

LUÍS CORDEIRO RODRIGUES
Sun Yat-Sen University

EMANUELE ACHINO
Polytechnic University of Turin

A Case Study on Moral Disengagement and Rationalization in the Context of Portuguese Bullfighting

Abstract: Bullfighting is increasingly seen as a contested practice in Portugal. The Portuguese public generally disapproves of the practice and the Portuguese animal rights movement has dedicated a significant number of their campaigns to protesting against it. Despite this opposition to the practice, however, there is still legal protection of the practice on grounds of preserving it as a national tradition. This contestation and legality has led bullfighting supporters to actively try to defend and rationalize the practice. This paper analyses this defence and rationalization by exploring a case study of the quasi-lobbyist Portuguese organization, Prótoiro. The aforementioned case study is analyzed through the use of critical discourse analysis and neutralization theory. The conclusion reached in this article is that the analysis of speech reveals that Prótoiro and its supporters try to morally disengage with the harm done to the bull by using justifications that bullfighting is an ethical activity.

Keywords: Bullfighting, deviance, Portuguese case study, neutralization theory, critical discourse analysis.

Introduction

Cultural change and lifestyle transformations call into question human-nonhuman relations and the cultural heritage that is sometimes used to justify archaic practices, for example, eating meat and bullfighting among many others. Bullfighting has, however, lost much of its popularity as an effect of a growing awareness in the animal rights and welfare fields (Cordeiro-Rodrigues 2015; Donaldson and Kymlicka 2013; Beilin 2012). Some examples of the drop in popularity of this practice can be found in countries such as Portugal, Spain and South Africa. In Portugal, there was an almost 50% decrease in the number of bullfights between 2000 to 2013 due to lack of demand (Inspeccao Geral das Actividades Culturais 2016). In Spain, the Catalan demand for independence from Spain has been coupled with an anti-bullfighting sentiment, whereby the autonomous government of Catalonia has attempted to make a law prohibiting the practice in the region (Beilin 2012; Lelieveldt 2016). In South Africa, there is growing opposition to the bullfighting practice known as *Ukeshwama* on the grounds of it being inhumane (Rautenbach 2011; Horsthemke 2015).¹

A factor that has strongly influenced this anti-bullfighting sentiment has been a change in lifestyle. Most particularly, bullfighting is, generally speaking, a rural practice and the

¹ There is no evidence of a drop in instances of bullfighting in France given that the practice has always had a small number of supporters and thus limited expression.

urbanization of lifestyles and behavior has led to a growth in bullfighting being rejected (Beilin 2012; Basta 2014). Moreover, since the 70's there has been increasing concern regarding animal welfare, with more individuals becoming vegan and vegetarians (Donaldson and Kymlicka 2013); this, in turn, has led to a greater opposition to practices that are understood as involving cruelty to animals, such as bullfighting. Additionally, various works undertaken in comparative psychology, ecology and nutrition have strongly advocated for a change from an omnivorous diet to a vegan or vegetarian one, influencing many people in terms of opposing the human use of animals (Adams 2011; Mitchell 2011; Craig, Mangels, and the American Dietetic Association 2009; Gullone and Arkow 2012). In short, these changes have led to a reconsideration of the role of tradition and to a high level of skepticism regarding bullfighting.

On top of this, in 2015, the European Parliament voted for an amendment to stop over €100 million in EU agricultural subsidies from being used to raise bulls for bullfights. Additionally, in a number of different EU countries, such as Italy and the Netherlands, bullfights have been abolished and subsequently deleted from the list of cultural heritage activities.

