

## SECTION II

# Cross-Disciplinary Contributions to Research on Physical Education

In 1969, American curriculum theorist Joseph Schwab pronounced the curriculum field to be “moribund”. The cause of its untimely demise, according to Schwab, was the invasion and colonization by a range of disciplines such as psychology, sociology and history. Schwab claimed that this discipline-based research fragmented the curriculum field, proposed competing and contradictory explanations for curricula phenomena, and was too theoretical to inform practitioners’ deliberations on curriculum practice.

More than 35 years later, we can say with some confidence that Schwab’s pronouncement was perhaps premature. Both curriculum and education more broadly have survived what appeared at the time to be a colonization and have thrived as fields of study with their own particular theories, issues, problems, and methods (e.g. Kirk, 1994). Moreover, the resurgence of curriculum and education as fields of study has not been at the expense of discipline-based study, as Schwab’s analysis might have led us to expect. As we can see in this section, the application of theories, issues, problems, and methods from a range of disciplines has the potential to enrich our understanding of physical education as an educational phenomenon.

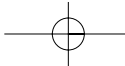
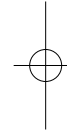
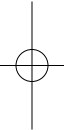
Philosophy, history and psychology can probably lay claim to the longest running lines of research in physical education, with sociology emerging to significance in the 1980s, and with public health the relative newcomer. Perhaps in some respects consistent with Schwab’s critique, both Morgan’s and Phillips and Roper’s chapters reveal a diminution in the amount of attention given to physical education by philosophers and historians respectively as sport has grown in importance within their research agendas. At the same time, both Morgan and Phillips and Roper argue for the continuing relevance of philosophical and historical studies of physical education and suggest that ongoing developments in their fields can provide new insights into physical education. In a somewhat contrasting situation, and in many respects matching the dominance of psychology in educational research more generally, the

continuing proliferation of psychological studies in physical education settings leads Lirgg to focus on just one prominent line of inquiry centred around the concept of motivation. Again qualifying Schwab’s analysis, Lirgg shows that social psychologists have often sought to provide advice to physical education practitioners on how studies of concepts such as motivation can inform their deliberations on practice. Evans and Davies’ chapter provides an overview of sociological contributions to physical education, and like Lirgg’s account of social psychology, their chapter reveals burgeoning sociological interest in physical education, particularly since the body and concepts such as embodiment became central to contemporary mainstream sociological inquiry. Finally, Trost’s contribution reveals that physical education is of key and growing interest to researchers in the field of public health, in so far as physical education is viewed as both a source of the problem and as a possible solution to alleged increases in childhood obesity and sedentariness.

Each of these authors shows that, far from providing contradictory findings for physical education, their disciplines provide particular perspectives that enrich our understanding. They also provide repositories of theories and methods that pedagogy researchers can plunder and apply to specific problems in their fields of interest within physical education. And the histories of each discipline remind us that we must study physical education in the round, from as many salient perspectives as possible, and that we should not base policy and practice on whichever perspective happens to be fashionable at any given time.

## References

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## 2.1 Philosophy and physical education

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### Brief historical perspective

Strictly speaking, the philosophy of physical education is a sub-discipline of the philosophy of education, which, in turn, is a division of philosophy proper. So conceived, the philosophical issues pursued in the philosophy of physical education take their point of departure from the main issues that enliven the philosophy of education. And it was precisely this pedagogical perspective that informed most philosophical considerations of games, sports, exercise, dance, and other related physical fare on both sides of the Atlantic (mainly, the US and Great Britain) up to the late 1960s or so.

But beginning in the late 1960s (in the US) and the 1970s (in Britain), however, the field of the philosophy of physical education gradually gave way to a new, upstart area called the philosophy of sport. This change was by no means merely a linguistic or semantic one, but a thorough-going theoretical and practical one that reflected, no doubt, the growing prominence of sport as a social practice in the Anglo-American world, to say nothing of Europe and the rest of the world. In any event, it signaled the break of philosophic considerations of games and sports, and to a lesser extent exercise and dance, from the philosophy of education. This meant that the philosophical examination of human movement phenomena was no longer considered beholden to the philosophy of education, and thus no longer considered its sub-discipline but a bonafide philosophical subject in its own right. This put it on a par not only with the philosophy of education but as well with the philosophy of art, science, and religion. More particularly, it also meant that analyses of human movement phenomena came to have less and less to do with issues like knowledge (what counts as knowledge?, by what mechanisms do we obtain knowledge of such phenomena?, and what constitutes the logical organization of such knowledge?) and more and more to do with issues of value, especially ethical value (for a large part of the increased philosophic attention sports attracted in the last few decades of the past century had to do with their hard-to-miss moral debauchery).

In locating this break in the disciplinary identity and focus of philosophic examinations of human movement in the 1960s and 1970s, of course, I do not mean to imply that all philosophical work in physical education ceased at that point, and that everyone from that point on trained their philosophical sights on sports. Drawing boundaries that are too neat and tidy, of course, is the danger of any effort to periodize an academic enterprise or any other reasonably complex enterprise for that matter. So philosophical work dealing with physical education proper has persisted up to the present, but it has been clearly dwarfed by the work devoted to sports, and by the concern with ethical inquiries that defined and continues to define much of that work.

In order to appreciate the full significance of this break, however, it would be wise to briefly characterize the focus and content of philosophical inquiry in physical activity and sports prior to the 1960s and to do the same for the immediately following period which saw the birth and eventual hegemony of the philosophy of sport.

