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Thinking about the Gym: Greek Ideals, Newtonian Bodies and Exercise in Early Eighteenth-Century Britain

ROBERT BATCHELOR

Abstract: Revival of Greek ideas about exercise in the British and Irish Enlightenment by doctors led to a shift in understandings about the independent mind by establishing a relation between bodily and mental health. By the late 1730s, interest shifted away from mind and body and towards the sentiments and passions, which marked gender distinctions and held together national communities. Gilbert West's writing about the Olympics in the 1740s indicated the difficulty in resolving tensions about exercise and sport as producing aristocratic distinction and violent passions as against their encouragement of healthy minds and civic virtue in the nation.

Keywords: exercise, Olympics, sport, George Cheyne, sentimentalism, Gilbert West, Enlightenment

It is often easy to forget that the original Olympics as well as their nineteenth-century revival had as much to do with exercise and education, the practice of the gymnasium, as with the competitive entertainment of sport, the spectacle of the arena. Although the connection between the cultivation of the mind and the body came down from the Greeks in the medical tradition through writers such as Aristotle and Galen, the radical distinction made by Descartes between res cogitans and res extensa, mind and body, as a defining point of science and Enlightenment appeared to suggest that the cultivation of reason was best served by a kind of Stoic detachment from physical activity. But in early eighteenth-century Britain, a crucial location for the development of modern notions of sport, the concept of 'exercise' became on the advice of physicians the basis for a kind of mass movement supporting physical activity as good for cultivating both body and mind. Rather than a discourse of restraint, like politeness, this revival of the ancient Greek concept of exercise actively attempted to address the limitations of the theory of the independent mind inherited from seventeenth-century science and philosophy, building in the process a broader public for the claims of the new science and new philosophies.

There remains something of a cultural taboo in mentioning exercise and sports in connection with the Enlightenment, or the 'Age of Reason' as it was once called. It goes back at least to Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, who for good reasons expressed anxiety about the Nazi sports palace and Leni Riefensthal's celebration of the Olympics, writing rather bluntly that 'Those who extolled the body in Germany, the gymnasts and outdoor sports enthusiasts, always had an intimate affinity to killing.' Others, notably Norbert Elias and his student Eric Dunning in their landmark collection of essays *Quest for Excitement*, did their best to rehabilitate sport in relation to the 'civilizing process' as something that not only decreased violent impulses but also defined polite and rule-bound conflict appropriate to an emerging democratic society. They in turn

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failed to capture the liberating and often transcultural aspects of sports and exercise that appear rexample, in C. L. R. James's famous account of cricket. Each of these approaches oids the question of the embodied mind and the dynamic historical questions that emerged in the British Enlightenment around the question of how to understand it.³

The ambiguities surrounding the most famous advocate of exercise in the early eighteenth century, the Newtonian physician George Cheyne, offer some sense of why it remains difficult to address these questions. Cheyne, in his Essay of Health and Long Life (1724), had been one of the first to recommend a broad spectrum of everyday exercises as part of a healthy daily regimen, including billiards and cricket for rheumatism, tennis for feeble arms, football for weak hams and bell-ringing or pumping for a bad back, as well as exercise more generally for the health of the mind and spirit. Dancing and walking could be equally effective for men and women.⁴ With this very popular book, which went through eight editions in the decade that followed, Cheyne's exercise and diet suggestions became the subject of dinner conversation and what one author called 'Sects in the Dietetic philosophy'. 5 Born in Aberdeen, Chevne is usually given only a prole in the of the Scottish, and more broadly British, Enlightenment, despite ar inf 😽 th his Newtonian and medicinal theories on Hutcheson and Hume as well 😿 th the Methodist and sentimental movements in England. Chevne considered himself as one who wanted to 'enlighten' the public, as he said in his autobiographical 'Case of the Author' appended to his English Malady (1733), and at one time he aspired to write a *Principia* for medicine that would turn that discipline it into a true mathematical *scientia*. When the poet Thomas Gray imagined a conversation between ancient and modern geniuses, he included Cheyne among a list of conversants that included Aristotle, Euclid, Ovid, Virgil, Locke, Malebranche and Swift.⁶ But Cheyne was also a failure, angering Newton in 1703 by publishing before the master a general summary of the fluxion calculus. In the aftermath of the controversy he gained vast amounts of weight (up to 32 stone or c.450 lb.) in the 1720s in binges of drinking and eating as he struggled to find a place in Aberdeen, London and Bath, and he sought solace in a kind of Neoplatonic spiritualism learned from Scottish mystics.⁷

Many historians as a result treat Cheyne as an almost grotesque figure, clearly damaged by Newton's rejection of his ideas and his own provincialism and later obsessed with all too discursive mental health diagnoses of hysteria, the vapours and melancholia in women. Roy Porter quoted him as struggling with his 'own crazy Carcase', understanding Cheyne's confessional writing about diet as a kind of *Pilgrim's Progress*. His popularity clearly did at some level come from his performative story of depression and weight gain and loss, which brought him down to as little as 9 stone (125 lb.) if his accounts are to be believed. His portrait from 1732, dignified but hardly what one might imagine for a diet and exercise guru, circulated widely as an engraving and mezzotint in both London and Bath, where it was a popular souvenir at the Great Toy Shop. This portrait has been in many ways an ambiguous sign, serving as a visual reminder of the challenges in framing Cheyne's work within broader narratives of Enlightenment. Indeed, Cheyne consistently returns historians to George Rousseau's provocative question, 'In which "discipline" ought a figure such as Cheyne be studied?'9

In the early eighteenth century, certain strains of Enlightenment thinking along with the more practical advice of physicians tried to place a particular vision of ancient Greek exercise and sport in a closer dialogue with contemporary Britain. Cheyne's friend Jonathan Swift, for example, put at the core of Houyhnhnm society a kind of utopian version of Greek gymnastic education, having Gulliver describe them as

