

1

2

3

4 FORTHCOMING IN THE JOURNAL OF MEDICINE AND PHILOSOPHY

5

NOT TO BE CITED OR DISTRIBUTED

6

7

8

May the blessed man win

9

A critique of the categorical preference for natural talent over doping as proper origins  
of athletic ability

10

11

12

13 Abstract

14

Doping scandals can reveal unresolved tensions between the meritocratic values of equal opportunity + reward for effort and the ‘talentocratic’ love of hereditary privilege. Whence this special reverence for talent? We analyze the following arguments: (1) talent is a unique indicator of greater potential, whereas doping enables only temporary boosts (the *fluke* critique); (2) developing a talent is an authentic endeavor of ‘becoming who you are’, whereas reforming the fundamentals of your birth suit via artifice is an act of alienation (the *phony* critique); (3) your (lack of) talent informs you of your proper place and purpose in life, whereas doping frustrates such an *amor fati* self-understanding (the *fateless* critique). We conclude that these arguments fail to justify a *categorical* preference for natural talent over integrated artifice. Instead, they illustrate the extent to which unsavory beliefs about ‘nature’s aristocracy’ may still be at play in the moral theatre of sports.

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

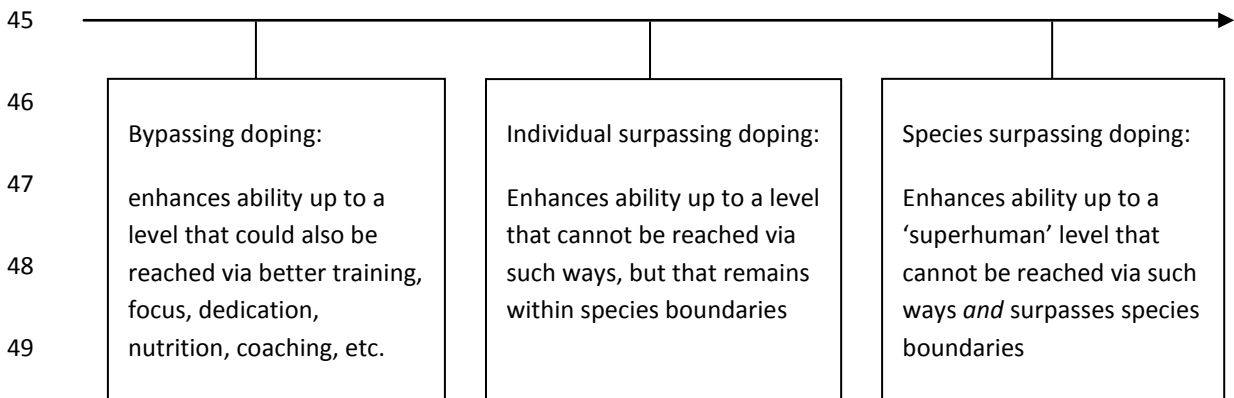
26

Keywords: doping, enhancement, talent, sports, meritocracy

27

## 29 1. Intrinsic anti-doping, pro-talent arguments

30 Doping is often discussed without defining what is meant by it, and when an attempt at  
 31 explicit definition is made, most authors who set out to do so conclude that a largely  
 32 undisputed definition is not to be found (see for instance Van Hilvoorde, Vos & De  
 33 Wert 2007). This unsatisfactory situation caused the World Anti Doping Agency  
 34 (WADA) to adopt a ‘positivistic’ legal definition of doping, namely: doping is whatever  
 35 is on WADA’s prohibition list.<sup>i</sup> Nevertheless, for clarity’s sake we define doping here  
 36 as a ‘family construct’<sup>ii</sup> made up out of the following components: *doping is the use of*  
 37 *an exogenous substance, device or method that enables enhanced physical ability by*  
 38 *altering a person’s bodily make-up, beyond the ability level (a) that the (otherwise*  
 39 *healthy and able-bodied) doper possessed before this use (bypassing or ‘short-cutting’*  
 40 *doping), (b) that the doper might come to possess if she were to apply maximized effort*  
 41 *and enjoy optimal social and environmental circumstances (individual surpassing*  
 42 *doping), (c) of the biological species the doper is (or was) a member of, i.e. homo*  
 43 *sapiens (species surpassing doping).<sup>iii</sup> We are mindful not to presuppose that doping is*  
 44 *wrong: that is what needs to be proven, not assumed.*



50 Image 1: Three degrees of doping

51 In this paper we deal exclusively with the question of doping’s *intrinsic* and categorical  
 52 wrongness, suspending our judgment on all extrinsic or circumstantial issues.<sup>iv</sup> The  
 53 intrinsic question is: if doping were provided in a ‘best of all possible worlds’ wherein  
 54 issues regarding health, equal access, free choice and all other extrinsic issues were  
 55 resolved, would there still be something wrong with doping in competitive sport *in*  
 56 *itself?*<sup>v</sup> The authoritative World Anti Doping Code (WADC) and its signatories seem to

57 believe so. In its chapter on “The Fundamental Rationale for the World Anti Doping  
 58 Code”, the WADC states: “*Anti-doping programs seek to preserve what is intrinsically*  
 59 *valuable about sport. This intrinsic value is often referred to as "the spirit of sport", it is*  
 60 *the essence of Olympism; it is how we play true. [...] Doping is fundamentally contrary*  
 61 *to the spirit of sport.” (WADA 2009, 14) Read in isolation, this excerpt does not*

62 necessarily imply that doping is wrong in itself and thus wrong in any setting, but only  
 63 that doping is always wrong *when used within a sport*. However, it is often argued that  
 64 what is valuable in the Spirit of Sport and under threat from doping, are in fact  
 65 principles with a universal validity, such as fair play and equal opportunity, as well as  
 66 virtues such as dedication, courage and character (see the bullet point list of principles  
 67 and virtues that are used to exemplify the Spirit of Sport in WADA 2009, 14). The  
 68 world of sport is then seen as a ‘moral theatre’ in which such values and principles are  
 69 put on explicit display (a view widely advocated in the world of sport, explicitly  
 70 underlying the modern Olympic Movement, see Young 1996). This, then, is how we  
 71 will conceive of the ‘Spirit of Sport’ here: as a virtue ethic requiring that the respectable  
 72 athlete – to a certain extent and in confluence with many other, perhaps conflicting  
 73 requirements – demonstrates not only some excellent physical performance, but also an  
 74 adequately *honorable character* in doing so. We do not have the space here to justify  
 75 such a virtue ethic as basic to proper sports. Rather, we take a virtue ethical conception  
 76 of sports as a premise and proceed to investigate: (a) whether doping can indeed never  
 77 be compatible with such a spirit of sport; and (b) whether deep attachments to natural  
 78 talent are as readily compatible with such a spirit of sport as is often taken for granted.

