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THE NATURE OF SPORT AND ITS RELATION TO THE AESTHETIC DIMENSION OF SPORT

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ABSTRACT

In order to discuss the aesthetics of sport I shall start with some metaphysical considerations: instead of using the notion of essence (definition) of sport, understood as a set of necessary and sufficient conditions, I shall try to base these considerations on the notion of the nature of sport. In my understanding, the nature of sport is a very basic phenomenon that lies at the origin and shapes the history of sport. It is a technology of training and mastering physical skills valued for themselves. Now, the aesthetic dimension of sport is based on the technically valuable qualities of sports, which are the consecutive properties of sport. Such qualities are present in all types of sport, not only in the so-called ‘aesthetic sports’ (Best) or ‘performances’ (Suits). Finally, I advance a thesis that although sport is not a form of art, its aesthetic dimension is closer to the nature of sport than its ethical dimension.

Keywords: sport; art; technology; skills; aesthetic; purposive; metaphysics; Best; Suits

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I love baseball. You know it doesn't have to mean anything, it's just beautiful to watch.
Woody Allen in Zelig (1983)

INTRODUCTION: SOFT METAPHYSICS OF SPORT AS A GROUND FOR SPORT AESTHETICS

It is possible (and perhaps even common) to enjoy some aesthetic appreciation of sporting activities. Such appreciation even leads some theoreticians to treat sport as a form of art, and – logically enough – athletes as artists. Aesthetic experience is a function of two variables: a subjective aesthetic attitude and an objective aesthetic object. I shall analyse the latter; and my question is thus *what* could be aesthetically appreciated in such activities

as running or skating? This question belongs rather to metaphysics than psychology, and leads to the problem of those qualities of sport activities that could serve as a ground for an emerging aesthetic value. As *de gustibus non est disputandum*, the stress is on inter-subjectively identifiable qualities of activities that form the basis of aesthetic value judgements, and not on the judgements themselves. The term I will use here is *technically valuable qualities*²; they are a necessary, but non-sufficient condition of the constitution of aesthetic values.

Dynamism, balance, fluidity, symmetry, harmony and rhythm of players' movements are just a sample of such qualities considered in the literature in this field (see e.g. Kuntz, 1974; Cordner, 1984; Elcombe, 2012). Perhaps grace, coherence, expressiveness and psycho-physical unity of players could, at least in some cases, be inter-subjectively acknowledged. But to analyse these qualities and give a full account of their character one has to also investigate the object-the 'substance' in which they are rooted. To paraphrase a maxim of Scott Kretchmar (1988): to do aesthetics of sport one has to do some metaphysics – *soft metaphysics of sport is a precursor to good aesthetics of sport*. But before I start this metaphysical³ discussion I would like to offer a comparison between sport and art which might lead us in the right direction.

FIGURE SKATING VS. BALLET DANCING: A CASE OF REVERSE ENGLISH

In order to find some significant, essential differences between sport and art, let us compare figure skating-which, among sport events, is as close to art as possible, and ballet dancing-which, among artistic performances, is as close to sport as possible. Furthermore, they share many obvious similarities: both activities exhibit specific physical skills, which play an important function; both display a kind of artistic dimension, including narration, music, costume, etc. I believe it is hard to find many other pairs (comprising of one sport discipline and one artistic performance) that manifest such appealing similarities. If we were able to find any crucial differences here, it should *a fortiori* be applicable in other pairs of this kind. In order to find this difference, I would like to use a means-end analysis, applied by Bernard Suits in *The Grasshopper*. Suits compares and contrasts two types of activities: a make-believe game and a serious impersonation: "Serious impersonators play roles so that they will be taken for the subject of the impersonation, in make-believe the performers take a subject for impersonation so that they can be playing the roles such impersonation requires" (Suits, 2014, pp. 100–101). His example is as follows: "An impostor behaves like a Russian princess in order to be taken for Anastasia, but a player at make-believe chooses to impersonate Anastasia so that she can behave like a Russian princess" (ibid., p. 101). Thus

² The conceptual scheme that lies behind some of my aesthetic considerations was elaborated in Ingarden's aesthetic (Ingarden, 1964); the term 'technically valuable qualities' is a version of Ingarden's term 'artistically valuable qualities'; the former has been coined for the purposes of the aesthetics of sport. In Ingarden's theory 'technical mastery' belongs to 'artistic value qualities'; it is interesting that the term 'artistic' on Ingarden's ground corresponds to Best's aesthetic, whereas Ingarden's aesthetic is equivalent to Best's artistic.

