

PHYSICAL EDUCATION, SPORT AND HEDONISM: A DIALOGUE WITH INEZIL PENNA MARINHO

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Abstract: The aim of this essay is to reflect on the relevance of Inezil Penna Marinho's ideas concerning the relationship between physical education, sports, and hedonism in contemporary society. The research that led to this essay is theoretical in nature, and the methodology employed is essentially bibliographic. As a result, at least two meanings of hedonism were identified, one of which, in Marinho's (1984) text, is linked to the philosophical tradition that dates back to Epicurus. It is in this sense of hedonism—along with its developments in modern psychology and pedagogy—that the concept and function of physical education and sports are philosophically grounded. Although he could not have foreseen phenomena related to the development of the internet and the digital world, Marinho (1984) demonstrated a sensitivity capable of grasping important connections between philosophy, physical education, and sports in contemporary times, thus allowing some of his ideas remain relevant in the 21st century.

Keywords: Philosophy. Pleasure. Suffering. Pain.

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1 INTRODUCTION

The book by Inezil Penna Marinho, entitled *Introdução ao estudo da filosofia da educação física e dos desportos* [*Introduction to the Study of the Philosophy of Physical Education and Sport*] (our translation), has received relatively little attention in the contemporary specialized literature on the philosophical foundations of physical education. This fact appears symptomatic when considered in light of our historical context, marked by the widely disseminated “new approaches,” while deeper reflection on a central issue raised by Marinho (1984) in the mid-1980s remains scarce: the discussion of physical education within the framework of a philosophical-psychological-pedagogical-sociological current such as hedonism.

Given the scarcity of studies addressing this pressing discussion present in his work, we have adopted as a selection criterion the philosophical relevance of his approach in what is one of his last published books, prior to his passing. These are, therefore, writings of intellectual maturity, which renders them particularly interesting for critical analyses such as the one developed in this essay. To our knowledge, there are no other studies by the same author in which he addresses the theme of hedonism with such depth and breadth, even connecting it to the philosophical foundations of contemporary physical education and sport.

It is first important to emphasize that, in this study, the meaning of the term “hedonism” is not univocal. It may be understood both in a historical-philosophical sense, upon which Marinho (1984) relies to philosophically ground physical education and sport and, in a pejorative connotation, which the author did not ignore and which, in contemporary times, has once again come to overshadow its historical-philosophical meaning.

In this essay, drawing on Marinho's (1984) considerations, contextualized in their proper time, we examine the historical transformations of hedonism toward the digital age and its cultural relationship with physical education and sport. However, we are not restricted to merely reproducing here the general lines of analysis of this important Brazilian intellectual, since we commit to deepening the issue of hedonism through an analysis of the historical context of the early decades of the 21st century. To this end, we engage in dialogue with two works in order to advance the discussions initiated by Marinho (1984): *The Palliative Society* by Byung-Chul Han (2021), which offers an original account of the relatively pathological way in which, in the digital age, we have become accustomed to dealing with pain, as well as its existential function within philosophy, the arts, and culture; and *Dopamine Nation* by Anna Lembke (2025), a book that, despite having rapidly become a best-seller, presents significant arguments and scientific evidence demonstrating how pleasure, in contemporary times, has become one of the main cultural problems across diverse societies. Both works have gained prominence in our historical context, and we therefore consider it necessary to engage them in our study in order to foster philosophical debate within the field of physical education and sport.

At the same time that a significant portion of the world's population is swept along by an endless wave of unnecessary and excessive pleasures offered in every

element of the hyperspace of the digital world, with each nation and regional context experiencing this immersion in distinct ways, contemporary civilization, despite the unequal living conditions present across the six continents, appears to be evading the centrality of the experience of pain and suffering to the human existential condition. Moreover, it has failed to engage in deep philosophical debate concerning biotechnological projects linked to the problem of pleasure.

Thus, the aim of this article is to critically reflect on the contemporary relevance of the ideas by Marinho (1984) regarding the way he positions the relationship between physical education, sport, and hedonism in contemporary society. More specifically, it seeks to understand how the current relevance of this author's thought compels an examination of the ongoing socio-technical transformations experienced by modern societies or those undergoing processes of modernization, particularly in the final decades of the 20th century and the early decades of the 21st century. In this essay, the expression "modern societies" refers to those nations that have historically experienced broad and profound technological transformations of their industrial base across multiple sectors of the global economy, thereby becoming more powerful, so to speak, in military and global trade terms (e.g., the United States, China etc.), whereas the so-called "societies in the process of modernization" refer to those nations at a less advanced techno-industrial stage that nonetheless seek, each in its own way and within the constraints imposed by the prevailing geopolitical system, to create conditions that reduce inequalities in the living conditions of their citizens.

