



## FIRST STEPS: APPROPRIATIONS OF F. J. J. BUYTENDIJK IN BRAZILIAN PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Primeiros Passos: Apropriações de F. J. J. Buytendijk na Educação Física Brasileira

Primeros pasos: apropiaciones de F. J. J. Buytendijk en la Educación Física  
brasileña

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**Abstract:** Although there are rare mentions, F. J. J. Buytendijk is an unknown author in Brazilian Physical Education. The objective of the present study was to articulate an approximation of the ideas of F. J. J. Buytendijk with the area of Physical Education. Initially, a biographical summary of the eclectic trajectory of the author thought was made. After, a review of the Theory of Human Movement (THM) was carried out, in which Buytendijk enjoys an outstanding role, although his ideas are not deepened by studies in the area. *Posteriori*, its General Theory and its Play Anthropology are presented. Authors of Physical Education have appropriated only the latter and in a restricted way, that is, disregarding the contributions of the General Play Theory and the fullness of the ideas of Play Anthropology. Finally, we argue about the relevance of studying Buytendijk in Brazilian Physical Education and, above all, we defend that the ideas of the Dutch thinker need to be better studied and contextualized in national research, because of the richness of his theorizations can contribute with the area both in thematic investigations as well as in the methodological research itinerary in this scope.

**Keywords:** Physical Education; Movement; Theory of Play.

**Resumo:** Embora haja raras menções, F. J. J. Buytendijk é um autor desconhecido na Educação Física brasileira. O objetivo do presente estudo foi articular uma aproximação das ideias de F. J. J. Buytendijk com a área da Educação Física. Inicialmente foi feito um resumo biográfico da eclética trajetória do pensamento do autor. Em seguida, conduziu-se uma revisão da Teoria do Se-Movimentar Humano (TSMH), na qual Buytendijk desfruta de papel destacado, embora, suas ideias não sejam aprofundadas pelos estudos da área. *A posteriori*, é apresentada sua Teoria Geral e sua Antropologia de jogo. Autores da Educação Física tem se apropriado tão-somente da última e de forma restrita, isto é, desconsiderando as contribuições da Teoria Geral de Jogo e a plenitude das ideias da Antropologia de Jogo. Por fim, argumentamos sobre a relevância de se estudar Buytendijk na Educação Física brasileira e, sobretudo, defendemos que as ideias do pensador holandês precisam ser mais bem estudadas e contextualizadas nas pesquisas nacionais, dado que a riqueza de suas teorizações podem contribuir com essa área tanto em investigações temáticas quanto no itinerário metodológico de pesquisas nesse mote.

**Palavras-Chaves:** Educação Física; Movimento; Teoria do Jogo.

**Resumen:** Aunque hay pocas menciones, F. J. J. Buytendijk es un autor desconocido en Educación Física brasileña. El objetivo del presente estudio fue articular una aproximación de las ideas de F. J. J. Buytendijk con el área de Educación Física. Inicialmente se hizo un resumen biográfico de la ecléctica trayectoria del pensamiento del autor. Luego, se realizó una revisión de la Teoría del Movimiento Humano (TSMH), en la que Buytendijk disfruta de un papel destacado, aunque sus ideas no son profundizadas por estudios en el área. Después, se presenta su Teoría General y su Antropología del Juego. Los autores de Educación Física se han apropiado sólo de esta última y de forma restringida, es decir, desconociendo los aportes de la Teoría General del Juego y la plenitud de las ideas de la Antropología del Juego. Finalmente, argumentamos sobre la relevancia de estudiar Buytendijk en la Educación Física brasileña y, sobre todo, defendemos que las ideas del pensador holandés deben ser mejor estudiadas y contextualizadas en la investigación nacional, dado que la riqueza de sus teorizaciones puede contribuir a esto área tanto en las investigaciones temáticas como en el itinerario de investigación metodológica en este ámbito.

**Palabras claves:** Educación Física; Movimiento; Teoría de los Juego.

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## Introduction

In the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Edmund Husserl (1859-1938), German mathematician and philosopher, began the propositions of Phenomenology, a philosophical “movement” that drew the attention of many thinkers, from Heidegger to Fink (in Germany), from Sartre to Merleau-Ponty (in France), and others (Depraz, 2011). In the Netherlands, one of the scholars who relied on Phenomenology to architect his ideas in the fields of Medicine, Psychology, Physiology etc., was Frederik Jacobus Johannes Buytendijk (1887-1974). Graduated as a physician, university professor, scholar of varied themes (which made him break many disciplinary boundaries), and a philosophy lover, notably, Merleau-Ponty’s French Phenomenology, Buytendijk may be considered an intellectual of eclectic thinking, which allowed him to engender a multivariate view on humans, going from common sense to science and philosophy (Stan & Hezewijk, 2012). Although present in the European society in this period of rise of Phenomenology in Germany and concretion of Buytendijk’s ideas in the Netherlands, Belgium, and Germany, the “movements of thought” that constituted Physical Education seem to have been distant from the effervescence of Phenomenology, mainly Buytendijk’s Phenomenology.

Physical Education, understood as a knowledge area attached to the “body pedagogies” and to the study of “Culture of Movement” practices (plays, sports, fights, gymnastics, dances, and others), achieved the current configuration as social practice and school subject during the 19<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in Brazil (Castellani Filho, 1991; Cunha Jr., 2004). Although contemporary, evidence points out that Physical Education had little dialogue with Phenomenology at the time. For Santos Rodrigues and Grillo (2019), only after the 1980’s, in Brazil, it is possible to notice the first dialogues of the area with Phenomenology. These dialogues were motivated by a “renovation movement” in Brazilian Physical Education (Machado & Bracht, 2016), which was essential for the interlocutions of Physical Education with philosophy, science, and arts.