³ For simplicity I shall consequently use the term 'metaphysics'; although perhaps in some considerations (e.g. concerning the different types of properties) the term 'ontology' is more common.

the two similar activities are different in a very crucial respect: “Their means and ends are reversed – by playing the role, the genuine impostor produces a false identity, while a player at make-believe assumes a false identity so that he can be playing a role” (ibid., p. 101). Suits – by means of an analogy taken from another game, the game of billiards, calls this phenomenon of the reversal of the activity’s means and ends: the ‘Reverse English’⁴.

Let us return now to the figure skating and ballet dancing comparison (one might recall here the 1988 Olympics gold-winner Katarina Witt’s Carmen routine), and the already indicated two elements of these activities: physical skills and artistic dimension. My claim is that ‘Reverse English’ occurs here in a very clear form: a ballet dancer uses her physical skills in order to strengthen the artistic dimension of the performance, whereas the figure skater uses the artistic dimension of her performance to exhibit her physical skills. A given jump performed by a ballet dancer during a ballet performance is a tool used for the artistic effect; the music accompanying a figure skating performance (or artistic gymnastics performance) is a tool used for the sport effect: the exhibition of physical skills involved in the performance of a similar jump. *What techniques (figures) should be used in order to enhance the artistic expression?* is an appropriate question while creating a ballet performance; whereas *what artistic means should be used in order to expose the techniques (figures)?* is an appropriate question while preparing a figure skating programme⁵. The sporting goal is thus defined in terms of the exhibition of physical skills (whilst some artistic means might be used to achieve this goal), whereas in art, the exhibition of physical skills is never the main goal, whilst it might be a means to achieve an artistic goal. In contrast to sport, I shall not offer a specific description of the goal in the domain of art, but I believe it cannot be described solely in terms of the exhibition of physical skills without reference to some overriding ideas such as expression, mimesis, aesthetic experience, some specific set of values etc.

If this analysis is correct, it reveals serious teleological differences between art and sport: despite some apparent similarities, the main goals of art and sport performances are essentially different. But my current aim lies beyond the sport/art comparison, and the conclusion is important because it also reveals something crucial for an understanding of the nature of sport.

DEFINITION OF SPORT VS. THE NATURE OF SPORT

Since sport is a social construct (it is a social kind rather than a natural kind) it is historically changeable and to a certain degree depends on arbitrary decisions and institutional

⁴ In billiard players’ jargon ‘reverse English’ refers to one of the situations (the other one being ‘running English’) in which the ball changes its trajectory after collision due to the rotation caused by a special impact of the cue. In Suits’ words: “The governing purpose of [...] an ordinary billiard ball (as I suppose we may call it) is to depart from the point of impact, whereas the tendency of an Anglicized billiard ball is to *return* to the point of impact” (2014, p. 101).

⁵ Imagine, for example, a dialogue between a young skater and her coach. Skater: This composition of Saties is so beautiful that I would like to prepare a choreography to it. Its melancholic mood excludes any sharp, speedy movements. Coach: Let’s mix it with some piece of disco music then, because without your triple flip you won’t get the high notes! Compare Wright’s interesting remark: “In ballet, if we become aware of the movements as difficult techniques that are being performed, the illusion of the dance is lost” (2003, p. 89).

factors. In these circumstances many of the definitions of sport have rather a descriptive character. For example, Suits characterizes his definition of sport (in the form of a set of four requirements that must be met by any game to be called a sport) as a ‘more or less arbitrary, since they are simply facts about sport’ (Suits, 1988a, p. 14)⁶. This is one of the reasons why placing ‘sport’ within another category – like ‘game’ or ‘art’ – has not been resolved or agreed upon. However, the following considerations do not require an exact definition of sport (nor an exact definition of art either). It is sufficient for some important diachronic features of sport to be understood within the field of the aesthetics of sport. Thus, instead of the concept ‘definition of sport’ (as a set of necessary and sufficient conditions) I would like to use a different, more speculative concept, namely: ‘the nature of sport’. I certainly understand it as being not synonymous with the ‘definition of sport’, but rather as a characteristic of a phenomenon that lies at the origin of sport, and structures its history – ‘arche’, ‘core’ or ‘root’ (fundamental feature). It is responsible for the dynamic identity of sport, and as an internal purpose of sport is at the top of the hierarchy of any set of its definitional features. This is the way in which I understand the above-mentioned need for a metaphysics of sport.