To begin at the beginning then, the philosophy of physical education in the pre-1960s looked rather different depending on whether one's frame of reference was the American or the English scene. With regard to the American scene, the body of literature reveals an eclectic mix of philosophical studies of physical education, and one which favored the use of so-called philosophic schools of thought. By schools of philosophic thought I mean things like pragmatism, naturalism, realism, idealism, and existentialism, which consist of a collection of concepts that examine phenomena like physical education from one or more of these standpoints. So, for instance, an existentialist analysis of physical education would take as its point of departure the unique being of the individual (what Heidegger called "Dasein", which literally translated means "being there," and by which Heidegger tried to convey the idea that what distinguishes the particular being of humans is the care they take regarding their own existence, not only its mere sustenance but its perfection), and judge the relative worth of physical education by how, and in what way, it hooks up with

this existential project. The point of analyses like these was no mere scholastic one, however, but an effort to construct a coherent philosophy to live one's life by. The work of Davis, Miller, and Zeigler formed the nucleus of this early work; and more contemporary examples of it can be found in Charles's and Kretchmar's recent books.

On the other side of the Atlantic, however, the early work in the philosophy of physical education was a far less eclectic mix owing to the dominance of analytic philosophy. From the outset, this body of work reflected an unmistakable analytic bent, one that favored conceptual analyses of key terms associated with education, and one that was directly carried over into the philosophy of physical education. This explains why the latter was largely given over to considerations as to what extent physical education could itself legitimately be called an educational subject, a question prompted by the work of classical analytical philosophers of education like Peters who claimed that anything worthy of the name education must possessive both a cognitive orientation and content. For Peters that meant that education was a matter of inducting the uninitiated into intrinsically valuable forms of knowledge that together go to make up the rational mind (MacNamee, 1998). This suggests that because physical education is preeminently a practical rather than a theoretical endeavor, meaning that while it is not averse to theoretical treatment (whether it be biological, chemical, biomechanical, historical, sociological, or philosophical in character) such treatment is not central to what it is or what it does, it lacks the cognitive orientation and propositional content befitting education. Unsurprisingly, this grand dismissal of physical education prompted a basic rethinking of what constitutes education proper by philosophers of physical education. It was with this aim in mind that Arnold, Aspin, Best, and Reid, and more recently McNamee and Parry, turned out their own expanded conceptions of education, conceptions that left room according to Reid, for pleasurable human activities; according to Aspin and Best, for esthetic endeavors; according to Arnold, for moral practices; and according to Parry and McNamee, for activities that involve practical, tacit knowledge. They thus argued that if the mark of an educated person could not be reduced to the capacity to wield propositional knowledge, but included as well the ability to suffuse one's intentions and actions with esthetic, moral, and practical know-how, and to provide pleasurable experiences that people regard as intrinsically worthwhile, then physical education should most definitely not be denied entrance into the pantheon of education.

While these philosophers critically, and I think successfully, challenged Peters' sweeping and uncompromising rejection of the educational pedigree of physical education as an academic and,

therefore, appropriate school subject, the same cannot be said for their response to Peters heavy reliance on language analysis in his treatment of education, which for the most part they aped (Kirk, 2001). This led to a certain scholastic preoccupation with definitional issues, whose practical import was not always easy to fathom. However, taking its cue from its intellectual cousin the sociology of education, whose respective theorists heretofore largely ignored one another, physical educationists began to take up in the mid-1980s critical questions concerning the social construction and production of knowledge. Rather than focusing on a conceptual analysis of key notions of education, these thinkers turned their attention, among other things, to the ideological and political uses of education, and in physical education circles to the social "normalization" and regulation of "schooling bodies" (Evans and Davies, 1986; Kirk, 2001).

In the late and post-1960s, as previously noted, the philosophy of sport gradually eclipsed the philosophy of physical education in both the US and Britain as well as larger Europe. It should also be said, however, that American-educated theorists embraced this new philosophical emphasis on sport more quickly and enthusiastically than their British counterparts. This might explain why the impetus for this break originated in the US with the publication of Slusher's *Man, Sport, and Existence* (1967) and Metheny's *Movement and Meaning* (1968). These two books helped put the philosophical examination of human movement and mostly sport on the intellectual map, and signaled the beginning of the end of the reign of the philosophy of education and of its preoccupation with issues of knowledge.

But it was Paul Weiss's important book *Sport: A Philosophical Inquiry*, published in the following year of 1969, that gave the philosophy of sport the philosophical cachet it needed to prosper. This had as much or perhaps more to do with Weiss's stature in the philosophical community, where he was widely regarded as one of America's premier philosophers and the co-founder of one of its most prestigious journals, the *Review of Metaphysics*, as it did with the philosophic brilliance of his book. In any event, the publication of his book on sport finally brought attention to this seemingly trivial slice of human life to the attention of philosophers themselves, who had long steered clear of anything having to do with popular culture, let alone vulgar matters of the body. It was his example that further inspired philosophically inclined and sometimes philosophically trained theorists in physical education departments (where Slusher and Metheny, for instance, were housed), who also in the 1960s were likewise trying to break away from what they regarded to be the staid pedagogical tradition of physical education, to take up the serious

philosophic study of sport. And in the important year of 1972, these two groups (philosophers and former physical educationists), led by Weiss himself, banded together to form the Philosophic Society for the Study of Sport (the name has recently been changed to the International Association of the Philosophy of Sport). Weiss was installed as its first president in 1974, and in that same year the society began publishing the *Journal of the Philosophy of Sport*, which to this day remains the most important journal in the field.

