

**A new interpretation of sport derived
from art-related aesthetics**

by

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Dedicated in loving memory of my father, David Shorkend

SUMMARY

This thesis is concerned with understanding sport theory based on art theory. In so doing, in extending their relationship, a deeper appreciation of both may result. In turn, this may enhance our lives.

While postmodern theories of art somewhat devalue the rarefied status of art, at the same time art's openness is particularly well appointed to understanding other aesthetic domains. Scholarly attention to the so-called aesthetics of the everyday of which sport is an example, is a relatively recent paradigm shift that attempts to give philosophical weight to common, ordinary experiences as aesthetic. Art as the paradigm case of aesthetic experience is therefore useful in illuminating such experiences, one of which is sport.

The results of this study are: Like art, sport idealises in its desire for perfection. Like art, sport is a second-order mimetic activity that is autonomous and reflects extra-aesthetic concerns. The implications of the postmodern language turn for art, namely detotalising and/or meaninglessness can be applied to sport. Drawing from Wittgenstein, art and sport are culturally embedded within institutional frameworks and quite simply are learnt ways of thinking and doing. Expressive theories of art were introduced which, it was found, has resonance with sport, as it can be similarly described as an expression of "aesthetic ideas", to use Kant's phrase. The artistic formalist perspective and the realization of form led to describing sport as aesthetically beautiful in many ways. One might apply Zangwell's moderate aesthetic formalism to sport where formal qualities, representation and content co-exist, thus somewhat combining the above conclusions.

An analysis of this kind suggests that sport may derive its meaning from an artistic perspective, at least in theory. At the same time, though not the primary focus of this thesis, one might describe the relationship between art and sport as an oscillation, if at times a dialectic, in which case boundaries between them inevitably become more complex. It is conceivable that within that complexity/struggle/play there can be self-

realization and world-bettering. It is also conceivable that this is a result of the emergence of a new sub-discipline, namely *sports art*.

Keywords

art, sport, idealism, mimesis, postmodernism, institution, expressionism, formalism, play, body, aesthetic

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Foreword

Maradona, turns like a little eel, comes away from trouble, little squat man...comes inside Butcher, leaves him for dead...outside Fenick, leaves him for dead...and puts the ball away and that is why Maradona is the greatest player in the world. He buried the English defense...he picked up that ball forty yards out...

I can still hear it. I can still see it. Those glorious few moments when Diego Armando Maradona dribbled past half the English side to score that fantastic quarter final goal for Argentina against England in the 1986 FIFA World Cup. The English commentator described that superlative effort but probably did not match the emotional intensity of his Spanish colleague. It was an iconic moment, like the wonderfully documented Bobby Fischer of the United States taking on the reigning World Chess champion of the time, the Soviet Union's Boris Spassky during the Cold War era, a 24 match dual that has often been described as scintillatingly beautiful.

Sport is common, but such moments are rare¹. They are *beautiful*. They are also historic, inimical to their sport and yet they reach out, even changing history, inspiring, motivating and captivating. The beautiful, the aesthetic is usually reserved not for sport, but for "higher" culture, namely art. Nevertheless, I have an intuition that art and sport interplay. In the process an oscillation between sport theory and art theory results, because they share an aesthetic dimension.

When I was a boy, winning a judo contest was of great importance (chess and soccer were almost equally significant). Later, making a painting expressed my creative impulse. I grew more philosophical, turning inward in order to attempt to understand life. In this thesis such interests are combined and "intertwined" – and this is at the heart of a study of this sort. In understanding culture, such as art and sport, is therefore also a kind of self-knowledge. It is at once an engagement with the tradition of Western art and the rather recent academic attention to sport, as well as a personal compass that enables me to navigate towards self-understanding. In the process, I hope to offer the reader why art is useful in bringing to light aspects of sport that are perhaps not that conscious, at least discursively and so to develop a mere intuition into a detailed account of why sport fascinates to the point of perhaps being the

¹ Such examples are the heights of sport, part of its very tradition and do not cancel the power and beauty of sport played recreationally and at "lower" levels, including the viewing thereof.

most popular aesthetic modality today. One possible future course for further research is in developing not only a philosophical account that can be categorized as an arm of the humanities, so to speak, but engage with sports sciences in order to form an interdisciplinary field of knowledge. In other words: I eventually wish to prove the hypothesis that awareness of the arts by sportsmen and women may improve their sports performance or practice. The far-reaching result may be the formation of a discipline annexed to sports science that I shall name *sports art*. But more than this, beyond quantitative results and knowledge claims, I wish to critically reconstruct the aesthetic as pervasive in order to re-imagine both art and sport. That is, insofar as a relationship is established between art and sport, neither art nor sport ought to be perceived in isolation. The far-reaching personal result of this research is an enhancement of our lives through the awareness that indeed there are similarities between art and sport. These similarities are alive and vibrant, owing to an interplay – both playful and one of struggle – that should motivate our experience of the totality of our lives. That is, by re-imagining both art and sport one is enjoined to widen the arc of aesthetic experience in life which metaphorically is itself that great artwork and that great movement. Life is, however, more than culture, but a culture invigorated by the “good life” (the good play, the good struggle) and might very well encourage aesthetics, ethical and creatively enriching cultural practices. At the same time, this is said with circumspect as our games are clearly not free of ideological bias. The historic moment in which we find ourselves are not transcended by the ways in which we express ourselves, hence aesthetic beauty is at the same time potentially grotesque or merely aesthetically redundant (i.e. imaginative, self-referential, reflective, repetitive, sensory [aesthesis]) with no power to change prevailing socioeconomic and political inequalities.

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Introduction

A current issue in the field of aesthetics is whether or not art has the potential to extend everyday aesthetics. In this thesis I side with those who argue that it does have the potential to extend everyday aesthetics. To make the field of study manageable I have decided to focus on sport, an everyday aesthetic. The conjecture is that this focus might lead to a new interpretation of sport derived from art-related aesthetics. Or otherwise stated: I hypothesize that one can explain the phenomenon of sport in a new way based on the assumption that it is derived from art-related aesthetics. While defining aesthetics, art and sport is beyond the scope of this thesis, a simple working definition of each will suffice in the context of this thesis. Admittedly this is rather simplistic as meanings change and evolve over time, differ relative to the language employed, and transmute, even requiring the development of new words (concepts). Nevertheless, we can glean some sense to individual words as well as note their overlaps.

Aesthetics: the philosophical study of art and nature to the extent that we take up the same attitude towards it as we do to art; a special aesthetic experience, we look for neither factual nor practical outcomes and that can apply to all activities (hence an everyday aesthetic); pre-cognitive sensory perception (aesthesis) and feeling; to identify the aesthetic value (which few would now call beauty) of aesthetically satisfying objects; does it relate to moral value? The philosophy of taste and sensory perception and pleasure; music; theatrical arts; connoisseurship; quality...

(Adapted from Collins dictionary [1990], Roget's thesaurus [1967, 1994],

Oxford Dictionary [2004], The Fontana Dictionary of Modern Thought [1988]; brackets my inclusion).

Art: a practical skill; application of skill to the production of beauty and works of creative imagination as in the visual arts; fine arts (beaux arts); decorative arts, abstract art; guile; trick; the use of imagination to express ideas and emotions; arts contra sciences; imagery; music; theatrical and performing arts; requiring aesthetic sensibility...

(Adapted from Collins dictionary [1990], Roget's thesaurus [1967, 1994], Oxford Dictionary [2004], The Chambers Dictionary [2003], The Oxford Universal Dictionary [1965], The Fontana Dictionary of Modern Thought [1988]).

Sport: recreation; play; game or activity; especially involving physical exercise; banter; contest; pleasure; fun, performance; a particular skill, wit...

(Adapted from (adapted from Collins dictionary [1990], Roget's thesaurus [1967, 1994], Oxford dictionary [2004], The Chambers Dictionary [2003], The Oxford Universal Dictionary [1965]).

Within these basic definitional parameters we can certainly extract the interconnectedness of art and aesthetics, but what about sport? "Skill" is common to art and sport as is "wit" or "guile", perhaps also "performance" and "pleasure" (we take pleasure in aesthetic forms and delight in a game of sport). I believe that even these small, common subtleties are sufficient to warrant an exploration of their similar trajectories. In fact, the changing trajectory of aesthetics post-beauty and of art post its alignment with metaphysical "depth" further warrants including sport in its embrace, as the very concept of art continues to morph both in theory and practice. In this respect, aesthetics in both a general sense and in relation to art may enable one to see in mere "fun", "pleasure" and "play" terms – the non-conceptual – the value of sport. In turn, this may quite surprisingly free art of its metaphysical "baggage".

Gumbrecht in *Production of Presence*² (2004:140), which I see as a logical precursor to his *In Praise of Athletic Beauty*³ (2006) writes that we should have "concepts that would allow us to point to what is irreversibly non-conceptual in our lives". In this light, the philosophical paradigm shift from metaphysical thinking to one where physical (non-conceptual) processes interact with spiritual processes does not valorize the latter over the former⁴.

² While I agree with Gumbrecht that presence-effects and meaning-effects oscillate one to the other (and there are innumerable such pairings between aesthetic/extra-aesthetic, form/content and so on), unlike Gumbrecht, I am inclined to think that their "pairing" is complementary. The oscillation between aesthetic presence and extra-artistic "absence" is not exhausted, because in complementary pairings there is no absolute and final interpretation (as in the inverse graph as one axis tends towards infinity, the other tends towards zero, though infinity or zero are never reached).

³ A copy of this book is available in the Drama section of the Arts library at the University of Cape Town. It indicates a certain complexification: the mixture of dance, theatrical arts, drama, performance art and sport!

⁴ One can trace this "trend" in the philosophy of Nietzsche, the philosophical implication of Freud's work, Bergson's philosophy, Heidegger's philosophy of Being, Husserl's phenomenology, Kantian philosophy and the postmodern "language turn". All appear to point away from the subject/object distinction, a relic of Cartesian dualism. One can include other seminal thinkers and theories such as Einstein's relativity theory, Darwin's

The metaphysical paradigm⁵, particularly of the Enlightenment, is paralleled in the development of the discipline of aesthetics and at roughly the same time the rise of beaux arts (or fine arts) in the eighteenth century. In the course of the development of aesthetics, notions of beauty or proportion – an indebtedness to the Ancient Greeks – were supplanted by theories of the sublime (partly as a result of the Romantic spirit). Sensual harmony gave way to abundance and formlessness indicating that “reason” or “spirit” or “beauty” was to fall from its pedestal and the body – that which is present over and above its metaphysical meaning – as significant.

In these respects, perhaps it is timely to compare an ostensibly bodily activity such as sport with art with a view to extending our conception of sport from an arts perspective. This outlines my primary research agenda with the primary research question: How can art-related aesthetics extend our understanding of sport? This research agenda presents a number of problems, which I shall enumerate below together with proposed solutions. The basic conceptualization and rationalization of the project will become evident in this process. The body of the text⁶ then unpacks this in various ways.

Problems and proposed solutions:

1. *Art is referred to as “high” culture whereas sport is not.*

The idea of art’s centrality as “high” culture has come under critique. Doubt has been cast on the Enlightenment tradition that sees in art an emancipatory and “civilizing” role. The ivory tower of the art gallery and the museum is called into question. Furthermore, the very notion of “high” culture may be reduced to Western culture privileging certain groups and certain artists over others. “High” culture and art thus becomes a way of dominating “other” cultures. Therefore, there has been a movement towards breaking down the assumed categories of fine

evolutionary theory and Marx’s dialectical materialism. These thinkers co-join “Spirit” with becoming, flux and matter in various ways. In aesthetics this translates as aesthetic experience been subjective and recent “anti-intellectual trends” in contemporary aesthetics.

⁵ This does not discount the pre-modern metaphysical religious centered world-view.

⁶ The “text” refers both to the written mark and action, a reference to “what is said” and “what is done”. In terms of the latter as sport, one may say a “record” leaves a trace or mark in time. Such action negotiates the realm of event in spatial terms and as part of a story/narrative, as temporal. In a sense such stories are fictional texts, or in other words, the world is mediated by texts.

art both in theory and practice, especially the kind of art produced after the 1960s and the current concern for non-Western art, alternative aesthetics and the body. In this climate, it is conceivable to think jointly of art and sport.

2. *Aesthetics is a broader and even separate category to art.*

According to the institutional theory of art, art is not simply defined by aesthetics or even beauty, but is considered so by its place in the art world and its canonization as part of art theory – the former as expounded by Dickie (1969, 1971, 1974, 1984) and the latter by Danto (1983, 2000). In this sense art is a self-enclosed game that may or may not draw attention to an aesthetic dimension. For example, Duchamp's declaration that his "ready-mades" (1914 onwards) are art makes it so not purely without aesthetic considerations and later Warhol's *Brillo boxes* (1960) attests similarly. Sport too is a cultural game, played by players in a specific way. Therefore, at a certain level art and sport do not necessarily entail an aesthetic dimension in all respects. But that does not mean the inability to compare both as forms of games⁷, as play. As such sport is art-like even where we do not impute aesthetics. In a certain sense though they are obviously both aesthetic where aesthetics is defined as sensible, perceptual (aesthesis), bodily, and involving feeling. Art need not be purely aesthetic as it is also cognitive and intellectual. But because we cannot easily distinguish the perceptual and the cognitive, sport may also in a certain sense be art. On the other hand the way they are played can be assessed in terms of general aesthetics, where imagination, play and other subjective "functions", such as empathy (*Einfühlung*) and pre-cognitive sensory experience and appreciation (aesthesis) describe both disciplines/activities or games. As such aesthetics is not in all respects separate from art – or sport for that matter.

