressive history, because its ideal models were already produced by the ancients, and those who believed that new works of art could be much better than old works, because those who

come later knew the ancient past, but also their own present, which the ancients could not. But the essence of this quarrel was the claim that there never existed a greater and better empire of more magnificent and more beautiful art than under the reign of Louis the Great: this kind of argument silenced the ancients, and the moderns won the quarrel.

These two stories demonstrate what modernity and modernism are about. Modernity is the present, which is, at the same time, the most progressive point of all human history, and a springboard for further progressive expanding in space and time. Modernism is a praise sung of such a present and its future potentials: an ideology of modernity. The twentieth-century crisis of belief in modernity changed the ideology from modernism to postmodernism. Whatever the change, we doubt today that it should necessarily be for the better.

Sport is a child and a part of modernity, especially with its inclination to constant expansion in records. The Olympic idea, at least up to now, is a rare example of the ideology of modernism untouched by postmodern skepticism.

Critique and critical theory

The notion of critique occupies a central place in the philosophical logic of modernity. The first person to use and develop it into concept and method was Immanuel Kant. Between his and our philosophical critique, there are many steps which went in different directions. To find the radical critique of sport, we follow the path which brings us from Kant to Marx and from Marx to the Frankfurt school and critical theory.

Kant's philosophical problem was how to confirm that three fundamental abilities of human mind are possible sources of the progress of humanity, developing of secure knowledge of the world of nature (pure reason) and of the reign of human action (practical reason), and then turning the field of nature into a homeland of human freedom (judgment) (Kant, 1914: 7–42). To achieve this, he decided to criticize all three abilities apiece, with the aim of limiting their competences inside borders within which they can operate sovereignly. The purpose was to avoid their use outside the territory covered by their sovereign power, and to avoid conflicts of these abilities over territories of their competence. The end of critique was to put the movement of enlightenment and its philosophy, after decades of conflict between rationalism and empiricism, on sure ground again. From such a solid ground, enlightenment, engaged with the emancipation of humankind, could progress further.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, after the French revolution and Napoleon's defeat, German reality was still far below standards of its philosophy. The Hegelian left, a group of young radical philosophers, used Hegel's dialectic against its systematic totality to put forward the German claim for unity and emancipation. Karl Marx, then 23 years old, accepted the idea of emancipation, but criticized political emancipation as dissatisfactory: political emancipation is emancipation of the state from people. To reach the state of human emancipation, more radical change is needed than just a political change – a universal change in everyday practice where human beings must become the highest criterion of all social relations (Marx, 1970). The highest point of his radical critique was later articulated as a critique of political economy, where revealed contradictions of capitalist production become a weapon in the hands of workers organized as an international proletariat. Numerous critical theories came forward to heal the conflicts in capitalist society, but Marx's was the one which influenced critical theory the most.

Adherents, and those who were influenced by critical theory, are already in a third and fourth generation. The first generation started after the First World War as an Institute at the Goethe University in Frankfurt am Main, and is thus called the Frankfurt school (consisting of

Max Horkheimer, Theodor W. Adorno, Herbert Marcuse, Leo Löwenthal, Erich Fromm, among others). Departing from Marxist orthodoxy, they critically reflected upon: 1) the failure of social democracy which, instead of acting internationally against the First World War, supported the imperialist ends of their national bourgeoisies; 2) the failure of post-war revolutions, which left only the Russian revolution in power. That capitalist imperialism was the reason for the war, and its actual winner, was general the post-war opinion. In critical circles, which, before the war, still believed that capitalist society could be humanized by modern art and culture, this idea was now abandoned: modern culture was part of the problem, not its solution. The Frankfurt school still favored Marxist criticism, but with more emphasis on a critique of the superstructure than a critique of political economy. From their point of view, the proletarian revolution had its moment after the First World War and lost it. The existence of “socialism in one country”, the Soviet Union, did not impress them as it did many others, and their contribution to the critique of Stalinism is no less important than their criticism of Nazism and fascism. As enemies of Nazism, and as Jews, they had to leave Germany, and, after few years in Paris, they settled in the USA until the end of the war. Their position, that the Second World War came as the solution to the economic crisis of capitalism, together with totalitarian political systems, troubled the Frankfurt school and critical theory thereafter. They claimed that totalitarianism was not something attacking modern liberal society from the pre-modern past, but its own product, emerging from the instrumental reason and from the tendency to construct (and in social practice, to control) the instrumentalised totality of natural, human and social life. Another crucial problem was why there was no revolution against this totality. Turning their backs on the critique of political economy, they developed a critique of ideology, alienation and manipulation. This included the third fundamental tenet of their criticism: liberal society, presumably the opposite of totalitarianism, developed totalitarian tendencies through mass culture and its practices of pacification of social conflicts without resolving them. It is in this promised land of entertainment where sport also belongs – but sport became a target of critique only later, with the second and further generations of critical thinkers.

The ideas of the Frankfurt school circle, known earlier just to a few specialized intellectuals and critical thinkers, became a much broader intellectual movement during the 1960s. Here, the ideas described above became public property, and started to mix with many other theoretical movements and philosophical ideas. This hybridization developed into the 1970s, when many different versions of critical theory appeared, which included elements of post-structuralist philosophy, cultural studies, other versions of Marxist tradition, theoretical post-modernism, theoretical psychoanalysis, and others. It is as hard to describe what is common to all these different versions, as it used to be difficult to say what is essential for Marxism and who therefore are genuine Marxists a few decades ago – including the inconclusive debate about the Marxist character of critical theory itself. As a consequence, there is no longer a unified critical theory, but a collection of differences and hybrids. Their family resemblance, however, comes more from the 1960s than from its first generation founders.

Radicalism and radical critique of sport

Radicalism is a certain attitude of modernity that demands the elimination of present society, and the rebuilding of the world anew from its roots upwards. It offers just one choice, since there can be no turning back. A special kind of “radicalism in reverse” appears when one believes that crucial opportunities for revolution were lost. Critical theory, especially during first generation of the Frankfurt school, was such a reversed radicalism. The moment for radical

change appeared after the First World War, when capitalism was in a shambles and revolutions ensued. But the moment was lost, revolutions were defeated, or were, in case of Russia, an isolated event which developed into a tragic caricature. Can one expect another revolutionary moment, and with it another chance? Perhaps not. In a world resistant to radical change, radical criticism assumes a tragic position: its criticism is true, but prospects of radical change are next to none.