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49 50 train[ing] up their Youth to Strength, Speed, and Hardiness, by exercising them in running Races up and down steep Hills, or over hard stony Grounds; and when they are all in a Sweat, they are ordered to leap over Head and Ears into a Pond or River. Four times a Year the Youth of certain Districts meet to shew their Proficiency in Running and Leaping, and other Feats of Strength or Agility; where the Victor is rewarded with a Song made in his or her Praise. ¹⁰

Swift clearly wanted to use such gymnastic training to differentiate Houyhnhnms from Yahoos, who rarely, in Gulliver's increasingly estranged eyes, practised the equine values of 'temperance, industry, exercise and cleanliness'. The questions involved here are rather different from those posed by Elias and Dunning in relation to sport as a tool for the moderation of social violence or more recent discursive studies about eighteenth-century 'politeness' and religious 'enthusiasm'. They are closer to what Jan de Vries, C. A. Bayly and Craig Muldrew have talked about in terms of the 'industrious revolution', the efficient bodies photographed a century later by Muybridge in his time-motion studies. Bayly, in particular, has written about modernity as 'building outward from the body', a growing uniformity in bodily practices at a global level observable in, among other things, rules for sports and games but also intertwined with colonial practices, as in Swift's Ireland. As Swift's horses suggest, there could be something unsettling about the need for exercise to theories of the independent rational mind. Swift's Houyhnhnms in some way must be horses – the success of their civic virtue requires a generation of independence by educating the youth through exercise. Rather than pantheistic, this enlargement of the human into horseness, which connects the education of mind and body, seems like an uncanny return of 'country' and aristocratic values to the mercantile Gulliver, and Gulliver finds it difficult to return to London, where he is surrounded by the confused bodies and minds of Yahoos.

Part of the dilemma seems to have come out of the sense that Stoic intellectual labour (and critical observation or 'spectatorship') failed on its own to produce an independent political subject or, in the case of the Irish Dean Swift or of Cheyne the Scot, despite their moves to London, a proper scientific observer. Conversely, simple industriousness and exercise seemed virtues more appropriately aimed at labourers, wild Irish and highland Scots. This broader British and Irish uncertainty about political subjectivity and intellectual labour may be one reason why the 'English Enlightenment' has often seemed less clearly defined than the rationalist French or even Jonathan Israel's radically pantheist and internationalist Dutch, and why writers such as Swift expressed such ambiguity about the Laputa-like rationalism of London's Royal Society, floating above the undisciplined activities of the 'many busy Heads, Hands, and Faces' of Balnibari.

For France, Descartes had set the model for the solitary mind alone in his study, withdrawn from the world and using geometry to leverage the world from its stability. Despite an interest in Greek geometry and Platonic dualism, Descartes's gesture was largely Roman and Stoic, in which a connection existed between mind and body that should be actively resisted. Seneca's eightieth epistle (epitomised by the translation in 1620 commas Lodge) set out the terms quite starkly: 'That the common sort went to the Shewes and Games, hee to his studie and contemplation. That the minde is to be beautified and not the bodie.' Seneca's letter began not with the scholar himself withdrawing but with everyone withdrawing from the scholar because of, as it was translated in the seventeenth century, a football game:

This day I am wholly mine owne, not onely by mine owne means, but for that the Foot-ball play hath withdraawne all those that were troublesome unto mee, and came to importune mee. There is not one that thrusteth in upon mee, no man distracteth my thoughts, my doore

creaked not so often as it was accustomed, my hanging was not lifted up, I have freedome to be solitary, which is most necessary for him that walketh alone, and followeth his own way [...] Behold a huge cry is raysed in the Theater, where men exercise their running, which cannot draw my selfe from my selfe, but rather transporteth me to contemplate on the Combats that are in hand. I thinke with my selfe, how many exercise their bodies, how few their minds; how many men throng to a vaine and trifling spectacle, and what desolation there is about good arts, how weakly minded they are, whose armes and shoulders we wonder at? But above all I meditate upon this: If a man may by exercise bring his bodie to this patience whereby he may sustayne not only the strokes and spurnes of many men, whereby soyled with his own bloud [...] how much more easily may the mind be strengthened invincibly to entertayne the shocke of Fortune, to the end that being cast to ground, and trod under foot, he may yet rayse himself? 12

For Descartes, Stoic training of the mind had been a way of clearly defining independence and the individual away from both common bodily and Jesuit spiritual exercises, one reason why he proved attractive to an Irish Protestant such as his English translator William Molyneaux. 'The mind', as Milton would have Satan say, following Seneca and the broader Stoic and indeed Protestant idea of self-sufficiency, 'is its own place.'¹³

The radically independent mind of Seneca and especially Descartes has traditionally served as the classic basis of Enlightenment rationality and republicanism. Without a Stoic concept of the independence of mind, how could one frame the notion of individual authority or scientific observation in ways that did not simply derive from the virtual or Hobbesian body of the sovereign? Scholars have proposed collective witnessing (the Royal Society), sociability (politeness), printing and coffee houses (the public) and the citizensoldier of civic humanism as possible late seventeenth- and eighteenth-century answers to this question in terms of collective authority. But especially by the 1720s such collective solutions also raised suspicions, and here lay the core of Swift's satire. In the world of Walpolean Parliamentary corruption, Irish penal laws and General Wade's Black Watch one could not achieve independence through mere Senecan/Cartesian withdrawal of the mind, despite the efforts of John Locke to create a natural world of ideas or Bishop Berkeley of Cloyne to make perception divine. Only among the horses in a country retreat could one emulate the Greeks and achieve true embodiment of mind through a combination of physical and intellectual labour.