To achieve this objective, the essay is methodologically divided into two stages. The first consists of an examination of Marinho's (1984) philosophical approach to the relationships between hedonism, physical education, and sport. Secondly, we turn to an analysis of the works of Han (2021) and Lembke (2025), which address not only the problems associated with contemporary hedonism but also the ways in which the digital world has contributed to the increasing contemporary difficulty of dealing with pain and suffering. In this context, Marinho's (1984) reflections on hedonism in the society of his time are also critically reconsidered, as well as his views on the role of recreation and sport in fostering activities to be enjoyed during leisure time.

In order to avoid an anachronistic comparative analysis between these authors, it is important to highlight, in the development of our exposition, the emergence of significant socio-technical transformations over the approximately four decades separating Marinho's (1984) work from the books by Han (2021) and Lembke (2025) that are examined here. In this sense, we seek to make explicit some of the significant transformations undergone by this four-decade historical context, particularly with regard to the emergence of the digital age. Thus, although these three authors developed their theoretical frameworks under significantly distinct historical and cultural circumstances (encompassing South American, North American, European, and East Asian contexts), the theme of pleasure and hedonism constituted the nexus that, through the juxtaposition of their writings, enabled us to partially elucidate the phenomena investigated here in their genesis and to present, through a dialogue with the work by Marinho (1984), an updated account of his contribution to our present historical context.

2 PHYSICAL EDUCATION, SPORTS AND HEDONISM IN THE PHILOSOPHICAL WORK OF INEZIL PENNA MARINHO

When writing the work to which reference has been made here, Marinho (1984) was likely aware of developments in microelectronics, although he did not have the opportunity to witness the repercussions of the internet and the phenomena associated with it. This is because the author passed away before the beginning of the 1990s, a crucial period for the development of sociotechnical apparatuses that would come to dominate the cultural landscape of modern societies or those in process of modernization. It is known that, with the emergence of the internet and the massive proliferation of smartphones, contemporary civilizations have come to experience considerable sociocultural transformations, such that it is no longer novel to claim that artificial intelligence will shape the next major qualitative techno-industrial transformation and will become incorporated into all dimensions of social life.

However, through his historical-philosophical perspective on physical education and sports, Marinho (1984) demonstrated a sensitivity not only to grasp the emergence and development of hedonism in Western culture – as a movement that has influenced fields ranging from ancient philosophy to modern psychology, pedagogy, and sociology –, but also, in a sense, to indicate signs of its exacerbation and consequent corruption in both ancient and contemporary times, pointing to the importance of physical education and sport programs organized by the State in order to counteract this condition of decadence. Perhaps, with regard to this latter point, the author sought to recover and distinguish historical hedonism from the purely pejorative sense associated with various modern uses of the term, thereby attributing to it, in his own way, a connotation more consistent with the Epicurean interpretation of this notion. Before doing so, however, the author situates this Epicurean understanding of the role of pleasure in human life within the trajectory of Western philosophical development, naturally tracing the discussion back to Socratic-Platonic thought. In order to deepen the understanding of the historically constituted notion of Hedonism, we highlight here the definition found in the *Dictionary of Philosophy* by Nicola Abbagnano (1998, p. 497):

A term that indicates both the indiscriminate pursuit of pleasure and the philosophical doctrine that considers pleasure as the only possible good, and therefore as the foundation of moral life. This doctrine was upheld by one of the Socratic schools, the Cyrenaic school, founded by Aristippus; it was later taken up by Epicurus, according to whom “pleasure is the principle and the end of a happy life” (DIOG. L., 10, 129). Hedonism differs from eighteenth-century utilitarianism because, for the latter, the good does not lie in individual pleasure but in the pleasure of “the greatest possible number of people,” that is, in social utility (Abbagnano, 1998, p. 497, *our translation*).

As will be seen in the subsequent section, the conceptions of hedonism employed by Anna Lembke (2025) and Byung-Chul Han (2021) are substantially distinct, insofar as they tend to express attitudes related to addiction (Lembke, 2025) and to conformity with an emerging sociocultural paradigm, linked to a particular ideology of well-being that leads individuals to regard pain as a scandal (Han, 2021).

With regard to Lembke's (2025) conception, Marinho (1984) approaches it when he employs the concept of hedonism in a pejorative sense, rather than as a philosophical doctrine, attributing, for example, to the Romans the blame for the disrepute into which philosophical hedonism fell in other periods of history. This philosophical capacity of Marinho (1984) to employ the concept in such distinct senses lends his work a complexity that requires caution from the reader.

However, the influence of Hedonism, understood as a specific philosophical doctrine originating in Ancient Greece, influenced various schools of thought in the Modern Age (e.g., the utilitarianism of the 18th century, as pointed by Abbagnano), as will be seen below. For now, it suffices to recall the influence of Hedonism on the philosophy of the thinker who is often regarded as the father of modern philosophy of education: Jean-Jacques Rousseau. As is well known, in *Émile*, Rousseau advocates the implementation of a pedagogy in which the otherwise clear distinctions between instructional authority and the interests of the child become, to some extent, blurred, so that the young student may develop naturally, learning and enjoying his freedom as he grows.