79 The intrinsic, categorical arguments against doping in competitive sport seem to run  
 80 along three main lines, respectively based on the conviction that a proper athletic  
 81 accomplishment should: (a) originate from proper origins, such as natural talent; (b)  
 82 take place via proper, intentionally directed processes; and (c) result in proper,  
 83 recognizably human outcomes (Sandel 2007; President’s Council on Bioethics 2003;  
 84 Murray 2009); whereas doping would respectively turn that proper athletic  
 85 accomplishment into something *debasing, mechanistic* and/or *dehumanizing*:

Performance	Natural	Doped/Enhanced
-------------	---------	----------------

Proper Origins	<p>From ‘given’, natural origins</p> <p>Praised as ‘gifts’, providing a sense of given place, purpose or predestination</p> <p>Proper, for sports should display who has been allotted greater/lesser talent</p>	<p>From self-styled, artificial origins</p> <p>Denounced as ‘hyperagency’, eroding our sense of given place, purpose or predestination</p> <p>Improper, for it distorts the display of ‘real’, natural superiority/inferiority</p>
Proper Processes	<p>Through one’s inherent, endogenous bodily processes and one’s active intentional effort</p> <p>Praised as authentic accomplishments</p>	<p>Through intrusive, exogenous means and by passively undergoing their influence</p> <p>Denounced as effortless &amp; mechanistic</p>
Proper Outcomes	<p>‘Vitruvian’</p> <p>Towards a perfected optimum within the normal, species-typical range</p> <p>Praised as perfected humanity</p>	<p>‘Promethean’</p> <p>Towards a distorted excess over and beyond the normal, species-typical range</p> <p>Denounced as alienating dehumanization</p>

86

Image 2: The main intrinsic objections to doping<sup>vi</sup>

87 Because of the relative lack of focused and sustained analyses of the intrinsic issues in  
88 the doping debate, we will further restrict ourselves, within the category of intrinsic  
89 arguments, to the first bone of intrinsic contention – Proper Origins.

90 2. Talentocracy: fair play, or rigging the game for talent?

91 From its inception, modern Olympic sport has been promoted as a meritocratic  
92 institution: *palnam qui meriut ferat* – may he who merits it win the prize – was the  
93 guiding motto of the trailblazing Olympian Games organized in England from 1850

94 onwards by Dr William Penny Brookes.<sup>vii</sup> To realize this motto's aspiration, an  
95 environment of 'fair play' needs to be put in place – an environment purged from  
96 (blatantly) unearned privileges and advantages. As such, the sports arena has often been  
97 heralded by the ideologues of the Olympic Movement as an artificially constructed  
98 ethical idyll in which one can escape from (and perhaps stage an attack on) the many  
99 undeserved privileges and their discriminatory protectionism in real world society. In  
100 fair, universal and classless sport, the 'true, natural order' is allowed to prevail, whereas  
101 daily life is replete with false hierarchies of privilege and deprivation, protectionism and  
102 discrimination which deeply obscure our view of who merits what she has and who  
103 doesn't. Within the splendid isolation of the sports arena, organizers should ensure that  
104 all participants enjoy an "equal opportunity to perform" (Loland 2009, 163) insofar as it  
105 is logistically feasible (Dixon 2008). The closer we come to reaching this ideal of the  
106 'fair opportunity principle' (Loland 2009, 163), the more likely it becomes that the  
107 intrinsically most deserving person wins: irrelevant inequalities are equalized, so that  
108 the relevant inequalities can make (most of) the difference. Across the spectrum of  
109 athletic disciplines, organizing institutions seek to implement this fair opportunity  
110 principle to some satisfactory degree by neutralizing the distortive effect of irrelevant  
111 luck factors (possible ways of achieving this include intervening in significant  
112 disparities in the quality of equipment, position on the playing field, access to proper  
113 training facilities, etc.).

114 However, with regard to one fundamental and highly decisive luck factor, the situation  
115 seems to be wholly reversed. Towards this particular luck factor, organizing institutions  
116 are determined to ensure that brute luck remains decisive in determining who comes out  
117 on top. That factor is natural talent. Indeed, today it is still widely advocated that sport  
118 ought to be – as former WADA president Richard Pound put it – "a humanistic  
119 endeavor to see how far you can go on your own talent" (Pound in CBC Sports Online  
120 2003). With this talent-centered take on the Spirit of Sport, Pound implicitly echoes  
121 some elements of the bygone 'amateur' sports doctrine, which remained the official  
122 doctrine of the IOC until it was discarded after the 1988 Olympics (after having been  
123 conceptually plagued and de facto hollowed out for decades, see Guttman 2002).  
124 According to this amateur Spirit of Sport, applying too much effort is undignified: an  
125 ideal athletic performance should well up from more or less spontaneous talent, and

126 training may only be engaged in leisurely – not too tenaciously, certainly not  
127 professionally. During the early Modern Olympics of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup>  
128 century, even being coached was seen as a disturbing degradation of the Spirit of Sport  
129 which demanded that an athlete should flourish on her own talent, not via the help of  
130 some external aid (Young 1996, 32). Similar to what is now often said of doping, such  
131 coaching aid would allow the athlete to circumvent her own lack of strategic cunning  
132 and motivational perseverance, and it would introduce a second entity (the coach) as a  
133 disruptive distinct origin to attribute the performance to.

134 In part, amateurism was a blunt weapon of class distinction, wielded to exclude the  
135 working class (which Brookes, in his original modern Games, explicitly sought to  
136 *include*) merely for the snobbish joy of exclusivity. However, in its more refined  
137 renditions, such as those given by the ‘Muscular Christianity’ movement which inspired  
138 the Liverpool Olympic Festival of 1862, it is about cultivating the art of living of the  
139 ‘well-rounded, chivalric and pious gentlemen’, a brittle internal spirit to be carefully  
140 protected against lowly motives. To ensure that the athletes came to the Games for the  
141 love of the game and not for the love or need of money, the original amateur Spirit of  
142 Sport shunned all who would attend for material gain. Also, the motives of the  
143 participants were to be screened in some way to be sure they were based on honor rather  
144 than “bestiality”, for as sport involves some measure of ‘ritualized aggression’,  
145 “athleticism can occasion the most noble passions or the most vile. [...] It can be  
146 chivalrous or corrupt, vile, bestial.” (Coubertin in Baker 1988, 330) Generalizing  
147 grotesquely, many Gentlemen Amateurs of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century sought to  
148 realize these aims by categorically excluding the entire working class from  
149 participation.

150 But besides snobbery and a high-minded honor code, the Gentleman Amateur Spirit of  
151 Sport was also rooted partly in tendencies to believe that socially constructed classes  
152 were in fact hierarchies ordained by God (aristocratic beliefs) and/or Nature (social  
153 Darwinist and related beliefs). Such beliefs helped to resolve what we now see as a  
154 glaring contradiction between the painstaking efforts to ensure fairness for the upper  
155 class men on the sport field with the principled exclusion of the entire lower classes.  
156 The upper class men regarded themselves already, as a matter of imagined metaphysical  
157 fact, to be superior to the lower classes, so it was perfectly reasonable to have the upper

158 class men only compete amongst themselves. This discrimination was legitimized by  
159 appealing not to a difference in skill or proper motivation (although such fictions were  
160 also widespread), but to an *essentialistic* difference: the working class was literally  
161 perceived as of another class, as *another kind of being*, so that even if the working class  
162 would perform better when measured objectively, their performance would nonetheless  
163 be tainted by its ignoble origin: the body and mind not of a Gentleman, but of a  
164 proletarian brute.