To start the search for the ‘nature of sport’ let us follow some remarks of Suits that could be labelled as ‘the birth of sport from the spirit of play’. Sport emerges from primitive play, when skills ‘come to be valued for their own sake’ (Suits, 1988b). It happens, when “skills instead of being instrumental to other payoffs [...] themselves constitute the payoff” (Suits, 1988b). Suits illustrates this principle by several thought experiments (called fancifully ‘just so stories’), which show that besides the different genesis of its respective skills, all forms of sport are based on the cultivation of physical skills valued for themselves. For example, a plough-pulling wife, after being released from her duties (having been replaced by a more effective horse) might want to continue practising these skills after hours (Suits, 1988b).

These brief remarks on sport made by Suits, are, perhaps, not sufficient to construct a full theory of sport, but are instructive enough to grasp the very basic, explored fundamental feature of sport. In my view this represents the *technology of the training and mastering of physical skills valued for themselves*⁷. This idea is present, I believe, in the tradition of calling some sports ‘arts’ (in a similar sense): ‘the art of archery’, ‘the art of running’ etc. Since the term ‘art’ is ambiguous (especially in the context of sport/art comparison), to avoid possible misunderstandings I shall prefer to use the term *technology* rather than the term *art*.

Any serious cultivation of physical skills generates the need for rules, but rules, on the other hand, generate skills, thus the history of sport is governed by a feedback mechanism: skills generate rules, then rules generate new skills, and so on. Both rules and judging techniques are primarily a response to the need to evaluate skills, and they are derived from specific skills. The first need in designing sport-rules is to provide an opportunity for the evaluation, comparison, development, etc. of the physical skills. Only subsequent

⁶ Similar characteristics apply, for example, to the four features of sport in its paradigmatic form (Boxill, 2002, pp. 2–3).

⁷ Although with in the concept of the nature of sport the emphasis is entirely on physical skills, it does not follow that mental skills do not play an important role in sport. The mastery of physical skills is not just a physical matter, e.g. they are often controlled by one’s mental capacity.

amendments⁸ might increase the aesthetic dimension of a given sport. In this respect the history of sport resembles the history of any other kind of technology: its functionality becomes prior to an aesthetically pleasing design.

Physical skills in sports manifest themselves in actions that are fundamentally movements (running, jumping, shooting), and the basic qualities that could be regarded from the aesthetic viewpoint must be qualities of these actions. The actions as such belong to the metaphysical category of processes, whose qualities are different from qualities of subjects that are bearers of these processes (Ingarden, 2013). Thus the beauty of an athlete's body as such, or the aesthetic dimension of a sport arena – although they accompany a proper sport event – are not taken into account in this view. The focus is on the qualities of the *processes*, such as jumping, running, playing soccer etc., not on qualities of the *bodies* (that are jumping, running, etc.) nor the sport *venues*. Now, it is important to note that these qualities are something objective – they are qualities of objective processes.

BEST SUITS, SUITS BEST – THE TWO TYPOLOGIES OF SPORTS

Now, in our interlacing metaphysical-aesthetic study, we may go back to aesthetic considerations. There are a lot of different typologies of sports based on different criteria, but in the context of the aesthetics of sport two of them are relevant. According to Best's typology, the first type of sports – *purposive sports* – is defined as follows: “The purpose [goal] can be specified independently of the means of achieving it as long as it conforms to the limits set by the rules or norms” (Best, 1978, p. 104). “A purposive sport is one in which, within the rules or conventions, there is an indefinite variety of ways of achieving the purpose which defines the character of the activity” (Best, 1978, p. 104).

This definition corresponds with Suits' account of games. According to Suits, the lusory goal (winning) “can be described only in terms of the game in which it figures”; whereas a game (not an institution of a game) is understood as a prescriptive use of constitutive rules – a limitation imposed on the means by the rules. Because we are now considering the scope of sports (and not games in general), we might say that Best's category of ‘purposive sports’ is a *prima facie* equivalent to Suits' description of those games that are sports; the two categories are perhaps co-extensive.