Accepting without due criticism Rousseau's assumptions that human beings are born good, although corrupted by society, Marinho (1984) states, with regard to the philosophy of Epicurus, that "it becomes indispensable to observe the child before education has corrupted its nature" (*our translation*). He then declares that "there is no other reason why, after [observing childhood], it remains only to observe the animal, since man is nothing more than one of the animals, and the good of the animal will also be that of man" (*our translation*). With animals being species of "faithful mirrors of nature," the author acknowledges that, with Epicurus, it is in the nature of both humans and animals to tend "to preserve pleasure when it presents itself," while, when pain manifests, they seek to flee from it as quickly as possible (Marinho, 1984, p. 26–27).

Thus, when man questions himself, his nature shows him that it is necessary to preserve pleasure and to flee from pain. And if we attempt to deceive the longings of our nature by despising pleasure, like fanatics of an artificial virtue, we may, through introspective analysis, verify that we are not sincere and how much we disguise our sufferings in order to conform our actions to our words. [...] If each of our pleasures, instead of affecting only one part of our body for a moment, were to extend throughout the entire mass of our organism and persist without weakening over time, we would never cease to possess the supreme good; our nature would not demand any other satisfaction, no one would have anything to reproach us for, and we would have nothing more to do than follow moral precepts: a theory of virtue would be superfluous. But this is not the case: there are pleasures without duration that, far from being a good for the whole body, leave it in a state of weakness and discomfort; it is important to distinguish these transient pleasures from the stable, perfect, and enduring pleasure that is the object of our constant desire (Marinho, 1984, p. 27, *our translation*).

As can be observed, in developing his account of pleasure in human life, the author aligns himself with Epicurean philosophy, which distinguishes transient pleasures from higher forms of pleasure (which coincide with lightness, gentleness, and serenity). In this sense, as expressed in Epicurus' well-known *Letter to Menoeceus*, recognizing pleasure as the most natural and fundamental good and acknowledging

that one should not act against nature, does not imply the pursuit of every form of pleasure. As the ancient Greek philosopher argues, attaining higher forms of pleasure requires renouncing dishonorable pleasures. Moreover, one should prefer many pains to certain pleasures, especially when such pains result in greater goods than the suffering endured. This Epicurean understanding indicates that it is impossible to attain higher forms of pleasure without being just, virtuous, courageous, temperate, in short, without being wise.

Having considered historical-philosophical hedonism in these terms, Marinho (1984) states that it served a large portion of the Romans “to justify their lives of dissipation and pleasures” (*our translation*), which, as noted, contributed to the discredit into which this philosophical system fell. During the Middle Ages, according to the author, hedonism declined, suppressed by ascetic doctrines, reemerging only during the Renaissance. Furthermore, hedonism was adopted by various modern philosophical currents, such as French materialism in the 17th century and much of utilitarianism (as noted in Abbagnano’s definition, in which this English doctrine aims at multiplying pleasure for the greatest number of people). This philosophy also inspired the modern psychology of Sigmund Freud, who postulated the pleasure principle as an important force modulating the psyche. Additionally, according to the author, Modern Pedagogy itself was profoundly influenced by Hedonism insofar as it advocated a happier life for the child, with fewer unpleasant experiences, maintaining that, in childhood, one “should not do what one wants, but rather want what one does” (*our translation*) (Marinho, 1984, p. 31–32).

And what does this discussion have to do with physical education? It is through his pedagogical analysis of the nature of games and sport that Marinho (1984) establishes the connection between hedonism and physical education. Regarding the nature of games, the author cites Claparède, whose theory is imbued with historical hedonism, stating that play, “psychologically and physiologically, like every spontaneous activity of a living being, is nothing more than the manifestation of an individual’s tendency to unfold and affirm his personality” (*our translation*). From this perspective, Marinho (1984) questions why, in play, the identity of the developing human being resorts to fiction, proposing fantastical objects rather than relying on reality. To answer this question, the author asserts that the immediate contexts of experience are not always capable of satisfying “their deepest tendencies,” such that playful activities function to enable the individual to realize the self, guiding personality and following “the path of its greatest interest” in circumstances where this cannot be achieved through serious activities (Marinho, 1984, p. 49).

For Marinho (1984), Rousseau is the “great champion” and unwavering defender of the child’s freedom in pedagogical contexts. The author claims to find in *Émile* “the true philosophy of recreation, the genetic foundations of interest” (*our translation*). He cites Rousseau in the following terms: it is necessary for children to run, jump, and shout as much as they wish, such that the totality of their movements is considered necessary to their constitution, which seeks to strengthen itself. Rousseau is also said to have proposed a reorientation of children’s games, suggesting that they should not be regarded merely as “forms of distraction,” but also, and perhaps more

importantly, as “instruments of utility” (*our translation*). This principle would go on to inspire renowned authors such as Herbart, Pestalozzi, Decroly, Fröbel, Montessori etc. (Marinho, 1984, p. 45–46).