The dialogues with the philosophical field counted on the initiative of authors of philosophy of sport and philosophy of body, such as Manuel Sérgio and Silvino Santin (Almeida, Bracht & Ghidetti, 2013). *A posteriori*, authors of Physical Education such as Elenor Kunz, Wagner Wey Moreira, Maria Augusta Salin Gonçalves, Terezinha Petrucia da Nóbrega, and others, are the ones who endorsed the convergences with Phenomenology (Santos Rodrigues & Grillo, 2019). However, excepting some rare and sparse mentions of particular ideas, F. J. J. Buytendijk is an unknown author in Brazilian Physical Education. Despite this negligence in the area, this Dutch thinker’s ideas may be of great value to the reflections in Physical Education, although Buytendijk, apparently, did not make any closer dialogue with this area.

The closest contact of Buytendijk with Physical Education possibly occurred between 1930 and 1933, during the period when he was the president of the International Federation of Sports Medicine (Have & Van Der Arend, 1985). Another approach happened in the conference in the Academy of Physical Education in Amsterdam, in 1950, which was posteriorly published as a book titled *Das Fussballspiel: eine psychologische Studie*, translated to Portuguese as *Psicologia do futebol* (Buytendijk, 1953/1965). Moreover, there are convergences between Buytendijk and Physical Education through mutual investigation themes. In this sense, although graduated in Medicine, the Dutch scholar assiduously worked in the scope of Physiology, Psychology, Anthropology, and Philosophy, approaching themes such as the play/to play, ludic activities, movement, soccer, etc., which are part of the body of knowledge studied by Physical Education teachers and professionals.

Aiming to present the Dutch author, to widen the convergences of the author’s ideas with Physical Education scholars, and to thicken the intellectual debate about the Dutch thinker, in the present study we have the general objective of establishing an approach between F. J. J. Buytendijk and the Physical Education area. Specifically, the goals are: to present the author’s biography and his interlocution with Phenomenology; to review how Brazilian Physical Education scholars, notably the ones linked to Teoria do Se-Movimentar Humano (TSMH) and to theories of play, have been appropriating Buytendijk’s theoretical contribution; and, lastly, to indicate possible convergences of the Dutch thinker’s ideas with studies related to plays, sports, fights, dances, and gymnastics, which represent the body of knowledge in Physical Education.

The relevance of this study comes from the evidence that points out that, although there are mentions of Buytendijk in Brazilian Physical Education, there has not been a systematic and deepened study about the author in this area. In this sense, this lack of knowledge may represent a great hindrance to the approaches of the area with the Dutch scholar’s fertility of ideas. In the same way, bringing the appropriations that have been done by Physical Education authors to the light of the ideas may indicate the insufficiencies and the mistakes in this process and, meanwhile, fruitful paths for studies that may make use of these convergences to achieve their objectives.

Thus, initially, the biographical summary about the trajectory of the author’s thought is made. In view of this, the modes of appropriation that Physical Education makes of Buytendijk are discussed, from the review of his Theory of Movement, as well as his General Theory of Play and his Anthropology of Play. Both debates are, in our perspective, the first interlocutions of Brazilian Physical Education with Buytendijk, but they need to be revisited and expanded.



Lastly, as synthesis, we resume the main ideas of the study aiming to prospect ideas for Physical Education scholars to study more and with more authority the Dutch author's propositions and, likewise, for Phenomenology scholars to build their assertions attentive to Physical Education considerations. This articulation, although ambitious, is inspired in the eclecticism and interdisciplinarity, distinctive of Buytendijk's thought and career.

## Nomad Dutch: F. J. J. Buytendijk's biographical summary

Born in Breda, a city in the southern part of the Netherlands, Thines and Zayan (1975) mention that Buytendijk had an extensive intellectual production that ended when he was 87 years old. The author's myriad of interests made him wander around different areas of knowledge. Buytendijk himself (1965) claims that he began his studies in Medicine at *Universiteit van Amsterdam* (University of Amsterdam). In 1909, he writes his doctorate thesis and graduates, four years later, in Physiology. According to Stam and Hezewijk (2012), in the beginning of his career, Buytendijk traveled around Europe visiting the laboratories of renowned physiologists at the time, such as Charles S. Sherrington (in Liverpool), and John Langley and Archibald V. Hill (in Cambridge) in England; Theodor W. Engelmann (in Berlin), in Germany; and Anton Dohrn (in Naples) in Italy. Throughout his work, Buytendijk contested these physiologists' ideas; however, this beginning of career was essential for his elaborations.

Have and Van der Arend (1985) indicate that, in 1913, Buytendijk was designated as assistant in the psychiatric-neurologic clinic of *Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam* (Free University of Amsterdam). In the following year, the beginning of the Great War (1914-1918), he was called to serve as a military doctor in the Hospital of Amsterdam, where he worked in the areas of Psychiatry and Neurology. In the same period, he received the title of "reader" in Biology. In 1917, he became leader and mentor of the new laboratory of Physiology at *Vrije Universiteit*. After the end of the War, he was appointed as professor of General Physiology at *Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam*.

At that time, his studies were about the physical-chemical and electrophysiological aspects of animals' psychological life. Despite being a common theme among North American psychologists, Buytendijk totally disagreed with the behavioral theory developed by John B. Watson in the United States (Fagot-Largeault, 2009). Dekkers (1995, p.16) argues that "Within a short period of time Buytendijk became known as a leading European proponent of the scientific approach to animal behavior."<sup>1</sup>

In 1925, Buytendijk was appointed to take the position of Physiology professor at *Rijksuniversiteit Groningen* (University of Groningen), in the north of the Netherlands. According to Dekkers (1995) and Stam and Hezewijk (2012), his initial lecture already indicated an interest in philosophical issues in the scope of Biology and Psychology. In this lecture (*Over het verstaan der levensverschijnselen – About understanding life phenomena*), the Dutch scholar "emphasizes the advantages of the phenomenological method of understanding the phenomena of life over the method of causal explanation"<sup>2</sup> (Dekkers, 1995, p.17). For Stam and Hezewijk (2012), this interest in the philosophy of "living things" led him from Physiology and Psychology to Philosophical Anthropology and Phenomenology.