165 In time, the social struggle for equal opportunities managed to prove that the perceived  
166 inferiorities of the lower classes with regard to skill, motivation and essence were little  
167 more than smokescreens erected to protect the privileges of the well-off. Today, the  
168 Olympic Movement proudly claims that it has largely succeeded in realizing its  
169 commitment to proper ‘universalism’: there is now open access for all, regardless of  
170 class, creed, race, sex or any other purported essentialist difference which would stand  
171 in the way of universal eligibility to participate. However, in this paper we will  
172 investigate whether one such privilege-protecting obstacle to full universalism may still  
173 be in place: the requirement that one achieves athletic excellence only via the (more or  
174 less effortful) “cultivation or display of natural talents” (Sandel 2007, 28-29) which may  
175 (inadvertently) protect the privilege of those who have been referred to as the ‘natural  
176 aristocracy’ (Jefferson 1988 [1813], 387-391) or ‘lucky sperm club’ (Young 1958) and  
177 which we propose to denote more precisely as the athletic ‘talentocracy’, this being the  
178 societal class consisting of those who happen, through no merit of their own, to be born  
179 with a biological endowment advantageous to athleticism. We seek to answer the  
180 questions: is such talentocratic thinking at play in contemporary sports? If so, does this  
181 endanger the ‘equal opportunity to perform’,<sup>viii</sup> of those who were perhaps less lucky in  
182 the natural lottery but seek to obtain a similarly advantageous bodily endowment via  
183 biotechnology?

184 One may point out that the celebration of *effort* in our contemporary Spirit of Sport  
185 seems to show that we no longer value natural talent above all other origins of athletic  
186 ability. Indeed, in the wake of broader societal trends of increasing industriousness and  
187 social mobility, talent-driven amateurism has apparently been complemented by an  
188 ethic of effort-driven professionalism.<sup>ix</sup> Elite sport today is no longer supposed to be a  
189 leisurely, genteel display of natural talent. Rather, the ethic of our contemporary “pro’s”

190 is all about the super-intensive, maximally efficient optimization of that talent. The cult  
191 of talent has been supplemented by a cult of effort, grit and determination, a  
192 meritocratic work ethic wherein the prize and praise should go to those who put in the  
193 most intentional effort to realize the potential provided by natural talent. Indeed, it has  
194 been supplemented, not replaced, it seems, because even if Pound's Spirit of Sport  
195 invites you to "see how far you can go", you still have to restrict yourself to "your own  
196 talent" as the proper material to draw on for your maximizing exercise.

197 The implicit model of human flourishing, that Pound and like minds seem to draw on,  
198 can be clarified with the following GMO analogy. It is one thing to make a seed flourish  
199 into a strong, tall and many-flowered plant via nourishing environmental influencing: in  
200 doing so, we endeavor to see how far the seed can go based on the seed's own natural  
201 (genetic) predisposition – the seed's 'talent' if you will. It is something else, perhaps  
202 something wrong, to let our nourishing environmental influence penetrate the  
203 ontological membrane of the seed-itself: then we will slide from a *discovering*  
204 exploratory practice of seeing how far the seed can go on its own natural predispositions  
205 into a very different *creative* exploratory practice. We then not only discover what a  
206 seed is capable of, but instead begin to *remake* the seed. This is certainly somewhat  
207 confusing, and it may be very wrong. And if it is very wrong, it will probably be all the  
208 more so when sliding from discovering-exploration into creative exploration with  
209 humans.

210 Perhaps this underlying discovery-creation distinction helps to explain why effort-  
211 driven professionalism appears to have supplemented talent-driven amateurism not as  
212 an equal, but as a *second best* ethos. Consider once again two flower seeds: one is  
213 tossed aside and left unattended in poor soil, the other is meticulously exposed to the  
214 most nourishing environments – earthed in the best soil, given the perfect amounts of  
215 light and water, perfectly managed on all fronts to see how far the seed can go.  
216 Flourishing time comes around and lo: *both* seeds grow into equally strong, tall and  
217 many-flowered plants. Surely, the horticulturalist will be more impressed by the  
218 'diamond in the rough' plant which managed to come to full bloom unaided and in  
219 unwelcoming terrain than by the plant that flourished equally only by investing  
220 continuous effort to optimize its growth. Analogously, when considering the arguments  
221 of Richard Pound, Michael Sandel, Thomas Murray and many others, we perceive a



222 historical and ethical tension between the professional and the amateur mindset being  
223 resolved by ultimately letting talent trump effort – a ‘talentocratic’ conclusion:

224 [S]triving is not the point of sports; excellence is. And excellence consists at least partly  
225 in the display of natural talents and gifts that are no doing of the athlete who possesses  
226 them. [...] This is an uncomfortable fact for democratic societies. We want to believe  
227 that success, in sports and in life, is something we earn, not something we inherit.  
228 Natural gifts, and the admiration they inspire, embarrass the meritocratic faith; they cast  
229 doubt on the conviction that praise and rewards flow from effort alone. [...] No one  
230 believes that a mediocre basketball player who works and trains even harder than  
231 Michael Jordan deserves greater acclaim or a bigger contract. The real problem with  
232 genetically altered athletes is that they corrupt athletic competition as *a human activity*  
233 *that honors the cultivation and display of natural talents.* (Sandel 2007, p28-29)

234 For Sandel and many others, ultimately, talent still comes out on top when compared to  
235 effort, even when this creates enormous friction with the deeply entrenched meritocratic  
236 beliefs of modernity, as Sandel admits. Before we turn to our analysis of candidate-  
237 justifications for such pro-talent, contra-doping valuations, we should clarify what is at  
238 stake for the Olympic Spirit of Sport. WADA, the IOC and other anti-doping advocacy  
239 groups regularly assert that their categorical anti-doping norm and their Spirit of Sport  
240 have *universal* validity: anti-doping Olympism presents itself not as *one* spirit among  
241 many, but as *the* basic concept of proper sport which underlies all reasonable  
242 conceptions of proper sport (cf. Parry 2009, WADC 2009, IOC 2010). If one adds to  
243 this the assumption that all sports cultures existing within the bounds of reasonable  
244 moral pluralism do indeed accept the categorical anti-doping norm and Olympism, then  
245 such a factual consensus might be used to justify claims to universal *regulative*  
246 authority of institutions such as WADA and the IOC. In his discussion of Olympism,  
247 Parry for instance seems to hold that these connections (from universal aspiration to  
248 factual universal consensus to legitimate universal authority) can be made (Parry 2009,  
249 8). However, this implies that if a reasonable conception of the good athletic life can be  
250 construed which is permissive or positive towards certain doping practices, the assumed  
251 universal consensus across reasonable moral pluralism would not (necessarily) hold,  
252 and categorically anti-doping Olympism would be reduced to one *particular* spirit of  
253 sport that, even while having universal ambitions and remaining overwhelmingly

254 majoritarian, would not be able to exercise factual universal authority.<sup>x</sup> In such a  
255 scenario, it would be inappropriate to impose the categorical anti-doping norm on sports  
256 communities who live by reasonable views of the good athletic life in which doping is  
257 not categorically rejected.

## 258 2.1. Talent as greater potential & the fluke critique of doping

259 A good common sense reason to categorically prefer talent over effort refers back to the  
260 seed-plant analogy. Imagine a 400 meter sprint where two runners, A and B, cross the  
261 finish line at the same time, but A has had to invest all his effort and falls to the ground  
262 panting, whereas B runs unexhausted toward the cameras to mimic a lightning bolt that  
263 travels at the speed of light. The exhausted A may be greatly appreciated for having  
264 made an excellent time, and for having demonstrated the impressive character traits of  
265 extraordinary determination and willpower. But with regard to athletic skill *per se*,  
266 athlete B can be admired more because he has clearly not exhausted all of his running  
267 capacity: compared to A, B still has a reservoir of untapped potential, and thus  
268 demonstrates by his lack of fatigue that he has a potential for running skill superior to  
269 A's. They may have crossed the line at the same time on this occasion, but should B  
270 choose to *also* invest the extraordinary perseverance of A, his performance would  
271 exceed A's. In contrast, it is not an option for A to choose to also have a body like B's.  
272 Therefore, when someone with a greater talent – understood here as *a (natural)*  
273 *predisposition or aptitude for some remarkable capacity* – ties with someone with a  
274 lesser talent, it is reasonable to infer that the more talented athlete has a greater athletic  
275 potential than his competitor. A clearly already exhausted all he has and does not have  
276 the option of obtaining extra talent, whereas B does seem to have the option of  
277 obtaining extra determination and exercising greater effort.