### Core concepts

While attempts to define philosophy, and so the philosophy of physical education or the philosophy of anything else, are notoriously difficult, and usually fail, owing, among other things, to its great complexity and diversity, efforts to encapsulate its central questions, concerns, issues, and concepts are, fortunately, not as ominous. In fact, the core questions and concepts of the philosophy of physical education center on three key themes. But before we try to explicate them and stake out the intellectual territory they demarcate, it is first important to distinguish the character of philosophical questions themselves that distinguish them from other types of inquiry.

Generally speaking, and somewhat crudely put, there are three kinds of questions one can ask when inquiring into some matter. The first kind of question is an objective one in which both what is being asked and what counts as a good answer to it is clear and agreed upon by just about all. More importantly, answers to objective questions admit of, and converge to one right answer from which, therefore, wrong answers can be unambiguously distinguished. And, finally, and relatedly, answers to objective questions brook no dissent, or at least no plausible dissent. So if I want to know what the atomic weight of hydrogen is, or what the chemical composition of water is, or how many feet there are in a yard, I can count on the fact that there is an objectively right answer to each of my questions. All that is required is to look it up, or to carry out some more or less complex empirical procedure or mathematical computation. And if I claim, despite evidence to the contrary, that the chemical makeup of water is not two parts hydrogen and one part oxygen, then everyone is justified in thinking me wrong, or, if I carry my contrarism too far, off my rocker.

The second kind of question is a subjective one and asks after people's personal tastes and preferences. Here there is not one objectively correct answer for every question asked, and indeed the answer given in each case is highly likely to be different. Since the point here is to find out someone's opinion, belief, or desire, no justification of one's

answer is expected or warranted. So if I ask people what their favorite movie is, or their favorite ice cream, I will in most cases get different answers to my queries and yet be entirely satisfied with their veracity because my aim was simply to determine people's subjective views about some matter.

The third kind of question is a normative one in which we are intent on probing people's reasons for the actions they undertake. Here while there is no objectively right answer to the questions asked, there are better and worse answers to them, in which what counts as a better or worse reason is its persuasive power. By persuasive power here is meant their argumentative force to effect some intersubjective consensus among those one is trying to persuade to act in one way or another. In this case, justification, the ability to back up what one is claiming with convincing arguments is everything, since this is the only way, short of physical force or terror, we have available to us to figure out what we should do and how we should act. In fact, most of life's most vexing and messiest questions fall into this category. So if I am trying to decide whether to go to graduate school, or to get married, or to embark on a different career, justifying my decisions to the argumentative satisfaction of myself and my peers is paramount. More dauntingly, if I am trying to resolve whether to follow through on my terminally ill father's request to terminate his life because he can no longer bear his suffering, I face a decision that requires me to think carefully about what I will do and what reasons I might have for acting one way or another. Cavalier, ill-considered actions in the face of serious and perplexing questions like these will simply not pass muster.

In the case of philosophy generally and the philosophy of physical education/sport particularly, the questions asked are all of this latter third kind. That means that the issues taken up in philosophy, no matter the type, call for careful reasoning and the marshalling of the best arguments available to persuade others of the validity and soundness of one's views. And it is in this sense that Socrates's well-known maxim that an unexamined life is not worth living is to be taken. To which we can add, in a more contemporary vein, that an unexamined life is, in addition, not a free one, since if one simply acts on whatever beliefs and values cross one's mind one can hardly call oneself the author of the actions they give rise to.

However, knowing that philosophical inquiry is committed to normative kinds of questions does not yet tell us just what those questions are, that is, just what sorts of issues philosophers deal with and consider their bailiwick. Fortunately, we can speak with some precision here because there are three themes central to philosophical inquiry. The first has to do with questions of reality, or of what is technically known as metaphysics. This question, in turn, can be

asked in three yet more specific ways depending on what is regarded as the referent of reality in each instance. If by reality one means what are the basic constituents or building blocks of nature, then we are dealing with the sub-field of cosmology; if by reality one means the non-human constitution of the world, then we have entered the province of theology; and finally, if by reality one means the being of human beings, the essential features that mark us off from other creatures, then we have encroached into the study of what is called ontology. Since in modern times the study of cosmology has been for the most part ceded to physics, and since the study of the non-human constitution of the world has been delegated to theology and distinguished from philosophy proper, the study of metaphysics today is largely limited to ontological inquiry.

The second major theme of philosophy is the study of knowledge, which goes by the formal name of epistemology. Here the concern is not with the psychological organization of knowledge, but its logical organization and the sorting out of different claims to knowledge, for instance, knowledge bequeathed to us by sense perception, intuition, abstract conception, scientific conjecture, and revealed truth.

The third and final major theme of philosophy is the study of value, which is formally called axiology. The study of value falls into two sub-categories. The first is the study of value in the sense of what is right or wrong, good or bad, noble or ignoble. This is known as ethics, and is mainly concerned with, among other things, just what it is we morally owe to one another. The second sub-area of value considers value from the standpoint of what is beautiful or not. This is called esthetics and it is primarily interested in what marks off esthetic practices from other kinds of practices, and what makes something esthetically pleasing or valuable.

### **Major research areas and applications**

In light of our above discussion of core concepts in philosophy, we can better see and appreciate the intellectual shift philosophy of physical education underwent when it morphed into the philosophy of sport. In the pre-1960s heyday of philosophy of physical education, the central theme that drove philosophic inquiry was epistemology. As such, philosophers of this era took seriously the epistemological challenges posed by a practical, evidently atheoretical, subject like physical education. Most of their effort, therefore, as previously noted, was geared toward justifying physical education as an intellectually reputable enterprise, one in which the study of physical education rivaled in importance

the study of any other academic subject. And most of this research was applied, in the sense that even at its most abstract it kept a close eye on the practice of physical activity in school settings. So it was precisely this practical focus that anchored its theoretical efforts to portray physical education as an integral part of the educational landscape.