Radical critiques of sport are not to be understood simply as any kind of strong criticism of sport, or simple rejections of sport as a humanly and socially harmful activity. It is critical theory of sport only when put in a framework of tragic and agonistic crises of humanity. In this chapter, I focus on the radical critique of sport that emerged when sport became a globalized, post-industrial, professional spectacle. Of course, there were critiques of sport before these developments, but I focus on contemporary radical criticism of sport as it developed after the 1960s, as a “fellow-traveler” in sport’s global growth and success. To distance theoretical radicalism from simple rejection of sport (and from those cases where sport is incidental to radical critiques), I discuss those theories and their philosophies of sport that are “literally” radical. By that, I mean criticism which digs beyond the surface to criticize the assumed roots of sport and criticism, which, even more radically, dissects sport because it is viewed as a crucial product of the contemporary global crisis of humanity. Criticism of sport is a prevalent and heterogeneous phenomenon, but there are not many cases of criticism that are truly radical.

I analyze four cases of radical criticism of sport in this chapter: Ljubodrag Simonović, Jean-Marie Brohm, Roman Vodeb and Douglas Kellner. At a first glance, they belong to different national and cultural traditions: Serbia, France, Slovenia, and the USA, respectively, and represent nuanced intellectual modes and embrace differences in sport traditions as well. Their ideas cover much ground, but it has still to be admitted that, of all possible sources of critical theory of sport, a German example is missing from this selection.¹

Ljubodrag Simonović (b. 1949, Serbia) had an impeccable professional basketball career, and in his heyday was one of the best players in Europe. At the 1972 Olympic Games, Yugoslavia lost to Puerto Rico in the second round; interestingly, at least two Puerto Rican players were found guilty of doping, but Olympic authorities decided to ignore their offences. In protest, Simonović protested that he did not want to continue with the tournament, and was expelled from the national team as a result. He concluded his professional basketball career in Bamberg (Germany) in 1978. After that, he obtained a Master’s degree in law and a Ph.D. in philosophy. His radical position, besides the criticism of sport, includes anti-capitalism and ecological concerns, but he betrayed his critical outlook by supporting Milosević and Serbian nationalism, and homophobia.² I examine his critique of Coubertin’s ideology and his analysis of professional athletes as little more than robots, ideologically shaped to serve the interests of capitalist profit making, below.

Jean-Marie Brohm (b. 1940, France) is Professor of Sociology at the University of Montpellier III (Paul Valéry). His academic career was devoted to radical critique, with a radical critique of sport as its main focus and self-definition. His criticism of sport started in 1968, during the student revolt, and he established a journal and a group called *Quel Corps* in 1975, which was active until 1997, when the group decided to end their activities. In 2002, Brohm became editor in chief of the journal *Prétentaine* (to gallivant, to gad about). His philosophical sources are Marxist-based, but not as much in critical theory as in Althusser’s critique of ideology, and in Debord’s criticism of the development of the modern public spectacle. His sources, however, include all the critical theoretical positions on the French stage, from psychoanalysis (Freud, Lacan, Reich) to post-structuralism (Foucault, and others). His position is different from that of Althusser, because Brohm, starting with the New Left and student protests, adheres more

to the radical New Left than to traditional communist positions, which he criticized early on, to include Western humanistic Marxism and Soviet Marxism alike. His is a figure of the radically engaged academic intellectual typical for French culture, and an “official outcast” in sport and mainstream academic circles. Of his many works, I focus attention on his critique of Olympism, and his general overview of sport as the “opium of the people”.

Roman Vodeb (b. 1963, Slovenia) started as an elite gymnast at national level, continued as gymnastic coach, and after ten years of coaching graduated from the Faculty of Sport at the University of Ljubljana, where he subsequently received a Masters degree in 1996. He then changed fields into social and human studies; after taking a Master’s in sociology he produced a Ph.D. thesis on the psychoanalysis of sport, which was not accepted by the university authorities and was therefore never publicly defended (and thus not awarded). Nevertheless, he published books and articles, and became a sport commentator in journals and at TV stations. In 2007, he became an independent researcher and counselor. His work is based in Freud (and not on Lacan, as is the Slovenian psychoanalytical school, together with its most celebrated figure Slavoj Žižek), and Althusser’s critique of ideology. His theoretical positions made him famous in Slovenia, while at the same time, resulting in his marginalization. I present his psychoanalysis of sport and critique of the unfinished transition from socialist to liberal ideology of sport in Slovenia.

Finally, Douglas Kellner (b. 1943, USA) studied philosophy at Columbia University, then in Germany (1969–71) and France (1971–72), where he became interested in the Frankfurt school of critical theory and French post-structuralist thought (Foucault, Deleuze, Baudrillard, Lyotard). His combination of critical and post-modern theory is blended with British cultural studies. Perhaps that is why he focuses on case studies as his main source of criticism. He spent the first period of his academic career at University of Texas (Austin; 1973–97). He then became Professor of the Philosophy of Education at UCLA. Beside his academic work, he is very active as a commentator of political processes in the USA, well known for his criticism of the Bush presidency, and for his intellectual activist writings on his personal blog.³ His interests are spread widely, but are more or less connected with his core work: new media in context of contemporary capitalism. In 2006, he was included on a list of UCLA’s radical leftists (“winning” third place), which was presented by right-wingers as softer version of McCarthyism’s blacklisting. From his work, I examine his research on Michael Jordan and his Nike relationship, where he analyzes how sport images are built by media spectacles, and how these function as important moments of capitalist economy and society.

These authors, taken together, create a field of differences and similarities, of which two circumstances deserve to be stressed: the persistent presence of the ideas inherited from 1960s (New Left with the concepts of ideology, alienation and manipulation; new media spectacle and its criticism; emancipation of the body) and adherence to Marx’s claim that religion is “the opium of the people” (Marx, 1970). To these two features, we will add radical criticism of Olympic ideology. What is now required is the setting of a context for their thoughts on sport.

Overview

The period of 1960s is more than two generations away, but the origin of both radical critique and sport as global phenomenon can be traced back to this period. Brohm and Kellner were actively involved with radical movements of the time: Brohm in France, as an activist of “New Left”, and Kellner in the USA as a protester against the Vietnam War. Simonović was still following his professional basketball career, and Vodeb was too young to have been active. Nevertheless, each was influenced by the 1960s, at least in three respects, which are common

to all four: (i) New Left theories and ideologies; (ii) the appearance of global media spectacles including sport spectacles; and (iii) the change in the body politic from asceticism to pleasure.

The New Left is the name given to those leftist ideologies and theories which differed from inherited social-democratic (including socialist and labor) and communist positions, which lacked intellectual coherence, and disappeared during the period of disillusionment of the 1970s and the post-modern cynicism of the 1980s. What persisted was its commitment to radical criticism, which was equally skeptical of Marxist, Western and Eastern orthodoxies, but was still influenced by both of them. Critical theory – with the famous Frankfurt school as its founder – was very important, but what most typified the times were numerous theoretical, ideological and political movements and sects. There were three main concepts elaborated in different ways: *ideology*, *alienation* and *manipulation*. These three concepts are still critical to their point of view.