278 However, when effective doping is possible, this partly sweeps the rug from under this  
279 commonsensical argument. Without doping as an option, A cannot gain an added  
280 predisposition as a matter of *fact*: there is literally no way to do so. If doping were to  
281 become an option, however, that factual barrier is lifted and what may keep A from  
282 gaining a similar aptitude becomes a matter of *value*: he now does have a way to do so,  
283 but perhaps a moral code forbids it. Therefore, as a preliminary conclusion, the  
284 argument about natural talent as the best indicator for greater potential loses its general

285 validity, because effective doping may just as well provide such great potential. What is  
286 more, theoretically it could even do so to a greater extent than the most attuned natural  
287 predisposition ever could.

288 One could try to counter this by pointing out that doping practices as we know them  
289 today only enable a *temporary* boost of performance levels, whereas the presence of  
290 natural talent indicates a more durable, longer lasting potential for high-level  
291 performance – a *predisposition* proper. This argument may have some validity if one  
292 restricts one’s view to the effectiveness of contemporary doping technologies, but it  
293 would be an exaggerated simplification to say that, come what may, *only* natural talent  
294 can ever count as a truly reliable marker for long-lasting potential. We must not let the  
295 image of today’s pills, syringes and injection needles, and the often fleeting effects they  
296 bring about, obscure the fact that a plethora of current and future doping practices will  
297 not follow the lines of this ‘Popeye caricature’<sup>xi</sup>: doping taken up right before the  
298 performance is to be performed, bringing the body in a temporary high, resulting in a  
299 extraordinary strong performance, after which the enhancing effect fades away and it  
300 becomes evident that the athlete without the spinach/doping is, ‘in reality’, a less able  
301 athlete who could never have performed her feat ‘on her own’.

302 What this Popeye caricature misses, is that long-lasting potential may also be obtained  
303 via certain forms of doping, for instance a doping agent that would secrete chemicals  
304 over a long space of time (contrast Popeye to Spiderman, Asterix to Obelix), or a  
305 permanent enhancing intervention such as today’s Lasik eye surgery that golfers  
306 undergo to provide them with better than 20/20 vision. We might one day develop a  
307 genetic intervention to bring down lactic acid production, which would endow cyclists  
308 with an enduring capacity to fatigue more slowly and recuperate more quickly  
309 (Mehlman 2009a, 62). Ergo, *deeply integrated* doping practices such as the very real  
310 Lasik eye lasering or the still theoretical lactic acid intervention seem immune to the  
311 *fluke* critique of doping. What is more, even if – counterfactually – not a single type of  
312 doping would ever be able to provide a potential for physical performance as profound  
313 or durable as natural talent, this alone does not suffice to categorically depreciate the  
314 acquisition of skills via doping – it would only mean that natural talent could be  
315 appreciated somewhat more as it would mark a somewhat more robust potential. In  
316 sum, it is an erroneous overgeneralization to hold that doping could only ever induce

317 fluke performances and that natural talent is and always will be *the* best proxy for  
318 deeply ingrained and durable predispositions.

319 Would such deeply integrated doping then really equal the ‘deep potential’ that natural  
320 talent harbors in *every* respect? Ultimately, no. There is one fundamental dimension that  
321 eludes doping techniques. They lack the same fundamental thing a silicone-filled bosom  
322 lacks: contrary to naturally given traits, the deeply integrated athletic or aesthetic  
323 enhancements are no reliable markers of *hereditary* potential. In this sense, as long as  
324 the techniques do not induce a hereditary enhancement (which is not theoretically  
325 impossible), their effects are categorically more superficial and fleeting. Even if they  
326 would be so deeply integrated that they exert their enhancing influence flawlessly  
327 throughout the entire lifespan of the doper, perhaps even more reliably and robustly as  
328 natural talent ever would, their enhancing influence would never live on in their  
329 offspring. To the extent that sport competitions still are in part atavistic relics of the  
330 ritualized fighting between animals to demonstrate who is the alpha male or female (De  
331 Block and Dewitte 2009), doping would dramatically corrupt this primitive Spirit of  
332 Sport: to demonstrate who is ‘truly’, genetically superior with respect to physical  
333 prowess.<sup>xii</sup> To the extent that we still are hardwired to seek out such reliable markers of  
334 hereditary physical superiority, doping, like silicone, frustrates.<sup>xiii</sup> From the perspective  
335 of this primal evolutionary-psychological craving, which is itself highly dubious and  
336 dangerous as a normative stance (even gravitating towards the ‘fascistoid’ according to  
337 bio-ethicist Torbjörn Tännsjö, see Tännsjö 2000), they can be regarded as superficial,  
338 ‘fake’ and categorically inferior abominations that corrupt this primal point to sports.  
339 This may be a way to flesh out Eric Juengst’s suggestion that deeper reflection on the  
340 widespread categorical objection to doping may reveal how many still turn to sport to  
341 “glorify a genetic prejudice that the world is working hard to evolve beyond in other spheres of  
342 human life.” (Juengst 2009, 176-177)

343 2.2. Talent as the true self & the phoney critique of doping<sup>xiv</sup>

344 Precisely by resolving the *fluke* objection (save for the hereditary dimension, although  
345 that might also be resolved by considering for instance germline genetic doping), the  
346 deep integration of doping can raise a new set of objections on an altogether different  
347 and perhaps more fundamental plane. On this plane, succeeding *only all too well* in

348 endowing the athlete with a predisposition to perform in a manner equivalent or even  
349 superior to natural talent becomes the problem. The deeper cause for concern is this: by  
350 implanting such novel (perhaps more enabling and superficially satisfying)  
351 predispositions, one may betray the (perhaps more incapacitating and superficially  
352 frustrating) predispositions that are properly one's own, that make up the essence of  
353 who one is. The more permanently and profoundly one modifies one's own inherent  
354 capabilities – and doping does exactly that – the more one 'tries to be somebody else',  
355 the more one turns into a 'phony'. Doping, therefore, might deeply undermine personal  
356 authenticity.

