

Instrumentalization of the Body in Sports

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The aim of this paper is to articulate an implicit conceptualization of the body of sportspersons that exists besides the official holistic and health-based understanding of mind and body. Sport, besides being a guardian of positive values, is also associated with an instrumentalization of the body consisting of a cluster of mutually interdependent conceptualizations of the body.

First, an optimization where athletes' are focusing upon optimizing their bodies to perform sports. Second, an idea of perfectedness in that this optimization rests upon the idea of being as perfect as possible for doing specific sports-related tasks. Third, modifiability, in that body in sports is understood as "raw material" that can and ought to be "cultivated" for satisfying this perfectedness ideal in sports. Fourth, control, in that there is a need of constant surveillance of sportspersons' bodies. Fifth, a strict division between body and mind, where sportspersons are rational subjects who should use their mechanic bodies in trying to reach their aims.

This implicit understanding of body is problematic in that, to some extent, it resembles attitudes involved in anorexia nervosa, and that these attitudes, if not consciously discussed, are negative for the sports community itself as well as for the society at large. Furthermore, it might be that the sports community, due to the idea of instrumentalization of body in sport, is strengthening negative attitudes towards people who do not live up to the ideal healthy body, for instance persons with obesity and overweight.

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1. Introduction

Sport and body are closely related. Body is a necessary feature doing sport, and sport is a perfect way of strengthening the body. This, at least, according to the official doctrines of sports community in which sport provides persons, who are suitably embodied, with a way of developing and taking care of their bodies, aiming at healthy and good personal lives.¹ According to this idea, sport in its very fundamental organization, the way it is done and the values it is based upon, provides a health-based life-style for the sportsperson that is founded in an understanding of the sportsperson as a holistic entity with mind and body, and that sportspersons' internalize societal positive norms and values concerning their own or others' bodies through participating in sport.²

In this paper I will discuss the body in sport from a different perspective. I will consider another conception of body involved in sport, a conception that is implicit in the practice of sport and which might imply that sport, even though it also can have positive consequences such as health, friendship and personal development, cannot really be straightforwardly understood as a guardian of good values of body. The sole aim of the paper is to articulate this underlying conception, and then point to some features of it that might be problematic, both for society at large as well as the sports community itself.

According to this conception, which we can call the instrumentalization of the body, sport relies upon a cluster of mutually interdependent conceptualizations of the body which together imply that *the sportspersons' body is a pure instrument of a subject which can and need to be controlled and modified with the aim of attaining perfectedness*. This instrumentalization is a cluster of interrelated conceptualizations of the sportspersons' body, which underlie, support and complement each other in the everyday practice of sport, thereby giving an air of naturalness and trivialness to this conceptualization of the body in sport.

Before proceeding I want to stress four things. First, by "sportsperson's body" I mean the biological body of the sportsperson used in performing his or her sport.³ Second, by the claim that there is an implicit instrumentalization of the body in sport I mean that sports and the sporting community as such are associated with this instrumentalization. That is, it is not only elite level sports that are conceptualising body as an instrument, though the instrumentalization of body comes out most strongly in elite sport. Elite sports, and athletes in elite sports, set the standard for other sporting activities, being the role model of sports, and hence, the conceptual framework of elite sports significantly influences non-elite competitive sports and pure recreational sports. Third, I do not claim that every aspect of the sports community, its activities, or the adherents and the participants in sports, is explicitly holding on to the instrumentalization of the body. Especially, I do not claim that persons in the sports community would, if asked a direct question concerning this instrumentalization

1 See for instance Howe, P. David, *Sport, Professionalism and Pain*, (London: Routledge, 2004).

2 See for instance Swedish Sport Confederation, (Riksidrottsförbundet), *Idrotten vill* (Stockholm, Riksidrottsförbundet, 2009) and Swedish Sport Confederation, The policy of The Swedish National Organization for Sport (Riksidrottsförbundet): *Alkohol och tobak inom idrotten*, (Stockholm, Riksidrottsförbundet, 2007).

3 This is very vaguely formulated, since it is possible to imagine several indeterminate cases of the biologicality of the body given this formulation. For instance, we can think of the following problematic cases: (i) the existence of some non-biological parts, such as a pace-maker, in the biological body, (ii) transplantations of organs from other biological persons which creates the existence of new biological parts in a biological body, (iii) transplantations of biological organs or parts from other biological organisms such as from pigs to a human sportspersons' body.

of the body, directly affirm that they are adhering to it. What I claim is that the instrumentalization of the body is an implicitly accepted conceptual structure, which, though not being straightforwardly affirmed, can be discerned as underlying the activities in sport, and hence constitutes an implicit part of the understanding of sport, both by athletes themselves and by the sport audience. Fourth, in claiming that this underlying conceptualization exists in sport, I do not, in any way, imply that this underlying conception of body in sport is *the* fundamental conceptualization in sport, and that the official view of sport as a guardian of health can be reduced to this implicit instrumentalization of sport. There is no such reduction involved. I merely claim that sport, and the sports community, is associated with this instrumentalization of the body as well.

2. Instrumentalization

The basic idea of something x being an instrument is that it is used as a tool for the purpose of something beyond itself y . Furthermore, an instrument is in one way or other thought to be particularly effective in reaching the purported aim. For example, a hammer is an effective instrument (tool) for the purpose of hammering nails. And, lastly, the value of the instrument is proportionate to how well it realizes the aim that is there to realize.

Generally speaking, everything can be, and also is, an instrument for something else. And that a sportspersons body is used as an instrument in sport is uncontroversial. The body functions as an instrument in all our ordinary activities. It is used as the cognitive instrument in orienting ourselves in the world, by for instance, walking, making love, looking at particular things, moving around, reaching for items above our head etc. Sport, being just one of those activities of a normal human life, also relies upon the body as the necessary cognitive instrument for performing in sport.

But, in sport it is not only the case that the body is working as an instrument in this general sense, there is also a high level of instrumentalization of the body in sport. We can illuminate this idea of instrumentalization by relating it to the second formulation of the Kantian Categorical Imperative; that every person is an end in its own right.⁴ According to this Kantian idea every person is an end in itself, and no person should be understood purely as a means to achieve pleasure or satisfaction for someone else, i.e. that no person should only be treated as an instrument. Now, let us first, generalize the principle (even though Kant only thought of persons in his formulation of the Categorical Imperative). This means that a person, an entity, a material object or social phenomenon, should be treated as an end in itself if not to be understood only as an instrument. Second, let us turn this Kantian thought, and claim that if an entity is *purely* used, understood or conceptualized as an instrument for the satisfaction of certain aims or tasks, beyond itself, we have a case of instrumentalization of that entity. By “purely” I mean here that the value of the entity is ultimately only dependent upon its’ contribution to the satisfaction of the goal, its effectiveness in leading to its purpose. This, then, means that by instrumentalization is meant:

4 Kant, Immanuel, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002).

An object *O* is instrumentalized if it is used, understood or conceptualized as a pure mean for the doing of *H* (where *H* is either an action, an object or some state of affairs) in the sense that *O*'s ultimate value is determined by *O*'s contribution and effectiveness in the realization of *H*.