Ideology, alienation and manipulation

Ideology is an old concept, coined by Destutt de Tracy in 1796 to signify the science of ideas. It was used against him and other liberal thinkers by Napoleon, who was also the first to use it in another, negative sense: false ideas based on wishful thinking and selfish interest. Marx explained that false consciousness is not false because ideologues are incapable of scientific analysis of reality, but because reality itself is – false reality: “To call them [people] to give up their illusions about their condition is to call on them to give up a condition that requires illusion.” (Marx, 1970) In contrast to the Marxist conception, contemporary usage of “ideology” can be classified as either “neutral” (merely describing a system of ideas) or “biased”, (designating false consciousness of a criticized object or one’s opponents), or “dialectic” (designating illusions which are produced because reality itself is “ideological”; that is, a false reality that would be unbearable without ideological illusions). This shift is not always explicitly acknowledged and authors slide from one meaning to another in the radical critique of sport. Some authors explore this concept and develop its definition, other are satisfied with simply using it. Simonović is in the latter category. He does not explicitly apply the term, but his theoretical effort is meant to unmask Coubertin’s reactionary ideology that runs through Olympism in his books about the Olympic deception of the “divine baron” Pierre de Coubertin (Simonović, 1988) and the philosophical aspects of modern Olympism (Simonović, 2002). In *Pobuna Robota* [Rebellion of Robots] (Simonović, 1981), the competitive nature of sport is described as an ideology of efficiency that turns athletes into robots. After 1989, he adhered to an anti-Western ideology, which was the dominant political ideological position in Serbia. Athletes’ body movements, like everything else in culture, are not immune to ideological manipulation: “Body movement in sport is not an expression of natural or ‘divine’ being of human; it is a phenomenal form of anti-cultural and anti-existential spirit of capitalism” (Simonović, 2007: xx).

The other three critical theories are more developed. Jean-Marie Brohm attacks sport ideology in a similar way to Simonović, including the Olympic ideas (Brohm, 2008), and links Coubertin and Carl Diem to the rise of National Socialism. The Olympic Games and the International Olympic Committee, the latter a “self-perpetuating oligarchy” in sport similar to that of *Komintern* in communism (Brohm, 2008: 15) and are largely, in his view, ideological props. Following Marx, Brohm takes ideology to mean false consciousness, as confirmed by the title of one of the chapters from *La Tyrannie Sportive*: “La Fausse Conscience Sportive” – sport’s false consciousness) (Brohm, 2006: 129–42). Sport is not just another innocent game; it is, rather, “a pernicious ideological vision of the World” (Brohm, 2006: 115), which inverts all values by converting right into wrong and *vice versa*. That is what ideologies do: “a transposition

of principle of reality into mystifying phantasmagoria under primacy of wishful thought, here as “magic” metamorphosis of capitalist society with its social conflicts, class struggles, destructive and self-destructive violence into exotic universe, charming and seductive, into oneiric oasis [a never-never land] with its mirrors, hallucinations, legendary heroisms and its mythological narrations” (Brohm, 2006: 115). This Philippic style is supported by theoretical elaborations, with three ideological mechanisms at work in the “Disneyland of sport” (Brohm, 2006: 131): the first is negation of any ideological distortion of sport that parades itself as apolitical (Brohm, 2006: 131); the second comes from a near-schizophrenic dissociation between ecstatic official sport discourses and a corrupt reality, which calls for even stronger ideologization (Brohm 2006: 135–6); the third mechanism is the production of performative discourse, which falsely presents sport as an autotelic and autonomous activity (Brohm 2006: 140). This is where sport becomes a kind of religion, and is expected somehow to solve the problems and contradictions of contemporary capitalist society of which it is just – an ideology; that is, false consciousness.

Roman Vodeb, who is extremely critical of sport ideology preached by the totalitarian priests of sport education, uses ideology in more neutral manner, starting from a combination of Freud’s psychoanalysis, Foucault’s analysis of power, and Althusser’s critique of (spontaneous) ideology. Where and how do these three come together? Vodeb writes:

Without the engagement of psychoanalysis, epistemological discourse on sport is dead – that is our belief, and that is why we have chosen an epistemological context for what we have to say. By linking Freud, Foucault and Althusser we want to hint at theoretical aberrations and nebulous ideas in which sportology [Vodeb’s term of art for the sport sciences] has found itself today. Researchers are seduced by such aberrations, because they assume from the outset that there must be some close, even causal, relationship between sport and health. Thus, they ignore pleasurable experiences and other derivations of libido, which are, as they see it, responsible for the social etiology of sport. These fixations can be traced to sport ideology itself. On the one hand, sport ideology is to blame, because it sought to turn sport into an immaculate sacred cause; on the other, the spontaneous ideology of scientists – ‘sportologists’ is to blame, as it is nothing else but scientific ideology as philosophically exposed by Althusser.

(Vodeb, 2001: 306)

Following Freud, each subject is bound by the principle of pleasure, and is thus looking for delight. Ideology is an invitation to join the “already delightful”, which has been socially constructed to allow the subjects’ pleasure. In liberal and democratic societies, these ideological invitations are forms of social control: subject to the pleasure principle in the guise of free choice. Not so in totalitarian societies, where choice is preempted by the state, which prescribes what kind of pleasure is obligatory, and which forbidden. On one side, Vodeb is introducing the concept of ideology as an inevitable atmosphere which emerges from the primal experience of the subject’s position in its relationship to father and/or mother. From the other side, however, Vodeb wants to get to the truth (just as any traditional enlightened scientist would) and therefore tries to mark a line that separates scientific efforts from ideological. As a consequence, his main target is the spontaneous ideology of Slovenian sport scientists who, under transitional circumstances, still cling to the state ideology of sport because it gives them more powerful pleasure than its liberal opposite. Douglas Kellner understood ideology as contradictory field of false ideas, but also of utopian dreams. In Marxist tradition, his approach is nearer to Ernst Bloch than to critical theory, as he himself declared (Kellner, 2010). Bloch claimed that, in our

culture, most artifacts and practices contain a mixture of ideology and utopian elements. This two-sidedness leads to the conclusion that even when we find elements of ideology (that is, errors and mystification, as well as the world-view of the ruling class), we have to search for utopian elements which deny ideology's right to rule in the same cultural artifacts and practices. Kellner follows this understanding of ideology in his research into sport culture as well.

The most important source of the concept of *alienation* is Hegel, who insists that *Geist* (spirit/mind) has to become estranged from its own self and to inhabit its opposite, but only to master its substance and then to overcome it. Still, an opposing account argues that our identity, previously solid and complete, is lost in alienation. In the 1960s, to become a "real" or "authentic" being was imperative. Alienation was the enemy, and this idea of alienation persists in radical critique: sport is seen as a field of total alienation of the individuals and especially of the masses, where our authenticity is lost. As we have already seen, Simonović does not elaborate his categories and concepts theoretically; he uses them as a weapon and as a tool of interpretation that sheds new, radical light on relations of contemporary sport. These relations are undoubtedly alienated. Play is, as he claims in accordance with Western Marxism and its humanist orientation, the ultimate form of being human. Sport *qua* play is a non-alienated form of human expression, but professional sport is, by contrast, alienated by virtue of its negation of play. Contemporary athletes are, therefore, largely alienated robots.