357 In light of this deeper danger, critics like Carl Elliot and Howard Baillie call for an ethic  
358 of authenticity, more precisely an ethic of *affirmative* authenticity. (Elliot 2003; Baillie  
359 2005) In such an ethic, self-exploration is conceived of as (primarily) self-discovery (cf.  
360 supra): drawing out what is already inside of you, as opposed to drawing in alien things  
361 from the outside. In the face of human enhancement interventions, this ethic would  
362 imply that one accepts and affirms, conserves and cultivates at least those elements of  
363 one's biology that are constitutive to one's individual identity. This general authenticity  
364 argument can be invoked with extra vigor in the field of sport and doping. Articulating  
365 the more fundamental reasons of why sport may be of great ethical value, several  
366 philosophers have characterized sport as a 'spiritual exercise' of self-discovery. While  
367 sport may often seem to be all about *Citius, Altius, Fortius* – that is: about transgressing  
368 given physical boundaries and striving towards "superhuman performance" (Savulescu,  
369 Foddy and Clayton 2004: 666) – this apparently *transgressive* practice can also be  
370 understood as an on-going *approximative* discovery of the eventual, ultimate boundaries  
371 of one's given potential – a practice akin to optimally nurturing a seed but refraining  
372 from remaking the seed. Sport can thus be engaged in as the intensive gauging of the  
373 inner depths and outer contours of one's 'true self'. The reward of intensive sporting  
374 then lies not only in the pride one can take in excellent performance, but also the  
375 valuable existential self-understanding one gains by it. This existential dimension is  
376 expressed in such widespread sporting slogans as "show what you are made of", "find  
377 out what you have in you", "stretch yourself to the limit".<sup>xv</sup>

378 Viewed from this perspective, doping now presents itself as a diametrically opposed  
379 practice of self-*alteration*. For that reason doping can be said to be fundamentally at

380 odds with the Spirit of Sport: instead of showing us what someone is made of, it makes  
381 that someone anew. By redrawing one's given physical boundaries instead of  
382 approximating them, doping blurs precisely what the ethic of affirmative authenticity  
383 wanted to bring into sharp focus. Such arguments help to explain why doping can be  
384 considered as a form of cheating not in the superficial sense of breaking a conventional  
385 agreement that no one is to use stimulants (just as no soccer player is allowed to carry  
386 the ball over the field in his hands), but cheating in a more profound sense as *cheating*  
387 *oneself* in becoming a fake, a phony, a fraud – denying and corrupting who one 'really  
388 is' or 'was cut out to be'.

389 However, the disorienting effects of human enhancement interventions must not be  
390 exaggerated and must also be properly compared to the way in which our natural,  
391 unenhanced body may be disorienting and alienating to us, too. Firstly, as for instance  
392 David DeGrazia makes philosophically plausible (DeGrazia 2005) and Peter Kramer  
393 backs up empirically (Kramer 1993), it is quite possible that identity-altering  
394 enhancements, even radical ones that directly intervene in one's mental life, may be  
395 *solicited* by certain persons, *welcomed* at the moment of the intervention, *positively*  
396 *assessed* afterwards and *seamlessly appropriated* as a core feature of the person's  
397 'narrative identity'. Such interventions may even serve to *conserve* a given identity. For  
398 instance, we can readily imagine a subset of doping practices engaged in to preserve  
399 one's youthful skill levels into older age, thus making the self more rather than less  
400 stable, at least in one regard. Secondly, it can be called into question whether a  
401 pharmacologically or prosthetically enhanced body must in all cases be more  
402 disorienting than one's default, nature-given bodily endowment. Applying this to  
403 doping, when it is engaged in mindfully and autonomously, in order to realize an  
404 athletic life project that is of fundamental value to a person, it may well be that in her  
405 doped state, she will experience a *heightened* sense of authenticity (we could label this  
406 'aspirational authenticity', distinguishable from 'affirmative authenticity') and that she  
407 will appropriate and affirm her newly enabled body as properly and proudly *hers*, where  
408 she may have felt out-of-place and ill-at-ease in her default, nature-given body which  
409 lacked the sufficient capacity to adequately realize her fundamental life project. Thirdly,  
410 drawing on a more philosophical and undoubtedly less common motivation,  
411 enhancement could also be engaged in as an explicit gesture to affirm the burdensome

412 reality that we are ‘self-shaping animals’ whether we like it or not, thus displaying the  
413 virtues of moral courage and epistemic dignity (cf. *infra*). In the same vein,  
414 enhancement could be engaged in as an act of ‘civil disobedience’ against the  
415 evolutionary forces that shaped our *Homo sapiens* nature. Insofar as sports are a form of  
416 moral and existential theatre (Pound 2004; Baker 1988), the use of doping could be a  
417 dramatic, public exemplification of this affirmation of our self-shaping dignity, and a  
418 public repudiation of the supposed duty to be natural (Bonte 2011 and 2012; Levy  
419 2011).

420 Based on these three arguments, there seems to be no good reason why people should  
421 categorically be denounced for critically reviewing their own natural predicament and  
422 deciding that their biological inheritance could use some ‘civil engineering’. However,  
423 the ‘true self’ objections raised here do contain considerable value if we properly tone  
424 them down into non-essentialistic, scientifically warranted arguments that we should  
425 pay close attention to the possible psychological effect of “spiraling self-doubt”  
426 (McKibben 2003, 55) if one uses doping or other human enhancement interventions too  
427 abruptly, too erratically or in any other way damaging to a valued sense of personal  
428 coherence and continuity (Kramer 1993; DeGrazia 2005). We must not let the mere  
429 possibility of all sorts of enhancement muddle the pivotal practical wisdom that it may  
430 still be best, all things considered, to appreciate and be content with the capacities one  
431 already has (Buchanan 2011, 69-114). As such, however, the ‘true self’ objection turns  
432 out to be not a categorical one about intrinsic, inextinguishable features of doping, but a  
433 precautionary one about *extrinsic eventualities* of *some* doping practices, that again,  
434 need not be overgeneralized.

### 435 2.3. Talent as a true gift & the fateless critique of doping

436 Resolving the *phony* objection may not suffice to quell all concern about proper origins  
437 of athletic ability. Instead, that very resolution may once over give rise to a new set of  
438 objections on an even more fundamental plane than that of personal authenticity. That  
439 even deeper cause for concern is this: precisely by heeding the moral call of his  
440 aspirational authenticity only all too well, the ‘self-made man’ may come to neglect the  
441 respect he owes not to his self, but to the forces that made him. Changing the  
442 fundamentals of how one was created, as doping arguably does, overrides one’s natural

443 biological blueprint. This overriding can be seen as a moral transgression: one should  
444 stay true to something more, something deeper, than one's 'ego'. Perhaps this is where  
445 the intuition comes from that the 'gifted athlete', like the 'natural beauty', deserves  
446 special reverence: she got her special gift from nature, whereas the doper helped herself  
447 to a gift.

448 In a particular religious mindset, for instance, one can perceive one's body to be literally  
449 given by some wise and benign giver. Arguably, one mustn't squander a benign and  
450 wisely given gift, nor should one be discontent with it. Ideally, one rejoices in the gift  
451 and makes the best of it without asking for a greater gift. From this perspective, good  
452 sports could be an outright religious practice in which pious athletes, having been  
453 endowed with special natural talents, prove their gratefulness to their creator by  
454 cultivating and displaying those special bodily gifts they received – this is indeed a  
455 pivotal theme in the theology of sports (Weir 2011). The Spirit of Sport may then be  
456 religiously rephrased as: may the most blessed man win. The founder of the IOC, Pierre  
457 de Coubertin, and many of his 20<sup>th</sup> century successors, such as Avery Brundage, were  
458 convinced that the spirit of Olympic sport did indeed consist in a universal, modern  
459 religiosity (Guttman 2002), premised in part on a deep attachment to the giftedness of  
460 natural talents. Today, current IOC president Jacques Rogge asserts that "the religious  
461 aspect has now totally disappeared" (Rogge in Braeckman et al. 2011, 83), yet the  
462 appreciation of sports as a display of the giftedness of natural talent remains common.  
463 To resolve this tension, Michael Sandel has set out to argue for the fundamental value  
464 of giftedness in sports (and in life in general) without drawing on (overtly) religious  
465 argument. In the chapter "Bionic Athletes" of his book *The Case Against Perfection*,  
466 Sandel writes:

467         The deeper danger is that [human enhancement interventions] represent a kind of  
468 hyperagency, a Promethean aspiration to remake nature, including human  
469 nature, to serve our purposes and satisfy our desires. [...] To acknowledge the  
470 giftedness of life is to recognize that our talents and powers are not wholly our  
471 own doing, nor even fully ours, despite the efforts we expend to develop and to  
472 exercise them. [...] It is, in part, a religious sensibility. But its resonance reaches  
473 beyond religion. (Sandel 2007, 26-27).