3. *Sport still exhibits the tendency of "spirit" or "reason" disciplining the body, thus setting in motion or corroborating the "metaphysical paradigm" (which could also be referred to as "correspondence thinking").*

In my estimation this particular problem can only be partially resolved. The tendency to privilege "spirit" over "matter", "mind" over "body" is present in both art and sport as both

⁷ I would venture to suggest that the kind of interconnected dot painting of the Aborigines could be compared to the strategic employment of dots in a team sport (when working out play-strategies), where in both cases there is a logical, even aesthetic and mathematical pattern that develops as a kind of game.

are interpreted in what Gumbrecht (2004) calls the “meaning dimension”; or as disciplining the body (mind) in the negative Marxist sense; or as performance that is a-moral, a game and fantasy with no sense of the “real” even as their appearance is obviously bodily! Both art and sport reveal not only a meta-reality, that which is “above” and “beyond”, but also a concern for the ineffable embodied, a unity of mind and body, as beautiful and as a tacit, intransitive form of knowing⁸.

4. *Art and sport diverge from similar roots, for example cave paintings of the hunt, and establish themselves as separate modes or expressions of/in culture.*

“It has been said that as the chase of wild animals was made the subject of the very earliest pictorial designs, sportsman can rightly claim to have given the first impulse to art” (Simplan 1919:4). Therefore, it may be possible to trace the historical formations of sport as a parallel activity to the changing evolution of the history of art from tribal, mythical and ritual initiatives, even as their developing and distinct institutional forms are such that they appear to diverge into separate discursive and institutional worlds. One focus of my project is to suggest a parallel development by not losing a sense of their undifferentiated common root that is fundamentally concerned with presence and the magical quality of the interaction between abstraction, spirituality and matter, physicality, and memory.

5. *Aesthetics, and in particular art-related aesthetics, became a way of dominating “other” cultures with the rise of fine art, an insular or autonomous activity unrelated to sport.*

While it is true that fine art can be construed as a kind of cultural hegemony, its deconstruction and subsequent reconstruction of a broader, “open” conception of art perhaps logically entail considering sport as art-like and even considering art as sport-like.

⁸ I have in mind here Polanski’s (1966, 1969) conception of tacit knowledge best articulated in his assertion that “we can know more than we can tell” (1966:4) and connects this to the performance of a certain skill (and dexterity), be it artistic, athletic, scientific know-how and so on. It is a kind of perception and consciousness that is gestalt-like, where the way we perceive is also rooted in bodily processes, what Polanski calls an “indwelling” (mostly applied in relation to science) and most interestingly connects that to *Einfühlung* in art (and humanities in general) and requires a kind of traditional form of knowledge acquisition. This know-how incorporates an aesthetic sense. His general aim is to bridge the gap between I – It and I – Thou so that, as I see it, the objective experience of the world is also at the same time the subjective experience of the self. This non-verbal, tacit knowledge I have also used interchangeably with “intransitive knowledge”.

6. *The seeds of the dissolution of the “metaphysical paradigm” can be found in the aesthetics of Kant, Hegel, Nietzsche and later postmodernism, but in what way can that be used to understand sport, ostensibly not part of that tradition?*

Kant’s idea that aesthetic experience cannot be subsumed under a definite concept; Hegel’s “end of art”⁹ thesis and Nietzsche’s valuation of art as pertinent to life itself, perhaps leads to the postmodern debunking of the reified art-object and suggests that art does not correspond to a presumed metaphysical “depth”. This then further implies an aestheticisation of everyday life. As such, sport ought to be philosophized about and in particular, in its connection to an art-related aesthetics.

7. *General aesthetics (modal or primary aesthetics) may be applied to sport and not just art per se. What reasons are there to also explicate sport in terms of art-related aesthetics?*

Turning points in the history of aesthetic thought became the basis for renewed interest in so-called everyday aesthetics. Hegel’s critical shift from modal to art theoretical aesthetics in which beauty and harmony or proportion were displaced by the sublime as a basic aesthetic category and the rediscovery of modal or primary aesthetics in the twentieth century via Dewey’s explication of “an experience” and continental philosophy’s hermeneutics are examples. In such terms, art is perhaps the paradigm exemplar of aesthetic experience and aesthetic value and provides a useful evaluative mechanism by which to understand everyday aesthetics, such as sport. Another reason why using art-related aesthetics to understand sport is that the Kantian description of “disinterestedness” – that special aesthetic distance required for art appreciation – can now be broadened to include the experience of other aspects of life, such as sport. Furthermore, considerations concerning the “play” (especially that of Huizinga), imagination and empathic (as discerned by Wollflin, Worringer, Vischer and Lipps) projection concerning art can be extended to apply to sport.

⁹ The “end of art” is not the end of art, but the beginning of a new kind of art. Deconstruction is the foundation for reconstruction. The history of style is a history of the ephemerality of aesthetic predilection. Perhaps post postmodernism will emerge.

8. *Aesthetic beauty is outdated as applied to art with notions of the sublime and arguments against art-for-art's sake formalism. What then is the value of describing sport as beautiful with the claim that this assertion need not apply even to art?*

This is a thorny issue. I can only suggest that although formalism has been critiqued and what Tatarkiewicz (1972) calls the “Great Theory” of beauty as proportion (which lasted two millennia) as no longer wholly tenable, this does not discount some aspects of beauty as it pertains to art. I say so as even though modernism is concerned with what Hughes calls the “shock of the new” and postmodernism with the grotesque and even the abject, such concerns are, quite paradoxically, still a wrestling with the concept of beauty. Formalism, moreover, is still relevant today as an invention derived from Kant that assists one in appreciating the “focused intensity” required when making and viewing art. Now, if this is the case, rather than saying art is no longer autonomous and therefore nebulous, one can embrace such lack of definition with the claim that sport shares aesthetic aspects with art. Therefore, a well-executed manoeuvre in sport, the delight of play and often its fictional violence can be defined as formally arresting and beautiful, without the pitfalls that beset art and its close alignment with a discursive metaphysical tradition. (In turn this could assist in reconceptualising art.)

9. *The art-object or body is a text whose forms bear no similarity to the “text” that is sport.*

This problem arises only if we assign specific forms as corresponding to art or sport respectively. However, once we introduce the aesthetic in both a general sense and as related to art, we discern subtle interconnections between art and sport, which I hope, will become evident during the course of this thesis. The conclusion must be that we can alter our perception of the forms and framing or mediation devices of sport in such a way as to cohere with an art-like repose and an art-like theoretical formulation.

10. *Art is an intellectual as well as emotional form of communication, whereas sport is simply the performance of bodily skill.*

This may be partly true. However, art is clearly dexterous and bodily (even poetry requires a bodily feel for the sound of words). Art requires training in craft (in general) as

much as it is an intellectual pursuit. Sport is also more than craft – the sportsperson expresses himself or herself, intuits a play, imagines an outcome, wills a victory and struggles nobly. In this sense sport is more than simply brawn, but has a strong mental component.

Both art and sport are individual and social activities that bear a resemblance and reflect – even potentially protest against – the prevailing culture¹⁰. Furthermore, I am in partial agreement with Shusterman’s somaesthetics, wherein all art is said to be created and perceived through the body so that we should “save art from reaching its end in philosophy, we should keep art in the area of the aesthetic” (Feng 2015: 105). Thus art is primarily concerned with the living, moving, sensuous body through which we can enhance ourselves and our surroundings; it is a call to action and dialogical experimentation, rather than privileging a transcendent mind and spirit purveying from an Archimedean point of objectivity and distance. Rather, the living body is a site for sensory appreciation (aesthesis) towards the transformative cultivation of beauty in daily life wherein, for example ordinary objects can be aesthetically appreciated with a non-verbal empathic connection, just as the artist may make use of his/her body so that it become a living material in art¹¹ and technology (the performance artist Stelarc is an example of this). As forms of communication – auditory, visual and movement - they reveal a semiotic structure, which in turn leads to interpretative possibilities.

The upshot of this is that art is not purely conceptual (Kant already made this point), rather it is through an awareness of the body and how that structures our sensorial perceptions (aesthesis) that gives rise to a certain aesthetic consciousness. The aesthetic dimension resists intellectualization, as Ranciere would have it, and it is the “thought that does not think” (in McQuilan 2014:18). The focus on *soma* or the living, wondrous body and bodyliness in art immediately acts as a bridge linking art and sport, where the latter is clearly marked by the mobilization of the body in various ways, thus potentially at least

¹⁰ This is dubious as where art is separated as “high” culture, it becomes the preserve of “spirit” and an elite few without effecting the status quo (c.f. Marcuse, 1968), while sport may just be the play of culture absorbing or negating any critical position.

¹¹ While I find some body-art crude, problematic and indulgent, I recognize the extent that “other” aesthetics or retrogressive acts may be at times a healthy purging by one extreme for another (perhaps one can link this to extreme sports).

one could argue that sport is art-like in terms of the aesthetics of corporeality¹², that which the living body as both object and subject expresses and whose performance may be transformative (in culture as in life).

11. I have not focused on a specific style, period or even art medium, nor have I focused on any particular sport. Does that render the text mere vague conjecture?

I have used art and sport as general concepts which might include each of their respective offshoots as forms of language games, with reference to historical examples and some individual sports. The text is mainly a philosophical exegesis of the ontological status of art and sport, without essentialising them because I have not just applied “timeless” aesthetic theories (expressionism, formalism, mimesis, idealism,..) but also focused on the historical and institutional reality of both activities. In this sense, this thesis may be more than theoretical and lead to action (at least in the world of theoretical posturing).

Perhaps another oversight or at least a project for further investigation is the focus on the particularity of what may be termed intermedia or multi-sensory art such as happenings, actions and fluxes as a example in art most readily warranting a comparison with the physicality of sport as well as its dissemination the world over. Nevertheless, insofar as this thesis argues that art, in varying degrees is concerned with the sensual, the lack of a particular focus on certain art-forms in relation to sport, does not weaken the basic tenant that indeed one can establish such a relationship.

12. Can this text be intelligible if the reader does not in some way enjoy sports in any shape or form although he/she engages with art or that the reader does in fact like sport, but not art? Secondly, what new insight can be discerned herein for those who already appreciate and enjoy both art and sport?

In theory, this text should assist those who have an interest in art with no regard for sport, to see in sport parallel and even converging trajectories with art. The result is that such a person may conceive sport philosophically or even be motivated to play and/or view sport. The reverse is also true: Those interested in sport may be motivated to conceive and perhaps even

¹² In order to argue for the centrality of the body, he cites Foucault, Simone de Beauvoir; Wittgenstein, Merleau-Ponty, William James and John Dewey – a strong “line up” of major “intellectual heavyweights” indeed.

make art. In this respect, sports-inclined people may find an interest in art as an affinity, a likeness between the two is proposed, argued-for and interpreted. This is achieved by arguing for a common aesthetic dimension. In this regard, a new insight is derived for the art enthusiast and sport enthusiast, namely that a relation exists between the two.

Concerning the value of the text for someone who delights in both, this text could articulate why some people may gravitate to both art and sport and so derive a new insight into the theoretical formulation of why and even how art and sport may appeal. However, admittedly I have attempted to do this via an art-centered approach so that art theory becomes a lens through which to see sport (and in some respects, art itself). Therefore, it may be that this text does not find the shores beyond art discourse. Yet with the aesthetics of the everyday and art practice blurring the boundary between art and sport, mind and body – namely somaesthetics – the text may indeed have relevance “outside” of art history and aesthetics. In this respect disciplines become interdisciplinary. The basic unit of this link in the sharing of an aesthetic dimension: Ancient Greek sculptures of athletes; the sheer ubiquity of games, of organized play and competitive sports; the sense of formal beauty, expression and idealism as well as the social import, bringing people together amplified by mass media and technological innovations, such as action replays – all this is known.

However, my task is to show how art-related aesthetics can be useful to explain and develop these observations in a new way. “New” in the sense already mentioned: An affinity between the two is described and argued for, although this has been somewhat developed in the recent past in the 1970s and 1980s triggered by L.A. Reid (1970), J.Kupfer (1975), D. Best (1979, 1980, 1986), S.K. Wertz (1984) and Cordner (1988). My intention or contribution is, unlike these writers, not a concern with the question whether sport is art, but simply *linking* the two, which renders that question unintelligible. And it is that link between art and sport – whether aesthetic, extra-aesthetic – that may enhance our experience (in art and in sport as in life). This implies a “third concept” (that is, in order to link the other two – art and sport), which would explain the endless oscillation, but one which is potentially dialectical, so that in that process there is a beautiful “wrestling”, even a “wrestling” with the concept of “beauty” itself.

Yet at times – and as is evident in this thesis – a less optimistic view of culture (such as art and sport) is assessed with reference to the manipulation and abuse of art and sport (and

hence the concept of beauty itself) under totalitarian regimes (the obvious example being Nazi Germany). Such insights, though not new, are new in respect of forging a link between art and sport, equalising them in some respects. Perhaps this too is not new: Huizinga, early twentieth century, already achieved this with his argument that man is homo ludens (which dovetails with the idea that man is homo faber) and such play can be found in art as in other activities such as law, war, music, political “jousting” ...but he does not so much see sport included in this list. On the contrary, I have argued that sport ought to be included here, and from there, it is questionable whether one can transcend that tendency to play, that is to play sport, fight wars, make art and so on – so that beauty as such cannot manifest. There is just aimless play, endless pre-cognitive play (including its seeming intellectual rationalization). It can be understood as an obsession with aesthetic redundancy; what I have also termed self-referentiality (analogously in logic to something tautological).

Nevertheless, if there is a telos to history and a good one, then these ruminations have a goal to which a positive lifeworld may be envisaged. Such concerns are beyond the scope of this thesis. I simply wish to establish a link between art and sport and gesture towards a goal (to use a sporting metaphor) namely to show the potential for beauty in art, in sport, in life...

13. I err in conflating general aesthetics with art-related aesthetics?

Even while certain aspects that are common to art and sport appear to be general aesthetic commonalities, such as play, imagination, skill and games these aspects are under specific categories, namely the art-related aesthetic considerations that mark and specify each chapter heading, though admittedly formalism is possibly the only “pure” art aesthetic concept.