Now, pure instrumentalization of an entity *O* is not a common phenomenon in any situation, sport being no exception. Therefore we can understand instrumentalization as a gradual notion, and simply claim that instrumentalization comes to a higher or lesser degree. This means that we still can claim that an object *O* is instrumentalized if the primary value of an object *O* is ultimately only dependent upon its contribution to the satisfaction of the goal, its effectiveness in leading to its purpose.

3. The optimization of body

Now that we have established what instrumentalization is, let us articulate the different conceptions involved in the instrumentalization of the body in sport.

The first feature of sport and body that we need to reflect upon is the fact that sport, ultimately speaking, is centred around an idea of optimizing the body. The reason for this is that sport rests upon an "aesthetic of functionality"⁵ in which the primary aim is to enable the body to become as good as possible in a particular sport. This aesthetic of functionality of the body is based upon three features of sport. The first feature is about the condition of sport in that (i) sportspersons are necessarily embodied and this embodiment is a necessary condition for the two other features of sport. The other two features are related to the aim of sport, namely that (ii) sport is essentially a performance enhancing, record striving and competitive activity in which sportspersons compete and test their sport related skills and abilities against each other, and (iii) sport is essentially an activity driven by the idea of being the best, the winner, in the sense that participants in sport strive to win competitions which they participate in.⁶

Given these features of sport, the focus on body inside sports community cannot be centred on anything else than acquiring sport related body skills and to use the body to perform as well as possible. The body is there as a necessary constituent for doing sports, but since sport also is about enhancing performance and winning, being the best, the body must always be conceptualized as an entity that stand in need of optimization. And it is a conceptualization centred around the body being an entity that needs to be optimized for performance in sport. The conception inherent in sport is that an athlete's body is there to

5 Damkjær, Søren, 'Post-Olympism and the aestheticization of sport', *Post-Olympism: Questioning Sport in the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Bale, J. and Christensen, M. K., (Oxford: Berg, 2004), p 217

6 Magdalinski, Tara, *Sport, Technology and Body: The Nature of Performance*, (London: Routledge, 2008), p 19. Damkjær calls it "aesthetics of sport" (See Damkjær, Søren 'Post-Olympism and the aestheticization of sport', p 217). These two features has been called the essence of sport, and are contrasted with the spirit of sport which contains the ideological content associated with sport such as for instance character building and fair play.

be optimized for the performance of sports-internal tasks, and particularly that a body is a tool for the fulfilling of sports related goals and intentions of the subject.⁷

This optimization of body performance⁸ consists of maximizing the natural ability of the athlete.⁹ It can either be external, “from the outside”, with external changes of the body in which optimal conditions of performance for the body is created, or internal, in which case the body itself is changed to become more optimal in relation to performing a task. External optimizations are strictly speaking only technologizations of the body,¹⁰ since they do not alter the athletes’ body in a permanent way, they only alter the conditions of the body for performing. An example is the using of “speedo” swimsuit for increasing the performance in swimming. It is a situation-based optimization. Internal optimization, on the other hand, consists in a permanent change of the athlete’s own body, for instance increasing the muscle mass of the thighs or developing the torso into a v-shaped form. This is an internal optimization in that it alters the internal features of the body of the sportsperson. Once the athlete has gone through the change, the change remains in the body. This internal body optimization presents itself in designed training regimes, strict diet regimes, abstract norm system of body in sport,¹¹ and to a great extent the structured everyday life of sportspersons. Through this practice of altering the internal shape of the body in relation to specific sports-internal tasks, the body becomes instrumentalized. The subject has internalized the general sports-internal features of performing and winning, and should use the body mainly as a tool for enhancing certain sport results. The body becomes interpreted as nothing but an entity whose value depends on its ability to perform certain sport related goals, it becomes instrumentalized; an instrument that primarily should fulfil sports-internal tasks, and this it can do by being a perfect body.

7 The instrumentalization of body presents itself in at least two different prevailing thought structures in the sports community. First, in a first person form in which athletes understand particular bodies of athletes as something that should be modified into achieving specific goals related to specific sport activities, and second, in a second and third person form in which coaches, managers and media perceive athletes as modifiable and replaceable bodies. As Damkjær says, “the sportsperson is seen as a mere puppet in a media show involving scientific manipulation of the body solely for the sake of performance” (See Damkjær, ‘Post-Olympism and the aestheticization of sport’, p 212). And, basically, if a particular body is not fit to serve the task in the optimal way, another body will replace that body. This second form of instrumentalization is an interesting phenomenon in itself, and seems to rest heavily upon professionalisation and commercialization of modern sport, especially at the elite level, but in this paper the focus lies only on the instrumentalization in the first person form.

8 The ways we can optimize for performance enhancing can be divided into non-bodily optimizations and bodily optimizations. The non-bodily optimizations are not really changes of the body *per se*, but creating new optimal situations for the body to perform. The most distant form of optimization from the body itself is changes of the environment as such, such as for instance sport arenas with special optimized tracks for running, or indoor arenas for bandy to avoid wind and snow. These changes of the settings in which the athlete is to perform are all done with the aim of creating optimal circumstances for the athlete. The next non-bodily form of optimization consists of the changes and technical tools that an athlete can use in performing a specific task. For instance, optimized engines and bikes, but also certain protective equipment making the athlete taking greater risks in the performing situation.

9 Magdalinski, Tara, *Sport, Technology and Body: The Nature of Performance*, p 114

10 See for instance Magdalinski, Tara, *Sport, Technology and Body: The Nature of Performance*.

11 Damkjær, Søren ‘Post-Olympism and the aestheticization of sport’, p 216.

4. The perfectedness of body

The idea of perfect body is a fundamental, but to a large extent undiscussed, assumption supporting and supported by the instrumentalization of the body. Perfect body, or the idea of perfect body, as evident from commercial advertisements, fashion magazines, fashion shows, health magazines, lifestyle magazines and television, is of prime concern in our culture. But, it is important to distinguish here between the idea of body perfection in sport and a more general cultural body ideal primarily with an aesthetic focus such as slenderness, muscularity, health and youth. Body ideal is (i) general in its character, (ii) focused upon cultural preferences of body-look and body-posture, and (iii) gendered in that there are different body ideals for men and women.