474 Sandel advances two closely connected objections to doping: (1) doping represents that  
475 Promethean aspiration; and (2) doping entails a failure to acknowledge the giftedness of  
476 life. We believe the first accusation may be too harsh and overgeneralizing, and the  
477 second to be open to a respectful difference of opinion.

478 In line with Allen Buchanan's reply to Sandel (Buchanan 2011, 69-114), it seems more  
479 prudent and precise to nuance that first accusation into a *probabilistic* statement: doping  
480 *may in specific contexts* represent a 'hyperagency-like' aspiration to remake nature to  
481 serve our purposes and satisfy our desires. Perhaps, in the contemporary Western  
482 culture of professionalism and perfectionism, such a drive towards absolute mastery  
483 over one's biological constitution may indeed be a common risk against which we do  
484 well to warn. And several entrenched contemporary doping cultures, such as those  
485 surrounding anabolic steroids or erythropoietin, may indeed be deeply marked by an  
486 obsessive drive towards mastery and perfection. But surely, there may be many other,  
487 less troublesome motives to engage in biotechnological alterations of one's bodily  
488 capacities, such as the active curiosity to seek out new aesthetics of embodiment and of  
489 athletic virtuosity. What is more, in answering Sandel's second objection, we find that  
490 doping might even be engaged in precisely out of a deep recognition and  
491 acknowledgement of something that is fatalistically given to any human person: not so  
492 much a given biological blueprint, but rather the given responsibility over oneself. As  
493 such, when one should actively take the fundamentals of one's own biology into one's  
494 own hands and reshape them, this need not be rooted in an aspiration for mastery and  
495 perfection. It need not even be rooted in *aspiration*, period. It may be rooted in the  
496 earnest, fatalistic *acceptance* of the burden of responsibility over oneself: an acceptance  
497 of the self-understanding of oneself as a 'self-shaping animal' (cf. supra). In this light,  
498 the opposite position of feeling compelled to stay true to one's given biological  
499 constitution may *also* come with a risk of being inspired by a lack of virtue, and in some  
500 cases even by vice. It may be inspired by the desire to escape a too great responsibility  
501 and too disorienting freedom to shape one's own existence. The escape plan then lies in  
502 choosing to conceive of oneself – perhaps counterfactually – as a creature that should  
503 stay true to how it was created. In this way, one may *outsource* substantial amounts of  
504 burdensome decisional responsibilities over what one should maintain and what one  
505 should change about one's biological constitution to that (created?) creator. This may be

506 a choice for psychological comfort – going with the natural flow of things – over  
507 epistemic and moral courage – feeling honor-bound to actively take responsibility over  
508 one’s own existence. From such a general existentialist position, a non-essentialist, non-  
509 perfectionist Spirit of Sport may sprout, in which (prosthetic and doped) sport is  
510 engaged in as ‘a virtuous exploration of bodily virtuosity’.

511 If the point is granted that this might be so, even if only in certain marginal cases, it  
512 seems advisable to respect such (and perhaps *only* such) doping practices as part of the  
513 respectful disagreement between certain religious and humanistic conceptions of the  
514 good athletic life which both fall within the bounds of reasonable moral pluralism.

### 515 3. Concluding remarks

516 Summarizing the conclusions of this critique of the talentocratic Spirit of Sport, we  
517 argued that all three anti-doping objections fall short as categorical objections but do  
518 have significant residual value as extrinsic, prudential arguments. Firstly, the arguments  
519 on natural talent as greater potential alert to the eventuality that certain doping practices  
520 will not be an equally trustworthy indicator of profound or long lasting potential as  
521 natural talent. However, deeply integrating doping may resolve this, although it may  
522 still lack the feature of being an indicator of *hereditary* traits. Then again, if the Spirit of  
523 Sport would consist in the demonstration of hereditary superiorities, that spirit would be  
524 an ethically dubious relic of evolutionary psychology. Secondly, the arguments on one’s  
525 (lack of) natural talents as a part the true self alert to the eventuality that if one engages  
526 in doping practices without paying due attention to how this fits with one’s affirmative  
527 and aspirational authenticity, it may possibly result in profound disorientation about  
528 who one is and what one should be doing with oneself. Nevertheless, doping could also  
529 be engaged in mindfully in order to achieve greater authenticity. Moreover, profound  
530 authenticity problems may also arise from *not* using available means for altering one’s  
531 natural endowment. Finally, the arguments about natural talent as a true gift alert to the  
532 possibility that the use of doping may be rooted in a problematic drive towards mastery  
533 and perfectionism. Nevertheless, it may also be rooted in the humanistic dignity of  
534 feeling honor-bound to take full responsibility over one’s own existence, including over  
535 one’s own biological constitution, which may be integrated in a non-essentialist, non-  
536 perfectionist Spirit of Sport of “the virtuous exploration of bodily virtuosity” as opposed

537 to the “virtuous perfection of natural talent”. Moreover, there seems to exist a converse  
538 risk, that the categorical anti-doping position may be rooted in a problematic urge to  
539 outsource such responsibilities over oneself, in order to maintain an easy and  
540 comfortable sense of ‘naturally given’ place and purpose.

541 In our exploration of what might constitute proper origins of athletic ability, we have  
542 found it possible to have a reasonable conception of the good athletic life which permits  
543 or even lauds profound corporeal alteration via artifice. However, an exploration of  
544 further intrinsic issues concerning Proper Processes and Proper Outcomes may reveal  
545 insurmountable intrinsic objections to doping nonetheless. What is more, even if doping  
546 would ultimately be found intrinsically permissible or laudable on all fronts, an  
547 exploration of the many *extrinsic* objections to *contemporary* doping practices such as  
548 health-related harms, indirect coercion, rule-breaking etc. may still lead one to conclude  
549 that (virtually all) contemporary doping practices necessarily imply impermissible  
550 conditions. Therefore, one might accept our current argument and still argue, anno  
551 2013, for a ban of all contemporary doping practices until proven that those  
552 impermissible conditions are sufficiently alleviated. The crucial difference, however,  
553 would be that, for want of intrinsic objections, such bans would cease to be based on  
554 ‘anti-doping’ grounds, but rather on ‘anti-unhealthiness’, ‘anti-peer pressure’ or some  
555 other such (aggregate) grounds.

556 Although any given sports institutions could still organize sports on categorical anti-  
557 doping grounds as long as it grants other institutions the right to organize sports on  
558 doping-neutral or pro-doping grounds, sports institutions based on Olympism face a  
559 particular challenge if no intrinsic objections can be found which all reasonable moral  
560 communities should accept. Given the universalist ambition of Olympism to include ‘all  
561 games for all peoples’ (Parry 2009), how should the Olympic Movement respond to the  
562 jarring figure of the reasonable, virtue-ethical doper? If the commitment to universal  
563 inclusivity outweighs the attachment to natural talent, it seems that she should in  
564 principle be welcomed and that, once forms of doping unburdened by decisive extrinsic  
565 objections are made available, provisions should be made to accommodate her. If  
566 instead the attachment to natural talent trumps the commitment to inclusivity, the  
567 Olympics may have to check its doctrine of universalism and clarify that it will host  
568 only ‘all games for all natural peoples’.