Many of Swift's English contemporaries were, however, far more confident of the possibilities of Grecian exercises. A new translation of the Greek Stoic Epitectus described his preparations for the Olympic Games as a process akin to training for philosophy, while Plato became a wrestler in the account of one of his early eighteenth-century biographers. ¹⁴ Compared with this, the Senecan scholar, fearful of the public and their sporting events, looked unhealthy, sitting at his desk all day and night, squinting at mathematical diagrams and scribbling calculations by candlelight. Following certain Greek ideals, Joseph Addison proclaimed himself no mere spectator but 'a compound of soul and body', obliged to labour and exercise as well as study and contemplate. Although he too preferred the country activities of hunting and riding, when in town, as he wrote in the *Spectator* for 12 July 1711,

I exercise myself an hour every morning upon a dumb-bell [a bell without a clapper] that is placed in the corner of my room, and pleases me the more because it does everything I require of it in the most profound silence. My landlady and her daughters are so well acquainted with my hours of exercise, that they never come into my room to disturb me whilst I am ringing.¹⁵

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Addison felt obliged to lift in private, explicitly away from the eyes of the women in the house, let alone the broader public. He also engaged in solitary skiomachia ($\Sigma \kappa \iota o \mu \alpha \chi \iota \alpha$), or shadow boxing with free weights, which he appropriately claimed to have learned from reading an obscure sixteenth-century treatise on gymnastics rather than training at a martial arts academy or emulating street fighting. ¹⁶

Why exercise in private rather than publicly in a gymnasium like the Greeks or collectively through sport? Addison's initial concern in his essay was to separate ordinary labour, the industriousness of the English populace, from the voluntary labour of exercise. Resistant to the more violent aspects of James Figg's boxing (Figg opened his School of Arms and Art of Self-Defence Academy in Tottenham Court Road in 1719) as well as popular ball games and acrobatics in the fields surrounding London, where William Bedle was becoming the first star of English cricket, Addison nevertheless believed that such activities were ultimately healthy. 17 He understood the body in terms of Newtonian and ultimately Aristotelian kinetics (although Newton himself held different views), a system of pipes that needs to be cleared and cleansed by exercise. Without such movement the body lacked 'vigour' and the soul 'cheerfulness'. Addison went out of his way to emphasise the benefits of exercise for the 'faculties of the mind', including 'keeping the understanding clear, the imagination untroubled, and refining those spirits that are necessary for the proper exertion of our intellectual faculties, during the present laws of union between soul and body'. Neglecting exercise by the studious and sedentary led to melancholic spleen in men and the vapours in women – that is to sa pression. Country life as well as industrious physical labour provided such cleansing as ter, of course, but the emerging urban middle class did not reap the same benefits. They needed to use their leisure time in an industrious manner in order to remain healthy. Beneath Addison's confident advocacy of an hour of private exercise each day lay the sense that, unlike the Greeks, the English and the 'moderns' more generally had failed to come to terms with the compound nature of mind and body.

The 'British Enlightenment' deserves to be called such precisely because it marked a radical departure from the more limited theory of mind espoused by Cartesianism and neo-Stoic science more generally, involving an active debate over what the relation between mind and body should be. Before the late seventeenth century, recommendations for exercise were largely aimed at preserving the integrity of the body and mind. In the 1680s Thomas Sydenham was the first English physician to advocate exercise as part of a regimen of health, specifically for warding off hysteria. ¹⁸ Michel Foucault, as one might expect, attributed Sydenham's encouragement of riding and walking to an increasing regulation of the movement of the body, arguing that this, 'therapeutics of movement conceals the idea of a seizure by the world of the alienated mind'. ¹⁹ But for Sydenham, whose writings tended towards a kind of natural philosophy, the basic gesture was to stabilise the mind within a now fragile, uncertain and in a Hobbesian sense discredited natural order, the Restoration regrets of one who like Milton supported the cause of a monarch-less Parliament.

In the aftermath of the Glorious Revolution, English physicians, notably Francis Fuller and John Floyer, began to investigate diagnostic and therapeutic strategies derived from other medical traditions, respectively the Greek and the Chinese, in order to try and resolve how one could actually measure the effects of exercise on producing healthy mental states. Addison took the lion's share of his ideas on exercise from the 1705 edition of Fuller's *Medicina Gymnastica: or, A Treatise Concerning the Power of Exercise*, which argued that gymnastic exercise, neglected since the ancient Greeks, was in fact the key to medicine. Fuller worried that to some modern doctors this might seem to be a primitive

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approach, alluding to the famous semi-barbarous nature of the Greeks and their Dionysian festivals, but he nevertheless insisted that it should form an equally valid part of therapeutics. He could not say why the contemporary British no longer exercised properly in the manner of the Greeks. The omission of exercise from medicinal practice might be a very old Gothic problem in which Greek concepts had not translated – northern European nations not placing as much emphasis on exercise as southern ones – or it could be a more recent problem derived from the impression given by the anatomical table that medicine was an entirely internal rather than partially an external question. Addressing both issues, Fuller redefined exercise in Newtonian terms as the motion of the body generated at least partially by externalities to it. Such motions in turn could change both bodily and mental health, asserting both performatively and physically a new self, one in some ways appropriate to the more republican gestures of the Glorious Revolution.

Published in 1707, the same year as the second edition of Fuller's book, John Floyer's Physician's Pulse Watch also tried to redefine therapeutics and exercise. Floyer relied on a series of accounts of Chinese medicine, including Andreas Cleyer's Specimen Medicinae (1682), on Chinese methods for taking the pulse.21 In terms of which tradition to revive and which concepts to translate, Floyer thought that the Chinese used a more empirical method than the Greeks (Galen) for taking the pulse, tying it to the state of particular organs in the body rather than more abstract and mathematical 'magnitiudes' defined through geometry. Regulating heart rate was the essence of Chinese medicine, a balancing of forces both between the body and the world and between organs within the body, whereas the inaccuracies of Greek pulse measurement techniques (and geometric science) had led them to neglect the interplay of forces external to and within the body.²² Because the Chinese technique was more precise, they could use pulse measurement as part of 'therapeutics' rather than simply diagnostics (which he classified in good Greek fashion as 'Prognostications and Semiotica') – like the heart rate monitor on a modern treadmill. But Floyer, not knowing how to read Chinese and having access to a Latin translation and some Chinese anatomical prints, admittedly ld not fully understand their methods. So in a nod to Newtonian mechanics he recommended instead using a stopwatch (his own model – the 'pulse watch') and then moderating the pulse through a combination of baths, diet and, above all, exercise. As with Addison's dumb-bell, exercise required a technical apparatus that could guarantee physical labour was actually occurring and not becoming excessive.