In the 1920s and 1930s Buytendijk increasingly occupied himself with general theoretical problems of animal and human behavior [...]. His best known phenomenological writings cover a wide range of topics, such as youthfulness, rest, play and movement<sup>3</sup> (Dekkers, 1995, p.17).

Until the 1930's, Buytendijk's notion about Phenomenology was based on the German philosopher Max Scheler. Stam and Hezewijk (2012) affirm that Buytendijk kept a series of correspondences with Scheler. A common practice, as the authors indicate that Buytendijk corresponded with other scholars of the time, such as Helmuth Plessner (philosopher); Hans Driesch and Jacob John von Uexkull (biologists); Ludwig Binswanger, Viktor von Weizsäcker, and Viktor Emil von Gebattel (physicians); Jacques Maritain and Gabriel Marcel (catholic thinkers), and others. From 1920 to 1930, the Dutch author released four books about Animal Psychology, when, in the end of the 30's, he ends his experimental studies and launches himself in a career different from what he had been studying in the past decades (Thines & Zayan, 1975).

During World War II, more precisely between July and October 1942, the German occupation troops kept him in a hostage camp, whose aim was to avoid acts of sabotage. Buytendijk was openly anti-Nazi and a loud critic of the German regime, to which he addressed articles criticizing German Anthropology. During his period of imprisonment, he wrote one of his most known works, talking about pain (Buytendijk, 1948/2018). In the following year, the German troops tried to keep him hostage once again; however, he managed to escape and went to Utrecht, a city in the center of the Netherlands. After World War II, he returned to Groningen and, in his first post-war lecture, [...] he began with a critique of the racial theories of the Nazis and plea for the importance of values in education<sup>4</sup> (Stam & Hezewijk, 2012, p.792).

<sup>1</sup> **In the original text:** "Within a short period of time Buytendijk became known as a leading European proponent of the scientific approach to animal behavior" (Dekkers, 1995, p.16).

<sup>2</sup> **In the original text:** "He emphasizes the advantages of the phenomenological method of understanding the phenomena of life over the method of causal explanation" (Dekkers, 1995, p.17).

<sup>3</sup> **In the original text:** "In the 1920s and 1930s Buytendijk increasingly occupied himself with general theoretical problems of animal and human behavior [...]. His best known phenomenological writings cover a wide range of topics, such as youthfulness, rest, play and movement" (Dekkers, 1995, p.17).

<sup>4</sup> **In the original text:** "[...] he began with a critique of the racial theories of the Nazis and plea for the importance of values in education" (Stam & Hezewijk, 2012, p.792).



In 1946, the Dutch scientist was invited to hold the position of professor of Psychology at *Universiteit Utrecht* (Utrecht University). Two factors corroborated the invitation. First, the influence of Martinus Langeveld, whose theoretical perspective was aligned with Phenomenology. Second, the removal of Frans Roels, who, due to his support for the German regime in World War II, made his own conservation impossible in the post-war context. For Stam and Hezewijk (2012, p.792) “Buytendijk’s appointment was a surprise given that Buytendijk had no formal training in psychology and was self-taught in matters psychological”<sup>5</sup>

Dekkers (1995) claims that Buytendijk also held a position at *Universiteit Nijmegen*, in the East of the Netherlands. Moreover, he worked as a professor of Comparative Psychology at *Université Catholique de Louvain* (Catholic University of Louvain), in Belgium. Undoubtedly, holding these positions helped him in his phenomenological-existential studies about human and animal behavior. Due to this work as a professor of Psychology, Buytendijk is commonly known as a psychologist, although he has never had a major in the area.

The relationship with Phenomenology also deserves some special attention. Before 1945, his main reference was Scheler, but, from this date on, Buytendijk begins to have Maurice Merleau-Ponty as his main theoretical basis in Phenomenology. In fact, the subject of psychophysics represents a common interest between both authors. Dekkers (1995, p. 21) claims that “Merleau-Ponty owes much to Buytendijk. He adopts many of the empirical findings of Buytendijk and [...] He [Merleau-Ponty] shares their criticism of objectivistic and elementaristic approaches to physiology and psychology”<sup>6</sup>. Until 1945, Merleau-Ponty is influenced by the Dutch author. From this date on, there is a role reversal and Buytendijk begins to adopt Merleau-Ponty’s thought. For Stam and Hezewijk (2012), the Dutch scholar’s career as a professor of Psychology and in Philosophical Anthropology is, also, due to his alignment with Merleau-Ponty’s ideas.

From this milestone on, Buytendijk begins to employ Merleau-Ponty’s concepts in his works. In fact, the concepts of embodied subjectivity (subject as body), being-in-the-world, pre-reflective existence, and others, started to appear more and more in the author’s studies. Phenomenological Psychology, which he had contact with at *Universiteit Utrecht*, also begins to be part of his elaborations. Thus, Buytendijk’s contribution to Phenomenology is a tiered notion of issues concerning the body and its meanings.

[...] beings have a nature that is available to the specific sciences and is objectively knowable. In addition, beings also have a body that makes an appearance that is expressive and meaningful, not just objective. Finally, beings have an existence, which includes for human beings a pre-reflexive as well as conscious existence that is the foundation of our action<sup>7</sup> (Stam & Hezewijk, 2012, p.793).

Buytendijk’s ideas, linked to Merleau-Ponty, embody a notion of human being from an existential point of view. This existential being is anchored on biological, psychological, and anthropological bases. For Dekkers (1995) it becomes evident in the concept of Anthropological Physiology as the basis for a medical practice.