And what about sport? How does it relate to hedonism? According to Marinho (1984), sports stand to adults and adolescents as play stands to the child. In his view, sport ultimately consists of processes through which individuals are encouraged to express their gestures “with the greatest possible perfection,” such that one might repeat, in Aristotelian fashion, that “pleasure completes and perfects the act” (*our translation*). In the domain of recreation, the author argues, the pleasure of sport extends from athletes to spectators: the intense emotion experienced by a player when “scoring a goal” (*our translation*) spreads to and envelops the supporter in such a way that cheering appears as a determining element or factor in the “perfection achieved” in the gestures performed by the player. As an example, the author refers to the architectural colossi that are soccer stadiums, which function as genuine “release valves” (*our translation*) for the accumulated tension of the workweek or “of varied anxieties and hardships” (*our translation*). In this sense, gesturing, shouting, and biting one’s nails integrate spectators with the athletes of their team in the struggle for victory: sport, this undeniable source of pleasure, both for players and spectators, emerges as one of the principal institutions of contemporary societies and “should receive the most careful attention from the State” (*our translation*) (Marinho, 1984, p. 49–50).

In order to more precisely understand the relationship established in Marinho’s (1984) text between physical education, sport, and historical hedonism, it is necessary to briefly describe the ways in which, since prehistory, physical activities and physical education have manifested themselves in three major conceptions or stages. The first corresponds to the naturalistic conception of physical education, in which the human being is understood as an animal who, in struggle against the hostility of nature, makes use of natural resources to survive. At this stage, human beings ran, fought, carried, and jumped, that is, performed actions that other animals could also perform, but distinguished themselves by developing the capacity to elaborate a gesture of great importance for survival, one that other animals could not perform. What gesture would that be? It would be the ability to throw objects and strike prey without engaging in direct bodily combat: “even today, in our most instinctive and primitive manifestations, we always feel the indomitable impulse to throw something when anger dominates us, when instinct overcomes reason” (*our translation*). The second stage corresponds to the warrior conception of physical education, still present today in contexts where various armies are trained. This conception emerged as human beings expanded their group coexistence alongside the development of agriculture, livestock, and sedentary life. In that context, “that they structure and organize themselves for the defense of what they cultivate and raise” (*our translation*) becomes indispensable, and therefore arises the need for readiness for fight, combat and war, especially when it becomes unavoidable. Finally, the third stage, corresponding to the sporting conception of physical education, emerges when human groupings become larger and when humans become more settled, giving rise to villages, towns, and cities.

When war ceases to be a constant threat, well-prepared cities are able to rest and live in peace. In this context, the warrior conception that once guided bodily activity is gradually replaced by a “life philosophy” that emphasizes the exercise of already developed faculties humans depend upon, preventing their atrophy and preserving the capacity to use them. Thus, simulated combat and exercises practiced in times of peace allow for the transformation of warlike activity into competition (Marinho, 1984, p. 19–20).

As can be seen, the sporting conception of physical education is the most appropriate for the practice of physical activities in times of peace. Due to the pleasure they promote, and to the modern rights to leisure and sport, this conception links physical education to the historical-philosophical current of hedonism. Finally, it should be emphasized that Marinho (1984) was attentive not only to the fact that the original philosophical meaning of historical hedonism had already been corrupted in Ancient Rome, but also that something similar appears to be occurring in contemporary societies. This, however, is a matter to be addressed in the following section, where we will have the opportunity to more properly examine not only Marinho’s (1984) insights regarding “cultural” tendencies expressed through the pejorative sense of the term hedonism, but also some impacts related to changes in the contemporary sociotechnical landscape associated with the digital world.

3 DOPAMINE NATION AND THE PALLIATIVE SOCIETY: A PORTRAIT OF CONTEMPORARY HEDONISTIC CULTURE AND SOME INSIGHTS FROM INEZIL PENNA MARINHO

According to Lembke (2025), over the past centuries, we have transformed the world from a place of scarcity into one of great abundance: “drugs, food, news, games, shopping, gambling, text messaging, sex messaging, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Twitter...” (Lembke, 2025, p. 9, our translation). In this kind of “brave new world” that unfolds before those who begin to perceive it, the increasing numbers, the vast variety, and the great potential of compensatory stimuli overwhelm human reason, while the smartphone has functioned as a “hypodermic needle” in the contemporary context, offering incessantly and instantaneously “digital dopamine” to multiple generations immersed in cyberspace. The author states that, according to scientists, dopamine consists of a “kind of universal currency for evaluating the addictive potential of any experience,” such that “the more dopamine in the brain’s reward system, the more addictive the experience” (our translation). For this reason, the author asserts that, if a given individual has not yet discovered their “drug of choice,” it will soon be readily available and within close reach through access to a virtual site (Lembke, 2025, p. 9-10, our translation).