Though the body ideal has some impact on the idea of perfect body in sport,¹² the main determining feature of perfect body in sport is the functionality of the body, or even the optimal functionality of the body. As such it is (i) specific rather than general, since the aim of sport is to enable the body to perform specific actions, and (ii) it is not primarily gendered since the perfect body for performing a specific sport task is basically similar for men and women.¹³ The sex of the athlete is of no consequence. If a certain sport, for its good performance, require very muscular upper arms, chest and stomach, but small legs, for instance, this is what is understood as the perfect body for both men and women (and this it does without taking into account the look of the person).

This idea of perfectedness of body is based upon the will to optimize the body. Athletes do this through, for instance, training regimes in which they “eagerly submit their bodies to technologies that seek to chart, forecast and, most importantly, improve their abilities, perfecting their bodies on what is essentially a factory production line”.¹⁴ Part of these training regimes consists in conscious use of weight training. This, being done in the gyms, has made sportspersons to come in contact with attitudes involved in the gym culture¹⁵ (for instance aerobics, fitness and body building). In this culture, Johansson has shown that there exists a “fascination for the perfection of the *individual* body”¹⁶ and that “body perfection

12 Generally we can say that the body ideals impact on perfect body in sport is associated with external values, such as sponsorship, gender-related status etc..

13 Of course, there are some sports that also rest heavily on the body ideal. For instance, gymnastics can be understood as demanding gender specific ideals for male gymnast and female gymnast; male gymnast should be muscular and female gymnasts should be flexible and gracious. However, this can also be an indication that the two sports are requiring two different functional bodies in and by itself, and hence that this difference is dependent upon the body ideal *per se*.

14 Magdalinski, Tara, *Sport, Technology and Body: The Nature of Performance*, p 67.

15 Though the gym culture is not a perfectly clear example of body perfectedness as such, since the gym culture is an activity in which the two body ideals are mixed, it still provides us with illuminating insights concerning the idea of perfectedness in sport. For instance, even though the basic idea of bodybuilding consists in building up a large muscle mass, in competitions, the pure muscle mass is not the only criteria for determining the winner. Female body builders should, for instance, preserve their femininity, but still be muscular. This means that males should be muscular, and females should be muscular in a *feminine* way, which is more in accordance with the body ideal such that men should build up morphologically muscular and hard bodies, whereas women “are encouraged to focus on “toning” rather than growing their muscles to ensure that they do not replicate men but remain identifiably female” (See Magdalinski, Tara, *Sport, Technology and Body: The Nature of Performance*, p 97). In sport, this gender relatedness is mostly left out.

16 Johansson, Thomas, *The Sculptured Body: Gym Culture, Hard Bodies and Gender Identities*, Centre for Cultural research, (Växjö Iniversity, Article No 3. 1998), p 1

has increasingly become an individual project”¹⁷. Though it is true that the strict gym culture is still heavily influenced by the body ideal, it is reasonable to think that the idea of perfection involved is transferred also into the functional perfectedness ideal of sport. An example of this is the way athletes conceptualize their training in the gym, and how it is done in referring to a perfectedness idea of body. The Swedish swimmer Sahra Sjöström said the following concerning her training and her body:

The swim training today was rather ok. I had done two tough sessions the days before but today it was a bit softer. Weight lifting is still something new for me, and I really enjoy it even though it is hard work. I do not use weights that are too heavy, but, then again, the aim is not that I should become a Magnus Samuelsson¹⁸. A swimmer *should not have* those big muscles.¹⁹

In this example we do not have a particularly detailed description or account of what features a perfect swim-body should have, but it is clear from the quote that there is an awareness of perfectedness of body in relation to a particular sport, and that the optimization of this body through training is done under the guidance of this perfectedness idea.

Second, the practices of athletes show that the perfectedness idea is involved in sport. It has, for instance, been shown that female athletes who otherwise were satisfied with their bodies, i.e. satisfied in relation to the cultural body ideal, still to a great extent used weight loss methods motivated by the particular sport they participated in.²⁰ There are

as many as 15% to 20% of high-level competitive female athletes regularly engage in clinically significant weight loss methods such as severe food restrictions, self-induced vomiting, and laxative use in order to conform to the body-shape standards of their sport²¹.

Third, the fact that illegal performance enhancing is an existing phenomenon in sports shows that perfectedness of the body is at the very heart of sport. Athletes use performance enhancing drugs (PED) in order to enhance their physical abilities through optimizing their bodies. But, an athlete who uses PED does not do this in a random way. As Verner Møller points out, athletes “use doping for the same purpose as artists use stimulants. They do

17 Johansson, Thomas, *The Sculptured Body: Gym Culture, Hard Bodies and Gender Identities*, p 1-2

18 Magnus Samuelsson is the name of one of the most well-known Swedish participants in the competition The Strongest Man in the World Constest.

19 A diary of Sahra Sjöström, Swedish swimmer, in *Dagens Nyheter*, Tuesday 13th of October 2009, authors translation. “Simträningen idag var helt ok. Jag hade kört två tuffa pass dagarna före men idag var det något lugnare. Styrketräning är fortfarande något nytt för mig, och jag gillar det verkligen även om det är jobbigt. Jag kör inte med så tunga vikter, men det är inte meningen att jag ska bli någon Magnus Samuelsson. En simmare *ska inte ha* så stora muskler.” (Author’s italics in both the original text and in the translation)

20 Davies, Caroline, ‘Body Image and Athleticism’, in T. Cash, & T. Pruzinsky, *Body Image: A Handbook of Theory, Research, and Clinical Practice*, (New York: Guilford Press, 2002), pp 220-222. (<http://77site.ebrary.com/lib/dalarna/Doc?id=10172277&ppg=242>). Furthermore, there are also indications that male athletes express more satisfaction of their body images in cases where the sport they participate require a body structure more similar to the body ideal for men.

21 Davies, Caroline, ‘Body Image and Athleticism’, p 220.

it to achieve the optimum: to reach their highest level – to transcend themselves”²². Basically, the method or substance used is deliberately chosen for its effects on those abilities that are most dominant or important in the sport the athlete is participating in. Though it is true that not all drugs affect the body in the “positive” way desired, i.e. in creating the perfected body, it is still the underlying reason for sportspersons to use PED.²³ The basic idea, though, underlying the use of doping is that doping is used for optimizing the body of the athlete for performing specific sports-internal tasks, and the ultimate end of this line of thought is the perfected body.