On the grounds of this growing opposition to bullfighting, we developed desk-based qualitative research on bullfighting in Portugal. Accordingly, this paper will discuss the bullfighting discourse of *Prótoiro* (the *Federação Portuguesa das Associações Taurinas*), which is the Portuguese federation for bullfighting and bullfight related events, using critical discourse analysis and neutralization theory as our theoretical approach. We will also discuss data collection and analysis as well as the social and legal context of bullfighting. In sections 2 and 3 we will discuss how the discourse used by bullfighting supporters can be understood using the techniques of neutralisation, whilst in section 4 we will discuss the cultural and legal context of Portuguese bullfighting. In particular, the *Prótoiro* discourse engages in denial of injury (section 5), appeal to higher authorities and loyalties (section 6) and condemnation of the condemners (section 7).

The Theory and Research Question

With the aim of theoretically framing the research, critical discourse analysis and neutralization theory have been combined. Critical discourse analysis is a form of investigation which uses a critical analysis of the language under investigation. It focuses on the social, cultural and historical contexts of communication and meanings, especially those meanings implicitly embedded in the discourse. Accordingly, discourse analysis research implies that data collected would have been intended as discursively constructed, and thus able to be discursively analyzed (Dijk 2014; Mitchell 2006). Moreover, a discourse could be intended as the language beyond the level of the sentence, as well as those language behaviors that are linked to social practices, for example, when the language offers a way of creating social stigmas. Language is also intended as a system of thought—political language/political discourse analysis—as well as having the potential for revealing, sustaining and reproducing the social status quo; for that reason, it is understood as making a contribution to the transformation of the status quo (Fairclough 2010).

Accordingly, by analysing language, it is possible to de-construct the ideologies that are implied by language, and also to create and reproduce power dynamics. Hence, critical discourse analysts are typically interested in how discourse is able to reproduce social domination, that is, through language use. Discourse and political discourse analysis focuses on coherent sequences of sentences, propositions and speeches, as well as on language use beyond the sentence boundary, taking on board 'naturally occurring' language use. Moreover, the interpretation made by critical discourse analysis is inevitably contextual, and language intended as a social practice is tied to a specific social-historical context. Thus, to understand how the texts investigated reproduce power, discourses should be analyzed through the understanding of their context (Dijk 2014).

Although the context is the place within which action is considered legitimate (at least from a legal perspective), it is not supposed that bullfighting supporters are engaged in 'stigmatized-deviant-contextual-behaviors' (Beilin 2012; Kennedy 1999; Doyle 2012). In other words, it is not stated that bullfighting is a deviant behavior in itself. In fact, the deviant-behavior perspective is not sufficient to explain the existence of such a practice, and implicitly hints at a norm which is supposed to be the 'normality' as such. Yet, bullfighting is a cultural practice which is intertwined with both social and legal backgrounds (Cordeiro-Rodrigues 2015; Doyle 2012; Thompson 2010). Accordingly, the social roles embedded in the performance of violent behavior (the stereotyped nature of violence) are able to make sense of the images of violence that stand out, both in ideology and the aesthetic culture of bullfighting (Gullone and Arkow 2012; Cordeiro-Rodrigues 2015; Beilin 2012). However, these approaches alone are not able to provide information about why this practice has endured in Portugal.

To fill the gap, neutralization theory was employed in order to examine the rationalization of bullfight supporters, as they attempt to counter the social stigma against the practice that is occurring in contemporary Portugal. According to neutralization theory, those who commit acts that are socially stigmatized, try to find justifications that rationalize their actions (Sykes and Matza 1957; Forsyth and Evans 1998). Hence, individuals who violate established social norms and expectations try somehow to find ways to neutralize their guilt and protect their self and social image (Bandura 1999; Osofsky, Bandura, and Zimbardo 2005). It has been noticed, in fact, that individuals do not ordinarily engage in harmful conduct, but rather have a tendency to act following their conscience (Kukathas 2007). When individuals do act in harmful ways, they tend to need to justify the morality of their actions to themselves. A possible strategy for doing this is to dehumanize those who are being harmed. If others are perceived as similar, then normally empathetic emotional reactions based on perceived similarity and a sense of social obligation are activated. Contrastingly, when one is dehumanized, one is no longer viewed as a subject with feelings, someone who feels pain and has aspirations, rather, the perception is of a being who does not possess these features and who will consequently not feel. Thus, it becomes easier to harm them (Bandura 1999; Osofsky, Bandura, and Zimbardo 2005; Mitchell 2006, 2011).