It was Cheyne who in the 1720s spread these ideas more broadly, but even before that point the movement had become fashionable, as Addison's private exercises suggest. By the 1720s the idea of *public* exercise was also gaining traction, tied in part to the interest in popular spectator shows and sports. In 1727 twenty-two men in their seventies played an exhibition match of cricket in Cranbrook, Kent.²³ East India Company servants diverted themselves in the 1720s with 'Cricket, and other Exercises' as locals watched on as 'spectators' near Khambhat.²⁴ Not to be outdone, the gentry and aristocracy at times participated in such country activities, but they increasingly developed their own spaces for public exercise. This was especially true in the fashion for purchasing country houses next to spa towns such as Bath or Epsom. Advertisements suggested that light exercise such as walking or fishing could be combined with spectatorship of village sports like cricket or the more aristocratic pastimes of horse-racing and fox-hunting.²⁵ John Wood, Ralph Allen's chief architect for the resort town of Bath, wanted to put in a 'Forum, Circus and Imperial Gymnasium', along Roman lines. Wood believed that this would re-establish Roman gymnastics in Britain, claiming falsely that the first Roman gymnasium had been built at Bath. Inspired by the Colosseum, Wood's celebrated King's Circus (1754) was to

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have a 320-foot diameter central space for the 'exhibition of sports'. In the final design this was decided impractical. In fact, it had fallen victim to a complex reaction to the English exercise movement.²⁶

In the 1720s Bath became an important centre for the exercise movement, in particular because Cheyne went there to conduct public exercises and to cure maladies such as melancholy, hysteria and the gout. Cheyne became a major backer not of the exercise fields, however, but of the General Hospital or Infirmary (also known as the Mineral Water Hospital, founded in 1738), a charity for which he served as a trustee from 1725.²⁷ Cheyne had moved to Bath by 1718 and become a sensation there and in London, especially with his publications in the 1720s. His milk diet, which appeared in Cheyne's *Essay on Gout* (1720), was learned from a doctor in Croydon but supposedly inspired by 'lusty and strong' Scottish Highlanders, who ate lots of porridge.²⁸ But by 1725 Cheyne was—also having weight problems with this regimen, which became the subject of his confessional story in *The*—lish *Malady* (1733).²⁹

Expect 1730s Cheyne, both personally and publicly, shifted the debate from exercise to diet. Cheyne knew some Greek and was seen by his contemporaries as inspired by Greece. 'So many Grecian Sages live in Thee', wrote one admirer.³⁰ He came to think of medicine, however, in temoving of obstructions and excess, Newtonian bodies in rest and motion, unlike the lier's or Floyer's effort to translate a Classical approach to mind and body derived from either Greece or China. For Cheyne medicine had always been defined by the natural, and all the physician could really do is to prescribe a regimen, involving air, exercise and evacuation to facilitate removal of such build-ups.³¹ His English Malady, or, A Treatise of Nervous Diseases of All Kinds (1733) reflected his growing sense of ambiguity about exercise, especially games and sports, as tools for doing this. His recommendations for activities narrowed substantially, and he only supported a 'low regimen' of exercise (namely riding and walking), leaving out many of the specific sports he had previously recommended for fear that too much exercise could lead to nervous and psychiatric disorders. He argued that slow thinkers were better than quick thinkers because they proved less prone to disease, and he advocated 'easy and agreeable' reading and 'innocent entertaining amusement' rather than more excitable sports such as football or cricket. Cheyne seems to have come to fear what Elias and Dunning (not to mention Aristotle in the *Poetics*) refer to as the cathartic power of sports.³²

Despite its strong connection with medical discourse, clearly by the 1720s exercise had taken on broader implications not only for philosophy but also, and more importantly, for sociability. In part, Cheyne's new fears seem to have come out of a redefinition of women in relation to the embodied mind, a shift, as Anita Guerrini has argued, that involved conceiving of women as emotional and sociable rather than in terms of the bodily and the mental.³³ Cheyne already in the mid-1720s was contending that riding was the best exercise because it was 'manly'. Adam's punishment of working by the sweat of his brow was actually for Cheyne a kind of remedy for bodily disorders and specifically the poison of the tree of knowledge. These passages on exercise from his *Essay on Health* made some quite radical claims about the relation of the body and mind to environment, noting that, after the Fall.

there happened an intire Revolution in the Complexion and Qualities of the minds of the first Pair (of Mankind) so to me there appear to be evident Indications of a designed change and alteration in the material World, and the Nature of the Animals and Vegetables, which subsist on this Globe, from what they were when God pronounced everything good that he had made.³⁴

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Such remarks in the 1720s were entirely aimed at the treatment of men, even though Cheyne had women patients. After some prominent failures, including the death under his care of Robert Walpole's eldest daughter, Catherine, in 1722, as well as the success of his diet, Cheyne by the 1730s refocused his efforts towards emotional and sentimental problems affecting women, notably hysteria and the vapours.³⁵

Cheyne, now in his sixties and from 1733 avidly corresponding with Samuel Richardson, began to reinstitute the split between mind and body in his descriptions of emotional and sentimental pathologies that empiricist doctors in the first three decades of the eighteenth century, including himself, had undermined. The nervous system, which included emotional and sentimental states once associated with the body, was in this account removed from the world and thus increasingly from exercise and sport. His shift in emphasis paralleled that of Francis Hutcheson, working in Ireland in the 1720s and then Scotland in the 1730s, who was developing a theory of the passions and sentiments and interested in the problem of their moderation. Influenced by Cheyne's writings, Edmund Burke would come to argue that the sublime was a kind of convalescence after the aesthetic experience of pain, which shook and worked the emotions as exercise did the muscles. Musings on feeling replaced questions about the kind of physical education necessary to main independent minds, and women were increasingly divorced from such questions agether.