Fourth, a further argument showing that doping rests on the idea of perfectedness of body is the general and official attitude towards doping, both from the sports community and the athletes themselves. Use of doping is banned in sport basically because it is thought to have positive effects on the performance of the athlete²⁴, and this performance is of course the sports-internal performance. But this is of course nothing else than thinking that doping aims at optimizing the athlete’s body to perform a task, and hence that doping to some extent is involved in the creation of a more perfect body. Now, one could perhaps think that the fact that doping is prohibited in sports shows that sports does not, contrary to what I have claimed, rest upon the idea of creating a perfect body. But, this does not follow from the prohibition of doping. That doping is banned does not imply that sport is not associated with the idea of perfectedness of body, it only shows that certain ways of attaining the perfect body are unacceptable. Basically, what underlies sport is still that a doped body should have been the perfect body, but it should be attained without using doping.

5. Body as Modifiable Object

Related to the idea of perfectedness of body is the idea of the body as modifiable object. This idea of modifiability of body is really at the centre of sport, since basic universal sport values are formulated as restrictions on acceptable or internal rule abiding modification of the body in sport. As Damkjær points out, there are values

concerning the body, placing restrictions on what can be done to one’s own body and the body of the opponent, or put differently, a number of requirements for the body, notably that the body must be modified only by training and nutrition²⁵

22 Møller, Verner, ‘Doping at the Olympic Games from an Aesthetic perspective’, *Post-Olympism: Questioning Sport in the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Bale, J., and Christensen, M., K., (Oxford: Berg, 2004) p 208

23 It might for instance be the case that doping does not affect the body in the long run, or that it is simply a form of doping that is destructive for the body, such as for instance alcohol or different forms of drugs (though mainly different forms of drugs can be used to enhance the athletes training abilities in that it enables the athlete to endure both more and harder training regimes). But many of the doping methods and substances are, in effect, affecting the body in different ways to increase the athlete’s performances in a particular sport (of course, doping in and by itself is not sufficient to enhance performance, it also requires a severe and rigid practice of the parts of the body the athlete want to enhance).

24 If interested in the arguments in favour of the ban on doping see Tamburrini, Claudio M., ‘What’s wrong with doping?’ i *Values in sport*, ed. Tännsjö, T., and Tamburrini, C., (London: E & FN Spon, 1999).

25 Damkjær, Søren ‘Post-Olympism and the aestheticization of sport’, p 216.

This means, then, that through different sports-internal rule abiding training techniques, athletes' bodies should be modified as to realize better and better body perfectedness in relation to sport. Just as in the body building culture,²⁶ where the fundamental practice consists in shaping the body in a way which is understood as more desirable, beautiful, muscular, "hard" than the original look of the body, sport athletes endeavour, through different methods, to reshape their bodily features aiming at getting closer and closer to the perfect body for sport performances. As Magdalinski claims ,

exercise and sport are not simply amusing diversions but are conducted with the expectation of physical modification and augmentation through discipline, hard work and, in many ways, the body's capitulation to the rigours of the machine²⁷

Doing sport is trying to shape and modify one's body in accordance to the requirements of a particular sport through "a range of mechanical and chemical interventions designed to alter the body and improve the physical performance of an athlete"²⁸. These mechanical and chemical interventions are, by Magdalinski, called performance techniques, and they include "equipment, dietary and physical manipulations, drugs, supplements and other substances, as well as training methods and techniques"²⁹. In this way, the body is ultimately conceived in the sports community, just as in the body building culture,³⁰ as a sculptured object. The sculpturing might be more or less gender-directed, as in the case of body building with its basis in the cultural body ideal, or more or less functionality-directed, as in the case of the sports community with its basis in the perfectedness idea. The common feature, though, is that a person, either explicitly or implicitly, conceives of his or her body as a creation of the persons' own will and intentions, and that the body needs to be and should be shaped.

In modern sport, especially at the elite level, this sculpturing of the body is a collective phenomenon. In sport today there are specialists of different kinds, such as psychologists, nutrition specialists, biochemists, physiologists etc. that assist the athlete in the sculpturing process to make sure that the modifications are as integral as possible to sport, and that the modifying process and the alterations of the body are as effective as possible for the perfection of specific sport performances.³¹

The idea of modification of body in sport seems to rest on a distinction between the natural and unnatural body. Due to the perfectedness ideal and the instrumentalization of the body in sport, the natural body cannot be understood as a sufficient entity in the performance of sport, but must be modified and thereby become a created body, an unnatural body.³²

26 See for instance Johansson, Thomas, *The Sculptured Body: Gym Culture, Hard Bodies and Gender Identities*, but also Bordo, Susanne, 'Anorexia Nervosa: Psychopathology as the Crystallization of Culture', in Crowley, H., & Himmelweit, S., eds., *Knowing Woman: Feminism and Knowledge*, (Cambridge/Oxford: Polity Press/Open University Press, 1992), p 400

27 Magdalinski, Tara, *Sport, Technology and Body: The Nature of Performance*, p 2

28 Magdalinski, Tara, *Sport, Technology and Body: The Nature of Performance*, p 8

29 Magdalinski, Tara, *Sport, Technology and Body: The Nature of Performance*, p 8

30 Johansson, Thomas, *The Sculptured Body: Gym Culture, Hard Bodies and Gender Identities*, p 1

31 Howe, P. David, *Sport, Professionalism and Pain*, (London: Routledge, 2004).

32 It is important to point out that self-modification can, to some extent, be an empowerment strategy, especially in the case of women and other culturally suppressed groups of individuals, since it opens up an opportunity of self-creation not available if we only consider the distinction between natural and

Though natural/unnatural to some extent is an illuminating dichotomy, I do not think it fully clarifies the underlying attitude structuring the idea of body modification in sport. The reasons are two; first, the dichotomy is fundamentally unclear in that “natural” is unclear in itself. We simply do not seem to know which body features are to classify as natural, and hence which to classify as unnatural. This is for instance clear in the case of the discussion of doping in sport. What is natural in operation situations, for instance receiving blood intravenously, is not seen to be natural in the sports community, and hence classified as doping.

But second, and more importantly, if the distinction between “natural” and “unnatural” should have any meaning at all, it seems to be a distinction between the biological body and bodies which are not fully biological. The most obvious example of this kind of unnatural body would be a body with external equipment that increase the performances of an athlete, such as Fastskin swimsuits. But given this, it seems odd to claim that a fit and well trained body should not be understood as a natural body. The basic internal biological constitution of the body has not been altered, nor has anything external been added to the body. So, we simply do not seem to have any reasons to claim that it is unnatural.