Roman Vodeb has another notion of alienation. The source of our human "essence" is rooted in the primal family situation, where principles of pleasure and reality conflict with the figure of the father. From this situation comes the urge to compete. Alienation means to turn away from reality and enter the world of pleasure. Athletes and artists turn away from reality. The world of pleasure is different for men and women, because men find pleasure in competition and victory, whereas women find it in beauty. Women are discriminated against in sport, claims Vodeb, but that happens because as athletes in men's sports, they have to become "male women". This radical picture triggered numerous attacks against his theory. His conservative psychoanalysis arrives at similar conclusions as Camilla Paglia (1992) did. She fights against the postmodern insistence on the exclusively social background of gender differences, and gets back to sex as an uninhibited and unstoppable natural power.⁴ For both Vodeb and Paglia, competitiveness is a natural and authentic drive. Vodeb accepts that the state has to control society, because otherwise it will be unbalanced by these natural drives. What he finds unacceptable is the state issuing commands: "You have to do sport!" and "play sport to become healthy and reduce obesity". The state should instead facilitate sport and decisions to engage in it. To promote health as reason for sport means to alienate sport from its basic pleasures. If sport is not a free choice, and if it is done for health and not for pleasure, it is alienated activity.

Brohm and Kellner both have very elaborate concepts of alienation – but their positions are quite different. In *La Tyrannie Sportive*, Brohm (2006: 93–142) devotes the second section to alienation in sport. Sport is a "totalized" social fact (an expression taken from Marcel Mauss, 1966: 76). A social fact is called "total" when it appears in all social phenomena from religion and economy to culture and politics. That is what sport has become as a result of the global media, capitalist economy and oppressive state ideology, including "alienated mass psychology of sport spectacle with its mortifying violence" (Brohm, 2006: 84). The radical critique of sport functions against the grain of alienation and its pleasures. Brohm's critical theory is based on the Frankfurt school: contradictions cannot be resolved in soft theorizing about "good" and "bad", "right" and "wrong" sides of phenomena. These two sides are inseparable. In sport, this means that looking for a way out that would preserve the good of sport and remove the bad is impossible. The de-alienation of sport necessarily requires the deconstruction of sport. In this context, Brohm attacks the sport ideology of health, as Vodeb does, but for different reasons.

Vodeb wants to stress that sport has to be “unhealthy” because of its deep demonic forces; Brohm criticizes the competitive character of sport because of its dependence upon capitalist ideology, which, he argues, is the source of the ideology that sport is healthy activity.

The problem of alienation is not elaborated in Kellner’s (2003) *Media Spectacle*. We get more insight from his article on “New Technologies and Alienation” (Kellner, 2006: 8) where we are confronted with the multilevel and manifold effects of a social transformation “either to produce forms of alienation or contribute to disalienation”. Alienation of the sports spectacle and of professional sport stars is exemplified by Michael Jordan’s position in the global business world:

Indeed, Nike engages in superexploitation of both its Third World workers and global consumers. Its products are not more intrinsically valuable than other shoes but have a certain distinctive sign value that gives them prestige value ... While Michael Jordan tries to present himself as the embodiment of all good and wholesome values, he is clearly tainted by his corporate involvements with Nike in the unholy alliance of commerce, sports spectacle, and celebrity.

(Kellner, 2003: 82)

There is, moreover, another side to observe:

Although Jordan’s contradictions and tensions were somewhat suppressed by his ideological halo, to some extent Jordan always was his own contradictions ... Michael Jordan’s combination of athletic prowess and his association with fashion, cologne, and the good life always made him a potential transgressor of bourgeois middle-class family values and propriety. Although Jordan’s family values images articulated well with the conservative ethos of the Reagan–Bush I era (1980–92), there was always an aura of threatening sexuality and masculinity in Jordan, who was a potentially transgressive figure.

(Kellner, 2003: 86)

The sport spectacle, global business world, and media celebrity culture: all three meet in the figure of Jordan. What is interesting for our analysis is not just a fact that we have processes of alienation at work (in relations between the “real person” and its “media presentation”, between media product and fascinated consumers, between sport and market values etc.), but the fact that we are not completely lost in estrangement, because all alienating processes contain disalienation as a possibility as well.

As a label for mass culture behavior, the concept of ‘*manipulation*’ was more frequently used in the past than it is today. But it is not absent from the radical critique of sport. To take an example from critical cultural studies of sport, which does not belong to radical critique: in *Sport, Culture and Advertising: Identities, Commodities and the Politics of Representation* edited by Steven J. Jackson and David L. Andrews (2005), the authors make no mention of the concept of “manipulation,” and one cannot even find the term in the book’s index. In the editors’ “Introduction,” however, they cite the following crucial questions from Graham Murdock’s article on corporate dynamics and broadcasting future: “We also need to ask who orchestrates these representations? Who is licensed to talk about other people’s experience? Who is empowered to ventriloquize other people’s opinions? Who is mandated to picture other people’s lives? Who chooses who will be heard and who will be consigned to silence, who will be seen and who will remain invisible? Who decides which viewpoints will be taken seriously and how

conflicts between positions will be resolved? Who proposes explanations and analyses and who is subject to them?" (Murdock, 1999: 28). Radical critique of sport, quite similarly, may not use the term itself, but it answers these questions in diagnostic terms that suggest both totalitarian manipulation, and the softer, manipulating kind characteristic of management.

Simonović points out conscious and direct manipulation in sport, from Baron de Coubertin onwards, because he sees elite competitive sport as form of manipulation designed to pacify the masses and massive conflicts of capitalist society. Now sport serves to neutralize the consciousness of those who would otherwise rebel against the system, and to turn athletes into obedient robots: "With the support of TV program human being itself is programmed, his behavior is guided and space of his freedom is framed" (Simonović, 1985: 17). Brohm agrees that professional athletes look like robots coming from the laboratory (Brohm 2006: 10), but he understands the manipulative function of sport in the context of Tocqueville's critique of democracy's potential to become democratic despotism; in which political economy's "invisible hand" is turned from an ideological into an ontological category; and in the context of sport as religion of the people. When he attacks the mainstream understanding of sport as "culture, integration, peace, liberty, brotherhood etc.," (Brohm, 2006: 14), he characterizes sport as "*servitude sportive*" [sport slavery] (Brohm, 2006: 15). Tyranny is sport itself, not some person or persons that construct a despotic society: it is a democratic society that allows sport to serve such a tyrannical social function. The result is the "massification of conscience", a process which blinds people to sport's negative features such as its sanction of violence. In sport, we are all equal, as members of stupefied crowds.