By contrast, the burgeoning of the philosophy of sport not only resulted in its cutting ties with the philosophy of education, but as well with physical activity and sports conducted primarily in educational settings. Instead, it directed most of its attention to elite sports, which even in their collegiate settings in the US have at best a tenuous relation to educational institutions and their main educational missions. And much of its philosophical interest in elite sports was fueled by its diffusion across the world and by the great attention lavished on it worldwide. Since the growing social and cultural significance of these sports occurred at a time when they were going through one moral travail after another, it was hardly surprising that interest in the ethical study of sports grew by leaps and bounds while interest in epistemological issues waned appreciably. It also explains why much of this philosophic research was far less applied than its physical education predecessor, though, as I shall argue below, the practical potential of this rapidly growing body of research is great, and, if tapped, offers an important corrective to the earlier philosophy of physical education's neglect of ethical issues in school-based physical activity and sports.

But I am already getting ahead of myself in laying out the major research agenda of this new philosophy of sport, which as I have been arguing all along is the only philosophical game, as it were, left in town at the moment.

So let me start again, this time at the beginning. For the turn away from epistemological issues in this second wave of the philosophy of sport not only inaugurated ethics as an important field of research, but also ontological investigations. These took the form of conceptual investigations that tried both to demarcate the differences as well as establish the relationships between human movement phenomena like play, game, and sport, and occasionally exercise and dance, and to explicate the particular forms of life, of being, represented by each.

To begin with play, the preponderance of the literature suggests that play is best characterized as a quality of action as opposed to a full-blown action itself, and one which captures a certain way of engaging in human movement phenomena like sport. That mode of engagement has to do with a certain motivational state one brings to games and sports, and a certain way of intrinsically valuing them. To play sports with a capital P then (to distinguish it from play with a small p, in which it merely serves as a synonym for the common verb perform



or operate, as in the phrase to play a musical instrument), is to value them as ends in themselves as opposed to means that can be used to secure ends that are, strictly speaking, external to sports (many of the very things earlier physical educationists stressed could be had by engaging in physical activity, such as health, skill and character development, social learning skills, as well as some things these very same physical educationists denounced, such as winning at all costs, and the pursuit of the almighty dollar). Some theorists, like Suits for example, further claim that intrinsically valuing something picks out only one feature of play, and that the other equally important feature that must also be accounted for is that the resources deployed in play (time, space, equipment, etc.) must be reallocated from their primary use in everyday life to intrinsically valued activities. That means, for instance, that since eating mashed potatoes honors their primary instrumental purpose, which is to furnish us the nutrition we need to live and function adequately, it is not play. But that also means that when we reshape these same mashed potatoes into hills and valleys in order to engage in a pleasurable activity we find intrinsically rewarding, it is play.

By contrast, games and sports are treated in the literature as complex social practices. The most distinctive feature of these practices, which like most other activities are governed by certain goals and certain characteristic means of achieving these goals, is their defining rules, what Searle and others call constitutive rules. For these rules could not be more different than their everyday counterparts, since the role they perform in games is the very opposite of the role rules they perform in everyday life. Whereas in everyday life the rules we follow are designed to allow us to realize our ends as efficiently and as smoothly as possible (if I need to drive a nail in a piece of wood I use a hammer to do so), in games they are designed to make it as difficult as possible to realize their goals (to put the ball in the hole in golf I must stand some considerable distance from it and limit myself to using hard to manage clubs). So the fastest, easiest, most efficient means available to us in seeking to achieve game goals are always ruled out in favor of some less easy and less efficient way of doing so. And the point of these rules, as strange as they might at first seem, is readily and perfectly intelligible; for were it not for these means-limiting rules the goals we face in games would hardly hold our interest because we would hardly find them challenging (imagine a game of golf where hand-carrying the ball to the hole and stuffing it in were allowed, and so, were its main point. True, this would considerably lower every golfer's score, but it would also considerably lower, if not extinguish, every golfer's interest in playing golf).

If sports differ from games at all, the literature further suggests, they differ only in the skills that are

central to them. This means that all sports are games, but not all games are sports. And what marks sporting games off from other sorts of games is that they are games of skill as opposed to chance (which distinguishes dice games from sporting ones), and further, that those skills are of a decidedly physical character (which distinguishes games of skill like bridge from sporting games like basketball).

So the current philosophical research suggests that play, game, and sport, though in many respects closely related, are each different animals. For each demarcates a different way of being-in-the-world, of living one's life. At the same time, the close relations between them are undeniable, and serve, interestingly enough, to separate them all off from the routine instrumental activities we take up in our daily lives. This suggests, from an ontological standpoint, that there is something quite unique about play, game, and sport, about the ways of being that they provide us, and that this uniqueness is apparently what accounts both for their great allure and charm and for their vulnerability to exploitation and corruption.

But does it offer anything of practical import? For though it might be conceded that while some of this philosophic research appears quite sophisticated and even perhaps interesting, for example, in its explanation of what it is that makes these phenomena so different from the rest of our lives, it seems, nonetheless, an awfully slim reed to hang anything of truly educational significance on. It might even be objected further that most of this literature lacks substance, that it comes off as so much aimless intellectualizing, so much conceptual tomfoolery. I think, however, that both of these charges are unfounded, and that if this literature is guilty of anything it is not lack of practical substance but of understating or simply ignoring its educational utility. Let me explain.