In the 1950’s, Buytendijk publishes many books and texts. According to Have and Van der Arend (1985), he played a decisive role in the rise of Anthropological Medicine, whose peak was in the 1950s. Dekkers (1995) mentions that Anthropology in Dutch Medicine, from Buytendijk’s perspective, had the integrated project of sciences (Biology, Physiology and, Psychology) and Philosophy (Existential Phenomenology) as an ideal. Moreover, Have and Van der Arend (1985, p. 4) highlight that the Dutch doctor, scientist, and philosopher “[...] also emphasized that the basis of medical thought and practice is the care and sympathy for human beings; medicine is not only a science: it transcends theoretical knowledge and scientific insights.”<sup>8</sup>

In 1957, at the age of 70, the Dutch thinker retires from *Universiteit Utrecht*. Buytendijk (1965) states that, due to his retirement, he received the title of emeritus professor with the chair of Physiology for the teaching of Psychology at the aforementioned institution. Four years later, in 1961, he retired from *Universiteit Nijmegen*. In 1963, he retired from the position of professor of Comparative Psychology at the *Université Catholique de Louvain*. However, in 1964, due to the premature death of Johannes Linschoten (a Buytendijk’s student, who was appointed by him to take his chair at *Universiteit Utrecht*), he returned to his old position and remained there until 1966. 1974 is the year of Buytendijk’s death. With his death, there is the end of an intellectual career that was nomadic but enriching for several areas of knowledge, such as Medicine, Physiology, Psychology, Philosophy and, as we pointed out here, Physical Education.

<sup>5</sup> **In the original text:** “Buytendijk’s appointment was a surprise given that Buytendijk had no formal training in psychology and was self-taught in matters psychological” (Stam & Hezewijk 2012, p.792).

<sup>6</sup> **In the original text:** “Merleau-Ponty owes much to Buytendijk. He adopts many of the empirical findings of Buytendijk and [...] He [Merleau-Ponty] shares their criticism of objectivistic and elementaristic approaches to physiology and psychology” (Dekkers, 1995, p.21).

<sup>7</sup> **In the original text:** “Buytendijk’s specific contribution to phenomenology consists in [...] a tiered expression of these questions of the body and meaning. [...] [The] beings have a nature that is available to the specific sciences and is objectively knowable. In addition, beings also have a body that makes an appearance that is expressive and meaningful, not just objective. Finally, beings have an existence, which includes for human beings a pre-reflexive as well as conscious existence that is the foundation of our action” (Stam & Hezewijk, 2012, p.793).

<sup>8</sup> **In the original text:** “Buytendijk also emphasized that the basis of medical thought and practice is the care and sympathy for human beings; medicine is not only a science: it transcends theoretical knowledge and scientific insights” (Have & Van Der Arend, 1985, p.4).



## Buytendijk and Teoria do Se-Movimentar Humano: dialogues of Brazilian Physical Education with Germany and the Netherlands

We believe that physical education must change to be understood as a pedagogical discipline that values the human being. This change can only happen through a new understanding of the human movement (Surdi & Kunz, 2009, p.207).

A first step by Brazilian Physical Education towards Phenomenology, and in which the Buytendijk's name appears, is the studies of professor Elenor Kunz or the ones associated with him. As mentioned by Almeida, Bracht, and Ghidetti (2013, p.6), due to his doctorate in Germany under the supervision of Andreas Heinrich Trebels, Professor Kunz "had the merit [...] of translating this framework [studies of Phenomenology of Movement] to Brazil in the early 1990s and is, since then, the main disseminator of 'Teoria do Se-Movimentar Humano' (TSMH)." In summary, TSMH was created in the Dutch-German context and, in Brazil, it has in Professor Elenor Kunz and his collaborators its greatest disseminators (at least, concerning the area of Physical Education). Mauro Betti (2017) suggests that it is thanks to Kunz's works that the first references to Buytendijk's Theory of Movement begin to appear in the area of Brazilian Physical Education. As synthesis:

TSMH is a theory that provides a conceptualization about the human body/movement and establishes parameters for teachers to understand the images they make of their students when analyzing them in motion (in a class context). That is, it potentially presents itself as a possibility of grounding of a PE theory (Ghidetti, Almeida & Bracht, 2013, p.887).

Betti (2017) states that the main intellectuals of this theory are the Dutch Jan W. I. Tamboer, F. J. J. Buytendijk, Paul Christian, and Carl C. F. Gordijn; and, in the German side, Viktor Von Weizsäcker and Andreas H. Trebels. Buytendijk, according to Betti (2017), is the forerunner of TSMH, considering that he was the articulator of the notion of movement as humans' own expressivity in their existential dimension. This perspective is seen as a contrast to the mechanistic notion of movement derived from Classical Physics (Mechanics). The discussion of the concept of movement takes place in the same line of thought as *Phenomenology of perception* by Merleau-Ponty's (2006), published in 1945. As previously indicated, this discussion gains notoriety in a golden moment of philosophical debates (about body, movement, etc.) in Physical Education. Although other authors had exchanged ideas from Phenomenology to Physical Education, it is effectively with prof. Kunz, following the TSMH tradition, that Buytendijk begins to appear, still timidly, in Brazilian Physical Education.

In order to build a thought itinerary of TSMH, Betti (2017) points out that, after Buytendijk's propaedeutic work, Carl C. F. Gordijn is the one who will engender an idea of "education of movement" based on Phenomenology and on the Dutch thinker's ideas. Soon after, in the late 1970s and mid-1980s, still in the Netherlands, Jan W. I. Tamboer makes a critical analysis about Buytendijk and Gordijn's ideas and proposes a "didactics of the human movement" (or a didactics of TSMH). Andreas H. Trebels, German author and researcher, recovers these ideas from the Dutch context and takes them to Germany. Trebels was professor Kunz's doctoral advisor and it is from this articulation that the Brazilian author accesses this theory and the theoretical-pedagogical proposition of the human movement. In Brazil, Kunz publishes *Educação Física: ensino e mudanças* (1991) and *Transformação didático-pedagógica do esporte* (1994), which are two of the main "gateways" to the ideas of TSMH and to Buytendijk's notion of movement that we have access to.