14. On the one hand, I am saying that art is the exemplar case of aesthetic experience and value and on the other hand, I am deconstructing art as not necessarily an exemplar instance of aesthetic experience and value. So which is it?

Art is neither of the options exclusively. In order for deconstruction to occur there ought to be that which is deconstructed in the first place. Yet the text (or artwork) is but a “trace” with no single or definite textual meaning, even betraying the writer (or producer of art). At the same time such a deconstructive task produces a new text or interpretation which itself is open to

interpretation. And so the process may continue indefinitely. By maintaining the *tension*¹³ between art as a prime example of aesthetic experience and value and art as questionably so, it is conceivable that “other” texts factor into art theory. My project is to show the latent art-text “embedded” in sport aesthetics. I impute aesthetic value and experience as being common to both without subsiding into aestheticism, both generally in life itself and more particularly in art.

15. Sport is simply pop culture with a focus on superficial body-aesthetics in contrast to art's spiritual and philosophical depth?

The paradigm shift in philosophical thinking which Shusterman (2008:8) neatly describes as a “vision of an essentially situated, relational, and symbiotic self rather than the traditional concept of an autonomous self grounded in an individual, monadic, indestructible and unchanging soul” implies that there is always some aspect of the body (or rather some – the living body) in the understanding of persons and aspects of world. The dominant Platonic-Christian-Cartesian tradition is thus challenged by the fact that we think and act through our bodies so that in Shusterman’s (2008:19) words: “if the body is our primordial instrument in grasping the world, then we can learn more of the world by improving the conditions and use of this instrument”. In view of this it seems natural to turn philosophical attention on sport, a bodily activity in many respects and the *Journal of the Philosophy of Sport* is doing just that.

Furthermore, it is specifically art and aesthetics as a perceptual activity by and large that may assist in developing a creative conception of sport. Insofar as this can be done, where the perceptual role of aesthetics and its embodied intentionality contradicts the mind/body dichotomy, the distinction between art as “spiritual” and sport as superficial, even hedonistic dissolves. Art and pop culture in a postmodern context and the focus on everyday aesthetics means that art is not an isolated phenomenon or insular activity (and perhaps never was either), an ontological essence impervious to fashion, economic value and other aspects of life (political, religious, ideological ...). Moreover, as I understand it, somaesthetics perhaps drawing from Eastern philosophical thinking and practical disciplines such as Tai Chi and yoga, offer a perspective where pleasure and a more enjoyable method of basic functions such as breathing, sitting, lying, stretching, walking and eating gesture towards personal self-

¹³ Otherwise stated modernism and post modernism co-exist. In fact, the seeds for the latter can be found in the former.

cultivation and sensitivity to others – wherein the “spiritual” is not reserved simply as some kind of disembodied state or the philosophical promise of “depth” that is supposed to be found in fine art in particular. This potential all-pervasiveness of meaning and the acceptance of pleasure as integral to that bodes well for a philosophy and practice of life that fuels growth for the self and others.

16. Sport is about winning and losing, whereas art is not defined in such terms.

The reasons for participating in or viewing sport (or any conversation about it) are not solely understood and enjoyed for the sake of victory. Engagement in sport is also about love of the game, joy in its form and often complicated movements or tactics, the creativity, cooperation and teamwork, camaraderie, self-improvement, surmounting difficulties, enhanced health and mental vigour as well as more subtle intuitive, spiritual goals. The observation that “it’s only a game” is often heard, but sometimes sport is so dear to one’s mind and heart; sometimes it is one’s very life. On the other hand, art does not only have spiritual aims. It is often a rather competitive affair: there are rivalries, competitions, goal-setting and the hype of becoming a well-known artist and the like proffered by galleries, critics, grants, residencies and so on. Perhaps most significantly, both art and sport are social *fields* in the sense that Bourdieu (1979) intended: they render social distinctions between classes. They reflect societal norm and the kind of capital he or she can acquire/articulate through such social interactions which often produces inequality and the preservation and power of the dominant class through developing various aesthetic criteria, a certain bodily know-how (or otherwise stated – “a strong mind”). Granted that these social relations may be one of struggle, a certain social hierarchy whether in “high” art or everyday concerns and tastes – a distinction which is in no way neutral. Hence my project – in somewhat merging art and sport – is to offset binaries whereby:

the denial of lower, course, vulgar, venal, servile – in a word, natural enjoyment, which constitutes the sacred sphere of culture, implies the affirmation of the superiority of those who can be satisfied with the sublimated, refined, disinterested, gratuitous, distinguished pleasures closed to the profane. This is why art and cultural consumption are predisposed, consciously and deliberately or not, to fulfill a social function of legitimating social differences (Bourdieu 1979: 7).

Instead, recognizing that art and sport are games – social games – and thus similar or connected and that manifest in and through society as material products. In such terms, art and sport may have ideological (and this is inherently competitive) import. Nevertheless, by suggesting a “merger” one perhaps, at least theoretically, works towards a democratization of

culture and a creative dialogue between apparently separate languages. On a profound level, one also senses that the game (language) plays the players.

17. Does this thesis suffer from a lack of clear distinguishing markers between play, games, sport and art?

Simply put one plays a game! One example of a game is art. Another more obvious example is sport. Such games are worlds of make-believe, fictional creations. This conception is partly derived from Walton (1990) who argues that representation in art – and he includes non-figurative art too – are things possessing the social function of serving as props in games of make-believe. Furthermore, Walton (1990:7) also writes that he suspects that make-believe may be crucially involved as well in the role of sports in our culture. In this sense, there is a fluid continuum linking play, games, art and sport. At the same time such fictional worlds are partially real, by which I mean they are co-joined to economic, political, ideological and social realities in the process extending, mirroring, even changing lifeworlds.

Academic motivation

By developing an account of sport from an art theoretical perspective I hope to open up the field of everyday aesthetics, specifically in the domain of sport and develop a language *between* what appears to be vastly different forms of cultural expression. One significant reason why this project is relevant is that it promotes democratic and egalitarian practices. An additional motivation is that I believe that by drawing attention to the aesthetic dimension in both art and sport, lives can be enriched. This may have motivated Shusterman (1997:39) to point to the need for the philosophical value of the concept. He writes and I quote in full:

...First, it can remind us of the variety this concept still embraces as heightened, meaningful, and valuable phenomenological experience. So the threatened loss of one traditional form does not entail its utter extinction. Second, in any of its rewarding forms, aesthetic experience will be strengthened and preserved the more it is experienced; it will be more experienced the more we are directed to such experience; and one good way of directing us to such experience is fuller recognition of its importance and richness through greater attention to the concept of aesthetic experience. We thus find at least one good use for philosophical recognition of this concept: its orientation toward having the experience it names. Rather than defining art or justifying critical verdicts the concept is directional, reminding us of what is worth seeking in art and elsewhere in life...

A study of sport that draws from an art theoretical perspective is important, because in arguing for the pervasiveness of both aesthetic (and extra-aesthetic) dimensions one is led to the appreciation of the complexity of culture and life itself. Moreover, I hope to academically contribute to the literature in art theory, art history and aesthetics, which will increasingly include insights in aesthetics of the everyday. This fledgling field is important for making life worthwhile as it may open one to sensitive nuances and subtleties within the experience of life itself so that seemingly mundane physical movement and communication become meaningful, full of content and perhaps beautiful. In turn, this may lead to the improvement of the world whereby the power of aesthetics is understood but not misused. This is a result of a creative interplay between sensuality and abstraction via feelings, “play”, culture and movement. In this sense there is potentially a fusion of so-called high brow and low brow culture, theory and practice towards a more sustainable future.

One could trace this utopian ideal to the counter culture in the West in the 1960s, where writers such as Meredith Tax (1972) sees beyond art-for-art’s sake, beyond the alienation of a capitalist consumer culture, of commodity fetishism in the bridging of the gap between so-called “high” and “low” culture. In this sense the appeal of both art and sport is enhanced; specifically in the sense of opening avenues of appreciation for sport perhaps not shared by those in the arts and vice versa. Yet perhaps most significantly traditional Western art theory, history, philosophy and aesthetics are pivotal for deepening this appreciation of sport in the first place. At the same time this rather positive claim is critiqued, that is, sport (aesthetics) and art (aesthetics) may also simply serve extra-aesthetic ends which are clearly not for life, as in the combination of art and sport under fascism or more recently, the mindlessness of capitalist consumer culture where art and sport are simply reduced to superficial and monetary value so that culture in Marcuse’s (1969) sense does not in these terms empower or enable transformation of the status quo or civilization.

The neglect of everyday aesthetics and toward a new interpretation of sport

A basic summary by way of introduction of art-aesthetics is in order so that one can argue in what respect sport theory could be perceived in a new light.

Whereas, one finds in the eighteenth century Western aesthetic tradition that fine art was not thought of in isolation, but thought of in broader terms, that is as encompassing everyday

aesthetic matters, one finds in the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century an obsession, so to speak, with aesthetics as it pertained to fine arts. However, in the latter part of the twentieth century and now of current concern one notes that a shift has occurred in that there is precisely a reappraisal of the aesthetics of the everyday. Yet, even so sport has received scant attention, particularly in terms of an art-aesthetic perspective.

Literature on sport, a rather recent academic pursuit (around the 1960's; save the alignment of art and sport recognised by the Ancient Greeks) deals with philosophical aspects, social sciences, history (of sport), sports sciences, management and even psychology, but there is a dearth of texts that relate art to sport. One reason why this might be the case is that art-related aesthetics has been so confined to art as an autonomous sphere, as some kind of isolated, "disinterested" experience such that a reciprocity between the two fields was not interrogated. While some theorists such as Reid (1970), Kupfer (2001), Best (1974, 1978, 1986), Wertz (1984), Welsche (2005) and others did engage with the question "Is sport art?" and deduced various answers, the question itself is flawed somewhat as it assumes that a kind of "essence" pertains to both. Instead what I maintain and argue for, what in fact is a gap in the literature and a contribution to this field of inquiry is precisely that the implications for an everyday aesthetic such as sport in fact may derive its meaning from an art-based conceptual schema. In contradistinction to simply a philosophical or general aesthetic schema, this promises a "new" and original departure wherein sport so conceived is partially continuous with art, a "weak" version of everyday aesthetics as I shall develop below.

Defining my field of study

A number of new sub-disciplines in aesthetics have recently been identified or rediscovered. Ratiu (2013:5-8) notes that there are a number of trends linking aesthetics to the everyday, such as "participatory aesthetics" and "social aesthetics" by Berleant as an alternative to aesthetics as a "disinterested" experience; aesthetics of the human environment by Berleant and Carlson; "pragmatist aesthetics" (or somaesthetics) by Shusterman, such as popular music and film and arts of self-realization; "aesthetic multiculturalism" by Sartwell and others, dealing with art of cultures other than the West wherein aesthetics and everyday life are enmeshed and the area that I am concerned with, namely "aesthetics of the everyday" (or AEL), the aesthetics of virtually all aspects of daily life. Having said this, Irvin (2008:29f) notes that fewer than two percent of articles in the *British Journal of Aesthetics* and the

Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism between 2001-2006, dealt with aesthetic topics other than art. I do not have the figures for more recent trends, but it is clear that more voices on the subject are needed. This is surprising, because arguably the “founding father” of everyday aesthetics, that of Dewey, in his breaking down the distinction between aesthetic experiences in art with other experiences, already preempted this direction in aesthetics, writing a number of decades ago. Furthermore, the *Journal of the Philosophy of Sport* has for decades recognized the philosophical and even artistic dimension of sport and I foresee the “playing fields” in art criticism will be influenced by such endeavours.

Aesthetics of the everyday is the study of everyday life towards its appraisal as aesthetic. Which aspects of everyday life fit into this category and whether art aesthetics is significant in extending it, is a current point of debate. Christopher Dowling (2010) suggests that this new sub-discipline can be divided into two distinctive camps:

ADLI (Weak): The concept of the aesthetic, at work in discussions of the value of art can be extended to include experiences from daily life.

ADLI (Strong): Experiences from daily life can afford paradigm instances of aesthetic experience. Such experiences are not bound by the limitations and conventions of aesthetic value in the philosophy of art. (Adapted from Dowling 2010:226, ADLI stands for “aesthetics of everyday life intuition”).

Dan Ratiu (2013), Christopher Dowling (2010) and Sherri Irvin (2008) align themselves with the weak formulation, while Yuriko Saito (2007) and Kevin Melchionne (2011) argue for the “strong” version. This divergence is as a result of their respective definitions of what constitutes an everyday aesthetics, which I shall briefly outline in what follows.

Ratiu (2013:4) opposes the traditional conflation of the aesthetic dimension with the artistic institution that is “then insulated from ordinary human life and experience”. Instead, he wishes to address the aesthetics of ordinary life¹⁴ as well as built environments and popular

¹⁴ Ratiu (2013:7) writes: “The scope of aesthetics is expanded to include areas of everyday life previously neglected – consumer goods, artifacts, the urban or suburban built environments, and the ambiance within which we interact on a daily basis, including weather, other domains of life such as sport, sex, and everyday decision-making, as well as the ordinary domestic practices of dwelling and house-making such as cleaning, discarding, purchasing, using tools, cooking, dressing up, resting/relaxing and so on”.

art in such a way that art-related aesthetics and the everyday interact. Having discerned qualities that may apply to art and the everyday, Ratiu (2013:20) writes: "...these concepts are useful in developing a consistent aesthetic theory able to accommodate both art and everyday life and their interaction. In this way, the distinction between art-related experiences and non-art daily aesthetic experiences is less sharp than pretended by AEL – strong, while these experiences do resemble each other in some features".

Dowling (2010) has a similar definition of everyday aesthetics. He argues that the aesthetics of daily life intuition is "...one expressed by those quite familiar with the concept of the aesthetic as it occurs in the art world and adamant that *this* aspect of our experiences of art should be recognized as characteristic of many quotidian contexts" (Dowling 2010:230). He maintains this position by arguing that elements usually associated with art are not necessarily in contradistinction to the everyday such that art may also, like the everyday be about practicalities, impermanence and the multi-sensory.