A more promising way of understanding the underlying modification attitude in sport is to use another distinction, namely the distinction between “raw material” and “cultivated material”. A sportsperson’s body is like the raw lump of clay of an artist, and this lump of clay can be shaped into different forms. The body becomes like a statue, something we are able to sculpture according to our own aims and goals. It becomes a landscape in need of being cultivated for us to be able to accept.³³ The sportsperson’s body is not natural in the sense of being wild, and it is not unnatural in the sense of not being biological, but it is a natural body that need, even ought, to be cultivated to be an acceptable body. In this sense, “bodies do not necessarily have to *be* strictly natural, but they must, at the very least, *resemble* nature”³⁴ and they should “reflect a kind of perfected nature because we are no longer content with nature’s own imperfect products”³⁵.

6. Control

The fact that the body needs to be modified in sport makes the body into a certain form of problem for the athlete, a problem that need to be controlled and disciplined by the athlete in different ways.

That body is a problem in sport might be somewhat counter-intuitive, since the fundamental aesthetics of sport assumes that body is a necessary element for doing sport. But, what one needs to understand is that sport rests upon a double attitude towards body. On the one hand, body is highly valued in the sports community, and most of the activities in sport aim at strengthening the body and enable people to have a healthy life-style through

unnatural bodies. But this might also be an illusion, in that it is a change from being determined by the body ideal to a mixture of the body ideal with the sport specific body perfectedness ideal (See for instance Magdalinski, Tara, *Sport, Technology and Body: The Nature of Performance*, p94-95.

33 Magdalinski, Tara, *Sport, Technology and Body: The Nature of Performance*, p 10

34 Magdalinski, Tara, *Sport, Technology and Body: The Nature of Performance*, p 49.

35 Magdalinski, Tara, *Sport, Technology and Body: The Nature of Performance*, p 49.

having a healthy body. On the other hand, there is a general attitude conceiving body as a “problem” of the athlete in that the body is an unwanted limitation for performance in sport, and hence, that body need to be under control. And, if we look at the everyday practice of sport, this second understanding of body stands out as the dominating attitude of body in sport. The essence of sport being the attempt to set new records, to test the body, means that it will always have to conceive, to some extent, body functions and body limitations as negative aspects of the sportsperson. The reason is simply that these body limitations hinder the person from performing the way he or she wants to perform. It is even the case that the body, to some extent, can be conceived of as an enemy to the athlete. The body exists as a given, as an uncontrolled hostile fact in relation to the athlete’s willingness to perform. It is a limitation of the athlete’s ability to express his or her own personality.

And, even if we do not go as far as claiming that the body is understood as an enemy to the athlete, the body is still understood as a given problem of the athlete. The reason is that athletes in their everyday training regimes try to optimize the body in relation to the sport performance, and that these training regimes, ultimately, consist in disciplining and controlling the body of sportspersons. This control and discipline of what is understood to be a problematic given body, consists of aiming at mastery of the body through having conscious control of the problematic body, and in a constant surveillance, control and disciplining of the body during training.

Concerning the mastery of the body, this is a feature sport shares with certain form of religious asceticism, but as Bordo has pointed out, also with more closely related phenomena such as body building and aerobics. It is a sense of mastery of the body derived from the “reassurance that one can overcome all physical obstacles”³⁶ and that one is “in total charge of the shape of one’s body”³⁷. The athlete acquire it by disciplining the body through (i) habitual training³⁸ in which the body should “learn” to do certain actions automatically, (ii) morphological training in which the training process gradually shapes the body to have a constitution or outlook that is as optimal as possible for a particular sport practice, and (iii) focus training³⁹ in which the athlete is gradually accepting the constant presence of pain experience in relation to sport performance, both in the training process and in the competitive situations.⁴⁰ Through these training regimes the athlete acquires the pervasiveness of sport, and the idea of pushing the human body to the absolute limit of what is possible for it to perform.⁴¹ You find it in the outright extreme sports such as triathlon, marathon, cycling, but you also see it in other sports such as football, where circumstances pushes the body beyond its normal limits in extreme sun or icy rain.

Concerning the constant surveillance and control of the body, we can see that exemplified in the medicalization and scientification of training regimes in modern sport, where there is an extreme focus upon effectiveness of the training process. This, in turn, involves careful and exact physiological, as well as psychological, tests as part of everyday activi-

36 Bordo, Susanne, ‘Anorexia Nervosa: Psychopathology as the Crystallization of Culture’, p 400.

37 Bordo, Susanne, ‘Anorexia Nervosa: Psychopathology as the Crystallization of Culture’, p 400-401

38 Howe, P. David, *Sport, Professionalism and Pain*, p 62

39 Howe, P. David, *Sport, Professionalism and Pain*.

40 Sportspersons are of course told to “listen” to their bodies as well. But, the interesting aspect is that the basic underlying attitude of sport consists of an idea of disciplining the sportsperson away from his or her pain experience in the body. This is the case even though all sport activity involves pain, possible pain or anticipation of possible pain.

41 Bordo, Susanne, ‘Anorexia Nervosa: Psychopathology as the Crystallization of Culture’, p 399

ties in sportspersons' lives. The underlying idea is, of course, that by having these assessments of the sportsperson's body, it is possible to monitor what counts as the sportspersons normal level of performance (as well as physiological and psychological abilities), and then adjust the training in such a way that the effect of the training is maximized to enable him or her to reach a certain pre-specified sports result.⁴²

In sport the need to control the body stems also from the fact that all bodies are vulnerable, and that they will break under certain circumstances. Athletes bodies, being very much on the edge of what is possible to perform for a human being, are even more vulnerable than the regular person's body. Because of this, bodies of athletes are in need of constant surveillance for the athlete to be able to perform at his best. In this sense, a relation between the body as an instrument and health is kept going in sport.⁴³ It is the case, as Magdalinski points out, that "greater physical demands are made of athletes' bodies, which require increasingly specialist care to ensure they remain fit, healthy and ready to perform."⁴⁴ The modern commercialisation of sport and professionalization of the sportsperson have increased this specialist care.⁴⁵ Modern sport requires that athletes participate in more competitions than before, and therefore the athletes are also in need of more medical control, since increase of competitions puts to much stress on the athletes' bodies.⁴⁶ It is even the case that an athlete can be allowed, if the body "require it", to use what is in other situations classified as doping. The overall aim is controlling the body so it can do the sports related performances as well as possible when at competitions.⁴⁷

Participation in sport is very much centred around scheduled activities, such as regular training sessions and diet schedules that the sportsperson must follow in order to optimize his or her body. These schedules structure the daily life of the sportsperson in such a way that it both disciplines and controls the everyday activities of the sportsperson. It is even the case that some athletes feel guilt and agony if they are unable to keep the planned training schedule or the scheduled diet. The reason is that breaking the training and diet schedules means losing control over the body, the controllable given. In this, sport provide a self-regulating consciousness that controls body, body functions and parts of the sportsperson through strict and individualised training schedules, nutrition prescriptions and tests. All in all, then, there is an urge to discipline and control the defective body, the disabled body, aiming at making the subject able to overcome the shortcomings of the body through creating a complete control over the weaknesses of the body.