569 Reference list

- 570 Baillie, H. 2005. Aristotle and genetic engineering: The uncertainty of excellence. In: *Is*  
571 *human nature obsolete? Genetics, bioengineering, and the future of the human*  
572 *condition* (pp. 209-232), H. Baillie and T. Casey (eds.). Cambridge, Massachusetts:  
573 MIT Press.
- 574 Baker, W. 1988. *Sports in the western world. Revised edition.* Urbana and Chicago:  
575 Illinois University Press.
- 576 Bonte, P. 2011. Why Should I Be Natural? A fivefold challenge to the supposed duty to  
577 'be natural' as grounds for outlawing human enhancement. In: *Technologies on the*  
578 *stand: legal and ethical questions in neuroscience and robotics* (pp. 215-248), B. van  
579 den Bergh and L. Klaming (eds.). Wolf Legal Publishers.
- 580 Braeckman, J., A. De Baets, , J. Declercq, , I. Devisch, , M. Joris, , and L. Lauwereys, .  
581 2011. *Goed, Beter, Best? Over de maakbaarheid van de mens.* Ghent: Academia Press.
- 582 Buchanan, A. 2011. *Beyond humanity. The ethics of biomedical enhancement.* Oxford:  
583 Oxford University Press.
- 584 CBC Sports Online. 2003. The Enforcer. *Drugs & Sport CBC Sports Online InDepth.*  
585 [http://www.cbc.ca/sports/indepth/drugs/stories/qa\\_dickpound.html](http://www.cbc.ca/sports/indepth/drugs/stories/qa_dickpound.html) (accessed May 3  
586 2012).
- 587 De Block, A., and S. Dewitte. 2009. Darwinism and the cultural evolution of sports.  
588 *Perspectives in Biology and Medicine* 52 (1): 1-16.
- 589 DeGrazia, D. 2005. *Human identity and bioethics.* New York: Cambridge University  
590 Press.
- 591 Dixon, N. 2008. Performance-enhancing drugs, paternalism, meritocracy, and harm to  
592 sport. *Journal of Social Philosophy*, 39 (2): 246–268.
- 593 Elliot, C. 2003. *Better than well: American medicine meets the American dream.* New  
594 York: W. W. Norton & Company.

595 Engelhardt, H. 2012. Bioethics critically reconsidered: Living after foundations.  
596 *Theoretical Medicine and Bioethics*, 33: 97-105.

597 Guttman, A. 2002. *The Olympics, a history of the modern games. Second edition.*  
598 Champaign: University of Illinois Press.

599 Hurley, Susan. 2002. Luck, responsibility and the ‘natural lottery’. *The Journal of*  
600 *Political Philosophy*, 10 (1): 79-94.

601 Huxley, A. 2006 [1946]. *Brave new world*. Harper Perennial Modern Classics.

602 International Olympic Committee [IOC]. 2010. *Olympic Charter*. Lausanne:  
603 International Olympic Committee.

604 Jefferson, T. 1988 [1813]. *The Adams-Jefferson letters: The complete correspondence*  
605 *between Thomas Jefferson and Abigail and John Adams*. Lester Cappon (ed). Chapel  
606 Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press.

607 Juengst, E. 2009. Annotating the moral map of enhancement: gene doping, the limits of  
608 medicine and the spirit of sport. In: *Performance-enhancing technologies in sports.*  
609 *Ethical, conceptual, and scientific issues* (pp. 175-204), T. Murray, K. Maschke and A.  
610 Wasunna (eds). Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

611 Kramer, P. 1993. *Listening to Prozac. A psychiatrist explores antidepressant drugs and*  
612 *the remaking of the self*. New York: Viking.

613 Levy, N. 2011. Enhancing authenticity. *Journal of Applied Philosophy* 28 (3): 308-318.

614 Loland, S. 2009. Fairness in sport: An ideal and its consequences. In: *Performance-*  
615 *enhancing technologies in sports. Ethical, conceptual, and scientific issues* (pp. 160-  
616 174), T. Murray, K. Maschke and A. Wasunna (eds),. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins  
617 University Press.

618 McKibben, B. 2004. *Enough. Staying human in an engineered age*. New York: Henry  
619 Holt and Company.

620 Mehlman, M. 2009a. *The price of perfection. Individualism and society in the era of*  
621 *biomedical enhancement*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

622 Mehlman, 2009b. Genetic Enhancement in Sport: Ethical, Legal, and Policy Concerns.  
623 In: *Performance-Enhancing Technologies in Sports: Ethical, Conceptual, and Scientific*  
624 *Issues* (pp. 210-224) T. Murray, K. Maschke and A. Wasunna (eds). Baltimore: Johns  
625 Hopkins University Press.

626 Murray, T. 2009. In search of an ethics for sport: genetic hierarchies, handicappers  
627 general, and embodied excellence. In: *Performance-enhancing technologies in sports.*  
628 *Ethical, conceptual, and scientific issues* (pp. 225-238), T. Murray, K. Maschke and A.  
629 Wasunna (eds). Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

630 Parry, J. 2009. The Ethical and Political Values of the Olympic Movement. Paper  
631 presented at the International Chair of Olympic Studies, Ghent/Louvain 2009.  
632 [http://www.ethicsandsport.com/public/uploads/files/Ethical%20&%20Political%20Valu](http://www.ethicsandsport.com/public/uploads/files/Ethical%20&%20Political%20Values%20of%20Olympism.pdf)  
633 [es%20of%20Olympism.pdf](http://www.ethicsandsport.com/public/uploads/files/Ethical%20&%20Political%20Values%20of%20Olympism.pdf) (accessed December 4 2012).

634 Pico della Mirandola, G. 2012 [1486]. *Oration on the dignity of man. A new translation*  
635 *and commentary*. F. Borghesi, M. Papio, and M. Riva (eds). Cambridge University  
636 Press.

637 President's Council on Bioethics. 2003. *Beyond therapy. Biotechnology and the pursuit*  
638 *of happiness*. Washington: Dana Press.

639 Sandel, M. 2007. *The case against perfection. Ethics in the age of genetic engineering.*  
640 Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: The Belknap Press of Harvard  
641 University Press.

642 Sartre, J-P. 1964. *l'Existentialisme est un humanisme*. Paris: Nagel.

643 Savulescu, J, B. Foddy, and M. Clayton. 2004. Why we should allow performance  
644 enhancing drugs in sport. *British Journal Of Sports Magazine* 38: 666-670.

645 Tännsjö, T. 2000. Is it fascistoid to admire sports heroes? In: *Values in sport: elitism,*  
646 *nationalism, gender equality, and the scientific manufacturing of winners* (pp. 9-23), T.  
647 Tännsjö and C. Tamburinni (eds). London: Kluwer Academic Publishers.

- 648 Van Hilvoorde, I, R. Vos, and G. de Wert. 2007. Flopping, klapping and gene doping:  
649 dichotomies between 'natural' and 'artificial' in elite sport. *Social Studies of Science* 37  
650 (2): 173-200.
- 651 Weir, S. 2011. Theology of sport – historical overview. *Verité sport*.  
652 [http://www.veritesport.org/downloads/Theology\\_of\\_Sport\\_An\\_historical\\_review.pdf](http://www.veritesport.org/downloads/Theology_of_Sport_An_historical_review.pdf)  
653 (accessed March 27 2012).
- 654 World Anti-Doping Agency. 2009. World Anti-Doping Code. [http://www.wada-  
655 ama.org/World-Anti-Doping-Program/Sports-and-Anti-Doping-Organizations/The-  
656 Code/](http://www.wada-ama.org/World-Anti-Doping-Program/Sports-and-Anti-Doping-Organizations/The-Code/) (accessed March 27 2012).
- 657 Young, D. 1996. *The modern Olympics: a struggle for revival*. Baltimore: Johns  
658 Hopkins University Press.
- 659 Young, M. 1958. *The rise of the meritocracy*. London: Thames and Hudson.