It is commonplace in physical education, and in academic areas in general, that when asked to justify its inclusion in the curriculum, in other words its educational value, its proponents immediately and instinctively reach for an instrumental answer. So it is that physical education is touted for its contribution to health and fitness, motor learning, social cooperation, intellectual revitalization, ad infinitum, and some would even say, ad nauseam. These ends are, no doubt, serious and important ones, and what makes them so is their contribution to our ordinary lives. For in order to live well and productively, it is important, among other things, to be physically fit and to know how to interact with our peers so that we can get things done collectively that we could not achieve on our own. This means that physical education is a serious and important matter, but, and here is the rub, only in a second-hand, marginal way. For the things that are most serious and important in our lives are the things we

do to secure our survival and well-being, which is why in contemporary capitalist societies like ours that tie personal fortune and welfare to work it is practices like these that assume such a commanding and prominent place in our lives. Physical education in this scheme can be regarded as serious but only in a derivative way, that is, only if it furthers our work-lives and the other instrumental pursuits that dominate our everyday life. Hence, when push comes to shove, what is most serious always takes precedence over what is serious only in a derivative way, which is why an instrumental justification of physical education always comes up on the short end of the stick. No matter how hard and how ingeniously we pitch such justificatory efforts, then, play, game, and sport remain second-class, second-rate endeavors, endeavors about which it can be said that there are always other things that outrank them in importance and value.

If the previously discussed ontological investigations of these human movement phenomena are right, however, such efforts to show the educational utility of these phenomena are misguided because they get it exactly backwards. That is to say, those things which we take seriously in our daily work lives are important only insofar as they make it possible to engage in things like play, games, and sports. To put the same point otherwise, the purpose of life is to accomplish those things that we *have* to do in order to be able to do those things we *want* to do. So the point of working is to get to the point that we do not have to work any longer so that we can devote ourselves to those things that we find intrinsically rewarding. The same goes, for instance, for the deadly serious business of political diplomacy, whose important task of securing the peace is important precisely because it makes it possible for us to engage our attention and devote our energy to those select human activities that give our life meaning. After all, what would be the point of work or of political brinkmanship or, for that matter, of life, if there were no pursuits we humans find intrinsically satisfying that make life worth living in the first place, that is, worth all the struggle and hardship that are an inescapable part of life. And since play, game, and sport are best conceived, as the philosophical literature suggests, as just such intrinsically good things, they are among the most important and serious of human activities, and they are the very activities which things like work derive whatever seriousness they possess. All of which suggests, that when physical educationists endeavor to secure the academic legitimacy of their subject in the instrumental ways described above they are barking up the wrong tree.

They are also, as it turns out, skating on very thin ice. For instrumental justifications of physical education programs not only relegate them to second-class status and importance but also open them to the objection that there might well be better ways to

accomplish the ends they supposedly help to realize. For example, if physical education programs are justified because they are conducive to intellectual revitalization, it might easily and persuasively be countered that word games that break the tedium of classroom instruction or meditation exercises that relieve intellectual stress are far more effective ways to accomplish this outcome. So attempts that purport to demonstrate the educational utility of physical education can easily backfire with disastrous results.

If I am right about the superiority of intrinsic over instrumental defenses of physical education, then even seemingly abstruse because abstract ontological inquiries into the place of play, game, and sport in our lives bear practical fruit. That said, however, it must at once also be said that most of the real action in the philosophy of sport lies in the ethics of sports. And here it will be much more transparent, I trust, that ethical research of this kind has all sorts of practical implications for physical activity and sports conducted in school settings despite its preoccupation with elite sports. However, because much of the practical relevance of this ethical research, like its ontological counterpart, remains understated or unstated, it will still be necessary to flesh it out.

The kind of ethical inquiry relevant here focuses on how participants should treat one another in sport settings, and more particularly, on what kinds of conduct and assists to performance are morally permissible in seeking bodily excellence. The first question raises a host of questions regarding matters like sportspersonship, fair play, athletic success, cheating, the moral standing of competition, and gender issues of sexual identity and equity; and the second raises a narrower range of issues that have to do with the present epidemic of doping in sports and the moral problems it poses.

Some of the most interesting ethical research in sports grows out of the first question noted above, and suggests that notions like sportspersonship, fair play, athletic success, and cheating are intimately bound up with one another. That is because sportspersonship is often defined in terms of fair play, and cheating is commonly thought to involve a violation of both. Much of this literature tries to spell out just what virtues and moral qualities are central to conceptions of sportspersonship and fair play. Some argue that fair play is a virtue that must be acquired in learning sports, and in trying to meet the standards of excellence they put in place. Others claim that fair play has to do with general notions like moral respect, and, therefore, includes a bundle of moral qualities like benevolence, generosity, and equanimity. Still others regard fair play as a contractual notion, as an agreement we tacitly enter into when we agree to play a game and try to realize its goals.



In this connection, I would be remiss if I did not say something about the remarkable impact Alasdair MacIntyre's important book, *After Virtue*, has had in philosophy of sport circles. MacIntyre's treatise on moral virtues, published in 1981, singled out the importance of what he calls social practices, which include things like architecture, music, painting, science, and most importantly for our purposes games and sports. According to MacIntyre, social practices are defined by three main features: the standards of excellence they seek, the goods that are internal to their pursuit, and the virtues that are necessary to achieve these internal goods. The standards of excellence tell us both what kinds of activities fall under certain social practices, and how those practices are to be judged especially in moral terms. The internal goods of a practice are those goods that can only be attained by participation in a practice. So in the case of sports, they would include such things as the intrinsic pleasure of performing a sport's skill well, the meshing of the intentions and actions of an entire team as if they were one person, the self-awareness and self-knowledge gained by pushing one's body to the limit. Moreover, in trying to realize the standards of excellence of a social practice and the goods internal to them, one must be willing to take whatever risks they require, be willing to give "what is due to whom," and be able to listen to and constructively respond to criticisms of one's shortcomings. In other words, one must be prepared to exercise virtues like courage, justice, and honesty.