42 The same procedure is the basis for determining what to count as abnormal levels of different hormones or abilities of athletes.

43 See for instance Magdalinski, Tara, *Sport, Technology and Body: The Nature of Performance*, p 72.

44 Magdalinski, Tara, *Sport, Technology and Body: The Nature of Performance*, p 79.

45 Howe, P. David, *Sport, Professionalism and Pain*, pp 90-101

46 Magdalinski, Tara, *Sport, Technology and Body: The Nature of Performance*, p 79.

47 This is a problem since it leaves the cases of doping hanging a bit in the air. If you have a prescription for certain medical treatment you are allowed to use it, even though it is under "normal" circumstances understood as doping. This leaves doping being based upon a distinction between the enhancing of performance, and the correcting of performance, and this is a very unclear distinction in real life of athletes since the underlying determining factor if an athlete is doped or not is based upon the intention of the athlete or the administrator of the substance.

7. Division of subject – body

The attitude that the body is to some extent a problem, and maybe even an enemy of the subject also presents itself in the conceptualization of a strict division between subject and body, a form of Cartesianism.

Cartesianism, then, is the view that a person is to be identified with the inner mental states or consciousness having knowledge, experiences, will and intention. The strict Cartesian identifies this mental entity with a soul, but it might equally well be called a mind (without implying any existing soul) where the mind is then substantially what a person is. In the actual world, mind is associated with a particular body, but mind have different properties and conditions of existence than body (strict Cartesians claim that the mind can even exist separately from the body). It is even the case that the body to some extent hinders the mind or subject to fully exist in accordance with its own conditions, such as when a physically disabled person's intentions are impossible to realize due to the disabilities. A further important aspect of Cartesianism is that different laws structure the mind and body. Logic and rational laws structure mind, whereas body is structured according to causal and mechanical laws. The body is, in this sense, nothing but a "machine" that needs to be under the supervision and control of the mind.⁴⁸

Though not necessarily interpreted in the strict ontological Cartesian sense, the basic understanding of the relation between mind and body in the sports community is still Cartesian in spirit, in that the phenomenology of experience shows that the sportsperson is the subject, the 'I' whereas the body is something different from the person. In the context of sport, the sportsperson is primarily identified with the mental entity, the subject, consciousness, experiences, emotions, will, and intentions, and the body is the tool, the instrument at disposal for this mental subject. Body is, in modern sports, a highly "complex mechanical machine"⁴⁹ that should be kept working through the help of professional medicine⁵⁰. It is a machine to be used by the subject in that the athletic body "has essentially become a piece of equipment, designed and built to elicit greater performances through improved output"⁵¹. The body, then, is to be used as an instrument of the subjects will and intention, and every

action, each ingestion, each input is coordinated to achieve specific outcomes, and, like a machine, the athlete is reduced to parts and systems that can be specified, isolated, transformed, honed, and finely tuned to produce a more rational and efficient body.⁵²

And, most of this tuning of the body is done with the aim of making the actions automatic. This means that the body, in sports, is an entity that stands in need of being taught

48 Descartes, René, *Discourse on Method and the Meditations*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968).

49 Howe, P. David, *Sport, Professionalism and Pain*, p 56

50 See for instance Howe, P. David, *Sport, Professionalism and Pain*, p 22. Basically, professional medicine is involved in sport for two reasons; first, it has a preventive aim in helping creating sustainable training regimes so that the vulnerable bodies of sportspersons can perform in accordance with the intentions of the sportspersons. Second, medicine also helps sportspersons' rehabilitation when their bodies are not performing optimally due to some injury or malfunctioning of the body. The medicine is, of course, mainly in professional elite sport, but it gets more and more common also in other levels of sport.

51 Magdalinski, Tara, *Sport, Technology and Body: The Nature of Performance*, p 35.

52 Magdalinski, Tara, *Sport, Technology and Body: The Nature of Performance*, pp 35-36

by the willing subject how to react in certain situations through training regimes in such a way that the body acts autonomously in those sporting performance situations. It might be thought that these performances are really not examples of a dualist attitude since a conscious reflection of body in doing a sporting performance would be very bad for the outcome.⁵³ It is then more reasonable to think that the aim somehow is to create an integral unity between mind and body. Though it is true that conscious reflection might be bad in the moment of sporting performance, and that there is a form of unity involved in (at least) some performances, I think that the overall conceptualisation rests upon a dualistic framework where the subject through the training regimes construe the body as an automatic, controlled body. This is particularly apparent in sport given the assumed idea that the subject owns its body. This ownership of body by the subject is shown, for instance, in the automatising of bodily movements by repetition, the learning of overcoming bodily pain, but also in those mental training regimes directed towards control of the body. In mental training athletes primarily construe images of successful performances or are strengthening their minds through relating their practice, pain, and sacrifices to a higher goal, i.e. the optimal performance, to be able to perform better on the sporting field. This means that we have mechanic training of the body, but a form of rational training of the sportsperson.⁵⁴ Furthermore, “ownership-relation” between the mental sportsperson and a particular body indicates that the body of the sportsperson is a form of alien object.⁵⁵ The body is owned, and hence not really a part of the subject, the sportsperson. The body, then, is a contingent fact, or at least a phenomenologically contingent fact, of the sportsperson. It is a fact whose existence or non-existence does not really affect the existence of the mental being that the sportsperson is. And, what happens in this alien body, do not happen to the sportsperson. The pain, though experienced by the subject, is something that should be conceived as something mechanical, as happening in the body, in something that is distinct from the rational sportsperson, and hence the sportsperson can and should keep control of it. It is even the case, as previously pointed out, that sport to some extent conceives the body as a confinement of the subject, something that limits the subject even though it’s not part of the subject,⁵⁶ and this even though the sportsperson owns the body. The human body, with its absolute and individual biological limitations, will always exist as an unwanted restriction to perform, an unwanted confinement of the sportsperson. It is as if the subject would be captured in the body, and cannot really fully free itself, be the full free striving and intending sport-ego.