Analyzing hedonism in social life approximately four decades ago, Marinho (1984) had already pointed out that that historical context was marked by the emergence of more or less industrialized societies, such that the craftsmanship of earlier periods of history was giving way to large-scale serial production. Technology, in this context, had developed to such an extent that, as the author already observed,

“electronic brains work more rapidly than human brains, reducing errors to a minimal possibility” (Marinho, 1984, p. 61–62, our translation). In this society, in which working hours are reduced due to the implementation of automated production processes, human beings have expanded their leisure time and, “having satisfied their immediate needs for shelter, clothing, and food,” have turned toward the pursuit of life’s pleasures, thus reviving Aristotle’s statement that “every animal flees from pain and seeks pleasure” (Marinho, 1984, p. 61–62, our translation). With the establishment of the eight-hour workday, weekly paid rest, and annual vacations, the use of leisure time, which came to be referred to as “recreation,” ceases to be understood as a purely individual matter and assumes the proportions of a pressing social problem, involving not only the interest of the citizen but also that of the State, whose structure is seen as threatened and which, for this reason, must devote greater attention to this issue (Marinho, 1984, p. 61–62).

With regard to the historical expansion of leisure time among various populations, the sociologist of work Domenico De Masi (2019), in turn, analyzed the dramatic condition of large human populations that have come to experience the consequences of rising unemployment. According to the author, the distinction between the large machines of industrial factories conceived in previous centuries and contemporary miniaturized digital devices is not merely quantitative, but rather qualitative. In light of this qualitative transformation, two hypotheses concerning future scenarios are proposed: the first maintains that “in the short term these machines do indeed reduce jobs, but in the medium to long term they create many more, and thus the feared technological unemployment does not occur”; the second hypothesis, with which the author aligns himself, asserts that “machines will destroy more jobs than they create, increasingly so” (De Masi, 2019, p. 120–121, our translation). Although the second hypothesis may at first appear more pessimistic, for the author it nevertheless constitutes a saving and vital vision, since it assumes that we will produce increasing quantities of goods and services with ever more advanced technostructures and ever less human physical labor. This phenomenon is referred to as “jobless growth.” The central problem, in the Italian sociologist’s view, lies precisely in the management and distribution of employment, which would entail a reduction in working hours proportional to the increase in productivity enabled by this technostructure. It would also imply a more equitable distribution of goods and services for a global population numbering in the billions, as well as greater attention to and investment in education for leisure time, given that leisure will become increasingly extensive and central in relation to conventional working time (De Masi, 2019, p. 120–121).

Marinho (1984) did not consider, within his historical context, the aforementioned phenomenon of jobless growth and its possible repercussions on the economic sphere, which reveals the theoretical scope of his philosophical formulations. In this sense, it must be emphasized that his perspective is limited to certain observations that do not encompass contemporary questions related to leisure in their entirety. Nevertheless, due to the relative similarities between the historical contexts, the author would at least agree with Lembke’s (2025) description of the social transformations that have been shaping a “dopamine economy.” In this regard, as Lembke (2025, p. 27) points out,

within our current economic context, what David Courtwright called “limbic capitalism” has led to a large-scale cultural metamorphosis, supported by a technology that has expanded not only access to drugs, but also their number, potency, and variety (here understood in a broad sense). As Marinho (1984) states, drug addicts have always existed, “whether through the use of alcohol or drugs, among which cocaine, heroin, morphine, and marijuana appeared as the most widespread” (Marinho, 1984, p. 66, our translation). In the context of the final decades of the twentieth century, however, the author observes that “the number of drug addicts multiplied to such an extent, in all countries, that it came to constitute a serious social scourge” (Marinho, 1984, p. 66, our translation).

Alongside the problem of rising global rates of addiction, there emerge issues related to processes of the positivization of society. For Han (2021), we are experiencing a sociocultural paradigm shift, since, perhaps for the first time in history, “we live in a society of positivity that seeks to rid itself of every form of negativity” (Han, 2021, p. 11, our translation). Understanding pain as pure and simple negativity, the author argues that psychology itself has also been experiencing the effects of this paradigmatic transformation, moving from a “psychology of suffering” toward a positive psychology concerned with well-being, happiness, and optimism. In this context, negative thoughts are invited to leave the stage so that only positive thoughts may emerge, while “resilience training, as training in spiritual endurance, must shape the human being into a permanently happy performance subject, as insensitive to pain as possible” (Han, 2021, p. 11–12, our translation). For the author, positive psychology and its promise of happiness are closely intertwined, on the one hand, with the oasis of well-being hypothetically provided by pharmaceuticals, on the other (Han, 2021, p. 12).