By combining critical discourse analysis with neutralization theory, and by also considering bullfighting as a cultural practice rather than a deviant behavior, we identified the following questions:

Has language reproduced ideologies and/or stereotypes and power relations in bullfighting?

Have supporters of bullfighting in Portugal provided such discourses in order to self-justify and implicitly neutralize bullfighting?

Which contextual dimensions have been referred to with the aim of affording self-justification for bullfighting?

On this basis, data has been analyzed to understand whether it is able to positively and/or negatively influence action, and also able to construct a social reality and re/produce power dynamics. Given this, critical and political discourse analysis appears to be useful for questioning how the relations between discourses provided by the opponents and supporters of bullfighting in Portugal, as well as the implicit ideologies and political and power structures, are embedded in the mainstreaming practice of bullfighting in Portugal.

Answering the Questions

To answer these questions, qualitative research has been developed and data collected and analyzed. Data were collected from the Prótoiro website, the Portuguese federation for bullfighting and bullfight related events. Prótoiro is the official legal representative of all bullfight related events in Portugal and the core organization for representing all other Portuguese bullfighting associations (Cordeiro-Rodrigues 2015).

More precisely, two groups of sources from Prótoiro were collected, in the form of both written texts available online, and a software programme for conducting qualitative research. The Boolean approach has been employed with the aim of providing data analysis (NVivo).

In detail:

1. the first group of sources comes from social media, especially Prótoiro's posts (official communications and discussions) on Facebook and Tumblr (data collection: December 2014 / May 2015). Data comprises: i) their main activist tool, and: ii) an insight into the mainstreaming viewpoint provided by supporters.
2. The second group of sources is represented by formal letters (5) written by Prótoiro to the Portuguese Parliament. These letters offer responses to the anti-bullfighting petition of DATE? that aimed to abolish bullfighting in Portugal. The petition was, in fact, to be discussed in Parliament. Prótoiro responded with the objective of explaining their proposition that bullfighting is a practice that should be maintained as legal. As such, the petition systematically exposes Prótoiro's ethos vis-a-vis bullfighting. These letters provide a useful basis for the second source of information used in this study.

By combining political discourse analysis with neutralization theory and by analysing qualitative information, we found that those who support bullfighting mainly rely on three techniques of neutralization, all with the aim of justifying themselves and the practice of bullfighting. We also aimed at deconstructing discourses on bullfights which implicitly legitimate courses of action such as social and cultural practices as well as the rationalized practices and ethics of bullfighting. Due to the limited budget available for research, we used small-scale-data. It is important to stress that the results of this investigation are in-

tended as a helpful introduction for bringing to light certain dynamics about bullfighting which have long been taken for granted; these will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

The Cultural and Legal Context of Portuguese-style Bullfighting

The history of bullfighting goes back as far as the Roman Empire. Nevertheless, with the fall of Rome, associated cultural rituals were legally banned and ostracized (Ziolkowski 2011). In particular, the practice started disappearing with the conquest of the Iberian Peninsula by Vandals, Suebi, and Visigoths (Kennedy 1999; Doyle 2012).

It was only during the Enlightenment of the XVIII century that a revival of the practice on the Iberian peninsula occurred (Prótoiro 2011; Doyle 2012; Cordeiro-Rodrigues 2015). It makes sense that with the birth of the nation state, the practice of bullfighting has evolved in slightly different ways in different countries. In Europe, there are three countries where the practice predominates: Portugal, Spain and France. The differences and similarities of these three countries can be followed along the following lines: how it is done, its contestation and place in society, and its legal status.

