



"Amor y gimnástica" en Italia 1892 [

Foro para la Educación Física Recreativa y el Deporte en Castilla y León :

Valor Educativo de la Motricidad,
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text (article)

Analítica

In this article I analyse the content of Edmondo de Amicis' novel 'Love and Gymnastics', published in 1892, whose plot focusses upon the field of Physical Education (PE). First, I argue that it is pertinent to explore this romantic fiction because it describes the problems surrounding PE in Italy (and Europe) during the last third of the nineteenth century. In this sense, I think that the author wrote this and other popular novels (ie, 'Heart') to propose solutions to the problems of his country and to spread a newculture in order to strengthen, after the Italian unification, the sense of collective identity. From this perspective, second, I summarize the dilemmas and messages about PE that the author puts into the mouth of the various characters of the fiction. Those include the following: a) The existence of propagandists of a new body culture, committed to persuade society of the need of PE as a compulsory school subject. b) The crystallization, as a result of such endeavour, of specific legislation and institutions (ie, colleges for the training of PE teachers). c) The recurrent motifs in the justification of the 'raison d'être' of PE. Here, the issue of health and/or degeneration of the race, seen from the perspective of the wealth or the poverty of the nation, has a special relevance. From this point of view, PE has a dual nature: it's both a preventive measure (medicine) and an educational intervention. d) The discourse with which the apostles of the new culture distance themselves from other types of body practices: the scientific nature of PE based on anatomy, physiology, hygiene, pedagogy, history and theory of gymnastics, design of gyms, etc. e) The internal conflicts and disagreements between schools and/or currents of PE. In the fiction, the main characters are divided between the followers of Oberman and those of Bauman, where the 'baumanists' would be the more advanced. f) Finally, this novel can be seen as a declaration in favour of feminine PE: firstly

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