The second category of sports distinguished by Best is that of *aesthetic sports*. In this group “the aim cannot be specified in isolation from the manner of achieving it [...]. A (gymnastic) vault is not just ‘getting over the box’: rather, the manner of achieving the aim is crucial”; ‘an aesthetic sport is one in which the purpose can be specified only in terms of the aesthetic manner of achieving it’” (Best, 1978, p. 104).

In the first stage of Suits' philosophical development we can find a theory of sport as a sub-field of games (Suits, 1988a, pp. 9, 14). Later, Suits changed his theory, and the article *Tricky Triad: Games, Play and Sport* presented a more complex view: not all

⁸ After presenting a handful of examples illustrating modifications of rules directed towards satisfying spectators' considerations, Cordner concludes: “It is arguable that our concept of sport, perhaps unlike that of our ancestors, is in part a concept of that which is to be seen and evaluated from a spectator's point of view” (1988, p. 32).

sports are games, but there also exists another type of sports, namely performances. Thus, there are two distinctive types of competitive sport events: refereed events (games) and judged events (performances). The difference between games and performances – non-game sports – lies in the manner their respective skills are generated. Games generate skills by erecting barriers to be overcome. They are governed by constitutive rules; victory is not determined by the artistry of actions, but is determined by the effectiveness of actions. Performances, on the other hand, generate skills by postulating ideals to be approximated. They are governed by the *rules of skills*; the jury’s task is to evaluate the degree of approximation of a given performance to an ideal (Suits, 1988b).

Now, what is the relation between Best’s aesthetic sports and Suits’ performances? Again, it is very probable that these categories are coextensive, but at least terminological differences between the two formulations are greater than in the case of purposive sports/performances. According to Suits, the notion of pre-lusory goal cannot be applied to performances (this problem was discussed, among others, by Suits, 1988, Kretchmar, 1989). But if we understand the lusory goal in games as a goal saturated with the constitutive rules, we might, by means of analogy, understand the lusory goal in performances as a goal saturated by the rules of skills. Thus the ‘postulated ideal’ should be understood as something close to the ‘lusory goal for performances’; and rules of skill in the context of performances are understood as something close to an ‘aesthetic manner’. So, again, Suits’ and Best’s descriptions of the second category of sports are very similar.

Now, we are in a position to juxtapose these two apparently parallel typologies. Apart from some minor conceptual differences (which are not the main topic here), they both divide sports into two identical categories⁹, both dealing with the description of the goal (in terms of means), and rules as limitations of the means.

Table 1. Purposive sports/Refereed sports (Games)

X	Type of sport	Characteristics	Examples
Best	Purposive sports	The aim can be specified independently of the means of achieving it as long as the means conform to the limits set by the rules.	football, track and field, climbing, squash, orienteering
Suits	Games; refereed events	Generate skills by erecting barriers to be overcome; constitutive rules limit the means permitted in achieving the goal.	football, hockey, boxing, golf

⁹ Whether the purposive/aesthetic division is mutually exclusive is a debatable problem; compare for example the following two different opinions concerning ski-jumping: “In aesthetic sports, such as [...] ski jumping, a successful performance depends in part upon the manner in which the sport-specific goals are pursued” (Loland, 2002, p. 92); “the scoring in ski-jumping awards some marks for distance (purposive), and some for style (aesthetic). So ski-jumping is a straightforward mix of Best’s two categories” (McFee, 2004, p. 91). But because we are at present considering a controversial set of ski-jumping and perhaps a few other ‘hybrid’ sports, however interesting in itself, the set is too small to undermine our main line of argument.

Table 2. Aesthetic sports/Judged sports (Performances)

X	Type of sport	Characteristics	Examples
Best	Aesthetic sports	The aim cannot be specified in isolation from the manner of achieving it.	gymnastics, diving, figure skating, trampolining, synchronised swimming
Suits	Performances; judged events	Generate skills by postulating ideals to be approximated; governed by the rules of skills.	gymnastics, diving

ARE ‘AESTHETIC SPORTS’ REALLY MORE AESTHETIC THAN ‘PURPOSIVE SPORTS’?

Now, an intuitive suggestion is that an aesthetic dimension of sport is comparatively more related to the domain of aesthetic sports (performances). It is not incidental that an aesthetic sport – figure skating – was chosen for comparison with art. Best claims that in purposive sports aesthetics is incidental, whereas in aesthetic sports aesthetics is necessary to define their character (since the aesthetic manner of achieving a goal is taken into account while judging).