MacIntyre's linkage of moral virtues to social practices like sports immediately caught the eye of philosophers of sport because it helped to explain both the present moral malaise of sports and how they might once again, if practiced, structured, and organized in the right way, become vehicles of moral expression. Siedentop explored these issues in youth and junior sports, and Morgan in elite sports themselves. In the former case, Siedentop put MacIntyre's ideas to effective use in touting the educative potential of youth sports to inculcate virtues like self-discipline, humility, and sensitivity to the needs and values of others. The rub, he noted, is that in order to turn youth sports in this ethical direction they would have to change, and in some cases completely transform, the way they are practiced in elite circles, which are noted not only for their moral slackness but their downright indifference to moral concerns. In the latter case, Morgan explored, with MacIntyre as his guide, the way in which the goods internal to elite sports are compromised by external goods like money that are offered as rewards for successful athletic achievement. By promoting the latter at the expense of the former, social institutions such as, for instance, the International Olympic Committee, which like other such institutions oversee and regulate social practices, are often themselves responsible for

the moral decline of the very sports they were designed and entrusted to safeguard.

It is also evident from the literature that getting clear as to just what moral features fair play, and notions like it, entail, goes a long way as well in explaining athletic success. For it has been frequently and forcefully argued that athletic success cannot be simply equated with winning or failure with losing. That is because there are a number of respects in which athletic contests can fail, that is, fall short of the excellence they are designed to showcase. Such failures might be owed to refereeing errors, cheating, the use of tactics like taunting, or just plain bad luck, in which the winner of the contest does not deserve this acclaim because s/he was not the most excellent. The upshot of such arguments is that athletic success is not simply a technical matter, but a moral one. For unless one shows moral respect for one's opponent, which precludes treating one's opponents as mere obstacles to be overcome, and moral respect for the game itself, which precludes separating winning from the play of the game, one cannot succeed in sport.

Another issue of concern in this regard is the moral status of competition itself. Many have claimed that any form of competition is morally problematic because of its egoistic bent, because the point of competition is the self-interested one of demonstrating one's athletic superiority over others, and of achieving a goal, winning, that once achieved is the exclusive possession of the person or team who has achieved it. If this account of competition is right, then sports can not be regarded as moral ventures because they leave no room for the moral consideration of others.

The literature suggests, however, that instead of a knockdown argument against the moral credentials of competitive sports what we actually have here is an impoverished conception of competition itself, one that fails to see that competitive sports at their best involve what Simon and others call a mutual quest for excellence. The mutuality in question occurs at two levels. On the first level, any competition rightly understood cannot be properly construed as a war of all against all because competitors must cooperate with one another if there is to be a contest at all. That is, they must agree to abide by the rules and the standards of excellence that define the contest. Further, and more importantly, it is my competitors that supply me with the challenge against which I prove my athletic mettle, and it is only by striving together with them to realize that excellence that I can gauge how well I measure up athletically speaking, and they are able to do the same. In this sense, then, competition involves not only pitting myself against others but competing with them, and it is in this reciprocal give and take with these others that I am pressed and obligated to give them their moral due.

Cheating looms large in all of these analyses if for no other reason than, as already noted, it is commonly held to be a violation of the moral debt we owe to others in sports. But what, exactly, is cheating, and what sort of moral offense does it represent. To the first question, the literature gives a fairly definitive response, even though it concedes there are border situations in which it is difficult to say with any reasonable degree of certainty whether cheating has occurred. The most effective argumentative strategy in this regard equates cheating with lying. Just as telling something to someone that is untrue does not in itself count as lying, similarly simply breaking a rule in sport does not in itself count as cheating. What is missing in both cases is any mention of intention, and of an intention of a certain sort. So what turns telling something to someone that is untrue into a bald-faced lie as opposed to a simple mistake or misconception, is that one does so deliberately and deceitfully. In other words, I know what I am conveying to others is untrue and I purposefully do so in order to mislead them. The same applies to cheating, which is distinguished from mere rule breaking because I both intended to break the rule and to get away with it. So understood, it becomes fairly easy to see what sort of moral offense cheating constitutes. It violates a moral trust I enter into with others as a condition of playing the game in the first place by seeking to gain an unfair advantage over them by hook and crook, by disguising what my true intentions are. Such deceitful acts, then, fail in two important moral senses: first, they fail to show moral respect for my competitors as persons in their own right, and second, they fail to show moral respect for the perfectionist demands of the game itself.

A related and especially important moral concern in this regard is the complex issue of sexual identity and equity in sport. With regard to the first point, it is clear that in spite of the impressive inroads women have recently made in sports, these physical practices have not been especially kind to them. By that I mean specifically that when women engage in sports, this is perhaps most true at the elite level, they can expect either to have their own sexual identity questioned (the same occurs, for example, to gender-bending male athletes who play what are traditionally and rather pejoratively referred to as "feminine" sports) or that of the athletic stature of the sports they participate in (the claim, for instance, that synchronized swimming and their ilk are not real sports).

That women in sport continue to be subject to such hurtful stereotypes complicates the second issue in question here, the matter of sexual equity. For if sports are themselves morally problematic practices, beset as they seem to be by things like homophobia, then the question arises of why women and other vulnerable groups should seek access to them at all. It may well be better, or so this

line of argument intimates, for them to pursue less morally compromised endeavors. There is the additional complication, which may well in part explain the high incidence of sexual animus in practices like these, that since most sports were created by men for men they naturally enough privilege the male body (emphasizing as they do qualities like strength, power, and speed). That means that even if women were granted equal opportunity to participate in sports, invidious comparisons between their athletic accomplishments and those of their male peers would be inevitable – making an already inhospitable environment even more so.