Irvin (2008) takes this sharing of qualities between art and the everyday further by applying Dewey's definition of *an* experience, as one that contains unity and closure, with the following assertion (2008:33) "An experience of a symphony or a Victorian novel is very likely to be characterized by unity and closure as Dewey describes it. It seems that the description might also apply to an intense sexual experience, or to the experience of running a race or climbing a mountain". However, later in her article on the "pervasiveness of the aesthetic in ordinary experience" (2008) she argues that everyday life as well as art may lack unity or closure, may be simple and may contain elements that reside in the subconscious. In this light, consider Irvin's Zen-like description of aesthetic experiences that, should we so choose, may be found readily:

...Being in the room you are in right now, with its particular visual features and sounds;
sitting the way you are sitting, perhaps crookedly in an uncomfortable chair; feeling the
air currents on your skin- all of these things impart a texture to your experience,
that...should be regarded as aesthetic...

The reader will notice that this kind of attentiveness is also often a precondition for the artist in relation to his/her subject as well as the viewer in relation to the art-object. A similar *focus* may be required for sport. This may be understood by the following seeming digression on Zen or mindfulness, before continuing to define everyday aesthetics in order to give *weight* to the "weaker-version": Mindfulness occurs when the body is at rest but it can also occur at the

luminous point where one's senses are alert or when doing a particular activity and one is "lost in focused intensity" (the swimmer Morales quoted in Gumbrecht 2006:49). Dispensing with the notion of beauty in art, we reconstruct beauty and aesthetic experience as potentially all-pervasive, the field of numerous activities. In this regard, to be "lost in focused intensity" is to impute an aesthetic dimension and reapplication of the idea of beauty to an art of living. The idea that one can paint highly expressive works of "genius" but in life proper one is simply not a nice person is antiquated and loses a sense of the significance of art and aesthetics in terms of self-actualization and social-ethical responsibility. In this sense, the tendency in contemporary art to draw on a number of areas of life, sport included is a "good move", as are collaborative projects within and beyond the arts, working together from diverse nationalities and showcased at, for example, a biennale – a sports-like happening/event/game that perhaps both unifies and acknowledges difference.

Melchionne, as with Saito, argues for the "strong-version", and points out that Dowling makes the mistake of "focusing on discrete moments...[he has] mistaken the very ontology of everyday aesthetic life. What matters is the routine, habit, or practice, the cumulative rather than the individual effect" (Melchionne 2011:439). Melchionne errs perhaps in thinking that art itself may not share some of those characteristics associated with an everyday aesthetic, for example its commonness, and he defines everyday aesthetics in terms of practices such as cleaning, homemaking, cooking and wardrobe. Such common, repetitive activities are accordingly distinguished from "disinterested", autonomous art. Furthermore, Melchionne rejects the role of discourse in everyday aesthetics. Rather, it is of such a type, that it is unmediated, sensory experience. Ratiu argues that in the light of the poststructural denial of pure, unmediated direct perception, this would be a difficult line to maintain. Besides, we do contend, as Dowling rightly points out, that we argue with others over appearances, "insisting that one's aesthetic estimations should be acknowledged and respected" (Ratiu 2013:23), that is, that discourse is built into aesthetic experience. Moreover, critical discourse, say the "game" of art criticism or the "game" of sports commentary, aids understanding and appreciation, even making effable the seemingly ineffable that is aesthetic experience of whatever kind.

If one were to maintain the "strong version", if they were simply described as oppositions – art as coherent, as expressing ideas (that is, as having "depth") and everyday aesthetics as "surface" - what would be the satisfaction, the aesthetic joy in the everyday in the first place?

There would be no creative dialectic, and no connection between them, but what of their interface, for example in popular culture (cultural studies). So the strong version would “disallow” the research of popular art (such as film and television) as part of an everyday aesthetic, but this may be incorrect, as in the lifeworld mass culture and routine everyday experiences often coincide. Sport, I maintain, seems to belong in this category (as part of mass culture), and as with film and television (for example) imports artistic concepts. Only the weak version adequately deals with this possibility.

Moreover, proponents of the “strong” version have a problem with the “weak” formulation as it elevates art hierarchically above the everyday, subsuming such experiences as merely art-like, falling short in most respects. To this, one might respond that the borders between art and the culture industry and art and non-art has been somewhat questioned and deconstructed in art theory and practice, as well as the philosophical metaphysical justification for their separation, so that it has become possible to think aesthetics in art and aesthetics in everyday life together.

Dowling furthermore contends that theorists of the “strong” version (Saito and Melchionne) tend to confine everyday aesthetics to the private, domestic and pre-discursive and not so very coherent routine of life. This would tend to trivialize the aesthetic. But this may not be correct, that in real life the aesthetic plays itself out in alarmingly powerful ways, as for example a fascist aesthetic or even the consumer culture of late capitalist society – its “reach” is voracious. Thus the normal, commonplace and popular needs to be engaged with academically, even though it appears less “serious” than art-related aesthetics.

It is difficult to theorize the “pervasive” in aesthetic terms. As Dowling writes (2010:228) that a relatively private flow of experience and action (say domestic life) may be below the “discursive radar”. We thus have the paradox that on the one hand, aesthetics of the everyday ought to be analysed and theorized, while on the other hand such analysis gets in the way of the kind of awareness of ordinary activities that Irvin (2008) so eloquently describes. I maintain that aligning everyday aesthetics with art aesthetics may do the job of finding the appropriate language for understanding this relatively new area of academic debate. Leddy (2012) may have found that common ground in explaining how art elevates the ordinary, the quotidian into the extraordinary. In such terms – and against the “strong” form – art may indeed be useful in understanding sport (and vice versa).

My argument and position in the current debate

As is evident in my presentation above of some of the issues pertinent to the debate regarding everyday aesthetics as well as my stated aims in the very beginning of this introduction, I side with the weaker version. I draw from Western art theory, art history, philosophy of art and aesthetics of mainly the continental tradition to argue for my position. However, at the same time, I also draw from the Anglo-American analytic tradition. On the one hand, my appraisal of the aesthetic domain is historicized (continental tradition), while on the other hand analysis often proceeds as a purely logical set of arguments without context (analytic tradition). In the former context, one might see art as heteronomous, while the latter argues more for the autonomy of art. This kind of demarcation also reflects my concern regarding the aesthetic: extra-aesthetic complementary pairing.

My argument can be seen as both deconstructive and (re)constructive. It is deconstructive in that:

- a) I argue for the lack of a radical differentiation of aesthetic experience as it pertains to art and also equally a lack of a definite corresponding meaning that pertains to a particular artwork or style or movement or even period of art. That is, there is no ultimate, present aesthetic, nor a corresponding ultimate, present, ideological content in art. This deconstructive tendency can be summarized as follows: I argue that there is no ideal correlate, that is, between art's sensuality and idea (chapter 1). Furthermore, I argue that there is no necessary correspondence between sign and referent, just productive "play" (chapter 2). Then I argue that art and sport are "intertwined", that is, art is not insular and autonomous, but like language implies an other (chapter 3). Moreover – and lending support to the arbitrariness of our games, "forms of life", languages – I argue that art and sport are "locked" within the framework of contingent institutions (chapter 4); that expressive *intention* is questionable (chapter 5) and that formal beauty is not only reserved for art, but other experiences such as sport (chapter 6).
- b) On the other hand, my argument is (re)constructive in that this deconstructive tendency leads to a reconstruction of the aesthetic so that it pertains to everyday life itself, sport in particular. It is precisely then an art-centered approach that develops this conception. While Melchionne (2011) and Saito (2007) think that art as a model is not necessary to explicate everyday aesthetics, I argue that it is precisely art's

engagement with the everyday in the first place and the art-like repose necessary for the appreciation of the everyday in the second place, that one may come to an aesthetic appraisal and conception of sport.

The renewed interest and shift to everyday aesthetics and Shusterman's somaesthetics (defined above) combined with the deconstruction, particularly in continental philosophy of the logos and the purported sacredness of art, has led to a broader conception of art. Furthermore, this shift is characterized by a tendency to move away from metaphysics into what might be termed a Zen-like, pragmatic understanding of life; a movement away from philosophical idealism towards an engagement with bodily, pre-cognitive perceptual (aesthesis) reality; tacit knowledge as opposed to correspondence thinking. Consequently viewing both art and sport as not merely games apart from life, but as part of the fabric of life and culture, that is a "participatory self". In order to make this argument, that is to render what is precognitive, kinaesthetic and non-conceptual conceptual, I have discerned common elements shared by art and sport, namely "play", empathy (Einfühlung), imagination, morality, the ineffable and intransitive ways of knowing. These "concepts" rationalize the overall thesis, and are dealt with in various ways in the chapters and their sub-headings that suggest new ways of understanding sport derived from art-related aesthetics.

If we are then to maintain a previous boundary between art and the everyday, where the latter is sport, one can ask the question whether this results in an interplay (maybe at times a dialectic). In this respect, one can imagine a *model* to define a relationship between art theory and practice and sport theory and practice, derived from the postmodern "language turn"¹⁵ that tends towards the infinite, though with finite pockets of knowledge. In this sense, a potentially enriching oscillation (maybe at times a dialectic) between art and sport is set in motion.

Figure 1 (see page 45) *shows* a relationship between art, sport and the "language turn". All "three elements" are circumscribed as one text. But to be true to Derrida, text has an "other" beyond it and it too is circumscribed by a larger text. Together the first text and the "other text" are circumscribed by "language", which becomes itself another "text" and so the sequence continues indefinitely. Now, "stemming from" the "other" is the duality of art

¹⁵ This concept will be dealt with in more detail in chapter 3. Provisionally, it shall be defined as the recognition that our "grasp" on the world is mediated by language.

theory and art practice, “practice” being the “other” of “theory” and vice versa. This dualism is not one of opposites, but complementary and incommensurate pairings, so these relationships are not made up of irreconcilable opposites. And in accord with this thesis, there is some relationship and thus an interpretive analysis can be made concerning traditional theories of art and sport, so that from art theory sport theory is “extended” and from art practice sport practice is “extended”, sport “theory” being the “other” of sport “practice” and vice versa.

But it is not as simple as that: Art practice could be seen as the “other” of sport practice and vice versa, and art theory could be seen as the “other” of sport theory and vice versa. Furthermore: art practice could be seen as the “other” of sport theory and vice versa and sport practice as the “other” of art theory and vice versa. All this is indicated on the model. The common denominator is that all the “components” occupy an “aesthetic field”. The model also suggests, given the numerous possible interactions, the emergence of what I term *sports art*.

It is precisely because there is such a common aesthetic dimension that continues to iterate itself that we may speak of creativity, that it can elicit new meanings, even if one such meaning is that it is meaningless. The fact that this “aesthetic field” cannot hold to absolutes, to an “ultimate reality” does not mean everything is reduced to the same valueless muck. If this model holds some semblance of approximate accuracy, then it acknowledges that, since the “self”, the word and/or image and/or movement is decentered, that culture makes us as much as we make it. As Degenaar (1986:108) puts it: “Man is a meaning-giver who cannot disengage the meaning he creates from the process which brings it forth.”

I am aware that the model is seemingly impossible for the “process” is moving and changing so that “circles”, “arrows”, labels and the reading of it as if sequential, hierarchical is off the mark. There is no starting point as such. What one can say is that it involves duality, rather than monism, so that meaning, based on the conception of the “language turn” with its notion of “difference”, is a result of the “play” of one thing “as opposed” to another. This duality allows for a range of possibilities like the decimals between integers. In this respect art and sport as two different signs, tending to one integer or the other, can be said to exhibit similarities. But their obvious differences necessitate distinct nodes in the first place. With that insight, a valuation of sport via established art concepts should yield a measure of

understanding, which could be developed further by others interested in the field. For the purposes of this study, the dark line indicates the “direction” of my project, albeit limited in relation to the range of other possible connections.

Rather than simply a theoretical model, we might work towards a *hybrid* on a practical level. For example, contemporary performance artist, Athina Vahla explores the relationship between dance and boxing, which she calls *Sport theatre*¹⁶. Boxing, like her work as dance choreographer, requires one to push the threshold of pain and exhaustion; both are direct, structured and often damaging. In her more recent collaborative work, she has developed this hybrid of art and sport, and the resulting unstable relationship between theory and physical performance, is expressed in *Suspension lecture* (2011). The performer is pierced and suspended while Annemi Conradie, then art history lecturer at the department of Fine Art at Rhodes University, addressed the practice of sub-cultural bodily suspension entitled: “Rupture and resistance through modern primitivist body play and the strategic deployment of the Other”. In a sense, the lecture on the performance cannot explain the effect that it has on the audience. It is as if one can merely talk *around* the performance and in this sense bodily play¹⁷ excites, mystifies and inspires our desire to know, to understand and to attain some semblance of meaning. It is the body as the loci of perceptual and cognitive meaning in such art which is becoming ever more popular (for example contemporary artists such as Pan Gongkai and Stahl Stenslie), that there is a certain resonance with sport, which generally is the “manipulation” of the body to achieve certain ends. In this respect, both “high” art and sport, whether as practitioner and performer and/or as viewer and audience, at whatever level, offer a meaningful dialogue between the self and the “other”, whether considered as obviously separate domains of experience and forms of knowledge and “play”¹⁸, or that they are more alike than is apparent.

The model and application or practical example, encapsulate my position in the debate, namely that sport and art are not simply separate spheres of aesthetic experience and meaning

¹⁶ Athina Vahla’s *Fight club* (work in progress) was a Homelands Dance Festival commission for Chisendale Dance Space, presented there in November 2009.

¹⁷ This is a curious phrase (“bodily-play”). It denotes a kind of unity of the mind-and-body in the performance of a skilled action.