The main work cited in Brazilian studies about TSMH is the book *Allgemeine Theorie der menschlichen Haltung und Bewegung* ("General theory of human posture and movement") (Buytendijk, 1972), published in 1948. According to Trebels (2003, p. 254, author's highlights), Buytendijk is concerned with developing a theory that differentiates movement (displacement in time and space) understood under the aegis of a mechanistic paradigm, of the human movement conceived as "[...] an explanation of the expression of life." Hildebrandt-Stramann (2001) and Trebels (2003) argue that the distinction conceived by Buytendijk serves as a structural framework for a "theory of human movement". In general, this theory of movement supports a didactics of Physical Education both in school context and in sports training.

Trebels (2003), furthermore, discusses the concepts of process and function by which Buytendijk analyzes movement. First, movement conceived as a process consists of an object of study of Classical physics (Mechanics) and technical sciences (Engineering). These areas, claims Hildebrandt-Stramann (2001), are interested in the structuration of natural laws, occurrence, and in the cause-effect relationship of phenomena analyzed in series as isolated events. That said, "[the] engineer [and, consequently, the biomechanic] describes the events of a machine and researches its laws and principles. The movements of a machine are clarified by the process" (Buytendijk, as cited by Trebels, 2003, p.255). Therefore, a pedagogy of movement based on the causal-analytical model results in the elimination of human subjectivity and, thus, conceives the human body in movement only as an object of the movement.

In contrast, the movement understood as a function implies a living organism. The idea of function for Buytendijk, reminds Trebels (2003, p.255), consists of "[...] an immediate totality of transformations, significantly linked to something beyond them." This indicates that the movement has as a precondition the subjectivity in dialogue with the world (world-life) or, as Merleau-Ponty (2006) understands, the ambiguity of embodied subjectivity. In the same line



as Merleau-Ponty, Buytendijk assumes the ontological position in which the primordial human-world unity is what underlies the human movement (existential dimension). In other words, “[the] human capacity to move gains an existential dimension, as a singular and original form of relationship with the world, which may be designated in the experience of each one” (Trebel, 2003, p.256). However, the phenomenological-existentialist perspective of the human movement does not rule out movement as a process, on the contrary, it establishes another field of dialogue in which the concept starts to consider, in addition to the empirical-analytical relationship, the subject, the specific situational environment in which the subject is in relation to the world (temporality and spatiality as extensions of the body), and the meaning of the movement.

Despite the prominent position that Buytendijk takes in TSMH, Ghidetti, Almeida and Bracht (2013) point out that, compared to the other authors, the presence of his ideas is not very highlighted. In fact, with the exception of the criticism of the concept of movement as a process, mentioned above, and the proposition of movement as a function that stands out from life experience as a perspective for thinking about Physical Education, little is said about Buytendijk’s Theory of Movement. Evidently, as observed by Betti (2017), language represents a great challenge for interlocution with the author’s ideas. But it is also possible to suggest that the “option” to be based on authors who have already transported Buytendijk to TSMH is more comfortable from an argumentative point of view, considering the fact the author became, in these conditions, an indirect reference that, despite being basilar to TSMH, is also “inaccessible” due to the difficulty of the language and access to original texts, a fact that does not diminish the merits of Buytendijk and other TSMH authors.

## Other dialogues: Buytendijk, General Theory of Play, and Human Play

Another debate in which we find mentions to F. J. J. Buytendijk, although he is still an unknown author in Brazil, mainly concerning his studies on play and ludic activities, is the contribution in studies about play and toys in the Physical Education context. Grillo, Navarro, and Santos Rodrigues (2020) indicate that, despite the presence of studies, and ludic practices and plays in Physical Education since the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Physical Education has not taken play “seriously” as content and investigation theme. In this sense, although there have been (and still are) advanced study initiatives about play/ludic activities, Buytendijk’s work concerning play has been little explored and understood in the area. Likewise, when some authors mention the Dutch author’s contribution to this field of studies - namely, Scaglia (2003), Freire (2005), Grigorowitschs (2007), Zimmermann (2010), and Carneiro (2015) -, they focus only on the text “Human Play” (1977) which is contained in the collection *Neue Anthropologie* by Gadamer and Vogler and, even so, they do not consider the subject of this work in its fullness.

In addition to the text “Human Play”, Buytendijk has a unique contribution to the studies about the play, since he proposed a General Theory of Play in the 1930s, a theory which was published in 1933 under the title *Wesen und Sinn des Spiels* (Essence and meaning of play). This work only arrived in Brazil through the Spanish translation, *El Juego y su significado: el juego en los hombres y en los animales como manifestación de impulsos vitais* (Buytendijk, 1933/1935). In this work, the author elaborates a rich and articulated set of propositions about play/to play as a General Theory of Play. Part of these ideas is what will substantiate the chapter of “Human Play” that the author defines as a (philosophical) Anthropology of the play/to play.

Based on the above, we analyze that it is essential, in this section, to delimit and contextualize his theorizing related to play and ludic activities, in order to elucidate his theory and, with this, to contribute to the areas that study the play and/or aim at the construction of play practices, as it is the case of Physical Education. In order to do so, from this moment on, we will present his two classic texts and their convergences, divergences, but, mainly, his contributions that, in a way, were not explored, specifically, by the area of Physical Education.

When analyzing the work *Wesen und Sinn des Spiels*, we notice that Buytendijk establishes the first delimitation between play and other things: “the play is always the play with something”. In this attempt to delimit the scope of play, this intellectual establishes as an analysis the contrast of children’s activities with the ones performed by adult humans: sports, rituals, parties, etc., which, for Buytendijk, are not exactly play. On the contrary, he conceives them as activities that preserve the characteristics of a movement that generates fun, joy, and pleasure that, meanwhile, does not contain the relationship with the “object of play”. In this way, it is based on the comparison of human (children) with animals and even with adult humans that he will establish the limits or the extent of the play/to play.