The literature reveals three possible responses to these knotty problems. The first concedes the criticism that sports are morally challenged practices, but argues against the inference that, therefore, women should steer clear of them. So Francis, for instance, powerfully argues that while such unpleasant facts about sports weakens the case for sexual equality it does not eliminate it. Rather, we still have good reason to seek equity for women in sports as long as men are allowed to participate in these morally unwholesome practices. The idea seems to be the simple one that even in the moral realm what is good for the gander is good for the goose.

The second response challenges the claim that sports fall short of the mark morally and argues that they provide important benefits for their participants that it would be wrong to bar women from acquiring. Those benefits include what philosophers like Jane English call basic benefits (things like health, skill, self-respect, fun) and scarce benefits (things like fame and wealth). The moral case varies depending on what set of benefits one has in mind. So in the case of basic benefits, English argues that everyone is morally entitled to achieve these benefits and, therefore, that it would be wrong to deny them to women on the basis of their lesser skill (obviously, she has in mind here programs like intramural sports whose purpose is to offer participants, regardless of their race, ethnicity, sexual identity, or level of skill a chance to garner these benefits). In the case of scarce benefits, claims English, since skill is relevant here in a way it is not in the former instance, not everyone is entitled to obtain these benefits. But the relevance of skill can not, she argues further, be used to deprive women of equal opportunity to achieve these benefits. Rather, it suggests that there ought to be segregated and protected sports for able, elite women athletes that elite male athletes are barred from participating in. And the reason why elite male athletes should be prevented from seeking access to these women's sports is itself for English a decidedly moral one: namely, that the self-respect of all women would suffer if there were no women role models in high-performance sports.

The third response also finds moral fault with contemporary women's sports but is mostly

agnostic on the question of whether women should or should not seek access to them because it regards the entire matter of access as morally beside the point. Instead, it goes in a different and in many ways more obvious even if more radical direction. For since, it argues, there is a built-in moral bias in the present batch of women sports it is necessary to invent a new batch that privileges women's bodies. So understood, the proper moral antidote to the masculinist bias of actually existing sports lies in fashioning new ones that accent things like grace and dexterity rather than power and speed. The added moral advantage of this strategy is that it confronts headlong the idea that women's sports are a poor imitation of men's sports, which will go a long way, or at least English claims, in stemming the invidious comparison of women's to men's sports.

This takes us to the second major area of ethical inquiry in sports that considers what aids to performance in this realm are morally permissible. The main target here is, unsurprisingly, the use of performance-enhancing drugs in sports, although the even thornier and scarier issue of genetic interventions to boost performance is beginning to attract some attention in the literature – however, because gene technology is still in its infancy many of these issues are not yet clearly understood. The argument over drug use pits libertarians, defenders of individual freedom, against paternalists, defenders of regulating individuals' lives to protect their and our welfare. In the particular case of sports, the issue boils down to how much risk athletes should be allowed to take in their efforts to improve their performance. Unfortunately, the literature reveals no clear consensus here. On the one hand, defenders of individual liberty argue that as long as one is a competent moral agent and knows the risks involved, it should be left to the individual to decide whether they wish to chemically augment their performance. That means doping should be legalized so that athletes can exercise their individual discretion whether to take them or not. Paternalistic critics of doping, however, argue that athletes should not be allowed to play, so to speak, Russian Roulette with their sporting lives. They worry especially about the coercive environment of sports where athletes are pressured to do whatever it takes to come out on top, which makes it exceedingly difficult to say no to things like drugs, and about the fairness of doping, which is alleged to give drug-takers an unfair advantage over their non-drug taking peers. These are vexing issues, and there are good arguments on each side that have led to the present stalemate.

As I have already argued, the relevance of both of these areas of ethical inquiry to educational practice seems obvious on its face, especially when compared to its ontological counterpart. And its preoccupation with elite sports in this regard need not be as problematic as it might at first appear. Let me explain.

For starters, if an important part of the educational significance of practices like sports is to convey moral lessons, that is, to teach moral virtues like honesty, fairness, and a sense of justice, a reasonable position I believe, then the ethics in sport literature seems just what the doctor ordered. This is so in at least two senses. First, in its no-holds-barred critical depiction of elite sports, warts and all, it sketches a vivid picture of how not to morally do sports. That is, it shows in stark detail how sports go morally bad when, for instance, winning is granted too much importance and when external rewards like money command too much attention from the participants. There are important moral lessons, then, to be learned from this sort of moral debauchery that physical education can afford to ignore only at its own peril. Second, in subjecting elite sports to withering moral criticism, as the literature does, it also provides important lessons about how to redesign sports to avoid these sorts of undesirable moral consequences. So, for example, in showing why the dominant view of athletic success, which as we have seen simply reduces it to winning, can not hold a moral candle to conceptions of athletic success that emphasize the importance of worthy opponents who morally respect both their opponents and the game itself, this literature more than meets halfway practitioners keen on using sports to good moral effect.

It should also be said in this same vein that the ethical literature in sports provides valuable insights as to how sports might be morally restructured without denuding sports of the very qualities that attract us so to them. I am thinking here of the literature's defense of the morality of competition, which suggests that as we ponder how to redesign sports to good moral effect we do not give short shrift to the idea that there are morally valuable lessons to be learned by exposing people to the heat of competition. This suggests that there is indeed something to be said, after all, for the old adage that if you want to see what someone is really like engage them in a competitive game, and that that something has a moral dimension to it if properly handled. For learning to deal with one's own frailties, and so with disappointment and defeat, which are a constant in competitive sports, and learning to do so in ways that give both oneself and others their proper moral due, is a moral lesson whose importance would be hard to exaggerate. The moral of this moral, then, is that there is no need to turn sports into half-hearted, feckless affairs, in order to make them morally relevant to our lives.