¹⁸ I have placed “play” in parenthesis after “knowledge” to indicate the notion that the capacity to know is parceled up or derived or mediated via structured games or methods of assimilating information, performing particular tasks and being able to repeat this for specific results. In such terms, both art and sport qualify as kinds of knowledge (play).

but inform and enrich one another and may even lose definition as they interact. I consider Melchionne's definition of everyday aesthetics as being mainly domestic is too narrow; Saito's definition of art is in the first place not wholly accurate (that is, art is not necessarily about permanence and the like) and rather, following Ratiu, Dowling and Leddy, I recognize that art aesthetics and daily life form a relationship and therefore argue that art aesthetics and sport may themselves interplay. My particular contribution is to offer an artistic and philosophical framework in which to do just that.

The methodology

My strategy for arguing that art-related aesthetics can extend sport aesthetics was to identify important aesthetic "concepts" from art theoretical aesthetics and apply them to sport and sport theory. The concepts that were chosen for the task were: idealization, mimesis, postmodernism, the institutional theory of art, expressionism and formalism. The reader will notice that these are not really concepts nor are they *purely* aesthetic concepts as such. The reader will agree that although this categorization is not exhaustive it is a fair representation of important art theories and aesthetic concepts.

There are obvious overlaps between the above aesthetic "concepts" and sport, for clearly competitive sports strives for perfection as in art idealization. Regarding mimesis, both art and sport are debatably of a second order. As far as expressionism goes there is the common emotional aspect, such as apparently unmediated emotions and releases and indulgence in bodily kinaesthetic energy, for example Jackson Pollock (and possibly abstract expressionism as a whole) and dance in art. Sport can also be understood in terms of formalism where formal elements are composed so that the totality is more than the sum of its parts, disregarding iconography to an extent. The flow of a movement in soccer, for example sometimes transcends simple analysis and set game-plans (it just "looks right"). Concerning postmodernism and the institutional theory of art, the issues are somewhat different. These chapters are more concerned with the extra-aesthetic or the ideological as they deconstruct the traditional dividing line between ontological arts aesthetics and everyday aesthetics and that between art and life. The privileged status of art was called into question tending to purge such art of "deep" metaphysics, yet such theories may elucidate current everyday aesthetics. One should perhaps rather talk of the invention that is aesthetics than of a discovery about the "essence" of beauty as exemplified in art and grounded in ontological

theories and so be open to talk about the aesthetics of the everyday and more specifically how art aesthetics may unearth new ways to theorize about sport.

For the purposes of unpacking these respective “theories”, I consulted a number of writers. I mainly used writers from the continental tradition in a revisionist manner, that is I argue that even writers of the Enlightenment (such as Kant, Hegel, Nietzsche...) may have paved the way to thinking about art together with more everyday aesthetic concerns. Contemporary writers were used to further substantiate that perspective. Those that proved most useful for the purpose of my argument are the following: for idealism, Kant among others was consulted; for mimesis, Plato, Huizinga and Keenen were consulted; for postmodernism, Wittgenstein, Derrida, Potgieter and Welsch were consulted; for institutionalism, Danto, Dickie, again Wittgenstein, Brohm and Esclara were consulted; for expressionism, Tolstoy, Collingwood and Guyer were consulted and for formalism, again Kant, Greenberg, Bell, Gumbrecht and Nietzsche are the key theorists. Although by no means exhaustive, the reader will agree that they represent a fair sampling. Furthermore, these theories are a fair representation of concepts as employed in art historical discourse. Although these concepts may appear “timeless”, they are traditional, historically created “truths” whose viability is pragmatic and useful in their continuous re-occurrence (for example, the discussion on imitation theories or mimesis begins with Plato).

Each of these “concepts” was used as a structuring device as each became a chapter for the sake of order and clarity. They also flow from one to the other which will become clear as the text proceeds. Each “chapter” or “concept” was first explained from an art perspective and in a general and basic way. I then show a parallel activity at work in sport. This extends academically the brief and “obvious” parallels that were drawn above. I then develop confluences between art and sport. In the process, some light on aspects of sport came to the fore, but on a somewhat aesthetically general, philosophical level. One might term these points as somewhat akin to a kind of common-sense or *sensus communis* in the Kantian sense. I have also called these “observations”.

Thereafter, a number of different approaches to revisionism gleaned from both primary and secondary sources develop the argument that art aesthetics can meaningfully extend sport aesthetics. This section will thus be concerned with making specific applications. It depends on the success of these applications together with the work done in each chapter in drawing

out an understanding of sport in the light of art, whether the thesis that art aesthetics can illuminate sport, holds water. This requires not simply a wholesale comparison of art and sport, but the more modest comparison between the interpretations of the aesthetic aspects of art with the aesthetic aspects (and contemporary interpretations) of sport. Perhaps it is no coincidence that the rise of the institution of sport as we know it historically formed at roughly the same time as Baumgarten coined the term “aesthetic” and the simultaneous rise of fine arts.

While I have engaged with standard aesthetic “concepts” that structure each chapter, admittedly there will always be some omissions. In this respect, psychoanalytic theories of art, feminist theories of art (mentioned all but briefly in chapter 1), Marxist theory applied to art and sport (also dealt with only briefly in chapter 4) and iconography as a specific category are not dealt with in any detail and perhaps these are oversights. Furthermore, Steckner’s “historical functionalism” and Wollheim’s “art historical narratives”¹⁹ are not dealt with and admittedly they could assist in developing the argument that because art is not timeless and autonomous, this leads to an expanded definition of art and its “infiltration” into other cultural domains. Obviously one cannot include everything, so it is hoped that my method of answering the question, “How can art aesthetics extend on our understanding of sport” will shed some light on the “concepts” I have chosen. I included those theories that best exemplify a seeming autonomy in art (formalism, expressionism, idealism and mimesis) which under scrutiny gave way to “other” extra-aesthetic meanings, while postmodernism and institutionalism proved useful as engendering an aesthetic that was heteronymous, that is concerned with (mainly) extrinsic meanings. In these respects, these broad categories are such that I did not have recourse to other theories of art in order to develop an account of sport from an art perspective. These concepts exemplify the need for both formal (aesthetic) and hermeneutic (extra-aesthetic) descriptions that may be applied to an understanding of sport.

Overview of the structure of the thesis

On idealism, I argue that art is but partially or moderately ideal and that idealism thus extends to encompass a far broader range of everyday life, such as sport. I go so far as to maintain

¹⁹ C.f. *History and the philosophy of art* (2011) by Noel Carroll.

that Kant may have argued for idealism in sport and so to play sport in the “Kantian manner” would be a kind of moral and imaginative game. I derive this from Schmid’s reinterpretation of Kant and my further application that art and sport include moral and imaginative functions. In this way, formal aesthetics and content interact in a struggle, wherein no definite ideal can be ascertained or instantiated. Yet they are ideals of some sort, simultaneously separate and part of life-praxis.

On mimesis, I argue in a hermeneutic and historical manner, rather than analytically that mimesis as mirror or resemblance and correspondence to a defined (extra-aesthetic) reality is not forthcoming. Rather, “play” and more specifically, a “play” of surfaces becomes a significant way in which to argue that aesthetic and extra-aesthetic dimensions of meaning interact in a creative way, specifically in a postmodern context. Postmodern here is distinguished from modernism and premodernism, where postmodernism implies a view of mimesis that is not understood as correspondence thinking, that is the equivalence of sign to referent. There is rather a playful oscillation between aesthetic self-referentiality and extra-aesthetic content (what I called an “absent”). I correlate this “play” with Ricoeur’s argument that imagination is not simply reproductive, but productive as well as Walton’s contention that representations in the arts are games of make-believe continuous with other domains of culture. I end with the argument that sport can be understood as a tragic form of art, thus endorsing metaphor, rather than mimesis as reflection or mirroring, as a way to understand sport gleaned from the artistic model.

In the chapter on postmodernism I describe the “language turn” as negating the possibility of pure presence and ontological essence (and therefore as potentially meaningless or meaningful). Consequently art and sport may form hybrid entities and come close to being equated, an argument that is given some justification, because in everyday concerns of conservation a certain aesthetic attitude is called for. Towards the close of the chapter, I argue for what I have termed the “argument from intertwining” wherein aesthetics becomes inclusive of a range of experiences, art simply being but one strand. This is not new as I indicated concerning modal or primary aesthetics (problem 7 above); however, analysing sport in aesthetic terms and specifically within the ambit of art, offers a different perspective on sport (and indeed art).

At this point, the lack of ideal and correlative symbols, the lack of mimetic transparency, the arbitrariness of language systems and the subsequent instability create a dynamic aesthetic/extra-aesthetic oscillation in art and hence in sport. This is further developed in the chapter on institutionalism, where aesthetic meanings are determined by the various contingent, historically formed institutions so that such meanings – such culture – are often the creation of ideological, extra-aesthetic agendas of these institutions, artistic and otherwise. This is particularly true considering that institutional theories of art tend to separate art from aesthetics itself. Moreover, it is the art-context and “art-world” that confer art’s status, not something philosophically intrinsic to art. A parallel institutional model is developed in the context of sport. Both art and sport are subsequently shown to be cultural games. In this respect, applying Wittgenstein’s views on art to sport, we describe these activities not as a propositional sort of knowledge, but as intransitive, tacit kinds of knowledge.

In chapter 5 expressionism, emotion and individual style are described as aesthetic intuitions that reveal dimensions of meaning, such as world-view, beliefs and the like. It was described that the similar expressive potency of the sportsperson and artist and the idea that the sportsperson also expresses what may be termed a “deep” ontology, means that sport and art are both concerned with an expression outward (an act or performance) as well as an expression of inner depth and meaning (intention). In this way action and philosophical meaning converge. The observations concerning sport and art as engendering unique links between the mind and body and the effable and ineffable are ways in which we can both conceptualize art and sport and recognize their non-conceptual base. The chapter concludes by applying Kant’s remarks on architecture as an expression of aesthetic ideas to sport, which may be a contribution in extending our conception of sport from an art aesthetic perspective.

In the final chapter on formalism, a definite sub-set of the aesthetic, I develop the idea that while beauty has featured as a criterion, albeit critiqued in art, one can argue for beauty in sport. This is the most closely purely aesthetic as we attend to the formal elements of art aesthetics (and sport aesthetics), but at the same time it is itself historically created, reinforced and perhaps causes insidious erasures (namely of politics, history, content). The aesthetic in terms of reductive formalist “disinterested”, autonomous aesthetics may have given way to heteronomous aesthetics, but that does not cancel the analysis of art (and sport) in terms of formal beauty and the like. In this regard, I proposed applying Zangwill’s

moderate formalism as a way of including content, formal qualities, representation, extrinsic extra-aesthetic, social factors and the like together. I end the chapter with a discussion of the “will to form”, describing “play” and “struggle” as integral to sport and derived from considerations within the context of aesthetic and philosophical thinking such as that of Nietzsche.

The structure of the thesis is such that each theory and thus each chapter can be understood in isolation, but the fact that no one theory is adequate as an overarching theory of art and application to sport, implies that it “gives way” to another theory (chapter). This does not imply that the chapters taken together form a holistic grand theory. This is simply a modest attempt to put forward some ways in which to theorize about sport based on some key ideas found within art aesthetic and historical discourse. The success of this strategy can perhaps be determined by asking the question: Have I a better appreciation of sport as a partially or moderately aesthetic modality and as one that bears similarities with the theory and practice of art? If the answer is in the affirmative, then this thesis may have fulfilled its function.

Basic underpinnings

Underlining ideas that draw the chapters together conceptually and develop an account of sport from an arts perspective or rather art-related aesthetics are the following categories:

1. Aesthesis:

This ancient Greek word/concept is derived from a word meaning “to breathe”, that is, perception as pneumatic (as involving the soul or spirit), and later became adapted to aspects of the notion of naming Baumgarten’s new field of aesthetics and its application to art. Art until then was considered “techne” or craft and mere puppets of political and religious institutions before the secularization and democratization of art and culture (a further such development could lead to acknowledging sport in a similar way reserved for so-called high culture, that is, art).

“Aesthesis” could be understood perceptually in the sense that things breathe themselves “in” and “out”, that physicality embodies a vital spirit. Perception is the basis for experience co-joined as it is with mental processes, and is a kind of life-giving breath that leads to

pleasure. Hence we can delight in art (visual sense predominantly), music (auditory sense predominantly), in dance (movement predominantly), in sport (generally and predominantly movement). In my estimation this perceptual delight (aesthesis) is not contrary to noesis, because perceptual pattern (including “chaos” as Jackson Pollock “taught”) – aesthetics - presupposes conceptual pattern²⁰ or at least may be interpreted as such. What is clear is that conceptuality and sensuality are interrelated: we speak of movement, rest, shape weight, magnitude, number, and unity in nature, in the arts and in sport. Such terms combine categories of mind with empirical quantities and qualities of the external world.

It is curious that “aesthesis” is not even an entry in the *Encyclopedia of Aesthetics* (1998) and a number of other encyclopedias and dictionaries of art terms that I consulted. However, I would suggest that it is precisely this concept, namely the pre-cognitive, perceptual and kinaesthetic relationship between the observing subject and perceived object that explains one’s resonance with the object, whether it is the art body or the sport body – an orientation towards relating to perceptual experience, to vital presence.

Rancierre’s alternative or counter history to European Modernism entitled “aisthesis” (which is the same as the concept under consideration) is a caveat of moments that highlight the visceral, perceptual presence of moments that might have been pivotal to the development of the arts. Rancierre (2013:xii) summarizes his project as follows:

...these scenes of thought collected here show how a mutilated statue can become a perfect work; an image of lousy children the representative of the ideal; somersaulting clowns a flight in the poetic sky; a piece of furniture a temple; a staircase a character; patched overalls a princely garb; the convolutions of a veil a cosmogony, and an accelerated montage, gestures the sensible reality of communism.