---

<sup>i</sup> The list is not baseless, however. Criteria to be put on the list are (1) possible performance enhancing effect, (2) possible health risk, and (3) against the Spirit of Sport (henceforth: Spirit of Sport), where meeting only two of these three criteria suffices to be dubbed doping. (WADA 2009)

<sup>ii</sup> Similar to the WADC definition where the presence of two out of three components suffice to hold something to be doping, for family constructs not all components have to be present in every individual instance of doping, but there is nevertheless adequate persisting ('familial') similarity between all instances.

<sup>iii</sup> These can be thought of as three successive frontiers: a doping practice may bring about transgression (a), but not yet (b) and c); (a) and (b), but not yet (c), or (a), (b) and (c). It is interesting to mention the possibility of 'leapfrog technologies', of which the running blades of Oscar Pistorius might be a contemporary example, wherein a *therapeutic* intervention may not only restore health or ability but at the same time, perhaps even inextricably, effectuate all of these enhancing transgressions, for instance by developing prostheses that are in certain respects superior to conventional homo sapiens biology.

<sup>iv</sup> Circumstantial issues are, of course, crucial in reaching a conclusion on what to do with doping as it exists today. Even if doping may turn out to be permissible or even – *ex hypothesi* – laudable in itself, such neutral or positive valuations can be easily outweighed, when one is deciding on some *particular* doping practice in some *particular* sports context in a *particular* day and age, where countless contingencies should weigh in on such context-specific decision making. However, even if such extrinsic concerns would outweigh an intrinsic neutral or positive valuation of doping, even an extremely negative valuation of particular doping practices can only be called an 'anti-doping' position proper if something intrinsic to doping would be found decisively negative. Otherwise it would be a 'anti-unhealthiness', 'anti-peer pressure' or some other such (aggregate) position. Contemporary anti-doping positions often present themselves as full-blooded anti-doping positions proper, premised on an

---

intrinsic denunciation of doping. In this vein, the World Anti Doping Code states: “Anti-doping programs seek to preserve what is intrinsically valuable to sports. [...] Doping is fundamentally contrary to the spirit of sport”. (WADC 2009: 14) To give clear and sustained attention to *these* core arguments, we must suspend an ethical analysis of the contingent features of doping practices prevalent today – such as the *periodic intake of pharmaceutical substances which induce fleeting effects and come with grave health risks.*

<sup>v</sup> As, for instance, there seems to be something profoundly wrong with the healthy, abundantly available and non-coerced contentment-inducing ‘soma’ drug in Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World*. (2006 [1946])

<sup>vi</sup> This table is not intended to be exhaustive, nor to state a particular and supposedly proper use of the labels ‘unnatural’, ‘inauthentic’ and ‘dehumanizing’, as these labels can and often are used in other contexts.

<sup>vii</sup> Brookes is one of the often forgotten precursors of Pierre de Coubertin, the French Baron who went on to found the international Games we still know today and who is often – incorrectly – portrayed as the lone visionary who founded the modern Olympic Movement. For a detailed history of the early modern Olympic movement(s), see Young 1996.

<sup>viii</sup> We limit our discussion of the ‘equal opportunity to perform’ to questions of equal eligibility and admission. Further questions of equal (re)distribution (of talent and of doping) will not be addressed here, as our arguments can be made without settling these questions. We would, however, briefly note that the argument we present in this paper remains compatible with views on just redistribution from one end of the spectrum to the other: uncompromising luck egalitarian views in which all ‘unfair (biological) advantages’ must be undone (for instance by handicapping the talented or by enhancing the less-talented) so that every member of a community of equals may come to enjoy ‘equal (biological) opportunity’; uncompromising libertarian views of ‘fortunocracy’ in which individuals are left free to exploit for personal gain any good fortune that may come their way – financial capital, social capital, cultural capital, bio-capital and biotech-capital alike; and any position in between. For a luck egalitarian argument for handicapping the talented (for instance via point leads or head starts for the less talented) so that sports competitions can better track ethically relevant differentials such as character and effort, see Mehlman 2009b. See Murray 2009 for a critical response in the same volume. For a thorough analysis of the notion that perhaps the entirety of one’s constitution may be ‘predetermined all the way down’, one’s character and capacity for effort included, and thus wholly a matter of luck for which one cannot be held accountable, see Hurley 2002.

<sup>ix</sup> Money-driven professionalism – that is: sport as a true profession that supports one in one’s livelihood – has also become dominant, although merely as something permitted as a socioeconomical reality, whereas effort-driven professionalism has become dominant as an ethical aim.

<sup>x</sup> Adherents of anti-doping Olympism may of course still believe that others are (reasonably) *mistaken*, and that their Spirit of Sport truly reflects the only proper way to play sports, and thus still try to convince others, non-coercively, of the wrongness of their ways.

<sup>xi</sup> Curiously, Popeye is designed and accepted as a very loveable character, even if his relation to spinach is eerily similar to taking periodic shots of (healthy) doping.

<sup>xii</sup> Similarly spirited, many mainstream beauty pageants place a deep taboo, and regularly prohibitive regulations, on aesthetic surgeries as these also dramatically corrupt the primal urge to discern who is



---

innately superior with respect to beauty, which proxies for fertility and for the heredity of the beauty itself.

<sup>xiii</sup> Here is not the place to pursue this fully, but it may prove fruitful to further tie this in with evolutionary psychological analyses on the pervasiveness of mimicry as an evolutionary adaptive strategy, and how this created a deep evolutionary dynamic towards fine-tuned mechanisms for fake detection and the creation of testing situations in which an organism can probe and provoke proof of the actual traits of relevant others such as competitors, mates, kin, natural enemies and symbiotic partners.

<sup>xiv</sup> This set of arguments is closely connected to the ‘Proper Processes’ concerns which require adequately *active* agency by the athlete as a person, so that the athletic performance can be ascribed to that athlete as a proper *accomplishment* of her. However, here we suspend that further discussion on active agency and delve deeper into the origins-issue of what falls within and without the self, and how one may integrate novel ways of being into one’s authentic self-conception, a question preceding the active/passive distinction.

<sup>xv</sup> For any sport hobbyist this is true on the individual level, but a reason why the absolute top athletes are so revered may be that they are seen to reveal such an existential insight on a species level: at the Olympic Games, we appear to find out something about what ‘mankind’ is capable of, what mankind truly is. This crucial thought strengthens the emphatic connection of the spectators with their sport heroes. In global top sports, people from around the world can collectively rejoice in the most excellent performances given by the top crop of the great in-group of mankind. This exalted sentiment has always been at the heart of Pierre de Coubertin’s and the IOC’s vision of the Olympic Games as a humanistic endeavor to inspire fellow feeling between all human beings. (Young 1996) However, an argument against doping on these grounds would then be epistemic or aesthetic, rather than ethical. We thank an anonymous reviewer for drawing our attention to this ethical-aesthetical distinction.