Broadly speaking, Portuguese-style bullfighting has two phases. In the first phase, the bullfighter and the bull confront each other in the arena. In this confrontation, the objective of the bullfighter is to stick a pointed-stick into the bull without being touched by the animal. Although many bulls do die as a result of their injuries, the bullfighter is not legally allowed to kill the bull in the arena itself. In the second phase, a group of eight men, the *forcados*, come to catch the bull, and take it out of the arena, without using any protection or guns (Cordeiro-Rodrigues 2015). The Spanish and French bullfights differ from this. These two styles of bullfight each have three bullfighters and each of them has to fight and kill two bulls. Each bullfighter has six assistants: two *picadores* (“lancers”) mounted on horseback, three *banderilleros* (“flagmen”), and a *mozo de espada* (“sword servant”). The different assistants help the bullfighter attack the bull and finally kill it (Thompson 2010; Perales and Thouverez 2014). Hence, while the Portuguese bullfight only has one person fighting against the bull and then eight people eventually catching it, the French and Spanish style of bullfighting involve seven people participating in fighting the bull, with no catching part. Additionally, in the Portuguese bullfight, the bull is not killed in the arena, although the bull is killed in the arena in the former two countries.

Though legally legitimate, bullfighting is a minority practice in Portugal to the extent that only a small number of individuals support or practice it. The practice is present in various areas of Portugal, but is more predominantly found in Alentejo (in the South) and in the Lisbon (capital) area. Alentejo is where most supporters come from, and the presence of bullfighting in the Lisbon area is due to the internal migration of native people from Alentejo to Lisbon in search of better employment opportunities (Monteiro, Policarpo, and Vieira da Silva 2007). In fact, only about 4% of the population is actively involved in bullfighting (Inspeccao Geral das Actividades Culturais 2016). Indeed, this practice is strongly contested by social movements (Cordeiro-Rodrigues 2015), with animal rights movements in Portugal having prioritised campaigning against bullfights over other causes.

It was noticed in fact that, since 2002,² Animal, the main animal rights group in Portugal, has dedicated over 100 campaigns to the eradication of bullfights, which is about four times more than the campaigns dedicated to ending animal farming (Cordeiro-Rodrigues 2015). Equally, the Portuguese public is also in favor of abolishing this practice. Indeed, a recent study suggested that the majority of Portuguese consider that bullfights should be abolished due to their cruel and violent nature (Monteiro, Policarpo, and Vieira da Silva 2007). Moreover, bullfighting has a minority legal status in Portugal. Legal minority states are normally conceded with exemptions to the law; in particular, when there is a general law that prohibits a certain practice, while simultaneously granting an exception to a minority group (Levy 2000).

Thus, bullfighting in Portugal is an exception from the social norm of how to treat animals. Indeed, Portuguese society is becoming increasingly intolerant of the practice. With the aim of countering this tendency, bullfight supporters formed Prótoiro, the Portuguese Federation of Bullfights and Bullfight related events. Prótoiro officially represents all associations and businesses related to bullfighting, so that they can collectively try to counter the campaigns and discourse that increasingly exists against the practice. Moreover, Prótoiro has engaged in a systematic rationalization of bullfighting. Accordingly, their objective is to ‘promote, publicize, dignify the immaterial patrimony of Portuguese arts in culture that is bullfighting,’³ and they wish to promote bullfighting by engaging in an organized and informative debate on how they define the nature of bullfighting (Prótoiro 2015).

In terms of support for the practice, France is quite similar to Portugal. The practice only has support in Southern France, with about 10% of individuals contending that the practice ought to be allowed, but generally only practiced during Easter (ESDAW 2017). In Spain, contrastingly, bullfighting is a national blood-sport, which most people support and are proud of—even though it is more predominant in the Madrid area (Perales and Thouverez 2014). This tendency became increasingly marked following Francisco Franco’s dictatorship (Beilin 2012). Nevertheless, more recently, Catalonia’s autonomous government did try to ban the practice on its territory on the grounds of being a cruel practice and something that is part of Spanish culture, which differs from Catalan culture (Beilin 2012; Perales and Thouverez 2014). This ban was, however, rejected by the Spanish Constitutional Court on the grounds that the constitution demands that autonomous states protect practices with cultural and traditional value (Burgen 2016).