Next, the author returns to the notion of object of play by stating that “the dynamics of playing is conditioned by the fundamental drives of life and by the form of relationship with the object of play” (Buytendijk, 1935, p. 82)<sup>9</sup>. As for the drives that impel when playing, he uses Freud’s Theory of Primary Drives to explain the “force” that leads to play, after all, unlike K. Groos’s pre-exercise theory, here it is not the biological nature that determines the play. For this bias, it is the ambivalent unity of the drives of freedom and unity (destruction and creation) that mobilizes man to play with the object of play.

Therefore, it is in function of the ambivalent unity of the drives that “Children destroy the toys because both drives act on them [that is, children] destroy the toys because [it] offers resistance and because [they, the children] want

<sup>9</sup> In the original text: “[...] la dinámica del jugar se halla condicionada por los impulsos fundamentales de la vida y por la forma de relación con el objeto de juego” (Buytendijk, 1935, p. 82).



to merge with it [the toy]<sup>10</sup> (Buytendijk, 1935, p.111). Therefore, the primary drives to create and destroy, to break free and to unite with the object of play, lead children to dedicate themselves to play.

This object of play is not any object, but something that has a figurability or image. It seems to us that the ability to convert itself into an image or figurality consists, *a priori*, in being an object within the horizon of knowledge and, even so, having the capacity and/or possibility to convert itself into another figure, to metamorphose in another image (licentious character of play). That said, Buytendijk (1935, p. 132) adds, “An object is an object of play to the extent that it possesses figurability [because] the sphere of play is the sphere of figures and thus the sphere of possibilities, of fantasy”<sup>11</sup>.

In this sense, the reciprocal relationship of the player with the object of play grows, as “[...] playing does not consist only of one playing with something, but also that something plays with the player”<sup>12</sup> (Buytendijk, 1935, p. 120). In summary, the object of play is only concretized in the fantasy (state of play) because, outside of it, in the mundane reality, the object loses its practicality, its symbolic meaning, and becomes gnostic (rational).

Another aspect addressed by this intellectual, is the limits of play, that is, the playing field that is, singularly, defined by the playing rules. This field is what defines the limits or frontiers of the movement of play (transition from fantasy to reality and vice versa). In the author’s words, “[...] the playing rules are not laws of movement [ambivalent unity of ludic drives], they do not determine what may happen, but what *cannot* happen”<sup>13</sup> (Buytendijk, 1935, p.122). In this sense, within the ludic dynamics, even if regulated by the playing rules, there is freedom of action. This freedom is what preserves the unpredictability or uncertainty of the play/to play. Thus, this is a characteristic of play, it keeps the uncertainty within a margin of certainties, within boundaries that delimit it. In the “primitive plays” of the animals, such limits are real and biological demarcations, whereas in the “superior plays”<sup>14</sup> of humans, they are internal rules or self-responsibilities.

After defining the concept of the playing field, the author distinguishes the play from other human activities, such as sports, gymnastics and physical exercises. In Buytendijk’s (1935) view, these activities, typically of the adult human, have their logic of action in the rules, that is, the rules become a determining prescription of the ludic movement, whereas in the “pure play” this movement is free, not subjected to regulations and prescriptions of how to act, even if it has rules.

In the text “The human play”, the author resumes the discussion regarding the meaning of the words play and to play in some languages. Specifically in this text, the author uses this linguistic review as a “gateway” for the announcement of his theoretical-methodological perspective. Through this bias, right in the first paragraphs, he announces the incorporation of the epistemic, theoretical and, methodological contribution with Phenomenology. In this perspective, the author understands that when describing the essence of human play (phenomenological objective), Merleau-Ponty’s concepts of “body subjectivity” (“embodied subjectivity”) and “body as consciousness” must always be kept in the research horizon. In general terms, Buytendijk understands that the play has a link with what Phenomenology calls pre-conscious or pre-rational experience, as also highlighted by Grillo (2018). Therefore, “every human play is somehow related to the irrational and obscure foundation of our instincts and passions, capacities, dispositions, conditions, and states of mind, and also with the entirely inexplicable creative element in each activity” (Buytendijk, 1977, p. 66).

*A posteriori*, two basic notions of Buytendijk referring to play are used by Gadamer and were erroneously little explored by studies in the area of Physical Education (Freire, 2005; Scaglia, 2003; Carneiro, 2009; 2015). The first one is of the essence of the play as representation or self-representation, because “[the] subject of the play are not the players, but the play, through the ones who play, simply gains representation” (Gadamer, 1997, p. 176). The second one is the notion that “every playing is a being played” (Gadamer, 1997, p. 181). We may observe that these two authors meet, specially, regarding the notions of figurability and object of play, two themes that ground Buytendijk’s General Theory of Play, in 1933 and that, in such way, were retaken by him under the contribution of Hermeneutical Phenomenology.

In his text, the Dutch intellectual resumes the discussion concerning the essence of play. This discussion already existed in the 1933 work and is now resumed when he states that “[...] we need to take a closer look at the phenomenon that underlies any form of play - the *ludic back and forth movement*” (Buytendijk, 1977, p. 66, author’s highlights). The ludic movement, the comes and goes, translated as “ludic back and forth movement” (*hind und her bewegung*)<sup>15</sup>, is conceived as the essence of the human and animal play/to play, once, in animals, there is the vital drive. In contrast, in the human – this is the thesis in his Anthropology of play – there is a difference between play and ludic and this difference will determine the distinction of human play/to play.

In this sense, the play is an intermediary between fantasy and the reality of everyday life. In contrast, the ludic state consists of alternating (movement) from appearance to reality. In view of this, we understand that the ludic movement of animals only allows entrance into a “ludic drive”, that is, in the vital action of physical movement. Only in

<sup>10</sup> **In the original text:** “El niño destroza su juguete porque en él actúan ambos impulsos. Destroza el juguete porque le ofrece resistencia y porque quisiera fundirse con él.” (Buytendijk, 1935, p. 111).