For Marinho (1984), in earlier times pleasure was the privilege of a few, since only those who possessed power, time, and money could devote their lives to pleasure. As for the vast majority of people, they struggled through labor in order to ensure their own survival and that of their descendants, submitting themselves to extensive working hours in order to meet their immediate needs. Through the social transformations associated with contemporary life, which grant greater leisure time to the population, there has been an increase in opportunities “to surrender oneself to pleasure” (Marinho, 1984, p. 62, our translation). The author observed that this need for pleasure acts in such a way that individuals seek the object capable of providing it and that, from this relationship between subject and object of pleasure, there emerges what psychology has termed “interest.” This, understood as a momentary and reciprocal relation of convenience established between a subject and an object, varies “according to age, maturity, culture, in short, according to the highly personal conditions of each human being” (Marinho, 1984, p. 62, our translation).

Marinho (1984) already appeared aware of certain forms of human compulsion toward pleasure, insofar as he referred to the phenomenon of the industrialization of pleasure. This phenomenon would partly be marked by the need for entrepreneurs to investigate and sound out “the consumer market upon which the success of the intended enterprise depends” (Marinho, 1984, p. 62, our translation). Citing the futurist

Herman Kahn, Marinho (1984) points out that, during the 1980s, American workers were increasingly struggling both for higher wages and for more leisure time, moving rapidly from self-sacrifice to self-satisfaction. The author reports that this futurist concluded by asserting that resources for American education would increasingly be directed toward pleasure and entertainment, provided by culture, rather than toward the achievement of greater professional competence. Kahn also predicted that large corporations would be organized with the aim of promoting recreation, fostering amusement, and providing greater opportunities for pleasure (Marinho, 1984, p. 62-63). More recently, Lembke (2025) stated that we all flee from suffering: some by taking pills, others by stretching out on the couch while watching Netflix, others still by reading cheap novels, such that “we will do almost anything to distract ourselves from ourselves” (Lembke, 2025, p. 48–49, our translation). Nevertheless, the author argues, all this effort to exile suffering appears only to make it worse (Lembke, 2025, p. 48-49).

According to Han (2021), the American opioid crisis possesses a paradigmatic character within our historical context. This crisis involves not only “the material greed of a pharmaceutical company,” but also, at its foundation, “a fatal assumption concerning human existence” (Han, 2021, p. 12, our translation). For the author, only a society that promotes an ideology of permanent well-being can lead to medications originally intended for palliative medicine being used with great pomp even by individuals without health problems (Han, 2021, p. 12). Han cites the American pain specialist David B. Morris, who already stated during the 1990s that contemporary Americans probably belong to the first generation on Earth to seek a pain-free existence as a constitutional right, such that pain itself comes to be regarded as a form of scandal (Han, 2021, p. 12–13).

For Lembke (2025), contemporary culture, marked among other aspects by immersion in hyperspace, despite the unequal living conditions experienced by different populations, is moving toward an increasing loss of our ability to tolerate even the smallest forms of discomfort or suffering. Plugged into the narcissistically mirrored world of the smartphone, individuals seek distraction from the present moment through absorbed digital zapping. Citing Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World*, the author states that “the development of a vast mass communication industry had to do, in large part, not with the true or the false, but with the unreal, the more or less totally irrelevant... it failed to take into account man’s almost infinite appetite for distractions” (Lembke, 2025, p. 45, our translation). Subsequently, the author cites the classic work *Amusing Ourselves to Death* by Neil Postman: “Americans no longer talk to one another, they entertain one another. They do not exchange ideas; they exchange images. They do not argue with propositions; they argue with good looks, celebrities, and commercials” (Lembke, 2025, p. 45, our translation). Later, citing the *World Happiness Report*, which ranks 156 nations according to the extent of happiness their citizens consider themselves to experience, the author asserts that residents of the United States reported lower levels of happiness in 2018 than in 2008, while other nations with similar levels of “wealth, social support, and life expectancy” experienced comparable declines in self-reported happiness, “including

Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Japan, New Zealand, and Italy” (Lembke, 2025, p. 49, our translation).

Contemporary hedonism, understood as a sociocultural trait of a society that has consolidated itself over the past thirty years, is not limited to the use of hallucinogens or other illicit drugs. As we have seen, life itself, mediated by the digital world available at our fingertips, subjects us to a flood of dopamine. This has produced dramatic effects for those who, consciously or not, find themselves carried along by this current. For Lembke (2025), “the neurological machinery for processing pleasure and pain (super ancient from a phylogenetic perspective) has remained intact throughout evolution and across species” (Lembke, 2025, p. 68, our translation). Discussing the evolutionary advantages of pleasure and pain, the author recalls that, without pleasure, we would cease to eat, drink, and reproduce, while, in the absence of pain, we would have no reason to protect ourselves from injury and death. The result of these evolutionary mechanisms belonging to our species is that we are in the process of transforming the world from a place of scarcity into one of excessive abundance. By elevating, as a civilization, our neural set point through repeated pleasures, in a runaway form of hedonism, we become, according to the author, strivers who are never satisfied with what they possess. Paradoxically, the more pleasure is pursued, the more the compensatory mechanisms inherent to our organism drive us toward pain and suffering. At the same time, living in a world of relative abundance constitutes something entirely new for humanity, since, according to the author, our brains evolved to cope with a world of scarcity. Citing a metaphor by Dr. Tom Finucane, nowadays “we are cacti in a rainforest,” and “like cacti adapted to an arid climate, we are drowning in dopamine” (Lembke, 2025, p. 68, our translation).