This means, then, that the underlying Cartesian understanding of a division of mind and body of the sport person, that the body is a mechanistic entity distinct from the rational subject, strongly supports the basic idea that the body is an instrument that need to be controlled and optimized for performing sport related goals and intentions of the subject.

53 For example, a female 100 metre hurdle runner who would have to think every time of how to most optimally lift the first leg over the hurdle, and then the other leg, would run much slower than a person who have made the height and angle into automatic measurements in the body.

54 This could be a sign of there actually being a double instrumentalization in sport, one instrumentalization of the body, another instrumentalization of the mind of the sportsperson. Dr. Marzenna Jakubczak suggested this idea to me.

55 In this the bodies of sportspersons, just as in cases of anorexia nervosa, are experienced as something alien to the subject. See Bordo, Susanne, ‘Anorexia Nervosa: Psychopathology as the Crystallization of Culture’, p 394.

56 Bordo, Susanne, ‘Anorexia Nervosa: Psychopathology as the Crystallization of Culture’, p394.

8. The problem of instrumentality of the body in sport

Now, we have seen that sport, and the sports community, by and large is connected with a conceptualization of body which constructs the body of the athlete as primarily an instrumental tool for the performance of specific sport tasks.

Before proceeding with what I take to be some problematic features of this conceptualization in sport, one general counter-perspective has to be dealt with. I have already pointed out that everything can, and is used as an instrument for other things. The body is no exception. Now, the counter-perspective holds it that the kind of instrumentalization that I have attributed to sports and the sports community, is not exclusive for sports. This instrumentalization also exists in, for instance, the musical world where musicians practice and construe bodies as tools for handling musical instruments or their voices, or for that matter in religious ritualized asceticism (and ritual non-asceticism as well) where the body need to be modified and controlled as the instrument for realization of higher spiritual aims and goals.

Well, both of these points are correct, in the sense that the body is an instrument for the purpose of something else, for the realization of some other value. However, I do think there is a striking difference between the case of instrumentalization that take place in sport, and the use of the body as instrument for musical performances. Although you need to control your body and body movements, and also to some extent modify the body through practicing, in music, there is neither an underlying understanding of perfectedness of body for playing guitar or singing, nor in any way as a necessary consequence of doing music a division between the subject who is performing and the body that is used as performing tool. And when it comes to ritualized asceticism, I would be inclined to think that both instrumentalization of body in sport and instrumentalization of body in religious asceticism are equally problematic, as both of them rests upon a fundamental division between subject and body, and that this in both cases can lead to self-inflicted harm and long-term damages to the self as embodied self. A difference, though, between asceticism and instrumentalization of body in sport, is that in ritualized asceticism it seems that it does not so much rest upon an idea of perfectedness of body, and hence optimization of body, but rather a complete denial or annihilation of the body. This shows that instrumentalization of body can come in slightly different ways, but still have similar negative consequences for individuals.

Furthermore, a possible counter-argument against my claim that sport and sporting community is associated with this implicit instrumentalization of body is to hold on to the view that instrumentalization of body actually occurs in sport, but that there is no necessary connection between sport itself and this instrumentalization. Rather, it could be claimed that instrumentalization of the body consists of cases in which the sporting practices is malfunctioning. Now, of course, it is true that extreme cases of instrumentalization of body, cases that lead to serious consequences for the athlete, normally can be understood as ex-

ceptions. But, that does not mean that sport is not associated with an implicit understanding of the body as an instrument for the performance of sport activities..⁵⁷

What, then, are the negative aspects of this instrumentalization of body in sport and sports community? First, instrumentalization of body in sport is, it seems, not consistent with some of the more basic official ideas represented by the sports community. For instance, The Swedish National Organization for Sport claims

Through sport activity we train and develop the body in such a way that we feel well and can increase our performance in the sports field as well as in ordinary life. Thus sport is of great importance for people's health.⁵⁸

That is, according to the sports community, sport is an activity that increases the health of the person by, for instance, developing the body. That sport develops the body is absolutely correct, though it is questionable if this is done with the perspective of achieving health. Contrary to representing a healthy perspective on the body of the person, sport through the instrumentalization of the body is representing the body as something that the individual sport subject can and should gamble with. For instance, sport, by instrumentalizing the body, is putting the present and future health of the person at great risk through possible injuries and stress related harm of the persons' body. Furthermore, body is something that can be experimented with, in the aim of reaching good results, even if it causes great pain. As the classic saying states: "No pain, no gain". In sport, body is, simply disposable, regardless of health considerations.

Another aspect of the instrumentalization of body in sport is that it also leads to an atomization of the body, both in the sense that it constructs a division between mind and body, but also in the sense that different body parts are mechanically and individually conceived. And to claim, as the sports community does, that sport leads to people being healthy when at the same time supporting an activity in which the wholeness of personhood is denied, is problematic in that it does not capture a full perspective of what it is to be a human person.

Second, several of the elements involved in the instrumentalization of body have also been identified as important features involved in anorexia nervosa. According to Bordo, features such as modifiability of body, control of body and a strict division between subject and body in line with Cartesianism constitutes some of the basic elements in, what she called, our psychopathological culture, having as consequences self-starvation and self-inflicting of harm by individuals in society.⁵⁹ Though not necessarily concluding that sport

57 Furthermore, and a rather interesting feature is that this way of arguing, which is a very common way of arguing by the sports community, need a further investigation of its own. The general argumentation structure looks like the following: First, it is claimed and argued that the basic structure or value of sport is X. Then, any exception, either in policydocuments or in practice, pointed out concerning the structure or value X, is explained as either a malfunction of sport or as bad behaviours of strictly individuals who, by their actual behaviour, have not understood the basic idea, structure or meaning of sport. By using this strategy, sport as a structural phenomena can always be upheld in its purity.

58 From Swedish Sport Confederation, (Riksidrottsförbundet), *Idrotten vill* (Stockholm, Riksidrottsförbundet, 2009), "Genom idrottsverksamheten tränar vi och utvecklar kroppen så att vi mår bra och kan prestera mera såväl på idrottsbanan som i vardagen. Idrotten har på så sätt stor betydelse för folkhälsan."