As exercise became more closely tied to emotional states, particular kinds of sports – notably cricket – became identified with national passions and masculinity, the 'manly Britishness' of the new patriotism that emerged in the 1740s and '50s.³⁹ Away from the exercising body, mind became defined much more broadly in relation to a public network of sentiment and affect described as 'sympathy' and linked through the imagination. Because of this the passions of the spectator became an even more significant issue than the passions generated in actual participation in sports. This would be the signature of both Richardson's sentimentalism and the Scottish Enlightenment, beginning with Hume's engagement with Cheyne's work in the Treatise on Human Nature (1739). Hume emphasised the way that physical labour produced a different constellation of sentiments in day labourers, as opposed to 'men of quality'. Adam Smith's Theory of Moral Sentiments (1759) would broaden such observations into communities of sentiment, while Adam Ferguson worried in civic humanist terms in his An Essay on the History of Civil Society (1767) that the national spirit and 'the vigour of a nation, like that of a natural body, does not waste by a physical decay, that yet it may sicken for want of exercise.'40 Such writers, along with the spiritualists in the Methodist movement, were now quite far away from physicians who had generally advised an hour of exercise each day for reasons of health, let alone the democratic aspirations of the Greeks and the Houyhnhnms, where the idea had been to create independence of both mind and body at an individual level prior to the nation as a community of sentiment. Walking and riding increasingly had more to do with sociability than as strategies for personal improvement and Enlightenment.

The exercise movement, despite the rise of sentimentalism, did leave a critical legacy to the British Enlightenment in relation to the concept of Olympic Games themselves. To his translation of Pindar from 1749, Gilbert West appended a *Dissertation on the Olympic Games*. In it the patriotic West, who had been part of the Cobham circle of opposition Whigs in the 1730s, defined the 'Gymnasium' conceptually as a 'School of Exercise maintained at the publick Expence, with a View of training up their Youth in a Manner that best suited, as they imagined, to make them usefull to their Country'. Such schools were not limited to physical exercise, for it was in this active context that one would encounter and learn from rhetoricians, philosophers and other men of learning. As with

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46 47 48 the Houyhnhnms, these were institutions for the creations of citizens, a suggestion made directly by Lucian in a dialogue also translated by West: 'Our first and principal concern is how to make our Citizens virtuous in mind and strong in Body.'⁴² Schooling, at least for boys, was not to be a mere credential-gaining process but a training ground for breaking away from the kind of 'self-imposed immaturity' later described by Kant in his definition of *Aufklärung*.

But for West the basic problem with the Olympics and the gymnasium system of public schooling as a historical model was the general tendency for Greek history to be shrouded in myth and the amortic magnification of heroes. Rather than neglecting the mind or mixing the classed recising the body created an inappropriate sense of eriority within a national community of sentiments. In many ways like Elias in his historiography of sport, West understood the Olympics as a 'Heroic Age' institution, one that celebrated conquerors and ported through the aristocratic munificence of figures such as Achilles. West also explicitly turned to Isaac Newton's Chronology (1728), in which Newton followed Pausanias' Description of Greece (1.V.7) in arguing that the games were connected with war and 'celebrated in Triumph for Victories', beginning with Hercules Idaeus' victory over Saturn and the Titans. This aristocratic and mythic nature of the Olympics made them for West an uncertain institution, and they were in turn surrounded by, in his words, a 'Diversity and Uncertainty' of accounts as well as striking silences in Homer. But, as West noted, Homer did talk of games and heroes participating in 'exercises' like those supposedly part of the Olympics. To West this seemed to indicate that, instead of being 'restored' by King Iphitos of Elis to initiate the 'Olympic truce', they were actually at that point 'founded'. The Olympics were thus 'modern', only loosely based on older heroic or aristocratic practices. Stadium events such as 'Gymnastick Combats' and 'Horse-Races' were events added only later, by those who wanted to return the aristocratic element to the games by making them both more violent and, because horse-training was expensive, more aristocratic.⁴³ West here expressed a kind of double uncertainty about sport. It created better citizens but retained overt practices of violent barbarism. It also could be hijacked by the aristocracy and become an end rather than a means – creating largely useless professional athletic stars rather than warrior citizen-soldiers in the civic humanist tradition.44

What West thought was interesting about Iphitus was his institutionalising of the Olympic Games, framing them into 'a regular and coherent System or Form', 'uniting the sacred and Political institutions' and creating a 'Principle of Life and Duration as enabled it to outlive the Laws and Customs, the Liberty, and almost the Religion of Greece'. 45 The Olympics themselves were a way of rationalising the calendar and, as a kind of measuring-stick of time, had contributed to Newton's ability to revise historical chronology, a book that clearly impressed West. The stadium was based on the length of the stadion – an eighth of a mile – and was a space of exhibition for 'Gymnastic Exercises'. The collection of exercises called the pentathlon were all trials of skill rather than chance. And with the exception of the horse activities, introduced according to West by aristocratic families, gymnastic exercises favoured, as Alcibiades had noted, the 'meanly born, more meanly educated, and Inhabitants, perhaps of mean and inconsiderable cities'. 46 In other words, not only was there something modern about the Olympics – in the sense of a coherent or rationalised system along the lines of Newton – but there was also something translatable, equitable and cosmonlitan about e Olympics that transcended national sentiments and enabled them survive pite the almost complete disintegration of Greek culture, which by and large was seen by early eighteenth-century commentators such as West as 'superstitious and ostentatious'. Unlike Swift, West was

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neither utopian nor cynical, and he offered an alternative to the emerging consensus about the nation as an imagined community of 'moral sentiments' in which the bodies and minds of citizens must be disciplined and repressed into a more passive obedience and provincial outlook than the Greeks would have thought healthy.

