

The culture of competition metaphor, sport management and the future of Europe

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Aim of paper and research questions

Since the beginning of the European Union (EU), with the Treaty of Rome, the Member States adopted a competition policy framework. But in order to build a competition fair spirit it is fundamental that people be found to accept what competition really means, and, in several social environments, such as education and in sport, since the WW II, competition has not been a very well considered subject. History tells us that sport had especially been used to improve the nationalistic and agonistic feelings by several dictatorial leaders. To overcome this situation, during the 1960s of the previous century a new movement arose from the north of Europe named "Sport for All". Then in the middle of the 1980s when the Welfare State began to disinvest in some of its social responsibilities, program shortcomings became to be the rule. In those days the neoliberal policies crossed countries all over the world and the sanctification of an open competition sport system and a free market ideology took control. Consequently, in a market environment, competition became the new buzzword. With the financial and economical collapse in 2008, the problem that now arises in the EU is that competition is accused to be responsible for the blowing up of the finance and economic system. The question is: How should EU manage a culture of strategic competition in the dialectic of good and evil of the sport organisation?

Literature review

Authors in the management field who have studied competitiveness in an instrumental perspective are, among others, John Maurice Clark (1948), Alfred Chandler (1962), Igor Ansoff (1965), Michael Porter (1979), Henry Mintzberg (1979; 1994), Kenneth Andrews (1980), Jay R. Galbraith (1983), James B. Quinn (1980; 1994), Ralph Stacey (1991), Gary Hamel & Prahalad (1994), Manuel Castells (1996), Bruce Henderson (1989), Van der Bergh & Cameasa (2001), Thomas Christiansen (2001), Van der Heijden (2005), Kim Warren (2008). From an ontological perspective, Friedrich Nietzsche was one of the first authors in Europe who dealt with the issue of competition. Departing from the classics works of Homer (VIII Century b.C.), Hesiod (VIII Century b.C.), Heraclitus (540-470 b.C.), Socrates (470-399 b.C.), Plato (428/27-347 b.C.), Aristotle (384-322 b.C.), wrote about the very nature of the competitive human's existence. But after Nietzsche several philosophers as Martin Heidegger (1935; 2000), Ortega y Gasset Gasset (1985) Johan Huizinga (1938), Roger Caillois (1958), Hans-George Gadamer (1960), Desmond Morris (1967; 1981), John Hoberman (1984), Timothy Wilson (2005), Ann Janet (1993) and Thiago Mota (2008) treated the competition issue departing from Nietzsche's standpoint. In a development perspective our research also considers the position of John Rawls (1993; 1999) and Richard Rorty (1998).

Research design and data analysis

Our research design is of a qualitative hermeneutic kind. As a conceptual paper we do not use empirical data. It deals with the nature of competition in Nietzsche's conceptual work and how its intrinsic agonistic cultural metaphor, which permeates the very nature of sport, should be managed in order to build the foundations of a new strategic competition spirit for Europe. This demand requests the overcoming of the modern strategic management thinking, which only considers competition in its instrumental use, to consider competition in its inextricable ontological explanation.

Results

Considering a Nietzsche's philosophical categories, our qualitative hermeneutic research is developed according to the following chapters: (1) Competition and "natural law" considering Calicles from Gorgias and the nature of power; (2) The "super-man" and the pursuit of excellence; (3) Power need and the esthetical principles that determinate the creative force for new values; (4) Dionysius Vs Apollo considering the dialectical of "Eros" and the "Logos"; (5) The dialectic "Good Eris" and "Bad Eris", in accordance with Nietzsche refuse of "ius belis"; (6) The "Socrates Demonian" and the rational vs. instinct o life; (7) The "Ostracism Principle" and the natural limits to competition; (8) "The Eternal Return Myth" considering the alternatives of creation and destruction; (9) The Opposition "Good/Evil", to surpass the "slave's moral"; (10) The "Nietzschean's State" and the decadence of the Welfare State paradigm; (11) "Democracy and Liberalism" in according with the "moral imperative"; (12) "The Gay Science" and a more artistic Europe.

Discussion and conclusion

Competition policy to Europe is more than enforcement of a form of regulating structures to organize economy. A competition policy for Europe as a cultural metaphor must permeate the schools system, through sports education, in order to institutionalise a fair and noble economical competition system in the search for European "arete", the name the old Greeks gave to the management of excellence.

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