However, some questions arise here: are the aesthetic qualities of aesthetic sports a necessary and inherent component of these sports? Or are the aesthetic qualities of purposive sports only incidental to them? Although Best’s terms ‘aesthetic sports’ and ‘purposive sports’ are grounded in some essential features of respective types of sports, they could still be misleading. For both types of sports require achieving a purpose, and the aesthetic dimension can be found in both of the types. In these circumstances I propose to use the terms ‘quantitative’ and ‘qualitative’, which, perhaps, are more neutral.

An analogical criticism also applies to Suits’ analysis – although his terms do not refer directly to aesthetics, the context might also suggest that one type of sports – ‘performances’ or ‘judged events’ – is more aesthetically ‘saturated’ than the other type. According to Suits, in football, “victory is not determined by the artistry of [...] moves but by their effectiveness in winning games. [...] diving and gymnastics competitions are no more games than are other judged competitive events, such as beauty contests and pie-baking competitions” (Suits, 1988b).

But the distinction is in fact based on different kinds of skills that occur in a given type of sports; aesthetics is not a paramount consideration here. The crucial point in this distinction is that different kinds of skills require different ways of evaluation. ‘Qualitative’ and ‘quantitative’ should be understood as referring to the judging techniques generated by the respective skills. Judging – either in a ‘quantitative’ or a ‘qualitative’ way – is just the solution to a certain problem: the need for the evaluation of some skills. Rules applied in the evaluation of skills are tools that are invented in order to compare, as well as train and master physical skills valued for themselves. In fact, ‘aesthetic’ is understood in the context of judging aesthetic sports as a ‘skilful manner’, or a ‘manner in accordance with certain rules of skills’. But *aesthetic* in the ‘skilful manner’ sense does not mean *aesthetic* in the

sense of ‘realizing high positive aesthetic values’. According to Wright, “aesthetic criteria could be easily re-described in a purely technical language” (2003, p. 87). One might even design a ‘perverted’ aesthetic sport, in which the jury evaluates the achievement of certain aims in the prescribed manner, in as ugly a way as possible. Of course our aesthetic sports bear aesthetic values, but the relation between the two meanings of aesthetic needs some clarification, because it is not a relation of identity. In fact, *aesthetic* (as well as *artistic*) is an ambiguous term, doing double duty (Wright, 2003, pp. 88–89).

To have a real insight into the aesthetics of sport, one should examine each discipline with respect to the occurrence of particular technically valuable qualities, and finally, its possible aesthetic qualities. I believe every kind of sport activity – regardless of whether it is purposive/aesthetic – contains some qualities from the first category. Thus, paradoxically, there is not an *a priori* reason for claiming that ‘aesthetic sports’ are ‘more’ aesthetic than ‘purposive sports’ – as different kinds of technically valuable qualities occur in both types of sport¹⁰.

There is no simple pattern of relation between a particular discipline of sport and the aesthetically valuable qualities that occur in this discipline. Perhaps it is possible at least to grasp some tendencies, e.g.: the aesthetic generated in ‘aesthetic sports’ appears to be more conventional – conventional rules of skill define postulated ideals, and at the same time define directly which qualities of performance are to be evaluated more highly than others. On the other hand, the aesthetic generated in ‘purposive sports’ appears to be more ‘natural’ (i.e. less conventional) – and is based on the search for maximum efficiency in order to overcome obstacles. Compare, for example, some standards in gymnastics to the everlasting beauty of a foot race. This could even raise the problem of kitsch in sport – according to W. Welsch (2005) “the sports which directly strive to be aesthetic are in danger of producing events which for an educated sensibility come close to kitsch. Take ribbon gymnastics as an example. [...] Or imagine a skier who only tried to ski beautifully and not efficiently.”

TECHNICALLY VALUABLE QUALITIES AS CONSECUTIVE PROPERTIES OF SPORT

We should now go back to the problem of relation between the aesthetic as ‘skilfulness’ and the aesthetic as a ground for aesthetic values. In each object one may distinguish different types of properties. An object’s constitutive properties are those properties that are mentioned explicitly in a description that is used to identify the object. Thus, the constitutive property of sport in general is: *being a human activity directed towards the cultivation of physical skills valued for themselves*. An object’s consecutive or consequential properties are those properties that are somehow included or implied by the object’s constitutive

¹⁰ Apart from the technically valuable qualities in sport we may also distinguished another extensive category of qualities that might generate intensive aesthetic response, namely drama-related qualities (sudden twists of the situation during a game, uncertainty, risk etc. – see Kreft, 2012). This category is connected rather with some kinds of competition than with the nature of sport itself; and it is not analysed here. Because competition might occur in both types of sport, the second category of these qualities might also occur in both types, although the most spectacular occurrences of these qualities take place in games like soccer.

properties. Consecutive properties depend on and are determined (entailed) by the constitutive ones. Finally, the remaining part of the properties of object is accidental.