The recent death of the French scholar of Greek thought Jacqueline de Romilly has provoked some reflection on the translation of concepts and the momentum of languages across time through crises and rebirths.⁴⁷ The physicians and historians of eighteenthcentury Britain and Ireland seem at some level doing work more aptly characterised by her methodologies than by those of either Elias, with his figurations of the civilising process, or Foucault, with his discourses of medicine and madness. Cheyne, along with Fuller and Floyer and others who laid the foundations for our modern understandings of exercise and sports medicine, do indeed belong in the history of sport. Perhaps more importantly, the history, languages and practices of sport and exercise should play a greater role in our understanding of the Enlightenment. In this regard Elias and Dunning remind us of something very important. Fields of study such as sports, 'the only global idiom apart from science', as Laurence Kitchin once quipped, require approaches that are not merely limited to a particular nation state or to a particular conception of the body and mind entirely divorced from biological and environmental questions.⁴⁸ To the extent that we discuss emotions and not exercise, education and not sports, mind and not body, discourses and not physicality, the Enlightenment's problems, like those constantly re-invented concepts of the Greek language, remain with us. And while the elements of fascist spectacle and sentimental nationalism may linger over modern sporting events, it is also worth remembering and carrying forward other elements inherited from the Enlightenment – the range of possible exercises, the complex mental and physical demands required for achievement, the sense of experimentation with physical causes and the potential to participate in a cosmopolitan dialogue across divergent political, cultural and historical formations.

NOTES

- I. Jonathan Israel's emphasis on Spinoza's materialism as a rejection of Cartesian dualism and Stoic teleology is interesting here, but it has a tendency to move away from questions about the critical individual and towards more abstract questions about theology and materialism. See generally Jonathan Israel, *Radical Enlightenment* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), and especially *Enlightenment Contested* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p.457-70.
- 2. Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, ed. Gunzelin Noerr ([1947] Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), p.195. For the problematic development of exercise in the British context from the 1880s see Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska, *Managing the Body: Beauty, Health and Fitness in Britain, 1880-1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010). A very brief introduction to ideas about exercise in the broader Enlightenment can be found in L. H. Joseph, 'Gymnastics in the Pre-Revolutionary Eighteenth Century', *CIBA Symposia* 10 (March-April 1949), p.1054-60.
- 3. Norbert Elias and Eric Dunning, Quest for Excitement: Sport and Leisure in the Civilising Process (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986); C. L. R. James, Beyond a Boundary ([1963] Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1993). For an interesting comparative case see Mark Singleton, Yoga Body: The Origins of Modern Posture Practice (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010). For an introduction to the concept of the embodied mind see: Andy Clark, Supersizing the Mind: Embodiment, Action and Cognitive Extension (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); R. A. Wilson, Boundaries of the Mind (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); and Francisco Varela, Evan Thompson and E. Rosch, The Embodied Mind (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991). Most recent positive reassessments of the Enlightenment still ignore these questions. See, for example, Robert Louden, The World We Want: How and Why the Ideals of the Enlightenment Still Elude Us (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).
 - 4. George Cheyne, An Essay of Health and Long Life (London: George Straahan, 1724), p.98-9, 107.
 - 5. Archibald Bower (ed.), Historia litteraria 2 (London: N. Prevost, 1731), p.374
- 6. Thomas Gray to Richard West, January 1742, in P. Toynbee (ed.), *The Correspondence of Gray, Walpole, West and Ashton*, vol. II (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1915), p.19. John Ray and Henry More, as well as Bruyère,