<sup>11</sup> **In the original text:** “Un objeto, es objeto de juego en la medida en que posee *figurabilidad*. La esfera del juego es la esfera de las *figuras* y con ello la esfera de las *posibilidades*, de la *fantasia*.” (Buytendijk, 1935, p. 132, grifos do autor).

<sup>12</sup> **In the original text:** “[...] jugar no consiste sólo en que uno juegue con algo, sino también en que algo juegue con el jugador” (Buytendijk, 1935, p. 120).

<sup>13</sup> **In the original text:** “[...] las reglas de juego no son leyes del movimiento, no determinan lo que tiene que acontecer, sino lo que no puede acontecer.” (Buytendijk, 1935, p. 122).

<sup>14</sup> “Primitive plays” of animals and children and “superior plays” are expressions used by the author himself.

<sup>15</sup> See Grillo (2018).



humans is there an alternation or dialectic between appearance and reality (principle of play consciousness). Thus, the ludic back and forth movement of humans occurs when children (close to 4 years old) are able to distinguish illusion (appearance or fantasy) from reality (reason/objectivity).

The ludic back and forth movement is “[...] a continuous pendular movement between the play and the experience of reality” (Buytendijk, 1977, p. 67). Thus, the ludic back and forth movement indicates that the individual (human) is, continuously, in movement in this “interval”, sometimes being enraptured, sometimes abandoning the ludic state by free will, or for another reason that is internal and/or external to the play environment. Or yet, depending on the play situations, the individual can return to the play (be enraptured again). It should be said that even being totally absorbed by the play, the player does not leave reality (Grillo, 2018).

Regarding the essentials of human play/to play, Buytendijk resumes the notion of a pre-existing object of play *Wesen und Sinn des Spiels*. As in this first work, the author defines that the objects of play are images or figures that relate to things and events in their licentious and subjective character. In Buytendijk’s (1977, p. 68) understanding, a “[...] a ludic object never has the character of an ‘object’, a ‘thing’, whose features are gradually recognized by technique and reason. It is played [...] only with something that only takes shape through contact, by [...] moving and being moved”. In this sense, the dialogue with Gadamer (1997, p. 181) is eminent as the German philosopher realizes that the “[...] true subject of the play [...] is not the player, but the play itself”.

Ultimately, the “object of play” is not the toy, but what takes shape through contact, by meeting the player, becoming the “pivot” of the ludic back and forth movement and leading the player to the state of tension/relaxation and vice versa in the experience of playing. We may observe here little difference from what the author had already developed in his General Theory of Play in 1933<sup>16</sup>.

It is in this perspective that the idea of “mastering of the player” emerges, whose thesis was defended in his book *Wesen und Sinn des Spiels*, from 1933, and, *a posteriori*, was assumed by Huizinga (enrapture), Fink (being enraptured) and Gadamer (state of play). This notion is premised on the human willingness to take risks, that is, to put oneself to the test, to test oneself, as an affirmation of oneself in an uncertain and mysterious future. Becoming a “vassal” of the play, the “lord of the player” represents a putting oneself at a risk that “[...] may have the character of a relatively high probability, but also a totally mysterious probability” (Buytendijk, 1977, p. 82). Linked to it, there is the meaning of the play as a language of desire, prior to speech, capable of evoking a series of ludic behaviors and, in addition, transforming the world and the being itself.

Furthermore, Buytendijk brings back some of the themes already discussed in the course of his text, and also expands some discussions without actually solving them. When presenting the notion of human essence, Buytendijk (1977, p. 78) argues that “with the discovery of language, children finally find their authentic humanity”. The author concludes: language is not only a field of possibilities, of creation power, but also the limitation of meaning. In Buytendijk’s view, it is precisely in this ambiguous aspect that human existence rests, since it is the “gateway” to the symbolic world, that is, a possibility of emancipation from biological conditions and, *pari passu*, a limitation to the system of symbols of a culture. The Dutch thinker starts to emphasize the branch of language as emancipation, bringing from his General Theory of Play the perspective of the youth as the courage to take risks, as the condition of play and creation (art). In this context, the play/to play is always taking risks in the face of existence. The already presented ludic experience is, in a way, a “suspension” of everyday existence. Through this relationship with risk, with existential adventure, the author will present the different meanings of play.

Buytendijk says that language is essential to humans, since it is through it that we become human. Now, it should be noted that play and language enunciate several meanings. For some, the play/to play is a metaphor of language (Henriot, 1969; 1989), for others there are language plays (Wittgenstein, 1999), and, in a third way, there are those who claim that the play is language (Benveniste, 1947). For them, the double experience of the play/to play is conceived as an imagination for intellectual life. Thus, “[the] language as play is ‘what plays involving players’ [...] we do not speak of a play with language, but of the play of language itself that addresses, proposes, removes, asks us, and, in the answer, self-fulfills” (Buytendijk, 1977, p. 85). In this light, there is the idea that the play/to play is not only a human activity, but constitutes, in the full sense, humanity itself.

Moreover, it is essential to bring Buytendijk’s strong criticisms to the work *Homo Ludens*, by Huizinga<sup>17</sup>, for whom playing predates culture itself, once animals also play. If, for Huizinga (2012, p. 7), there are reasons to believe that all “[the] great archetypal activities of human society are, from the beginning, entirely marked by the play”, in Buytendijk’s view, what his countryman does in *Homo Ludens* is a superficial description of the ludic elements of culture. Buytendijk’s criticism is that Huizinga lacks an in-depth analysis of such human activities and it is because of this that the Dutch historian confuses behavior with existence, making the mistake of ignoring the difference between the in-

<sup>16</sup> This conception by Buytendijk concerning the “object of play” influenced eminent play theorists, such as: Daniil B. Elkonin, Hans Gadamer, and Hans Scheuerl.