With the acceptance of the universal value of the market, as represented by the "invisible hand," the European left in effect, promoted the "*ontologization* of the invisible hand". The invisible hand, Adam Smith's well-known metaphor, is now recognized as governing power. Sport is its most powerful machinery, which turns the invisible hand into an unmovable rock, upon which "mediatized manipulation" does its work.

(Brohm, 2006: 84)

At the same time, sport becomes a secular religion, what Marx calls the "opium of people". I discuss this metaphor later in the chapter. Vodeb is one more step away from a "Wizard of Oz" understanding of manipulation, but on the other hand, he accepts manipulation as natural state of affairs. What manipulates us is an inevitable unconscious force. It "manipulates" us into sport as well, because sport is a domain of pleasure in competition. What he presents as social and political manipulation is limited to the transitional struggle between liberal and statist ideologies of sport. Kellner is focused on media spectacle, which "is becoming one of the organizing principles of the economy, polity, society, and everyday life." (Kellner, 2003: 1) Each of these basic structures of social life is turned into entertainment in which its traditional logic and purpose is obscured. He starts from Debord's (1994) idea that contemporary societies are "organized around the production and consumption of images, commodities, and staged events." (Kellner, 2003: 2) His focus is different, because "while Debord presents a rather generalized and abstract notion of spectacle, I engage specific examples of media spectacle and how they are produced, constructed, circulated, and function in the present era." (Kellner, 2003: 2)

The difference in approach is a difference in general theory. Debord presented his case as "society of spectacle", which is manipulating crowds with pleasurable recuperation, to pacify radical ideas and possibilities; Kellner's concrete analysis makes visible media culture as a field of conflicting and manifold tendencies. Manipulation becomes enculturation into contemporary society's basic values and into its way of life (Kellner, 2003: 3), as "a social system predicated

on submission, conformity, and the cultivation of marketable difference.” The manipulative character of media culture, however, is not monolithic: “Thus, the spectacle is always contradictory, ambiguous, and subject to reversals and flip-flops so that a political administration and celebrities can never be sure if they will be beneficiaries or victims of the vagaries of spectacle politics” (Kellner, 2003: 16). Manipulators turn into the manipulated, and vice versa. There is not a definite division of society into one and the other, and the system is not monolithic but open to reversals, which opens it to “détournement” [rerouting]⁵ – turning media culture against its manipulating intentions.

New media spectacle

To mark its distinction from the old media of books and movies, “new” media are still called “new” but they are not new any more. The 1960s were a turning point, when television, with the help of satellite broadcasting, became global, and when new technology enabled genuinely televised production. To be able to watch directly what is happening on the other side of the Earth at that very moment (or even on the Moon) was an attraction in itself; the ability to produce pure entertainment put television immediately on a pedestal as the most important medium.

The transmission of visual material in the home and family situation stimulated critical voices even in its early days, but when it became easily accessible and the most popular entertainment, these voices multiplied. A radical critique of spectacular entertainment came from Guy Debord. The first part of his “spectacle” critique was published in 1967, and his *Comments* in 1988 (Debord, 1998). The title of his 1967 work (*Society of the Spectacle*) has to be understood literally: his is not a theory of spectacles organized in society but a theory of society organized as a spectacle. Debord introduced three types of spectacle: concentrated, diffuse, and integrated. In the first type, spectacle takes the form of a totalizing portrait of power reflective of centrally planned and bureaucratically controlled societies; the second, diffused type, by contrast, typifies liberal democratic and market economy societies. Both kinds of spectacles mixed together produce an integrated kind of spectacle, that builds society without a way out of it. In 1988, a year before the fall of the Berlin wall, Debord put the difference between the two alternative systems (communist and capitalist) aside, so that all three kinds of spectacle function globally and locally as a triad of a spectacular social system of power with an occult controlling center. It is called “occult” since it is, as Claude Lefort⁶ would put it, “the empty place of power” which nobody can occupy, but in Debord it represents all moves of power, including those of democracy, as ghostly and uncontrollable. To these three kinds of spectacle, Steven Best and Douglas Kellner (Best and Kellner, 1999) added another, fourth kind: megaspectacle. Megaspectacle represents global scandals – events such as the Gulf wars, the melodrama of the death of Princess Diana’s, the terrorist attacks on the USA of September 11, 2001, the trials and travails of Lance Armstrong or Oscar Pistorius. These events are (re)produced in and by media culture, where, as Jean Baudrillard might say, reality is indiscernible: events do not happen in reality, they are always staged in hyperreality where it is impossible to differentiate between “real” and “virtual”. Here is the difference between critical theories of spectacle, and radical theory: in radical theory, society itself is spectacle. Radical critique of sport recognizes sport as a constitutive moment of such a society.

Vodeb could not put sport spectacle in central focus, because he accepted from Freud a position that crowds do not behave much differently than individuals, and because he does not acknowledge the essential difference between direct and mediated presence. Simonović is similar. His attention is more on aggressive masses at stadia than on global media spectacle. He

compares contemporary sport with Roman spectacles because they are both “death games”; he even composed an anti-ode for London Olympics: “The London Olympics: The Death Games” (Simonović, 2012). Another of his interests to do with spectacles concerns the passivity of watching television: free time turned into time of enslavement. Brohm claims that spectacular sport can be traced to the 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin:

Finally, the Berlin Games were the first really modern Games. Organized with symbolic apparatus which belonged to the Nazis, they installed protocol which more or less persists up to now: release of pigeons, Olympic fire and its travel from Olympia, mass procession, official account of medals won by nation-states, etc. On the other hand, the Berlin Games were the first to profit from all the technologic innovations which consequently turned the Olympic spectacle into immense publicity show. With the Berlin Games, for the first time the world itself has been presented as a spectacle.

(Brohm, 2008: 50–1)

Today, international competitions are the zenith of sport production, which is totally commodified in the process of universal spectacularization, and which puts “living commodities in the service of dead commodities” (Brohm, 2006: 10). His main target is sport as a crucial embodiment of global capitalism, and not spectacle as such. Sport spectacles are the most important part of the entertainment industry (Brohm, 2006: 103–4) that turns reality into a “mystified and mystifying phantasmagoria” – to borrow from the German philosopher Walter Benjamin:⁷

the “magic” metamorphosis of capitalist society with its social conflicts, class struggles, destructive and self-destructing violence, into an exotic universe, charming and delightful, and into a dreamlike oasis with its mirrors, hallucinations, legendary heroes and mythological narratives.

(Brohm, 2006: 115)

All these social functions turn sport spectacle into “inversion of the real” (Brohm, 2006: 119) and into “performative illusion” (Brohm, 2006: 140).