The practice is legally allowed in the three aforementioned countries. In Portugal, violence towards animals is generally criminalized, but there is an exemption for bullfights. According to Law 92/95 from 12th September 2014, which is the Portuguese Animal Protection Law, no animal can legally be unnecessarily harmed, with the exemption of the case of bulls in bullfights on the grounds that this aspect of Portuguese culture and tradition must be preserved. In France bullfighting is also legally allowed. The practice is only allowed where there is an uninterrupted tradition of such bullfights, and the mentioning of culture and cultural value has been removed from the law (ESDAW 2017). In Spain, the legality of

² This date was chosen because the available data is from this date. Additionally, previous to this date, there was little contestation because there were no organized social movements to contest the practice.

³ Translated by us from the Portuguese. The same applies to all the following quotes.

bullfighting has constitutional legal grounds and is justified on the grounds of preservation of tradition (Perales and Thouverez 2014; Cordeiro-Rodrigues 2015).

Denial of Injury: the Nature of the Bull and the Redefinition of Violence and Torture

Having explained the methodology and social context, in this section we will discuss the Portuguese case study by analyzing the discourses used by supporters of bullfighting and related techniques of neutralization. One of the most common techniques used by unorthodox people and identified by neutralization theorists, is the denial of injury. Using this technique, offenders insist that their actions do not cause any harm or damage. This is a form of moral disengagement; individuals do not usually engage in harmful behavior, so when they do so, they need to construct justifications that neutralize their guilt. A way to deny that any harm was done, is to mischaracterize the one being harmed (Bandura 1999; Osofsky, Bandura, and Zimbardo 2005; Forsyth and Evans 1998). In the case of bullfighting, those involved in harming the bull insist that the bull is not harmed by bullfighting. That is, the supporters of bullfights attempt to offer a message of positive conduct by characterizing the interaction with the bull in the arena as an activity free from violence and torture, despite public and social movements widely criticizing bullfights as being cruel to bulls. In particular, this strategy consists of characterizing the bull as an animal free from injury and redefining notions of violence and torture.

Moreover, Prótoiro has attempted to conceptualize bullfighting as acceptable by characterizing the bull as an animal with certain natural attributes, which not only make him fit for bullfighting, but whose life purpose is to fight. In other words, part of the characterization of the bull used to justify bullfighting consists of characterizing the bull as a naturally strong and confrontational type of animal, and, thereby, an animal that enjoys bullfighting. Hence, it is contended that real disrespect for the bull is to deny him his *telos*, his life purpose, which is to fight.

By analyzing data and combining logic operators (and/or/not) under the umbrella of the denial of injury framework, it was found that Prótoiro used arguments such as:

“...the scientific studies show that the bull has physiological mechanisms that allow him to avoid pain. This scientific conclusion confirms that the bull, rather than running away, comes back to fight again” (Prótoiro 2011).

Similarly, data suggest that:

“...the bull does it because it is a genetically modified animal naturally inclined towards a fight/confrontation ... [and] ... genetically predisposed for fighting” (Prótoiro 2011).

And yet, the bull’s combativeness and its propensity to fight have also been questioned:

“...the added value in bullfighting is the animal’s combativeness, its peculiar ability to carry out a fight, to attack or to defend itself, its combative personality...” (Prótoiro 2011).

Moreover, data suggest that Prótoiro has also redefined violence and torture by comparing humans and nonhumans:

“...torturing a man or even an animal is to inflict injury on a being unable to defend themselves. Now this is not what happens in the case of the bullfight ... in fact, the bull is free to run and attack and thus combat ... [thus] ... two empirical proofs are evident: if another animal besides a bull is placed in the fight, this other animal would run away immediately, and escape is the immediate reaction of any mammal to aggression. Contrastingly, the bull does not run, but attacks more. Second proof: if we extend ‘real torture’ to a bull, for example an electric shock, the bull would escape and run away—which is the reverse reaction that he shows in the arena” (Prótoiro 2011).