Now, technically valuable qualities in sport are consecutive properties of sport. Every developed form of training of physical skills provides some technically valuable actions. But there is no ‘automatic’ transition from technique to aesthetic, and so the aesthetic is thus only an incidental quality of sport. This point is very clearly expressed by Wright: “Technical qualities [...] cannot on their own ensure the aesthetic value of a particular movement or series of movements”, and “there is no necessary connection between functional and aesthetic qualities” (2003, p. 86). To go back to Suits’ example, after some training, the plough-pulling wife’s practise will become very skilful and thus might provide some pleasure and satisfaction for the audience, but it will never become as aesthetically pleasing as figure skating. Even the most open aesthetic attitude of a competent audience will not be of help here¹¹.

To repeat, the aesthetic is incidental to sport (contrary to Best’s claim concerning aesthetic sports, but in accordance with his denial of the art-status of sport), but it does take a central position among the incidental qualities of sport. The aesthetic dimension of skilful actions in sport could be called a by-product, something secondary to its nature. There is no entailment here or a necessary consequence, but there is still a very intimate connection between the skilful and the beautiful. This closeness obviously needs some clarification and explanation, but even if a theory explaining this link is missing, whatever is given in an aesthetic experience cannot be undermined. For an aesthetically open person, some skilful actions in sport *are* beautiful, and whilst some combinations of qualities will increase or decrease this effect, a complete account of the aesthetic dimension in sport will require a special casuistry regarding the full complexity of every particular discipline.

It is interesting in this context to compare the position of two axiological disciplines – aesthetics and ethics of sport – as well as their relation. Although there is something ethical in self-realization (obviously linked to the cultivation of skills), the ethical considerations of sport are mainly based in its competitive character. In the viewpoint presented here, competitiveness might spontaneously evolve from the nature of sport, but ethical values are more distant and more incidental to sport than aesthetic values. The aesthetic is simply closer to the nature of sport than ethics. Let us compare, for example, ethical issues in figure skating with the aesthetics of this sport. It does not follow, of course, that the ethical dimension of sport is less important than the aesthetic dimension of sport (especially in an educational context), but – in terms of its closeness to the nature of the activity – the aesthetics of sport is a more central consideration. In this situation we may use the Aristotelian idiom: the metaphysics of sport is the *first philosophy* of sport, whereas the aesthetics of sport is the *second philosophy* of sport. I believe the quotation from Woody Allen mentioned at the beginning of this text could be interpreted in accordance with this remark.

¹¹ Another issue that might arise here is a moral evaluation of conducting physical labour for one’s own aesthetic experience. Sport permits and invites the adoption of the aesthetic attitude, whereas in the case of physical labour this attitude is at least morally questionable. However, this problem – which might be labelled ‘the ethics of the aesthetic way of watching physical labour’ – is beyond the focus of the article.

CONCLUSION

Guided by the maxim that the aesthetics of sport requires the metaphysics of sport, I have offered the concept of the *nature of sport*, defined as *technology of training and mastering of physical skills valued for themselves*. This phenomenon lies at the origin of sport, and structures its history as well as different definitions of sport. In the light of this theory *the cultivation of physical skills valued for themselves* is a constitutive property of sport, whereas as *the technically valuable qualities of sport* are consecutive properties of sport. The aesthetic dimension of sport might be based on the technically valuable qualities of sport, but there is no necessary connection here. The aesthetic is thus incidental to sport, although it has a central position among the incidental qualities of sport, and is closer to the nature of sport than ethics. The parallel distinctions between aesthetic sports/performances and purposive sports/games do not provide an a priori reason for claiming that members of the first group are 'more' aesthetic than the members of the second group. Although sport is not an art form, either in the purposive or the aesthetic type, in some cases there are obvious resemblances between sport and art (e.g. the pair: figure skating and ballet dancing). However, even in pairs of this kind a fundamental difference, related to the nature of sport might be noticed: there is a reversal of means and goals in these activities.

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