Media spectacle is one of Kellner’s main concerns (the other two being critical theory itself, and research into post-modern technology and science). The title of the first chapter in his *Media Spectacle* (Kellner, 2003) defines his focal issue: “Media Culture and the Triumph of the Spectacle”. Sport contributes to this triumph. What makes the difference in the otherwise long history of spectacle, from the ancient times of all cultures onwards, are new media and informational technology. On one hand, reality and life are transformed into “entertainment”; on the other, guiding figures of the post-modern global world are celebrities produced to (re)present basic values and to become valuable commodities themselves. His case studies are many and from different fields (McDonaldization, Michael Jordan and Nike, O. J. Simpson and his trial, the “X Files”). Sport spectacle is just one field, but not an unimportant one. The “public wedding” between Michael Jordan and Nike is interesting because Jordan “embodies the success ethics and the quintessential capitalist ideal of competition and winning” (Kellner, 2003: 64). He is (or was) the greatest athlete and global media spectacle, “combining his athletic prowess with skill as endorser of global commodities and as a self-promoter”, which “calls attention to the extent to which media culture is transforming sports into a spectacle that sells the values, products, celebrities, and institutions of the media and consumer society” (Kellner, 2003: 63–4) Sport spectacles and their celebrities are the focal crossing point where the necessity of the reproduction of contemporary global capitalism is effected, and where all borders

and limits between divided fields and realms of culture, politics, and economy become blurred. Kellner's approach has a recognizable post-modern touch. Still, his critical stance is stronger than his relativism. Because it became spectacle, sport is now part of the reproduction of the capitalist ethic. It is not just a replica of work, as Bero Rigauer argued in 1969 (Rigauer 1981). It is media spectacle which "attests to the commodification of all aspects of life in the media and consumer society" (Kellner, 2003: 66).

In their respective views on spectacle, all four authors have something in common: the spectacle appears at the same time as attractive entertainment and as means of social surveillance over masses. In *Downcast Eyes*, Martin Jay wisely put Foucault and Debord in the same chapter (Jay, 1993: 381–434): Foucault represents the critique of panopticon as an allegory of contemporary society, where everybody is put under the surveillance of Big Brother's eye; Debord's critique of spectacle as allegory of the same society, is one, by contrast, in which everybody is watching and nobody is living any more. To put Debord's and Foucault's approach in connection with each other, we have to step back to Marcuse's incorporation of Freud into critical theory. Marcuse introduced two new categories dealing with the pleasure and reality principles: repressive desublimation, and non-repressive sublimation. From this point of view, the panopticon and spectacle are not two different ways to establish control over society and its members, they are one: in spectacle, everybody wants to see and watch, but also to be seen and watched. What all four authors describe and analyze as sport spectacle's most important characteristic is repressive desublimation: by entertaining themselves, masses exert social surveillance upon themselves.

The body and sport

The 1960s are famous for the emancipation of bodily pleasure(s), sexual emancipation (including the women's liberation movement, the emancipation of lesbians and homosexuals, or, later, the whole LGBT community) and for opposition to all kinds of asceticism and repression of "natural needs". Yet the emancipation of sensual pleasures did not include sport: the intellectualist dismissal of sport as body practice is one important reason why sport was largely overlooked. But the arguments of critical theorists changed that. It was not the physical side of sport which was dismissed now, but its fetishistic metaphysical function in commodified and mediatized universe. In the radical critique, sport has not been seen as part of the emancipation of senses and of body, but as part of biopolitics, specifically, the exemplar of the disciplined body. We can still find traces of this characteristic in contemporary radical critique. But there is another, more curious, contradiction here. The emancipation of (sexual) pleasure was (and is) not without its own tensions. Mainstream emancipation, while attacking ascetic patriarchy, was still reduced to male emancipation and oriented towards male pleasures, so that female and LGBT emancipation had to attack traditional patriarchy and male emancipation at the same time. In radical critique, this conflict still matters. Sport is not criticized just for its functional position in perpetuation of capitalist order but for its attitudes toward male and female, and heterosexual and homosexual athletes as well. Of our four authors, two: Vodeb and Simonović, were, and still are, involved in a bitter fight with feminist and homosexual critical voices. There are traces of this problematic attitude in Brohm as well. Vodeb claims that women practice sport to please their symbolic father figure in an unnatural way, not to compete for attention in terms of their sexual attractiveness and beauty, but to turn themselves into physically competitive men. At the same time, he believes that sexual orientation is decisive for personal and social experience, so that homosexuals have a different position in sport than their heterosexual counterparts. Simonović's views are openly homophobic:

In contemporary capitalism, movements are created of growing numbers of homosexuals, which would, according to Marx's "humanism-naturalism", fall under the classification of degenerated sociability and, consequently, degenerated naturalness ... In the homosexual relationship. The human body loses its genuine erotic dimension and is instrumentalized in an unnatural and inhuman way.

(Simonović, 2011)

In his criticism of the Berlin Olympic Games, where he argues how close the Olympic movement's leadership and Nazism really were, Brohm concludes:

This corporeal ideology of askezis [asceticism], of purity, of discipline, of conformity, of sacrifice, of suffering and of hierarchy is shared by sport and fascism, and is evidently in its instinctual basement closely bound with repressed or sublimated homosexuality.

(Brohm, 2008: 211)

This is not a new aspect of fascist and National Socialism's anamnesis, not even in connection with sportive body, but it is interesting that what appears in Vodeb's "orthodox Freudism" as the male character of sport, is here presented as sublimated homosexuality.

The difficulties with male-female and with LGBT in radical critical analyses of sport make it clear that some radical critiques of sport can generate consequences which are at very least problematic. Their appearance is a sign that some motives of radical critique of sport have nothing to do with enlightened criticism oriented towards emancipation and liberation.

Marx and the "opium of the people"

Karl Marx is undoubtedly one of the most influential radical thinkers. Surprisingly, in radical critiques of sport, the most cited of his concepts is his famous metaphor "opium of the people" found in the introduction to *A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right* (Marx, 1970), which contemporary critics of sport seized on to establish that sport has become a substitute for religion.

Simonović mentions opium *for* and not opium *of* the people when he compares sport with the industry of death (Simonović, 2002). Sport spectacles are criticized as being similar to Roman spectacles. Contemporary rituals, according to Simonović, are at the same time rituals of death, and give rise to a new sort of mass religious movement which represents "flowers on the chains"; that is, consolation and substitute instead of real pleasure and happiness. Vodeb (2001) does not refer directly to opium of the people, but obviously considers desire and pleasure to have the same hallucinatory effect. Brohm (2006: 14) uses opium of people as one of his two most important theoretical categories (the other is false consciousness). "Really, the term opium of the people with its evident Marxian if not Marxist connotation has no meaning but in the language of Critical theory of sport," (Brohm, 2006: 22) where it occupies a place of "central significance: sport, opium of people" (ibid: 23). And then one of his typical tirades follows:

Indeed, sport as opium cannot be reduced to one of its multiple aspects – fanaticism, chauvinism, xenophobia, racism, anti-Semitism, sexism, hating opponents, hooligan violence, bellowing of fans, mass emotions, intellectual regression, spectacle of gladiators, taste for symbolic death executions, all these facets which I have tidily dissected,

as it represents a synthetic totality of a kind called by Theodor W. Adorno “exhortation to happiness,” “illusory pseudo-satisfactions because of which the established order still can survive,” and precisely because they reinforce the established order by concealing exploitation, alienation, oppression and domination, are never discovered by positivist sociologists who belong to a pre-established social harmony and to already existing “values of sport culture”.