Additionally, Prótoiro conceptualizes torture as such:

“By torture we must understand all act of voluntarily harming another defenseless human being, causing them physical or psychological pain, either for fun or to withdraw from this pain and suffering some benefit, such as a confession or information” (Prótoiro 2011).

In doing so, Prótoiro states that:

“...it is true that bullfighting is violent, but the violence is controlled and ritualised ... it is false that the show is barbaric: the show was born in the Age of Enlightenment as an example of the power of Man and civilization over the gross aspects of nature... it is also not true that the spectacle is cruel. To be cruel means to gain pleasure from the suffering of the victim...” (Prótoiro 2011).

To sum up, the evidence of the Portuguese case study suggests that part of the attempt to make bullfighting ethical is by rationalising the pain of the bull. A naturalistic approach has been employed to do this, and concepts that entail that the bull is not the victim of violence/torture and is naturally inclined to enter the bullfighting ring have been argued. Furthermore, Prótoiro rationalizes bullfighting by denying that there is any significant injury to the bull, stating that the bulls’ pain is a misunderstanding of the natural characteristics of the creature. Accordingly, Prótoiro has also referred to scientific evidence with the aim of justifying bullfighting in Portugal. However, scientific evidence is quite problematic, and this information is woven into the justification of bullfighting through the claim that the genetics of the bull make it naturally fit for the bullfighting arena. In particular, it is stated that the genes of the bull make him aggressive and willing to fight. It has also been stated that the bull has a combative personality, again trying to justify bullfighting as part of the bull’s natural behavior.

By analyzing data, the rationale that the physiological and genetic characteristics of the bull make the animal naturally inclined towards bullfighting, were noted. Moreover, a human-centric viewpoint was expressed only with the aim of self-justifying bullfighting. We propose that power relations between humans and nonhumans have been instrumentally used to self-justify bullfighting for human ‘fun’ only. In doing this, power relations between humans and non-humans tip towards humans, with the dominant human condition yet again justified through the adoption of the neutralization theory perspective.

Moreover, data suggests that Prótoiro has also tried to re-conceptualize the assumption of torture and violence in order to self-justify bullfighting. By re-conceptualizing torture and violence, Prótoiro provide a rationalization process, which is a form of moral disengagement: a process of convincing the self and others that detrimental and socially unacceptable conduct is, in fact ethical. Particularly relevant for the denial of injury are the euphemistic use of language, selective lexicalization, and the mischaracterization of the victim.

Appeal to Loyalties and Authorities

Neutralization theory suggests that offenders justify and rationalize their actions by appealing to higher loyalties and authorities. As such, the offender suggests that his/her offence is justified in the name of greater values (Forsyth and Evans 1998). The Portuguese case study equally shows this form of rationalization and justification.

By analyzing the data, the following statements of rationalization and justification could be found:

“...it suffices to recall the names of various artists, poets, painters and politicians of every country in the world who have supported bullfighting...” (Prótoiro 2011).

Moreover, a red line between bullfighting and cultural tradition has been detected, as well as identity and freedom, which have been quoted as such:

“It’s the time to say that we are Portuguese and demand respect for our traditions, our history and our culture...” (Prótoiro 2011)

and also

“...I am a bullfight supporter. I defend my culture, identity and freedom!” (Prótoiro 2014).

Connections between social phenomena have also emerged:

“...[the bullfight tradition] defends our culture, identity and freedom ... amateurs, show your unwavering defence of the Portuguese culture, our identity and freedom for all...” (Prótoiro 2015)

Finally, the appeal to authorities and loyalties, bullfighting and personal values have been seen as intertwined:

“...bullfighting is a school of virtues and who knows the reality knows that in the square, in the arena, you can perhaps see, feel and appreciate values about having respect, dignity, courage, friendship, will-power, loyalty and solidarity. The bullfight is also an invaluable source of aesthetic wealth, for the bullfighter creates beauty through a dance with death, turning raw nature, the straight line, uncontrolled movement, into poetic and timed curves. And to all the other arts, bullfighting adds this unique dimension of truth, authenticity, reality...” (Prótoiro 2014).