59 Bordo, Susanne, 'Anorexia Nervosa: Psychopathology as the Crystallization of Culture', in Crowley, H., & Himmelweit, S., eds., *Knowing Woman: Feminism and Knowledge*, (Cambridge/Oxford: Polity Press/Open University Press, 1992)

is a psychopathological culture, the fact that sport is associated with an instrumentalization of the body that actually contains the same features that Bordo identified in anorexia nervosa, can give us a form of understanding why sporting community, in their policy paper on diet also emphasizes prevention of anorexia nervosa and similar disorders. It might simply be that sport is an optimal surrounding for developing eating disorders, since such heavy focus is put on perfectedness of body, training regimes and control of calories, proteins etcetera. The optimal situation for a sportsperson is when the energy used in training and performance corresponds perfectly with calories, proteins and other nutritional elements necessary for the performance, thereby creating optimal conditions for a successful performance in the end. And furthermore, in many sports there is an advantage if the body is close to the lower numbers according to the standard BMI, such as, for instance, ski jumping, long distance running, gymnastics, and speedway. And, it might only be a slight slip of the mind before a functional instrumentalized conceptualization of body turns into a negative instrumentalization, where body no longer is understood as a part of the athlete, but as an alien entity that limits the athlete.

Third, the sports community, who has assumed responsibility for educating young people in positive values, needs to look carefully into what kind of values it really brings with it in its activities. For instance, The Swedish National Organization for Sport claims

Through the ordinary activities in sport, children and young people are learning to care for their bodies. In sports organisations they also become participants in a positive community that in and by itself functions in a preventive way.⁶⁰

Normally, then, the sports community is understood as a guard of positive values, and sportspersons' internalize good societal norms and values concerning their own or others' bodies through participating, and being educated, in sport. But given the instrumentalization of body within sports, one can really question if it is not the case that there is a discrepancy between values formulated in official documents, and values underlying the reality of actually doing sports and sports participation. For instance, the underlying assumption of the sports community, with its focus on personal responsibility for one's own body, through the ideas of perfectedness of body, modification of body, control of body and the differentiation between body as "raw material" and body as "cultivated material", seems to put a heavy duty on individuals' responsibility of their own bodies, and the way they are healthy and work. This might be part of the basis for a form of underlying individualistic fascistoid attitude of sport as such,⁶¹ which to a large extent is inconsistent with sports otherwise desired values of health, respect, generosity and tolerance.⁶² One case where

60 Swedish Sport Confederation, The policy of The Swedish National Organization for Sport (Riksidrottsförbundet): *Alkohol och tobak inom idrotten*, (Stockholm, Riksidrottsförbundet, 2007). "Genom idrottens ordinarie verksamhet lär sig barn och ungdomar att värna om sin kropp. I föreningar blir de också delaktiga i en positiv gemenskap som i sig fungerar förebyggande."

61 Tännsjö, Torbjörn, 'Is it Fascistoid to Admire Sport Heroes?', in *Values in sport*, ed. Tännsjö, T., and Tamburrini, C., (London: E & FN Spon, 1999). In claiming that the instrumentalization of body in sport might be part of a fascistoid attitude in sport, I go one step further than Tännsjö. Tännsjö's main target in his article is to show that the sport audience can be understood as having fascistoid attitudes in their celebration of the winner, (the stronger), and thereby having a contempt for the loser (the weaker). My point is that sport in itself might be understood as also incorporating attitudes of a fascistoid nature..

62 These values have been thought to be at the very heart of sportsmanship and fair play in sport. See for instance, Lindfeldt, Mikael, *Idrott och moral: Reflektioner över idrottens ideal*, (Nora: Nya Doxa, 1999),

this might express itself is in relation to overweight and obesity.⁶³ Both people with overweight and obese people are, in modern society, met with a negative and even unfriendly and disgusted attitude, though it is more evident towards obese people.⁶⁴ And sport with its personal responsibility of body, might be part of this cultural moral indignation. Either in the sense that it has accepted a form of cultural attitude to persons and their bodies, or that sport actually also is fomenting this attitude. Can it be that sports community, through its understanding of body as being given as a raw material to a person, and that the person then should take care, or is obliged to take care, of this body through cultivating it according to cultural standards, is provoking this form of negative moral attitude to person who suffer from obesity or overweight?

9. Conclusion

The aim of this paper was to present an implicit conceptualization of the body of sportspersons that exists parallel to the official view, and also to point out some problematic aspects of this implicit conceptualization. I have tried to argue that this alternative understanding consists of several different, and highly interrelated, conceptualizations of body in sport, and that it amounts to an instrumentalization of the body in sport. I have argued that there exists an instrumentalization of the body in the sports community due to the fact that athletes, in their attitude towards their bodies, basically are focusing exclusively upon optimizing their bodies to perform certain sport related performances. Furthermore, I claimed that this optimization of the body rests upon an underlying idea of perfectedness of the body, which means fulfilling specific sports-internal functions, i.e. the perfectedness is related towards the kind of performances that are required in particular sports. Related to this is the idea of the body being modifiable. There is an underlying attitude in sports that the body can and ought to be modified or sculptured in such a way that it satisfies, as far as possible, this perfectedness ideal in sport. This requires that athletes, and other members of the sports community, are constantly surveying the sportspersons' bodies, to avoid injuries, but also to enable the body to acquire the needed features for performing as well as possible. All of this is then related to an idea of a strict division between the sportsperson being the rational subject or the mental being, and the body being a mechanic instrument to reach its aims.

The question then, is whether these attitudes are of a destructive nature. Well, to some extent it seems that they can be. Some of the attitudes in the sports community resemble attitudes involved in anorexia nervosa, such as modification of body, control of body, division of body and person. These attitudes are, if not consciously discussed and criticised,

pp, 80-88.

63 Overweight and obesity is defined in relation to Body Mass Index (BMI). A BMI between 25-29.9 is classified as overweight, and obesity consists of a BMI above 30 (though there are three different categories of obesity). The BMI values are both age dependent and sex dependent, but regardless of these relativizations of the BMI value, it is questionable what absolute worth the BMI value actually has.

64 See for instance, Berryman, D., F., Dubale, M., D., Manchester, D., S., and Mittelstaedt, R., 'Dietetics Students Possess Negative Attitudes toward Obesity Similar to Nondietetics Students', *Journal of the American Dietetic Association*, Vol. 106, issue 10, October 2006, pages 1678-1682.

probably negative, both for the sports community itself and for society at large, since sport nowadays has such an impact on people's, and especially young people's, lives.

Lastly, the sports community, normally associated with good and desirable values, and having a fostering role in society, need to carefully scrutinize its own conceptualizations and practical activities so there is a consistency between the official policy documents and the practice. This is particularly pointed out in the case of attitudes towards overweight and obesity in contemporary society. There is a risk that sport, with its focus on an individuals' personal responsibility of body appearance, is, rather than providing a critical and constructive transcending path away from the cultural moral indignation associated with overweight and obesity, fomenting this cultural moral indignation by providing the basis for a fascistoid attitude towards body.

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