In order to gain an idea of what runaway hedonism taken to its ultimate consequences might look like, it is instructive to consider the conclusion of *The Palliative Society*, in which Han (2021) comments on *The Hedonistic Imperative*, by David Pearce, who proclaimed, in 1995, a future free from pain. Let us follow Pearce’s argument as outlined by Han (2021). Over the course of the coming millennial eras, the so-called “biological presuppositions of suffering” would be completely dissolved. In this sense, bodily and physical pain would be destined, through historical transformations, to fade until disappearing entirely. Within this scenario, even the pains of love, that is, the cruel afflictions that destroy the soul and are associated with certain traditional forms of love, would also be overcome. The aim of this transhumanism would therefore be a sublime happiness present throughout the totality of life. Commenting on Pearce’s conjecture, Han (2021) observes that “transhumanism leaves the last human being behind, for he is [...] human, all too human” (Han, 2021, p. 114, our translation). Even boredom could be overcome through biotechnical means: although humanity may presently lack the imagination to conceive of it, within a few generations boredom itself, understood as negative pain, would become “neurophysiologically impossible” (Han, 2021, p. 114, our translation). In contrast to boredom, Friedrich Nietzsche once stated that not even the gods struggle in vain. Nietzsche, however, could not have imagined the virtual possibilities envisioned within the field of biotechnology (Han, 2021, p. 114).

Pearce's transhumanism constitutes an extreme example of an ideology that promotes pleasure as the supreme good. Marinho (1984), however, does not invite us to transcend the limits of the present human existential condition when proposing, in a positive sense, his hedonistic conception of physical education. As we saw in the first section, he draws inspiration from the historical-philosophical hedonism of Epicurus, which does not invite us to imagine a world without pain, since, for Epicureanism, suffering that produces benefits for human development should be chosen over unnecessary and excessive pleasures that lead to vice. Marinho (1984), therefore, proposes a simpler solution. In his view, recreation emerged as a social problem at the end of the 19th century and gradually became increasingly important throughout the historical transformations that took place during the 20th century.

With regard to children's activity, Marinho (1984) points out that recreation manifested itself within his cultural context as an "indispensable necessity to prevent the educational work of the school from being nullified by the harmful influence of the streets, the neighborhood, and sometimes even the family itself" (Marinho, 1984, p. 69, our translation). Whereas, in earlier times, children remained at school for approximately six to eight hours a day, "thus leaving them with only a few hours of leisure" (Marinho, 1984, p. 69, our translation), the author lamented that, in his own time, children spent only three or at most four hours at school, such that their leisure time had increased considerably. In this sense, the author argues that the rational organization of recreation should constitute a duty of the State committed to the proper use of children's leisure hours and should therefore be regarded as a measure necessary for preserving the work carried out at school. Children's misconduct would not occur in school during study hours, but rather during their idle hours abandoned to the streets (Marinho, 1984, p. 69). As may be observed, the author did not experience the current controversy surrounding the use of smartphones inside and outside schools by children and adolescents, a controversy that is both highly current and deeply pressing today. Nevertheless, considering the limitations of his historical context, his concerns were legitimate.

With regard to adults, Marinho (1984) correctly observed that the State and educational problem concerning the proper use of leisure time was related to changes in labor laws, which had gradually been "reducing the working day to 12, 10, 9, and 8 hours of labor" (Marinho, 1984, p. 69–71, our translation). Without having known, however, the contemporary phenomena of self-exploitation, self-optimization, hyperperformance, and the consequent psychosomatic exhaustion characteristic of the digital era (Han, 2021), Marinho (1984) asserted that "populations do not become impoverished or degenerate during their working hours, but rather during their hours of leisure, of idleness" (Marinho, 1984, p. 69–71, our translation). Consequently, the author did not philosophically commit himself to proposing alternatives for the new labor scenario that was beginning to take shape, but rather to suggesting that the State conduct recreation programs for the population with imperative seriousness, understood as a "measure for preserving their physical and moral energies" (Marinho, 1984, p. 69–71, our translation), that is, against the dissipations and corruptions characteristic of excessive hedonism. In Brazil, according to the author, the so-called

Sport for All (EPT) movement, supported by the Secretariat of Physical Education and Sports of the Ministry of Education and Culture, could perform a relevant function by organizing a program capable of reaching both urban and rural areas, engaging the popular masses in sporting practices and, consequently, occupying in a healthy manner the leisure hours of people of all age groups (Marinho, 1984, p. 69–71).