<sup>17</sup> Huizinga is a very popular author in the context of Physical Education, when the subject is the play. There are several studies that are based on this author to characterize and define the play. However, it is essential to mention that the appropriations of this author’s work were also mistaken and reductionist, being used to justify the play at school and/or define the play as the thematic axis. We know that Huizinga’s book is a classic; however, we argue that there are certain mistakes in the work *Homo Ludens*, such as: to conceive the play as any type of historical-cultural manifestation, like dance, politics, legal practices, art, sacred rituals, war, etc.; the author’s lack of understanding regarding the difference between ludic activity and play; the conception that the play is prior to culture, in other words, the play would be innate (confusion between play and ludic behavior); his structural and limited analysis regarding the play and to play; the conception that play and ritual are analogous phenomena.





tionality of the play/to play and spontaneous manifestations. of culture. In this perspective, we argue that his ideas need to be better studied and contextualized in research (when used), given the wealth of his theorizing, as well as, for having a knowable methodological itinerary of how to investigate the human play. Now, it is of fundamental importance to say that in Buytendijk's (1935; 1977) view, in order to investigate the ludic phenomenon, it is essential to transcend the epistemological boundaries, or, if you want, it is necessary to go from common sense to philosophy, without forgetting, of course, that in this itinerary there are mandatory stops at scientific (bio-psychological and social) ports.

## **“One step further”: (possible) convergences and cautions to bring F. J. J. Buytendijk's ideas closer to the area of Physical Education**

In synthesis, we point out that the initial objective of this work was to expand the convergences of F. J. J. Buytendijk with the area of Physical Education through the description of the Dutch scholar's trajectory of thought and work and through a review of the appropriations that authors of Physical Education have carried out about this author's ideas. Buytendijk's intellectual trajectory is marked by the break with disciplinary boundaries and the engendering of a perspective of humanity that goes across common sense, religion, science, and philosophy. In this sense, we understand that Buytendijk was a singular thinker who, like few others, managed to observe humans in their existential dimension (in movement, in the world, and in dialogue with the world, building and constituting themselves human), in a perspective that transcends as partial and fragmented views of the human being, whether they are from science or philosophy.

Although he investigated many and diverse themes throughout his career (youth, play, ludic, rest, movement, pain, encounter, etc.), this author is unknown in several academic spheres. According to Dekkers (1995), the community of physiologists considers him to be very theoretical, the community of psychologists sees his ideas lacking experimental basis, and the community of philosophers conceives him as a very empirical author with little abstract reflection. Apparently, his eclecticism was not well regarded by academic communities; however, in the case of the area of Physical Education there are singular nuances concerning Buytendijk's studies. Thus, despite the rare and sparse mentions that are made to Buytendijk, the Dutch scholar still remains as a misunderstood or even unknown author.

A first step towards an approach between Buytendijk and Physical Education was made by the author himself, investigating themes in common with the area (for instance, the play, ludic activities, the soccer, etc.). Posteriorly, the establishment of TSMH in the Dutch-German context and its dissemination in the Brazilian Physical Education scenario made, particularly, by Elenor Kunz, granted him a prominent position in this ambit. Buytendijk is described as a precursor of the Theory of Movement through the phenomenological-existential bias. Based on these ideas, TSMH authors created an “education and didactic of the movement” which, in Brazilian Physical Education, was conceived as the theoretical foundation of this area of knowledge.

However, we indicate in the text that Buytendijk did not have a dense reading, at least in the Brazilian context, of the works related to his Theory of Movement, with emphasis on the book *Allgemeine Theorie der menschlichen Haltung und Bewegung* (Buytendijk, 1948). Evidently, language and access to original texts are major difficulties to be considered. However, it seems to us that the unique position of “inaccessible” referential can be seen as a comfortable argumentative strategy in that it does not allow the debate of ideas that support the authors' propositions. Therefore, it seems to us to be vitally important to study Buytendijk's original works again in order to thicken the debate prompted by TSMH in the context of Brazilian Physical Education.

Another timid step of Physical Education towards Buytendijk is via studies of plays, ludic activities and toys. In view of this, despite having two works that are propaedeutic to the studies of play and ludic, Buytendijk has still remained in the shadow of his countryman Johan Huizinga and his *Homo Ludens*, first published in 1938. Before Huizinga, Buytendijk had already made an important contribution to the play/ludic studies by architecting a General Theory of Play, which was later brought back and expanded in “Human Play”, a book chapter published in 1973, with a 1977 version translated to Portuguese. In summary, Brazilian Physical Education authors generally tend to neglect *Wesen und Sinn des Spiels*, translated to Spanish as *El Juego y su significado: el juego en los hombres y en los animales como manifestación de impulsos vitais* (Buytendijk, 1933/1935). Furthermore, even when the text “Human Play” is appropriated, they tend not to consider the work in its entirety, leaving fundamental aspects in the author's theoretical elaboration in the background.

Regarding *Homo Ludens*, by Huizinga (1938/2012), Brazilian Physical Education has built an ideal that assumes this work and this author as the main reference of play/ludic studies, whether in the school or in the extra-school context, even though Huizinga has not proposed any articulation for the play in the pedagogical or educational scope. On the other hand, Buytendijk, in his General Theory of Play and in Anthropology of Play, made certain considerations regarding the developmental process of children that deserve the attention of scholars in the field. Furthermore, in the text “Human Play”, Buytendijk (1977) himself criticizes Huizinga, which apparently went unnoticed in Brazilian Physical Education.



In view of what is exposed in this work, we conclude pointing out that F. J. J. Buytendijk's studies can substantiate a series of research and practices in the scope of Physical Education. Meanwhile, we also consider that the author's works deserved (and deserve) a better appropriation of Brazilian Physical Education scholars, who, in fact, have a great merit in taking the first steps in approaching this author. But now, it seems to us that it is necessary to take a "step further" and/or "increase the pace" towards other debates and elaborations. In view of this, we argue that the works of the Dutch scholar, when appropriated, need to be better studied and contextualized, given the richness of his theoretical elaborations that, undoubtedly, can contribute to Physical Education concerning both thematic investigations and methodological research itineraries on this theme.

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