The ethical sports literature also has an important role to play in dispelling certain morally repugnant stereotypes of vulnerable groups. Here again the focus of this literature on elite sports does not detract from its practical utility, since the parading of such stereotypes in the very public setting of

top-level sports is used to tar all the members of these targeted groups not just their athletic representatives. I have in mind in this regard the stereotyping of elite women's sports as athletically inferior versions of elite men's sports, which, in turn, as just noted, is used to put all women down with its not so subtle intimation that what goes for women in sports goes for women in all walks of life. The idea is as simple as it is pernicious, namely, that women lack the manly virtues required not just to succeed in sports but in life itself. This is why many critics have accused sports of being the last male bastion, the one place left men to lord their dominance over the opposite sex.

As the literature so deftly shows, however, nothing could be further from the truth. For this claim of male superiority rests on a bad inference, one that falsely claims that the present male advantage in sports is itself evidence that women are naturally inferior to men in the athletic realm. When, in fact, all that can be legitimately inferred from men's present dominance over women in these sports is the much more modest and homely point that, surprise, surprise, men are more adept at sports that were conceived with them in mind. In other words, because we live in patriarchal societies, and because in such societies men have the greater say in how social practices and institutions get put together, it is no coincidence that we ended up with sports that stress qualities like power and speed which suit men well and women ill. So there is a simple explanation for the present dominance of men in sports and it has nothing to do with biology and everything to do with social dominance. It thus stands to reason that if matriarchal societies were the rule rather than the rare exception, our major sports would not look anything like American football, basketball, soccer, or rugby, but exactly like the sports of synchronized swimming and the balance beam in gymnastics. In other words, if the athletic shoe were on the other foot, then the stereotype of athletic inferiority would be as well – in which case we would have to disabuse men of the specious claim that they are naturally inferior to women in sports.

Finally, the literature's fixation on the moral dilemmas of elite sport does not short-circuit its practical utility for physical education because the problems of the former are not as far removed from those of the latter as is commonly thought. That is because like it or not high-performance sports sets the tone, both morally and non-morally, for the rest of the sports world, to include the world of physical education. How else to explain the recent estimate that as many as a quarter of million kids in the US under the age of 16 use aids like anabolic steroids either to bolster their athletic performance or to improve their physical appearance. Performance-enhancing drugs are, of course, but one example of the hold elite sports have on young people. They are,

however, one of the more worrisome of such examples. And despite the previously discussed lack of consensus regarding the moral permissibility of doping for adult sports in the literature, there is a clear consensus in that same literature that doping has no legitimate moral place in youth sports. The reason why is because young people are not adjudged, either by defenders of freedom or their paternalistic opposite numbers, to be competent moral agents owing largely to their immaturity and ignorance, to the fact that they seldom consider the long-term effects of their actions. On this, and many other moral issues like it, then, the sport ethics literature has much to offer the physical education practitioner.

### Major trends and future directions

In one respect, I have already tipped my hand regarding major trends and future directions in the philosophy of physical education. For it is clear from my above remarks that the research that feeds the philosophy of physical education will come largely from the philosophy of sport rather than the philosophy of education literature. It is also clear that much of this research will be centered on ethical inquiry in sports, as opposed to the older epistemological research paradigm favored in philosophy of education circles. So there is good reason to think this emphasis on ethics and de-emphasis on theory of knowledge will continue into the foreseeable future.

But there has also been a recent shift in the parent discipline of philosophy itself (at present more evident in the US and Europe than Great Britain) that is already shaping philosophic inquiry in sports and will likely set much of its research agenda in the coming years. I am referring to the upsurge of pragmatism in philosophy, a movement that challenges headlong what many see as the sterile scholasticism of analytic philosophy, of its preoccupation with technical and rather arcane conceptual issues (for example, the controversy over whether the "truths" of mathematics are explicative or ampliative, that is, whether they merely make explicit what we already know implicitly or whether they extend our present stock of knowledge).

What is noteworthy about this recent pragmatic turn is its reconception of philosophy itself, of what its main tasks are. For on a pragmatic reading of philosophy of the sort one finds in the classical pragmatist John Dewey, the central aim of philosophy is to apply critical intelligence to the resolution of social problems. That means, as Richard Rorty, a contemporary philosopher whose widely read books and essays have helped rekindle interest in pragmatism, once put it, "philosophy is always parasitic on, always

a reaction to, developments elsewhere in culture and society." So understood, philosophy is best conceived not as a technical discipline that possesses its own special concepts and issues, but as a critical response to problems that arise from the social and historical circumstances in which we live. In other words, philosophy can only do its work profitably on this view if it eschews the intellectual comforts and consolations of disciplinary insularity and goes social and historical, that is, if it makes every effort to get a critical handle on the forms of life in which these problems come wrapped. This is what Wittgenstein famously meant when he said that "understanding a language-game is sharing a form of life," and that concepts are "patterns which recur, with different variations, in the weave of our life."

It is precisely this pragmatic spirit that informs much of the current philosophy of sport literature, and much of the recent work in sports ethics. Further, it is this same spirit, I conjecture, that will guide its future work. And this is as good a point as any to end my chapter on, if for no other reason than this refocusing of philosophy on the social and historical lives we actually live bodes well for the future fruitful collaboration between philosophy of sport theorists and physical education practitioners.

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