- Boileau, Madame Sevigné and her cousin Roger de Rabutin, were also in the conversation. Gray portrays this as a kind of confusion of tongues. For Cheyne as an Enlightenment figure see Roger French, *Medicine before Science: The Rational and Learned Doctor* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p.201, 213, and Richard Sher, *The Enlightenment and the Book: Scottish Authors and their Publishers* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2006), p.88
- 7. For the standard biography of Cheyne see Anita Guerrini, Obesity and Depression in the Enlightenment: The Life and Times of George Cheyne (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2000), as well as Guerrini's DNB entry, and H. Viets, 'George Cheyne, 1673-1743', Bulletin of the History of Medicine 23 (1949), p.435-52. On Cheyne's popularity and influence see George Rousseau, 'Mysticism and Millenarianism: "Immortal Dr. Cheyne" ', in Richard Popkin, Millenarianism and Messianism in English Literature and Thought, 1650-1800 (1988), p.81-126. In terms of his weight, the actual amount meant by a 'stone' has been questioned see Bernadine Paulshock, 'Review of Obesity and Depression', Journal of the American Medical Association 284:10 (2000), p.1305 and Cheyne's actual weight in various periods is largely anecdotal.
- 8. Roy Porter, *Bodies Politic: Disease, Death and Doctors in Britain, 1650-1900* (London: Reaktion Books, 2001), p.59-60, 84. Porter surprisingly spends very little time on Cheyne in his *The Creation of the Modern World: The Untold Story of the British Enlightenment* (New York: Norton, 2001), p.139, 282, 367.
- 9. G. S. Rousseau, Enlightenment Borders: Pre- and Post-Modern Discourses (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991), p.78.
- 10. Lemuel Gulliver [Jonathan Swift], Travels into Several Remote Nations of the World, vol. II (London: Benjamin Motte, 1726), p.130.
- 11. See Jan de Vries, 'The Industrial Revoution and the Industrious Revolution', *Journal of Economic History* 54:2 (1994), p.249-70; Craig Muldrew, *Food, Energy and the Creation of Industriousness: Work and Material Culture in Agrarian England,* 1550-1780 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); C. A. Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), p.19.
 - 12. Thomas Lodge (trans.), The Workes of Lucius Annaeus Seneca (London: William Stansby, 1620), p. 331.
- 13. John Milton, *Paradise Lost* (London: S. Simmons, 1668), Book I, l.254. But see Book IV, l.32-113, for an argument about the failure of this ideal.
- 14. Gilles Boileau, *Epictetus His Morals: With Simplicius His Comment*, trans. George Stanhope (London: Richard Sare, 1694), p.237-40, chaps 36-7. On Plato see *The Lives of the Ancient Philosophers* (London: John Nicholson, 1702), p.150.
- 15. Joseph Addison, *Spectator* 115 (12 July 1711). Writing to Samuel Richardson, Cheyne, also describes the 'chamber horse' as a kind of exercise machine: see Charles Mullet (ed.), *The Letters of Dr. George Cheyne to Samuel Richardson* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1943), p.59-60. See Carol Houlihan Flynn, 'Running Out of Matter: The Body Exercise in Eighteenth-Century Fiction', in G. S. Rousseau (ed.), *The Language of Psyche: Mind and Body in the Enlightenment* (Los Angeles, CA: Clark Library, 1990), p.147-85.
- 16. See Geronimo Mercuriali, *Artis gymnasticae apud antiquos* (Venice: 1569), fol. 50 C-D, 73 D, 105D. Addison probably used the Amsterdam edition of 1672.
- 17. This was a common refrain about the character of the 'English nation' more broadly, as Edward Chamberlayne wrote: 'The natives will endure long and hard Labour, insomuch that after 12 Hours hard Work, they will go in the Evening to Foot-ball, Stool-ball, Cricket, Prison-base, Wrestling, Cudgel-playing, or some such like vehement Exercise for their Recreation.' Edward Chamberlyne, *Anglia notitia* (London: T. Hodgkin, 1694), p.78. (This passage first appears in this the 18th edn.) By 1708 John Chamberlyne had changed 'natives' to 'Common people' (*Magnae Britanniae Notitia*, London: Timothy Godwin et. al., 1708), p.30). Chamberlayne also suggests that the 'Ringing of Bells' is particularly English, 'a Recreation used in no other Country in the world' (p.187).
- 18. Thomas Sydenham, *Dissertatio epistolaris ad Guielmum Cole* (London: 1682); see also Pechey (ed.), *The Whole Works* (1696; 2nd edn, enlarged, 1706). On Pitcairne see Guerrini, 'Archibald Pitcairne and Newtonian Medicine', *Medical History* (January 1987), p.70-83.
- 19. Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization* (Oxford: Routledge, 2001), p.164-6. Anthony Bateman in his analysis of cricket also sees 1650-1750 as a kind of 'discursive ferment' in which cricket alone generates a surprising amount of divergent discourses; see Anthony Bateman, *Cricket*, *Literature and Culture* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2009), p.19.
- 20. Francis Fuller, Medicina Gymnastica: or, A Treatise Concerning the Power of Exercise, 2nd edn (London: Robert Knaplock, 1705), p.4-5.
- 21. Andreas Cleyer (ed.), *Specimen medicinae sinicae sive opuscula medica ad mentem sinensium* (Frankfurt am Main: Joannis Petri Zubrodt, 1682). Cleyer, the VOC's chief physician at Batavia, relied on the work of Michael Boym for this text. See also Michael Boym, *Clavis medica ad chinarum doctrinam de pullsibus*, ed. Andreas Cleyer and Philip Couplet (Nuremberg: Wolfgang Endter, 1686). Boym drew heavily on the classic *Huangdi Neijing* ('The Yellow Emperor's Inner Canon', *c.*2nd-1st century BCE) and Wang Shuhe's *Maijing* ('Pulse Classic', *c.*2nd century CE).
- 22. Ďavid Hume famously, at the beginning of his *A Treatise of Human Nature*, vol. I (London: John Noon, 1739), argues that Locke does this as well in his broader philosophy and revives Hobbes's notion of 'impressions'.
 - 23. Gentleman's Magazine or Monthly Intelligencer for the year 1731 I (October 1731), p.451.
 - 24. Clement Downing, A Compendious History of the Indian Wars (London: T. Cooper, 1737), p.229.