Thus Rancierre highlights the aesthetic forms of prosaic life, destabilizing the hierarchies of knowledge and enjoyment. Such moments and forms are ultimately without a determinate concept in order to conceptualize what is a non-conceptual aspect of our life, that is,

²⁰ Traditionally it is unclear whether such pattern is only in nature and its scientific discovery, in the art-object/sports-act and/or “in” the artist/sportsperson’s mind and/or only in the consciousness of the reader/interpreter/viewer...

perception that never quite reaches “things in themselves”. This kind of perception carries with it the meaning of aesthesis: pre-cognitive, sensory experience and appreciation; haptic, tacit, heuristic, kinaesthetic knowledge and experience. In other words, the externality of things – perceptual awareness – symbolically through its bodily appearance speaks of a “form of life”. In this respect, Rancierre’s analysis of a kind of gymnastics in pantomime, fake Bergere such that “this apparent helter-skelter and disorder, finally, depicts real life in its capricious aspect more precisely than the most intricate drama” (Rancierre quoting Gauteer 2013:83). The material, perceptual fragment of even “low” culture is accorded an influence more substantial than what is perceived as “high” culture, as defining modernism.

I would claim that such a conceptual movement from high art to popular art is a bridge linking art to sport, linking the material fragment, that is perceptual bodily knowledge (aesthesis) within the canon of modernist aesthetics so that “the art of freely combining these patterns is the act of gathering and decomposing them in order to construct pantomimic scenarios that foil expectations and unite what is incompatible” (Rancierre 2013:90). Rancierre goes on to describe this “corporeal writing” in dance, even applied and decorative arts – forms that the painters brush left on the canvas in two dimensions and the sculptures knife fixes in immobile volumes (adapted from Rancierre 2013). What I think is suggested here is the ineffability of sensation and at the same time an art that serves life wherein poetry, music and dance would reunite in the very body of activity. Cinema (and here Rancierre analyses the example of Charlie Chaplin), for example thus conceived would be seen as a “total art”, whereas the fine arts such as painting and sculpture²¹ only *suggest* vital body movement.

It is precisely sport and its representation or presentation in popular formats that is the primary example in our times of body movement and while this may be obvious, an awareness of its aesthetic dimension may be garnered from its extreme perceptual (aesthesis) skill; sporting games that, like art, became organized during the latter part of the nineteenth century. Might one then not even maintain that secular sports are significant in defining modernism, and specifically in the non-conceptual, perceptual emphasis on its vitality; that art and sport require heightened perceptual awareness?

²¹ In Hall’s *The world as sculpture* (1999), he makes the point that to the extent that sculpture has tended towards its own tactility, its everydayness and its physical confrontation, so the world of things are in themselves sculptures. Art and life are not clearly separate. This is one basis for arguing that art is related to other domains of experience.

2. *Empathy (Einfühlung)*:

In the course of intensive philosophical debates on aesthetics in nineteenth century Germany, Robert Vischer introduced the concept of *Einfühlung* in relation to art. Theodor Lipps subsequently extended its use from art to visual illusions and interpersonal understanding. While Lipps had regarded *Einfühlung* as basically similar to the old notion of sympathy, Edward Titchner in America believed it had a different meaning. Hence, he coined the term empathy as its translation. This term came to be increasingly widely accepted, first in psychology and then more generally.

At around this time, Vernon Lee explicated a theory of empathy in art wherein she studied body movements in relation to aesthetic form. She developed an empirical-based empathy theory of art. As she states: “is not what we call the conception of the abstract relation outside as a perception of a concrete relation inside us? The innervation of certain movement, the basis of a movement itself” (in Lanza 2009:330). In these terms, she develops a physiological and emotional response as vital elements for the appreciation of beauty and she conducted her experiments in gallery and museum settings in the 1890s. She showed that there is a kinaesthetic of art reception that moved the body in a manner both emotional and actual. Robert Vischer argued that such movement in art is not simply physiological but psychologically rich involving a projection of movement, bodily feeling and even the self into the object of aesthetic appreciation, an expansive ego-based immersion in the art-object.

For Lee this constituted the confluence of body-mind reactions – that is, while Vischer focused more on feeling derived from, in the main, optical pleasure, Lee’s focus is on motoric response mechanisms influenced by aesthetic experience. And this bodily resonance sharpens and focuses the aesthetic repose and contributes to the general well-being – a certain “tactile sense” and “muscular sense” is involved in judging of weight, resistance, impressions of the object that are mirrored by the perceiving subject. This in turn produced a “sense of living in those who experienced it...and gives us the life-enhancing qualities of the object” (Lee in Lanzoni 2009:339). This draws from Nietzsche’s belief that art and aesthetic experience results in a heightened sense of the capacity for life – derived from that which is otherwise beyond the ordinary, everyday life. It requires imaginative projection to see from the others (or perhaps even the artist’s) projection and emphasizes in what Merleau-Ponty might

describe as lived bodily experience rather than pure abstraction, of play and desire and compassion.

Yet this rare experience can be found in everyday objects and Lee uses the example of a chair and a bowl to show that we somehow intuit and perceive in the object of attention a physical (and mental) “positioning” in relation to it that is a visceral effect which may be empirically measured so that, for example, “spatial dimensions were translations of perceptual modes bound to bodily²² extensions” (Anstruther-Thomson 1924:67). Consequently, harmony and pleasure is a kind of “aesthetic instinct”, deeply rooted in the needs of the organism and leads to well-being.

Worringer in 1908 in his work *Abstraction and Empathy* takes a different track to Lee. He argues that representational art is comfortable and “objectified self-enjoyment” (Worringer 1908:16), whereas abstract art thwarted the empathetic impulse producing an unease. Both abstraction and representational art, however, existed on a continuum of self-estrangement, relinquishing autonomy in absorption in the art-object; in the case of abstract art inducing emotional discomfort. For Lee, empathy was just as possible for geometric as for organic forms. One could say much of these discussions centered around the implied energy and movement of shapes and patterns particularly as abstraction began to take root. It seems that a confluence of the haptic and optic requiring the active experience of the individual spectator – and the birth of cinema heralded an emotive projection with the moving narrative and optical “visual music” akin to realistic representational art. The waning of narrative in painting and sculpture via abstraction was perhaps fuelled by the increasingly popular cinematic arts – the moving image.

One can perhaps sum up the fascination for “reaching out” to the aesthetic form as the senses becoming more spiritual and the spirit more sensual. While Robert Vischer found a lexicon of such terms to express this: *Auführung* (responsive feeling), *Nachführung* (attentive feeling) and *Zuführung* (immediate feeling), it was *Einführung* (empathy) that inspired much discussion. It conjured a resonance between spectator (viewer, listener...) and “object” that permeated perhaps both with a sense of striving, activity, power and energetic repose.

²² Wofflin held a similar view, namely that “we invest inanimate objects with inward states by analogizing between their physical shape and endowing on the other body posture and mood” (in Podro 1982: XXIV). Moreover, even verbal expression and written poetry is rooted in our ways of speaking which is based on the biological evolution of the tongue, palette, teeth, gut and thorax – we cannot separate mind and body as such.

Whether this could be grounded as a universal aesthetic – described both physiologically and psychologically – is debatable, and often subsides into mere elitism. It also could be construed as attentiveness to “pure form” and thus falls to the criticism levelled at formalism, or as expressive in been concerned with definite emotional dispositions of the maker and viewer in relation to the aesthetic object, which falls to the “intentional fallacy” and utopian Tolstoian brotherhood through the arts – both of which are contentious.

What is interesting is that the “faculties” for “sympathetic” and “empathetic” responses in humans are neurologically identical (Gladstein 1984:42) so that the sympathetic and empathetic are similar human experiences even as the former initially held sway in aesthetics. Both, however, are signs that do seem to constitute a universal language both formally and emotionally, for example, we “read” the facial expressions on another person or his/her gestures in communication (cultural differences aside). Nevertheless, empathy (like sympathy) captures a sense of both identification with other (or the aesthetic object) and alienation (as self cannot fully know other).

One may apply this account of *Einfühlung* to sport with the following considerations:

- a. The physiological and psychological basis of aesthetic experience links and encompasses both art and sport. In fact, the way one may apprehend the art-object and the sense of dynamic rhythm and dance-like movement as is evident in both participating and viewing sport thus describe similar phenomenon. Our empathetic “instinct” projects into for example the represented figure in art in the same way that one may see in sport and so sense, intuit, perceive and assess what needs to be done in a sport playing context (or what the viewer sees or hopes for or assesses during or after the “event”). Sport is the coordination of the senses in action (and a “thought” precedes action). Through sport we are able to express, communicate and feel invigorated as both body and mind “intermingle”.
- b. With a) above in mind, one could say that in the communal watching experience (whether on television or live; we also watch while we play), we involve ourselves (as the “play” requires on our part – as player or audience). Thus the playing and viewing of sport is similar to the attentiveness in

perceiving an artwork as well as the kinaesthetic dexterity, even whole body movements in a converging and parallel fashion to art such as the literary, where sensitivity to the “weight” and “sound” of words, are required.

Moreover, the dual and yet simultaneous presence of self-estrangement and connection to the sensed object in aesthetic experience perhaps explains both the individual aloneness and communal experience that is often felt when viewing sport – that we are somehow submerged in the game, the ego inflated, our sense of kinship with players and fans heightened – and yet we are all too aware that it is a game, that the athletes are but players and that we exist separate from one another. We are not actually those sportspeople into whom we empathetically project and through which one may profit with temporary release via entertainment. In a sense, though, one may live vicariously through a sports hero’s achievement. For the player, perhaps his/her empathic body-sense while absorbed in the game/art/craft also descends after the extravaganza, when the game is over as even elated victory is temporary (as is defeat).

In this regard, *Einfühlung* describes both a powerful egoist urge and identification and its demise or lack of conceptual awareness when aesthetic experience and its physiological and psychological base are not circumscribed by culture (when the game is over). In this respect, a tendency towards the aestheticisation of the everyday and the extension of the boundaries of art through considerations of the “living body” (or *soma*) as well as the lack of a cultural distinction between the everyday and the high seriousness of fine art, it would perhaps be useful to renew theories of *Einfühlung*. Hence I resort to referring to it as a basic conceptualization of this thesis.

Combining considerations concerning everyday aesthetics, somaesthetics, aesthesis and *Einfühlung*, we may say that it is the presence of the bodily, of physicality that marks aesthetic experience. At the same time this attentiveness to bodily rapport with the object of aesthetic attention links artistic experience (theory and practice) to the organized, dance-like bodily movements of sport, both as player and viewer. This is achieved as the senses are engaged in assessing that which is “external” and in the process of mixing and

matching is an aesthetic experience requiring bodily positioning and reaction filtered by the brain and other (living body) functions.

Feelings of awe, fright, love, horror, beauty and so on are because of one's embeddedness and relationship between ourselves and "things". Understanding presupposes a certain intimacy (empathy). Understanding is also not just making sense; it also means learning how to inhabit a new world so that hermeneutics – how to interpret what is there – is a "practical philosophy" which shows itself in action. For Danto it means entering into the history and theory – the hermeneutic circle – of the art world. Though this theory could be construed as a vindication of high art, Shusterman's pragmatist aesthetics by contrast takes an active role in reshaping art, particularly in the direction of awareness of the facile distinction between high and low art and between art and life. One implication is that other aspects of life, such as sport may overlap with art. But most poignantly is that empathy in art and sport is the way we relate, connect and share; it enhances a world consciousness.

3. "Play"

Eugen Fink (1960) has written extensively on the idea of play. He bases his high praise for the concept on possibly the earliest and most fundamental rendition or expression, arguing for the cosmic symbolism of play, quoting Heraclites (in Krell 1972: 66), who appears to unite the idea of cosmic fire, logos and play in this lengthy but beautiful quote:

...play becomes a cosmic metaphor for the collective appearance and disappearance of things in the space and time of the world. The foaming and frenzied flood of life, which instills in living beings the desire to reproduce is secretly one with the dark wave, which tears at living things away into death. Life and death, birth and dying, womb and tomb, are sisters, one to the other: the propelling power of the totality produces and annihilates, creates and kills, uniting the highest desire and the deepest suffering.

Krell notes that such a dramatic view of play informed Nietzsche's philosophy²³ which repelling the tide of the "metaphysical tradition" wherein being and stasis are emphasized, instead focuses on flux, becoming and playful struggle. In this sense, it is argued that it is the artist and child who are said to play without a goal, to enact via the body and "perform" within a world that is both real and unreal, a game defined by rules (later formulated as institutions) and yet spontaneous and free. Yet the common belief is that play is mere diversion – entertainment – a means to refresh oneself for further labour, work or war. However, the early twentieth century work of Huizinga overturns a strict polarity between play and work. He argues that play is also serious and permeates most activities because human beings are essentially *homoludens*, such that education, music, athletics²⁴, law and the religious festival are all bound by the same root syllable as is evident in the vocative for Greek in all these domains, namely *pai* (Krell 1972:77).

If one acknowledges the ubiquity of play, then metaphysics and the assumed status of transcendental reason, of *logos* is called into question. Rather, reason itself derives its objects from the carefree joy in the senses, a kind of "pagan" unity with world, whereas unlike technicist "reason", subject and object are not separate. There is what one might call a certain empathy and participatory consciousness (see page 152-155), where both truth and illusion configure and reconfigure one another, where beings' essence, as Heidegger put it is "the game itself" (in Elden 2008:52) – *das Spiel selbst*. As Heraclites once put it: "eternity or time (*aion*) is like a child playing a game" (Elden 2008: 48). In this respect, Fink (1960) argues that play is a theatrical enactment or embodiment of the immaterial – a "speculative metaphor of the world" (Fink 1960: 105). Rather than reason as embroiled in measuring, calculating its object – the world, from the perspective of a transcendent subjectivity, itself is becoming (the game unfolds in time) and constitutes subjectivity itself. Even play itself is in a way playing with the player, as if our language plays us, rather than we controlling the world through language.