(Brohm, 2006: 23–4)

For Brohm, sport is compared to religion because he believes that religion used to be, and sport now is the most dangerous enemy of the people. Kellner makes no such claim, but even he found something of religious significance in the sport spectacle:

Moreover, the sports spectacle is at the center of an almost religious fetishism in which sports become a surrogate religion and its stars demigods. For many, sports are the object of ultimate concern (Paul Tillich’s definition of religion), providing transcendence from the banality and suffering of everyday life.

(Kellner, 2003: 69)

This preoccupation with the connection between religion and sport, and with linking this comparison to Marx’s opium metaphor needs further elucidation. “The opium of the people” was not coined by Marx. It comes from the enlightenment critique of religion, when it was used for instance by de Sade in 1797 and Novalis in 1798. Marx is actually saying exactly the opposite: “For Germany, the criticism of religion has been essentially completed, and the criticism of religion is the prerequisite of all criticism” (Marx, 1970). When criticism of religion is completed, the critique of Hegel’s philosophy of right can begin, leading to criticism of the human world, society and state. Religion is the opium of people, because it is “the fantastic realization of human essence since the human essence has not acquired any true reality” (Marx, 1970). Obviously, the critique of religion is not enough. Even more, critique “has plucked the imaginary flowers on the chain not in order that man shall continue to bear that chain without fantasy or consolation” (Marx, 1970). In the radical critique of sport, the order of things is the opposite. If critique of sport would be analogous with the critique of religion under Marx’s terms, it would be dismissed as something which should be over and done with, so that critique of the actual reality and not of its phantasmagoric reflection – the critique of right and of political order (or later the critique of political economy) could begin. In the radical critique of sport, the status of this critique is, contrary to Marx, analogous to the critique of political economy.

How is it possible that, with the radical critique of such various cultural and philosophical backgrounds, the equation of sport and religion goes hand in hand with understanding of sport as fundamental pillar of global order? One of the reasons is the need to explain why people do not revolt against repression and exploitation. Another is a post-modern inclination to transfer the accent of criticism from “reality”, which ceased to be clearly discernible, to images and their phantasmagorias, where flowers themselves are treated as chains. Marx and Engels (1976) had an answer to that in the first sentences of *The German Ideology*, mockingly describing the Young Hegelians’ diagnosis of phantasmagoric and ideological rule which makes people blind to reality, and their proposals for various therapies:

The phantoms of their brains have got out of their hands. They, the creators, have bowed down before their creation. Let us liberate them from the chimeras, the ideas, dogmas, imaginary beings under the yoke of which they are pining away. Let us revolt

against the rule of abstract thoughts. Let us teach men, says one, to exchange these imaginations for thoughts which correspond to the essence of man; says the second, to take up a critical attitude to them; says the third, to knock them out of their heads; and – existing reality will collapse. These innocent and childlike fancies are the kernel of the modern Young–Hegelian philosophy.

(Marx and Engels, 1976)

The problem with radical critique of sport is neither its radicalness nor its dubious use of Marx's notion of opium but rather its insistence on the imaginary and phantasmagoric side of sport and other spectacles of media culture as the only reality, which leaves them with just one and only "therapy": to knock these images out of people's heads.

The Olympics

The Olympic movement and the Olympic Games get no attention in Douglas Kellner's and Roman Vodeb's works, because Kellner's focus is on American sports spectacles and Vodeb's on the psychoanalytical substance of sport. Jean-Marie Brohm and Ljubodrag Simonović, on the other hand, have written books on Olympic ideology, and on the decisive influence of their founder, Baron Pierre de Coubertin. Coubertin was not a theoretical thinker. His works are rather an eclectic mixture with an accent on Thomas Arnold's pedagogy of sport, Le Play's positivism, and Herbert Spencer's evolutionism.⁸ Both critics see Coubertin as a reactionary reformer who offered athletic placebos rather than genuine solutions to class conflicts, and sought instead to integrate exploited people into society, and to propagate fundamental bourgeois values (competition, hierarchy of success, military discipline, colonialism, nationalism and even racism), and who dangerously courted fascism and Nazism in his support for the 1936 Berlin Olympic Games, and in later expressions of his admiration and thankfulness for the Nazi regime and its leader. In both authors, these accusations are well supported by Coubertin's writings and statements, and the 1936 Games are just a tip of the iceberg of his beliefs about sport, not just a mistake or a casual step aside. If we put together their general diagnosis of sport's function in contemporary global capitalism, and Coubertin's reforming intentions, we arrive at a conclusion not offered by either Brohm nor Simonović: if Coubertin's intentions were to pacify conflicts of capitalist society, and to integrate masses into such society and its basic values with the help of sport, he was extremely successful, as both authors prove with their radical criticism of contemporary sport.

Final commentary

The source of modern philosophical critique can be traced to the Enlightenment. Its initiative was two-fold. First, at the beginning of the seventeenth century, critique was formulated in the name of reason and deployed to criticize all institutions, beliefs, and customs from the position of reason as the highest judge; in short, to substitute reason for unreason. Then, with Kant's approach to the crisis of enlightenment in the second half of the eighteenth century, philosophical critique started to criticize reason and other abilities of the human mind itself, not so much to dethrone reason as to make it stronger and sharper in accord with the limits of its ability. During the nineteenth century, social conflicts inspired many kinds of criticism, not all of them philosophical, and not all of them enlightened, but many of them radical in both a revolutionary and reactionary sense. The twentieth century added extreme criticism to all those versions in between. Making sport the main target of radical critique is still the exception rather

than the rule. The analysis of these four cases confirms that the first kind of critique, which turns its object into an enemy to be unmasked, prevails over the self-criticism of critique itself: over Kant's moment of philosophical critique. This exposes two of radical critique's weak points, both bound up with the dialectics of criticism. The first one is a tendency to flatten the historical development and contemporary situation of global sport to expose its negative side, which leaves "knocking sport out of our heads" as the only solution. By contrast, a dialectical approach would have to accept that "alienation" deserves philosophical critique not only because it is "negative" with regard to human authenticity, but also because human authenticity is developed only through "alienation" and its conflicting and contradiction-riddled development. This means that the solution would lie not outside the criticized phenomenon but, rather, inside it. The second one is a consequence of the first: when one paints the masses enjoying their pastimes, for instance sport, as deluded – as if under the influence of an opiate – the only way out is to put them into detox. But how can the masses take such a significant step of their own free will? Put simply, they cannot. The radical critique of sport, confronted with this fact, cannot but patronize sport crowds and underestimate their critical abilities. But to underestimate people is the very opposite of enlightening them.