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ROBERT BATCHELOR

- 25. John Toland, 'A Description of Epsom', in A Collection of Pieces, vol. II (London: J. Peele, 1726), p.114-5.
- 26. John Wood, An Essay towards a Description of Bath, in four parts (London: James Bettenham, 1749), vol.
- I.232; Nigel Jones, Architecture of England, Scotland and Wales (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing, 2005), p.17. 27. Mowbray Green, The Eighteenth Century Architecture of Bath (Bath: George Gregory, 1904), p.101-3.
- 28. John Smith, *The Curiosities of Common Water* [...] to which are added some rules for preserving health by diet (Edinburgh: Gideon Crawfurd, 1739), p.55; George Cheyne, Essay on Gout (London, 1720), p.103-8.
- 29. George Cheyne, 'The Case of the Author', The English Malady (London, 1733), p.342.
- 30. 'To Dr Cheyne of Bath on Reading his Works', Gentleman's Magazine or Monthly Intelligencer for the Year 1733 3 (April 1733), p.205.
- 31. Cheyne, *An Essay on Regimen*, 2nd edn (London: C. Rivington, 1740), p.iv-v. This difficult and philosophical book in fact did not sell well, despite two editions, and Cheyne had to buy back most copies from the publisher.
 - 32. Elias and Dunning, Quest for Excitement, p.90.
- 33. Anita Guerrini, 'The Hungry Soul: George Cheyne and the Construction of Femininity', Eighteenth-Century Studies 32:3 (Spring 1999), p.279-91. One suspects a turning point here, a narrowing of what Michèle Cohen refers to as space for the achieving girl because of concerns over masculine sociability; cf. Cohen, 'Is There a Space for the Achieving Girl?', in Patricia Murphy et al., Equity in the Classroom: Towards Effective Pedagogy for Girls and Boys (London: UNESCO, 1996), p.125-36.
 - 34. Cheyne, Essay of Health and Long Life, p.89-90.
- 35. The case of Catherine is described in Andrew Scull, *Hysteria: The Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p.43-53. See also G. S. Rousseaau, "A Strange Pathology": Hysteria in the Early Modern World', in Sander Gilman, *Hysteria beyond Freud* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993), p.145-65. For a more successful relationship with the prominent Methodist Selina Hastings, countess of Huntingdon, see Mullet (ed.), *The Letters of Dr. George Cheyne to the Countess of Huntingdon* (San Marino, CA: Huntington Library, 1940). On the focus on men in the construction of the discourse of masculinity see Michèle Cohen, *Fashioning Masculinity* (London: Routledge, 1996).
- 36. For the Richardson correspondence see F. Mullet (ed.), *The Letters of Doctor George Cheyne to Samuel Richardson* (1733-1743) (1943), which reproduces Edinburgh University Library, Laing MSS. Cheyne also contributed the sections on spas to Richardson's 1742 edition of Defoe's *Tour*. For Cheyne and sentimentality see G. J. Barker-Benfield, *The Culture of Sensibility* (Chicago, II.: University of Chicago Press, 1995), p.7-15. Similar to this influence on sentimentalism is the emphasis on the spiritual dimensions of Cheyne's work by the founders of Methodism George Whitfield and John Wesley. See: David Shuttleton, 'Methodism and Dr. George Cheyne's "More Enlightening Principles", in Roy Porter (ed.), *Medicine in the Enlightenment* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1995); Ruth Griffith, *Born Again Bodies: Flesh and Spirit in American Christianity* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2004), p.41-3; and David Grumett and Rachel Muers, *Theology on the Menu* (New York: Routledge, 2010), p.60-3.
- 37. On this as part of a broader trend in Dublin in the aftermath of the South Sea Bubble see Sean Moore, *Swift, the Book, and the Irish Financial Revolution: Satire and Sovereignty in Colonial Ireland* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010).
- 38. Aris Sarafianos, 'Pain, Labor, and the Sublime: Medical Gymnastics and Burke's Aesthetics', *Representations* 91 (Summer 2005), p.58-83.
- 39. Most famously in James Love, Cricket: An Heroic Poem', in *Poems on Several Occasions* (Edinburgh: R. Fleming, 1754); see Bateman, *Cricket*, p.18-19. On the rise of national sentiments in this period see Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992), and Kathleen Wilson, *The Sense of the People: Politics, Culture and Imperialism in England, 1715-1785* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).
- 40. Adam Ferguson, *An Essay on the History of Civil Society*, 2nd edn (London: A. Millar, 1768), p.329-30. Tellingly, Ferguson goes on to question the validity of his own analogy, suggesting that exercise was no longer adequate to the national task at hand.
- $4\overline{1}$. Gilbert West, 'Dissertation on the Olympic Games', *Odes of Pindar*, vol. II (London: R. Dodsley, 1753), p.204.
 - 42. West, 'Dissertation on the Olympic Games', p.221.
 - 43. West, 'Dissertation on the Olympic Games', p.3-11.
 - 44. West, 'Dissertation on the Olympic Games', p.243-5.
 - 45. West, 'Dissertation on the Olympic Games', p.11-12.
 - 46. West, 'Dissertation on the Olympic Games', p.58-60, 76, 105-6.
- 47. See, for example, her recent *Petites leçons sur le grec ancient* (Paris: Stock, 2008), with its diffusionist and comparative approach to Greek. My thanks to Martha Zebrowski for similarly keeping this Greek torch alight at BSECS and to Haun Saussy for reminding me of de Romilly's significance in this regard.
 - 48. Kitchin is quoted by Elias and Dunning, Quest, p.5.
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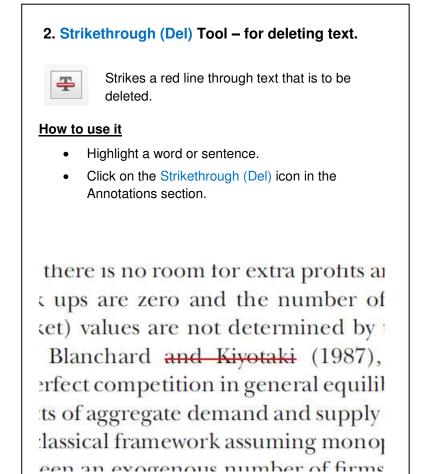
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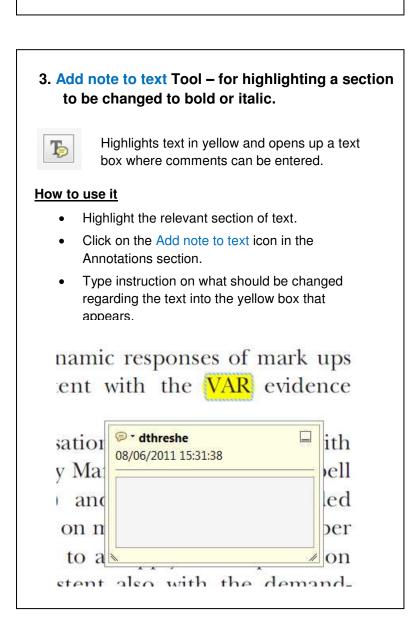


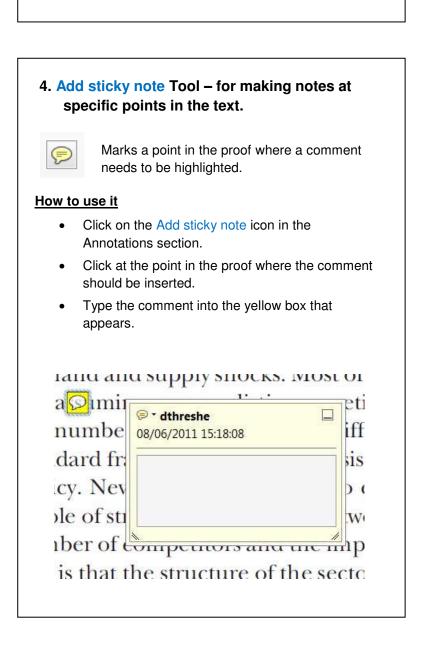
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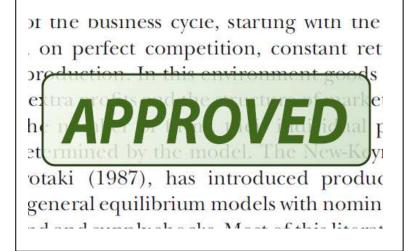
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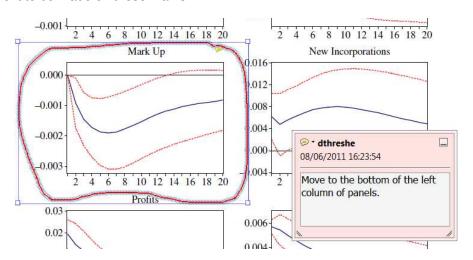


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