Such ruminations on play carve out a space wherein joy, delight, fun and pleasure are integral to our interaction in/with the world. Play has a social function, if at times purely imaginative (one might play-act against an imagined "adversary" or "enemy" for example); it does not elevate reflection as above life-experience but enjoins one to

²³ I have in mind here his elucidation of the power of Dionysius and the eternal recurrence of the same.

²⁴ Though admittedly athletics does not feature much in his theory.

become aware of our activity, a certain living impulse and dynamism, a creativity as we “play with work and struggle, love and death. We even play with play” (Fink 1960:100). One may grimace with pain while running for example (or even in contemplating²⁵), yet in a sense it is not real pain, it is circumscribed within a particular context or game – a race, solving a problem and so on...Running or contemplation are agreed delusions – ways of relating, creating, communicating even if at first only to the self.

I mentioned the pleasurable aspect as most such imaginative games require real *props* (i.e. it is not actually “things” in the ordinary sense), real theatre, but most importantly, a joy in appearances (aesthesis), Freud am Schein. It is thus “redeemed from the weight of real life” (Fink 1960:90); it is a certain freedom and a revelling in the sensory “mask”, an Apollonian and Dionysian reverence. Or what Hegel called “the most sublime expression of true seriousness” (in Fink 1960:105). It is thus no surprise that sport as play began in the ancient games as a kinship with magical rites.

My understanding of the “cosmic” significance of play reveals to me a bi-polarity. On the one hand, play as in aesthetic play (that permeates all fields in varying degrees and ways) is a kind of rhythmic aesthetic redundancy²⁶, what I refer to in later “observations” as

²⁵ Could one not conceive “thought” as a kind of movement – certainly metaphorically speaking and obviously physiologically so.

²⁶ By the phrase “aesthetic redundancy” I wish to connote both a monotonous repetition and the potential for meaningful, creative rhythm circumscribed by rules in the context of play and various games, where outcomes and performance/s are unpredictable. It also refers to the incessant deluge and overflow of images (sounds...) encountered in relation to entertainment and culture. It is unclear what such signs may mean, for their interpretation conforms to their function in a particular game, though signs may change in meaning over time and in different contexts. The veneer of a plot, a story, an unfolding drama would appear to give sense to the deluge of sensory data. While each game may tell a story peculiar to that game, it may also have other ramifications. The point is that to claim control of the story, assuming there is one, is problematic, in which case one “surrenders” to the deluge of sensory stimuli, to give in to “aesthetic redundancy” and the story of the particular game, without resorting to “deep” philosophy, which transmutes into ideology anyhow. On the other hand, could one then be ignorant of not living Socrates’ vision to live an examined life? Awareness that these sensory stimuli are aesthetic does lead to thought and vice versa, so that life, mediated by various games, can be more subtle, intransitive or tacit forms of knowing, where we see the borders of a particular game (for example sport or for that matter grooming, sex...and so on) and another (for example art...or for that matter politics, economics...and so on) give way and then interlink. The method for seeing if this is possible was to use art-related aesthetics as for example the basic chapter headings and interpret sport based on that perspective. The result is a new interpretation. This practically or perhaps merely theoretically means that neither art nor sport in themselves are dominant paradigms (stories, games, culture...) and therefore linking art and sport is an example that if other domains/games/institutions had to similarly interlink (including perhaps further links with art and sport), then no particular dimension will retain or maintain itself as dominant (like the mere differences in language). And the hope is that out of that, a linkage may register a universal symbol without form (a web?), neither sensual nor conceptual. It is “larger” than any individual and any collective and any one particular game, set of skills, know-how. These are far-reaching possible consequences of linking art and sport. But this only will be if the linkage in question produces a meaningful arrangement/harmony/aesthetics/language in the first place. The problem is can one ever be certain of such a meaning or at least of a particular, conclusive one? (in theory I

imaginative (chapter 1); self-referential (chapter 2); undefined (chapter 3); institutional body-politics (chapter 4); as ineffable (chapter 5) and as an incessant need to “think” through forms (chapter 6). On the other hand, play refers beyond its own parameters (a particular game) and suggests a moral code (chapter 1); an “absent” or content (chapter 2); a relationship or interface between different disciplines (such as between art and sport – chapter 3); a form of socializing (chapter 4); as a site where mind and body are fused (chapter 5) and as a will that asserts itself in ongoing creative expression that takes innumerable potential forms (chapter 6). These dualities express a certain ambivalence to play – play in art, play in sport – in that it is unclear in what sense “the game” brings people together in a positive or negative sense. Mass aesthetic delusion or hysteria or rhythmic repetitiveness (what I term aesthetic redundancy) is not necessarily a positive thing. On the other hand, imaginative and empathetic projection within the context of life is a desirable form of communication in society, mediated by various games. As communication and on a certain level simply pleasurable entertainment, there is play. One hits the tennis ball in order for there to be a return. Or does one simply want to vanquish one’s opponent and thus expect no return? One might make art to say something to someone or a public (or even just to oneself) or is it to glorify? Is sport and art simply a way to assert power? I believe that their power lies in their unifying elements, their way of connecting people, rather than as divisive activities.

In summary, “play” perhaps more so than other models for the world – Thales and water symbol; Plato’s light symbol; Hegel and “spirit”, Schopenhauer and “will” – is overturned somewhat by the concept of “play” suggesting a metaphysics beyond metaphysics. That is, transient being or rather, becoming; noble struggle and a tacit form of knowing, that which is beyond and unites the extremities of life and death as Heraclites beautifully expressed and with which I introduced the concept. In short: play is a creative form of individual and social meaning-making on a global scale.

Whether one is speaking of pre-cognitive perceptual awareness (aesthesis), *Einfühlung* (empathy) or “play”, one can just as well say that in art and sport as with other games, there is a certain physicality or mediation devices that intercede between “reality” and the

would say no). That is why the art-act (performance) or the sports-act (performance) is so powerful – it is certainty amidst doubt, and the promise of harmony. Yet art theory and practice has acknowledged the shortsightedness of such an appraisal of art itself or sport for that matter. A deconstruction is necessary in order to lay the foundation for linking with other dimensions of experience.

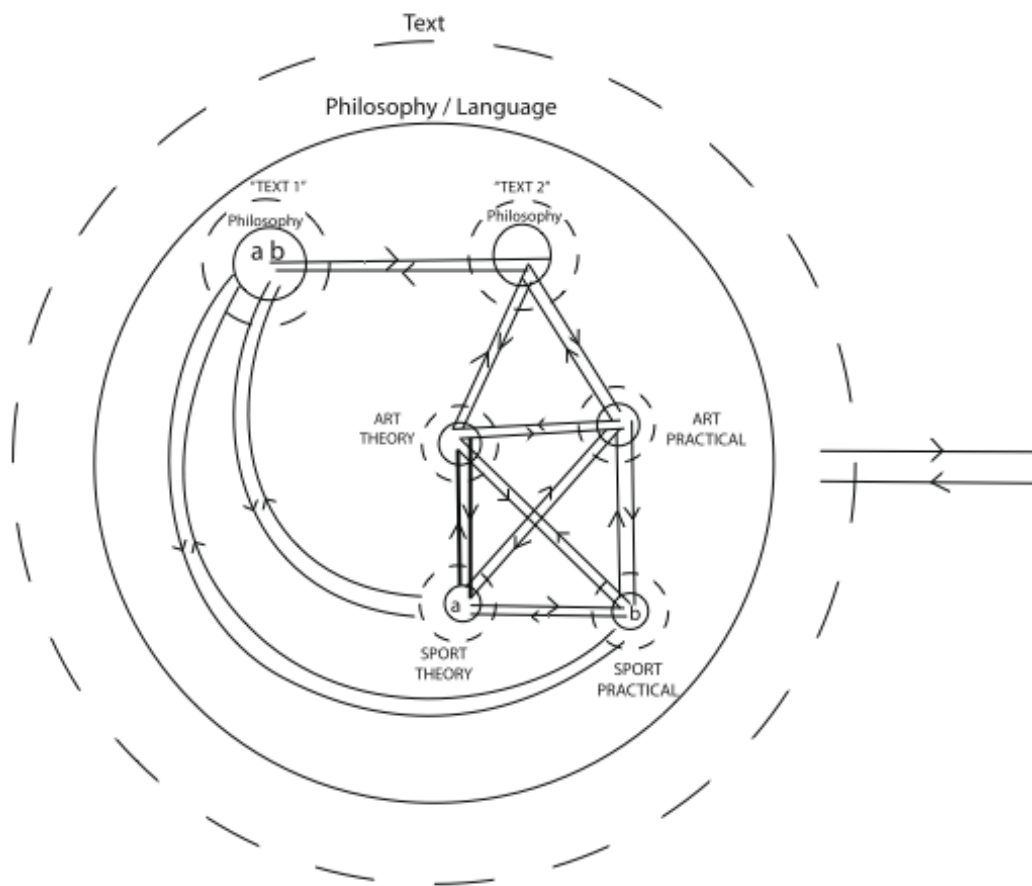
perceiving and/or creative consciousness/body. Thus art and sport reveal as much as they conceal without there being a known “reality” (or “ultimate” reality as denoted in the model, figure 1), even with the overlapping and linking of say, art and sport. Nevertheless, this is not to say that such a linkage does not at least theorize a new kind of hermeneutics that portend to an enhanced life-praxis.

It is interesting and timely to note that the South African Department of Basic Education recently grouped (fine?) art and sport together into one learning area, perhaps part of the democratization of culture begun in 1994 after the late Nelson Mandela’s release from prison. Moreover, Provincial Government structures have grouped art, sport, culture and recreation together based on the South African constitution. It seems that scholarly engagement of the everyday – the ordinary, the common – may promote the rise in global egalitarianism and democratic shifts. An implication is that traditional subject boundaries are transcended, that there is a bridging of the gap between the arts and technology, between so called high-brow culture and popular culture, and between aesthetics and politics. Furthermore, as the ivory tower view of art itself is an invention of the West, as opposed to cultures where art was integrated into everyday life, one could see scholarly attention to everyday aesthetics as affirming the West’s “other” towards egalitarianism. I endorse these shifts in scholarly attention and believe that it will not only give impetus to what to my mind is a significant “everyday” aesthetic, namely sport, but recognize too the relevance of art aesthetics – indeed its applicability – to such domains of cultural life. In arguing for a theoretical oscillation between sport and art-related aesthetics, one mirrors the “play” and “struggle” of life itself, life broadly defined as a literal physical reality and figuratively less physical reality.

1. Direction of thesis and 2. Towards the emergence and development of "sports art":

**Figure 1: Binaries
Model**

No 'Ultimate' Reality



Ad infinitum ...

Chapter 1: Idealization in art and sport

1.1.Introduction

In this chapter I will define the aesthetic ideal as it relates to art and then apply that to a reading of sport as similarly concerned with an aesthetic ideal. I begin by broadly defining the concept of the ideal and arguing that the “ordering devices”²⁷ of art are ways in which the ideal is revealed. The “ordering devices” of art are the literal frame, the gallery and the art book, as well as the genre of the nude. This framing of the ideal is also critiqued.

I then apply the analysis of art in terms of the aesthetic ideal to sport. I argue that the “ordering devices” in art bear a parallel relationship to that of sport in respect of the stadium, the trophy and the depiction and view of the body in sport. In so doing, the “ordering devices” are vessels, aesthetic embodiments of extra-aesthetic ideals. Yet, as with art, we note certain shortcomings and a one-sidedness that reflects the concerns of a feminist critique of culture. In such terms, art and sport reflect a partial ideal as idealism is not purely an autonomous aesthetic theory.

Having discerned these parallels, in particular that the concept of the ideal does factor in sport in a similar way to its function in art, I make two observations implicit in the concept of idealization. These philosophical speculations dubbed “observations” are that both art and sport exhibit moral ideals, and at the same time are simply imaginative, other-world constructions with no clear mapping onto real-world moral obligations. Imagination is equated to autonomous aesthetics, whereas morality is equated to other extrinsic extra-aesthetic factors that reflect heteronymous aesthetic theory. Such ruminations suggest a philosophical confluence between art and sport. I end with a Kantian theory of sport, a direct application of traditional philosophical aesthetics to that of sport in terms of the ideal and at the same time I develop the two observations. In this way sport is illuminated and extended by art aesthetics; at the same time art aesthetics in the form of Kant is renewed. The chapter argues for both the co-existence of ideals in art and sport and the impossibility that there can be an aesthetic embodiment of such ideals, as the extra-aesthetic dimension to which it refers is yet another surface aesthetic.

²⁷ This phrase together with terms like “vessel” and “body” in certain contexts may also be understood as “mediation devices”, though I have not used this latter phrase.

1.2. Idealist theories of art

Whether considered theoretically or practically, the ideal is a concept that implies that which is better, optimal and tends to be perfect. It is an abstraction and has material manifestations. Art is one way of expressing ideals. Art often appears to have the role of transporting the “viewer” to another, more elevated perception and conception. Art is often marked by the desire and vision to make things “right”, more ideal, whether in the art work itself and/or so far as everyday life is concerned. At the same time, it is unclear what ideal one ought to have in mind, for to hold on to an ideal or even claim the ideal smacks of the kind of universality that leads to exclusionism and essentialism. That is, one ought to ask not so much “what ideal?” but “whose ideal?” Postmodern notions of difference, to be explicated further in a later chapter remind us that a plurality of ideals rather than a wholesale, one size-fits all ideal is perhaps a more adequate vision for art, in theory and practice. “Theory” here equates or rather tends to extra-aesthetic meanings that art may convey, whereas “practice” here corresponds or tends to, in this context, aesthetics. When Rembrandt, for example, offers us his canvases with its play of light and dark or chiaroscuro (practice) – overtly for some and more subtly for others – he teaches the viewer to extract the light from the dark, that is, to recognize that in the interplay of the positive and negative aspects of life, one may find harmony, order and beauty (theory). In such terms, the aesthetics of the artist and even periods of art may be seen to correspond to extra-aesthetic attitudes to life. In this section I argue that it is precisely the “framing devices” in art, namely the literal frame, the gallery and the art book from which emerges this kind of oscillation between the aesthetic and extra-aesthetic dimension of idealistic meanings.