As it becomes recognized that the current stage of physical education, for many populations and due to the historical transformations that have shaped their respective contexts of life, has shifted from the “warrior conception” to what Marinho (1984) termed the “sporting conception,” the latter being linked both to the educational sphere and to that of leisure, one perceives not only how physical education and sporting practices may be philosophically grounded through Marinho’s theory, but also how his philosophical introduction sought to guide the State, approximately forty years ago, in responding to the problems resulting from the increase in leisure time and the absence of consistent public policies for popular recreation. Although he cultivated a sensitivity capable of producing valuable insights into his historical context and into the decades that would unfold until the present day, Marinho (1984) did not foresee problems arising from and specific to the digital era, such that the reader must remain attentive to these limitations. This final point demanded, in our view, an updated understanding of the context in which we are situated as civilizations participating in the 21st century. This is what we sought to accomplish in the analysis developed throughout this final section.

4 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

In this essay, we reflected upon the contemporary relevance of some of Marinho’s (1984) ideas concerning the ways in which physical education, sport, and hedonism are related within contemporary society.

To this end, we initially distinguished the historical-philosophical meaning of the term “hedonism” from the pejorative sense that has increasingly asserted itself in the present day. Through this distinction, it became possible to perceive the historical and cultural transformations of hedonism and its relationship to the concepts and functions of physical education and sport, as well as to situate the reader with regard to the historical stages of physical education (naturalistic, warrior, and sporting), understood as the foundations upon which the investigated problem becomes intelligible. In a second stage, we analyzed the ways in which, more recently, hedonism has been configured since the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century, examining the historical and cultural transformations that shape the relations various societies have established with pleasure and pain, as well as the manner in which games, sport, and recreation may emerge as solutions to important problems of our time.

Thus, it becomes possible to affirm that, although Marinho (1984) could not have anticipated phenomena arising from the development of the internet and the digital world (the process of popularization of personal computers connected to the internet in Brazil occurred precisely during the period in which his work was being compiled), with profound repercussions in the fields of the experience of pleasure

and suffering, Marinho (1984), who already suspected problems related to addiction, cultivated a sensitivity capable of understanding important relationships between philosophy, physical education, and sport in contemporary times, such that some of his ideas remain relevant in the 21st century.

His considerations, on the other hand, were limited to emphasizing pressing problems related to the fields of leisure studies, sport, recreation, and physical education, without offering a deeper analytical reference to important phenomena related to the sphere of labor, which could already be sensed in his own time, such as the phenomenon of jobless growth or the intensification of the use of microelectronics as a factor capable of producing large-scale sociocultural transformations. Inezil Penna Marinho was therefore a thinker of his time, which motivated us to further develop the debate he initiated in Brazil through new references.

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Resumo: O objetivo deste ensaio é refletir sobre a atualidade de ideias de Inezil Penna Marinho acerca do modo como se relacionam educação física, desportos e hedonismo na sociedade contemporânea. A pesquisa que resultou neste ensaio é de caráter teórico e a metodologia empregada é de cunho essencialmente bibliográfico. Como resultados, foram identificadas pelo menos duas acepções de hedonismo, uma das quais, no texto de Marinho (1984), se vincula à tradição filosófica que remonta a Epicuro. É nessa acepção de hedonismo, com seus desdobramentos na psicologia e na pedagogia modernas, que se fundamenta filosoficamente o conceito e a função da educação física e dos desportos. Embora não houvesse suspeitado de fenômenos relativos ao desenvolvimento da internet e do mundo digital, Marinho (1984) cultivou uma sensibilidade capaz de compreender importantes relações entre filosofia, educação física e desportos na contemporaneidade, de modo que algumas de suas ideias permanecem atuais no século XXI.

Palavras-chave: Filosofia. Prazer. Sofrimento. Dor.

Resumen: El objetivo de este ensayo es reflexionar sobre la actualidad de las ideas de Inezil Penna Marinho en relación con el modo en que se vinculan la educación física, los deportes y el hedonismo en la sociedad contemporánea. La investigación que dio lugar a este ensayo es de carácter teórico y la metodología empleada es esencialmente bibliográfica. Como resultado, se identificaron al menos dos acepciones del hedonismo, una de las cuales, en el texto de Marinho (1984), se relaciona con la tradición filosófica que se remonta a Epicuro. Es en esta acepción del hedonismo —con sus desarrollos en la psicología y la pedagogía modernas— donde se fundamentan filosóficamente el concepto y la función de la educación física y los deportes. Aunque no previó fenómenos relacionados con el desarrollo de internet y el mundo digital, Marinho (1984) cultivó una sensibilidad capaz de comprender importantes relaciones entre filosofía, educación física y deportes en la contemporaneidad, de modo que algunas de sus ideas siguen siendo actuales en el siglo XXI.

Palabras clave: Filosofía. Placer. Sufrimiento. Dolor.

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