While criticisms of sport offered by radical critique are often well deserved, radical critique itself has to be criticized for its non-dialectical approach to social criticism and for its caricaturing sport spectators as doped and intoxicated masses. On the one hand, as in Vodeb, it can come too close to naturalizing the human inclination to seek pleasure, so that any effort to change how spectators act counts at best as crude (manipulative) social engineering. On the other hand, as in Kellner, it can come close to realizing the critical ideals of the enlightenment in its critique of critical theory, and its incorporation of cultural studies and postmodern approaches to the study of new media and new technologies (including new technologies of power and government). And yet, as in Brohm, it sometimes appears as merely angry invective directed at sport-absent philosophical self-criticism and dialectical understanding. And it even can, as in Simonović's writings, become simply extreme right-wing criticism and ideology. It is this confusing and convoluted mixture of radical thought that deserves critical scrutiny itself so that the legitimate criticisms of sport it does make are not lost sight of but become critically preserved. Philosophy of sport is a discipline that questions anything but the right of its object to exist. It criticizes bad sport and promotes good sport. The radical critique of sport criticizes the right of sport to exist, and therefore does not attack only what philosophy of sport says about sport but what it stands for; that is, the existence of its object itself. Consequently, the philosophy of sport and the radical critique of sport rarely meet in the same room and, when they do, they dismiss each other without profound philosophical argument. Philosophy of sport, even when it is criticizing its object, remains an eulogy of sport; radical critique of sport, even when it admits to the attractiveness of sport, wants to uproot and eradicate it. This article is an attempt to find a language of communication between them, so that an account of the radical criticism of sport is brought to the attention of the philosophy of sport together with what it has to offer as critically sound. At the very least, a familiarity with the critical theory of sport can help the philosophy of sport steer clear of ideological accounts of sport that overlay its utopian potential and underplay its harsher, dystopian side.

Notes

- 1 *Sport and Work* is one of the rare works in critical theory of sport translated from German (*Sport und Arbeit*; Rigauer 1969) into English (Rigauer 1981), and its main thesis that sport is not the other of work but its mirroring copy is well known. If one wants to find more information on the relation

- between the Frankfurt School critique of sport, there is German monograph edited by the Brazilian scholar Alexandre Fernandez Vaz (2004). Another collection of German critical texts on sport was edited by Jörg Richter (1972), but, other than that of Bero Rigauer, the most interesting approach is that of Gerhard Vinnai (b. 1940) who published a book on football as ideology (Vinnai 1970) and edited a book on sport and class (Vinnai 1972). Bero Rigauer's book *Sport and Work* (1969, 1981) represents early German critical theory of sport at its best. The main addressee of the book is Karl Diem (1882–1962), the central figure of German sport and Olympic movement from the First World War to the first bid for Olympic Games in Munich, with the Berlin 1936 Games and his Nazi career in between. In his writings as ideologue and historian of sport and Olympic movement, Diem insisted on the fundamental difference between sport as a free-time activity, and work as a paid activity of necessity. Rigauer, on the contrary, argues that modern sport is structured as work, which means that sport does not differ from the repressive regime of work. In sport, the same idea of efficiency is applied as in factory working process broken down into smallest moves repeated on an on, best illustrated by Charlie Chaplin at conveyor belt in his last silent movie "Modern Times". On the other hand, sport is industrialized mass culture activity, which turns free time into a time of standardized mass consumption and ideological manipulation. After this seminal work, however, Bero Rigauer did not publish much about sport, and while critical examination of sport lives on in his and other German sociologists, his position, developing from critical theory towards figurational sociology of Norbert Elias, can hardly be called radical, and does not appear as a source in contemporary radical criticism of sport.
- 2 A younger generation of critical sport theorists, such as Milorad Gačević and Tamara Đorđević, has developed a radical critique of sport based on the biopolitical theories of Foucault, and the radical critique of capitalism in *operaismo* and Antonio Negri. Milorad Gačević graduated from the faculty for sport and physical education (University of Novi Sad); Tamara Đorđević achieved her Ph.D. at the faculty for visual arts (University of Arts in Belgrade).
 - 3 His blog, called *BlogLeft: Critical Interventions*, is available online at <https://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/blogleft/conversations/messages/56> (accessed October 13, 2014). He also has a well-developed personal website, available online at <http://pages.gseis.ucla.edu/faculty/kellner/flash/kellneraug8.swf> (accessed October 13, 2014).
 - 4 Paglia's main thesis, which concerns Western art, is that there is unity and continuity through the whole history of Western culture, without any fragmentation (as modernism and post-modernism seem to suggest), because Christianity never conquered pagan thought, which remains at work in artistic eroticism, in astrology and in pop culture (where, by the way, sport belongs as well). This pagan core of Western culture comes from two brutal pagan forces: sex and nature. This is where feminists should look for their starting point: both forces are embodied in the figure of the Mother. The title of this work (*Sexual Personae*) suggests that the artists of Western art history are natural, sexual pagan beings wearing cultural masks or social veils: society is artificial construction to prevent the catastrophic release of natural forces. Still, violence always comes out, because violence is an indelible part of human nature. Sexual liberation is thus an oxymoron: sex is rather a demonic power of nature. Women need more repression to become socially sustainable beings, because their chthonic natural essence is stronger. Contemporaneity (the book was first published in 1990) is an epoch when pagan sex and violence burst out of suppressed state, and over into thin Christian alluvion.
 - 5 *Détournement* is a technique designed by the Lettrist International and later accepted and developed by Situationist International during the 1950s as a subversive practice which is to reveal the wearing out and loss of importance of the old cultural spheres (Debord and Wolman, 1956).
 - 6 Claude Lefort, a French philosopher known for his political philosophy, marked the difference between authoritarian/totalitarian/despotic political regimes, and democratic regimes, as a difference between occupied seats of power, and empty places of power (Lefort, 1986).
 - 7 Walter Benjamin used this term, which also appears in Marx's analysis of the fetishism of commodities, to characterize the irrational forms of material presence of the commodified world found in the megalopolis environment of Paris of the nineteenth century, and its interiorization in the mass conscience of modern capitalist civilization: social reality is experienced as phantasmatic dream and state of intoxication. Those interested in Benjamin's notion of profane illumination can consult Benjamin (1999) himself, or the seminal study by Susan Buck-Morss (1989).
 - 8 Thomas Arnold (1795–1842) was a well-known reformer of sport education as headmaster at Rugby School; Frédéric Le Play (1806–1882) was a French engineer, sociologist and economist with proposals for new organization of labor and for social reform, who was installed as ideological leader of Paris International Exhibition of 1855 by Napoleon III. Herbert Spencer (1820–1903) was a British

philosopher, biologist, sociologist and liberal politic thinker famous for coining the phrase “survival of the fittest”, but whose synthetic philosophy is more than just pure philosophical Darwinism.

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