By combining the words ‘bullfight’ and ‘values’ in the available data available, it was suggested that:

“...the bullfight is a vehicle for humanistic, ethical, aesthetic and cultural values. Bullfighting is not just about having courage ... bullfighting demonstrates a very particular intelligence, that is, to put your body in front of the beast, so that control can be reached by the bullfighter...” (Prótoiro 2011, 2014).

And yet...

“...bullfighting is not just a technique, not a new art, but also about a lifestyle. We assume that we always act in respect of greater moral principles... the bullfighter, to deserve the title of bullfighter, has to fight an animal who is naturally dangerous, and this requires courage... it has to be done in public and with composure, and this demands dignity. It is necessary to master the bull, something that requires great self-control, both of the body and the emotions. It is necessary to inflict a wound on the opponent, but this can only be done if you put

yourself in danger, and this requires we cherish the value of loyalty to the opponent, as well as total sincerity to the opponent...” (Prótoiro 2011).

Data clearly states that Prótoiro is making an appeal to higher loyalties, such as the prestige of some individuals who support bullfighting, as well as to tradition and personal virtues, which are seen as the base for legitimating bullfighting in Portugal. The data analyzed suggest that Prótoiro contends that due to some extremely prestigious people who have supported bullfighting, then this it is a practice to be cherished; indeed, it extols that this practice should be good and ethical because of the support of prestigious people.

In doing so, Prótoiro appeals to loyalties by supposing an implicit link between the ethics of bullfighting and the fact that many famous people have endorsed it. Hence, the rationale is that if these people are normally considered good, they could not have made a morally bad judgment about the goodness of bullfighting.

Moreover, Prótoiro appeals to higher loyalty to the extent that they argue that because bullfighting is part of the Portuguese identity and culture, then it must be good. Thus, it is concluded by them that bullfighting is morally good as a result of being a Portuguese tradition. Here, a direct linkage between bullfighting, culture and what is supposed to be the Portuguese identity have been referred to in such a way that moral disengagement is discursively proposed and a discourse that justifies harming the bull is endorsed.

The Condemnation of the Condemners of Bullfights

Another technique of neutralisation used by Prótoiro for moral disengagement is the condemnation of the condemners, a practice aimed at making a practice immune from criticism. In doing this, the analysis of the Portuguese case study suggests that there is a praise for bullfighters which contrasts with the characterization of anti-bullfighting activists. Here, the anti-bullfighting activists are characterized as the real offenders and described as acting immorally. The Boolean approach employed in this study thus suggests that bullfighters are characterized as:

“... men of another universe, giving their lives for the art they create” (Prótoiro 2013).

Contrastingly, it was also suggested that:

“...in the last few decades a new kind of terrorism has appeared: eco-terrorism... in countries where there are bullfights, there have been many radical attacks... We suspect that these attacks are funded by companies that sell vegetarian food and food for animals (the more we treat animals like humans, the more we spend money on animals and on vegetarian food)” (Prótoiro 2011).

On this basis, the available data describe anti-bullfight activists as such:

“...they [the anti-bullfights activists] cannot do that because, contrary to what they say, bullfights are ethically and morally good... another of the arguments of the anti-bullfighting contingent is that bullfighting is a barbarous and cruel display. The anti-bullfighting people imagine blood and death... but it is the anti-bullfighting supporters saying they want the injury and the death of the bullfighter, putting mankind and the animal on the same level, who, are cruel; they are the ones clearly defending anti-humanist values...” (Prótoiro 2011) ...and... “...anti-bullfight movements are not the result of a preoccupation with the suffering of the bulls. They are attacks made by

organisations that wish to impose one way of living in the world. Anti-bullfight movements defend ideological and economic interests..." (Prótoiro 2011).

To summarize, another technique of neutralization used by Prótoiro is the condemnation of the condemners. This technique is substantiated in a discourse of othering, where bullfight supporters are characterized as having positive features, in contrast with the anti-bullfighting activists who are classified with the opposite/negative characteristics. In the case of bullfighting, this strategy has been used mainly to sharpen the contrast between bullfight supporters and anti-bullfighting activists. That is, Prótoiro uses the strategies of othering in order to condemn the activists who criticize them. By othering, we mean the process of essentialization and the crystallisation of difference, where two groups are juxtaposed and classified using binary categories (Cordeiro-Rodrigues 2015). In this juxtaposition, one group is classified with positive characteristics and the other is classified with the opposite (negative) characteristics. In the context discussed in this article, Prótoiro characterizes bullfight supporters as ethical and moral, with the anti-bullfighting activists being classified as terrorists and badly intentioned. On the one hand, bullfighters are characterized as being super human and extremely ethical, whilst on the other hand, according to Prótoiro, anti-bullfighting activists can be linked to terrorism and self-interest motivations only. This juxtaposed characterization is another form of moral disengagement. By doing it, bullfight supporters are characterized as victims, deviating the attention from the harm done to the bull and instead placing the attention on the suffering of the bullfighters as well as on the immoral actions of some activist groups. By using this strategy, Prótoiro tries to immunize itself from criticism and justify the suffering that is inflicted on the bull.

Conclusion

The way individuals relate to animals is very often revealing of the values and beliefs of the society in which they live (Best 2014; Elder, Emel, and Wolch 1998). Indeed, the ways in which individuals relate to animals are able to open up differences between people and reveal social dynamics. In this article, we have focused on a specific case study of an animal practice—bullfighting in Portugal, with a particular focus on Portugal. Worldwide, bullfighting is a practice that has been increasingly stigmatized. The case study involving Portugal, as investigated in this article, is no exception. Despite the legal protection given to this practice, the public in general disapproves of it and sees it as a form of animal cruelty. Owing to the fact that this practice has been widely stigmatized, those who do practice and support it have attempted to socially and individually justify the practice. In this study, critical discourse analysis and neutralization theory have been combined with the aim of theoretically framing the research, and providing a comprehensive approach for analyzing data. In doing so, we discovered that three techniques of neutralization are routinely used by supporters of bullfights. Namely, these techniques are: (1) denial of injury, (2) appeal to higher authorities and loyalties, and (3) the condemnation of the condemners.

Further research could focus on two topics. Firstly, the comparison of case studies regarding moral disengagements between France, Portugal, Spain and South Africa. Secondly, further research should focus on how bullfighting can reinforce and perpetuate mas-

culine roles within a community. Previous studies on dogfighting have demonstrated that honor cultures provide an environment propitious for the reinforcement of masculinity through the role of animal fights (Evans, Gauthier, and Forsyth 2007). Hence, for the study of bullfighting in Portugal it would be interesting to explore the honor culture behind the community and thus understand how, in the context of bullfighting, this can perpetuate stereotypes about masculinity.

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Biographical Notes:

Luis Cordeiro-Rodrigues (Ph.D.), is a research fellow at the Department of Philosophy (Zhuhai) of Sun Yat-sen University, China. His interests cover (i) multicultural and postcolonial theory, (ii) African studies (especially African normative philosophy) and (iii) the morality of political violence. A significant part of his work addresses the aforementioned research interests tied with moral questions regarding animals. Some examples are the morality of political violence on behalf of animal rights and neocolonialism in the animal advocates movements.

E-mail: lccmr1984@gmail.com

Emanuele Achino, (Ph.D.), is a lecturer at the Polytechnic University in Turin.

E-mail: Emanuele.achino@gmail.com