1.2.1. *The art “body”: the frame, the gallery and art book*

I begin by arguing from a number of standpoints that the ideal cannot be accurately defined, described or “framed”. In this respect I use Wittgenstein’s theory of family resemblance as well as Kant’s meditations on the symbol to strengthen my argument that sensible qualities and conceptual meanings do not necessarily reflect an/the ideal. I then describe “the frame” in a more literal sense, that is the square or rectangular format. This is followed by an analysis of the gallery and museum as a supposed ideal framing device. The art book is then described in a similar way; as a certain kind of ideal or at least the way we make meaning of art aesthetics, extending it and at the same time limiting it.

Art aesthetics is subject to change at any point which in turn may or may not correspond to different extra-aesthetic meanings. In that process there is no single image and neither is there a single meaning or interpretation to which it refers. A particular form may correspond to a set of ideological constructs, but this itself is historically contingent. In this respect, ideals cannot be contained in a singular image or in a singular set of corresponding references. A thought-experiment (see figure 2, page 80) ought to make this more explicit and cogent: one can envisage an image as the seminal point from which other images are derived extending from that “point outward”, though in a limited fashion, as further images. Now to further explicate the content of that image these images converge to yet a further “point below” (its shadow, as it were) that holds the plethora of content that was derived from the “initial point” or the ideal. The point is that these “points” act as a framing device for the thought-content. And that is what art, for example a painting, does. Through the image, it holds the world of ideas, that is, it manifests visually the ideal realm, it instantiates and aesthetically represents what is otherwise invisible, namely the non-exhibited extra-aesthetic meanings. This is a rather crude approximation, for Wittgenstein notes that there is a problem with universals, that is, single words or images mirroring a domain that is not amenable to sense, in his concept of “family resemblance”. As Tarnas (1991:405) notes on Wittgenstein: “what appears to be a definite commonality shared by all instances covered by a single general word [image] in fact often comprises a whole range of indefinite, overlapping similarities and relationships”. In other words, the single “frame” or “body”, that of the painting for example, does not easily map onto a definite concept; the aesthetic, sensible image may not be the “point” as elucidated above, but merely one of the projecting lines that emanate from that “point”.

Another way of saying this can be derived from Maidansky (2005:291) on Evald LL’enkov where the latter considers the ideal as a relation between two different things, one of which adequately represents the essence of the other. But Maidansky then asks whether there is an ideal without “essence”, the word/image (“point”) arbitrarily mirrored or represented by another word/image (“point”). In sharper terms:

in order for the expression of the essence of a thing to be ideally pure, the natural body of some other thing must become the material for this expression. The thing commends its “soul” to another thing, and the latter appears as a symbol. Thus a diplomat symbolically represents his country, money represents the value of all

commodities, and words represent the meaning of various things in culture
(Maidansky 2005:296).

This equation of thought to symbol creates the sense of the ideal as a transparent representation of one thing in and through another. This concept of the ideal renders the symbol as the perfect model and pattern of something. This has been called the aesthetic beauty, even the truth of the image. But this concept of the ideal presupposes that the framing device, that is the artwork, is not already embedded in seemingly arbitrary historical processes. In chapter 4 on institutionalism, I argue that this is not necessarily the case. In chapter 2 on mimesis and in particular chapter 3 on postmodernism, the truth and indeed beauty of the image are questioned, and so the notion of an ideal realm and the art object being an expression thereof. Thus Descartes' cogito is historically situated and determined in some way. Kant's Copernicus's Revolution, named as such by Tarnis (1991), was precisely that the world is structured according to mind, so that the ideal is not an uncovering of pre-existent truth *in* the world, and an objective account *of* the world, but the framing by the human mind itself. Consequently, one may say that art does not necessarily symbolise a higher realm and reach *a priori* truths. The painting, for example, can at best be considered a reflection of human cognition that is neither transcendental nor ideal in itself²⁸. This deconstructing of art as an absolute truth and an absolute aesthetic realization of that truth serves to illustrate that art changes and reforms and critiques itself out of its own dissatisfaction, borne out of a need to improve life, or at least reflect on it in some or other way. Or simply to improve/alter elements that pertain to the aesthetics of art itself.

There is, however, a further blight on the notion that the painting, for example frames the ideal. That is, if as Freud (1933:24-28) theorizes the cogito is maligned with irrational rather than rational motives for behaviour, with the instinct (the so-named "id") over-and-above the conscious self and ego, merely controlled by the hopefully stabilizing ideal of society (the super-ego), then the human condition is rather bleak and art's ideal rather more modest. This is so as our ideals would thus be the product of drives and passions determined by our biological nature²⁹ so that intellectual ideals of sorts are no more than the epiphenomenon of more fundamental and subconscious forces. The premodern could then be understood as the

²⁸ Examples that confirm this, namely standards of beauty in art differ through ages and cultures. This also applies to music where the basic harmonies differ between cultures.

²⁹ This immediately by implication should make one circumspect about any claim that something is cultural or rather culturally superior to, for example, another culture.

attempt to fashion these irrational forces in mythological images. The Ancient Greeks while known for their reasoning abilities, nevertheless controlled self and nature through the mediation of the gods; for centuries, Christian iconography gave visual and no-less ideal form to its religious narrative; the modern, secular outlook oscillated between the real and the ideal in trying to capture the observed world in say Impressionism to the many art movements proclaiming utopian promises,³⁰ and the postmodern recognition of the other, and the undermining of the very concept of the ideal. The above analysis is certainly a simplification, but what becomes clear is that the ideal in aesthetics, art and politics has a history. Therefore once again, appeal to innate, universal and a priori structures – a corresponding extra-aesthetic “truth” – based on the conscious rational self that is trans-historical, is questionable. The artwork does not necessarily render a coherent framing of the human condition or more poignantly, of an ideal. The very quest for a rational order may even be seen from the outset as replete with irrational motives.

Furthermore, drawing from Kant (1952 [1790]), one notes that he argues that the concept cannot adequately grasp or frame the aesthetic ideal. This is also contained in his description of the symbol. A symbol is a sensible intuition, which refers to a rational idea (or complex of ideas) and he uses an analogy of how we might reflect on the comparison between a despot and a hand mill. He further argues that a symbol is such that it has kinship over many concepts and that it is thus beyond a concept that can be expressed in words. Kant (1952 [1790]:156) sums it up as follows: “...within one and the same artefact the aesthetic idea possesses a sublime interior content recommended to us by its outwardly beautiful form”. One may thus determine whether the transition from form (aesthetics) to content (extra-aesthetic) is smooth or not. The role of the beautiful form is to render reflection of content possible. Beauty induces reflection, so that the aesthetic judgment of a work of art involves both a restful contemplation of its beautiful form combined with an exploration and struggle about what its aesthetic ideas and content may mean. This struggle is precisely because the artwork as a framing device for the concept holds many concepts, further images and yet, beyond concept, image and word. In this sense we may describe the ideal as ineffable, but if that is so, then the ideal remains beyond our grasp, and therefore to frame it as an art object, to order our ideas, to generate images, could be construed as an exercise that conceals as much as it reveals. Thus the argument of the artistic realist is that one should not be overly

³⁰ Examples abound in this regard with modern movements such as futurism, the international style in architecture and De Stejl and constructivism as applied to design.

concerned with ideals and an imaginative fantasy, but render the external world and the “facts” of existence as accurately as possible in order to reveal truth. However, one could argue that there is a common ground between the idealist and realist (in some varieties) insofar as they impute an idea of an absolute, albeit imaginary (or mental) in the case of the idealist and the “given” sense data in the case of the realist. A critique of aesthetic beauty and content via a notion of the ineffable leads to the eradication of an absolute benchmark and reaches the essence empirically or rationally with either a realist or idealist stance. In short: one cannot be certain of what a particular aesthetic means and whatever it is said to mean is yet another surface. The ideal is either ungraspable or even non-existent. There is only the struggle and tension between form and content.

Up to this point I have used the word “frame” in a more conceptual sense, that is, as an example of a language which carves out and orders in some way, be it as a painting, sculpture, photograph and so on. In other words, the very label “painting”, “sculpture”... and so on implies order, by the very fact that we have a name for these “things”. In this sense we try to formalise an aesthetic and shroud it in importance as if it were a rational essence. The above analysis suggests that the underlying “essence”, truth or beauty is not forthcoming, at least not with certainty.

There is, however, another more obvious sense of the word “frame” and that is the literal square or rectangle or even the special frame around the square or rectangle that gives the painting, for example the quality of awe and importance. Again, there is no necessary relation between the literal frame and its assumption of importance. It is within a particular cultural time, neither trans-historical nor absolute that designates its function as doing so. Bear in mind, for example, that the square or rectangular format is predominantly a modern phenomenon, as in premodern times, fused as art was to life-praxis, we find painting on walls (frescoes), diptychs and triptychs and the like³¹. The modern and postmodern “square” or “rectangle”, though many a time questioned and transformed (see note 31), is still the common “body”, and its veneration is accentuated via the museum and gallery, which itself is

³¹ In painting Stella, for example overturned the relevance of the “frame” and this breaking of established norms could be seen in dada, performance art, installation art and conceptual art. Yet, curiously these “new forms” can be seen to exist in the pre-modern as the art-object was fused to “real” life in ways that parallel “performance”, “installations” and Dadaist events. (For example a medieval procession of a painting through a town and installed in a sacred place). Or a Stella painting as initiating a lack of a clear separation between painting and sculpture, that is, as an invocation of a kind of postmodern hybridism through his use of irregularly shaped canvases.

a further frame and ordering device, lending further weight – and an “ideal” setting – for the art object. Together, the frame and the gallery or museum shroud art in importance, reflecting the purported achievements of a culture and nations and individuals. In this sense, aesthetics and extra-aesthetic “content” are curiously interwoven or rather are surfaces that reveal “depth”, or at least appear to do so – or rather one is acculturated to link that appearance with symbolic value.

The art object assumes value in a traditional art context. Thence we grant it meaning. Dunham (2011) describes the museum as a utopian space as the art object is displayed ideally. Thus we can say that the museum embodies modernist utopian ideology. Even in the failed nineteenth and twentieth century unravelling of idealistic utopian states, “the museum and its social and educational aims have largely remained unchallenged as a venue for the betterment of our world” (Dunham 2011:39). In this sense, one could argue that the museum is the de facto guarantor of the ideal. Mumford (1961:561) wrote that the museum was “the most typical institution of the metropolis as characteristic of its ideal life as the gymnasium was of the Hellenic city or the hospital of the medieval city”. In a sense, the white cube (the gallery) challenged religion, creating a kind of secular religion, a sacred space, with the ability to improve mankind. Modern museums, like Ancient Greek architecture, is used to frame and house precious collections. Dunham (2011:40) states: “it would be this framing device, highly perfected in its own right, which began to develop into a model for power, authority, and aesthetic supremacy”. One could say that the ideal, the thought-content was usurped by the vessel of the gallery, the museum itself overpowering the very objects it holds, so that “it is not the content which manifests the ideal; on the contrary it is often the surreptitious framing device” (Dunham 2011:40), namely the museum and gallery. Thus the nature of space, or the architecture, determines how the viewer sees the objects therein. Neoclassical manoeuvres such as symmetry, monumental processional entrances, raised podiums supporting a majestic colonnade, and the sublime Pantheonic rotunda (adapted from Dunham 2011) and lighting induce (consciously or not) in the viewer or the person that traverses the space, a reading of this framing device³² that inspires a mindful and respectful pose, an ideal presumed authority. There is thus a conflation of so-called universal ideals of aesthetic beauty and historically formed ideological features that reflect ideals of a particular

³² A historical side may be relevant here for the argument. When the “degenerate art show” of 1937 in Munich was shown it clearly contrasted the more serious, “ideal classic” art in the main Berlin Museum, so that in the “degenerate” show, the space was less classic, the images were hung haphazardly with curious text interspersed as opposed to the calm and serene order of the “ideal” classical art of the time.

time and place. In other words, the framing device is assumed to transparently reveal truth and beauty, just as the literal frame of a painting, for example, is supposed to do. The argument here is that this is merely convention, part of an on-going movement of cultural and historical change, without any necessary truth. Perhaps today we realise this, but we are not beyond it.

Postmodern museums, for example may often counter the museums' modernist idealizing tendencies. For example, as early as the 1970s and 1980s, the Montreal Museum of Fine Art and later the Metropolitan Museum in New York curated a retrospective of Yves St. Laurent, a fashion designer. In so doing, there is an undermining of the distinction between fine art and popular art, asserting both as part of the culture of entertainment³³. In this sense, we recognise the contingency of believing fine art superior to popular art. Nevertheless, one could argue that the former is still locked into a form of idealizing, a marking off of one set of "things" from "other" things. In other words: if Museum X wishes to deconstruct and critique Museum Y, then by necessity Museum X cannot avoid Y's influence and popular culture (a concern of Museum X for example) is not so much a negation of idealization (the primary focus of Museum X for example), as it could be construed as another ideal. It is for that reason that performance art, for example, which sought to reinvent the role of the gallery space and that of the disjunction between art and life, is now an established canonized form of art. It appears that we cannot break down the walls of the art gallery. This notion is further corroborated by the fact that the science of conservation is active in all museums, whether essentially modern or postmodern, so that the idea that the artwork defies entropy and is somewhat sacred is the assumed extra-aesthetic paradigm of the institution and reflects and projects what may be termed a kind of aesthetic idealism.

One further framing that generates a sense of the concept of art and at least some kind of ideal of aesthetic "depth" or rather extra-aesthetic meanings, is the cloistered story of art, the theory and history of art itself manifesting as the book or a book on the subject. One finds

³³ While entertainment appears superficial and trivial, the confluence of the aesthetics of art and sport as entertainment also argues that sport shares with art a philosophical dimension "beneath" the veneer of aesthetic sensory delight. The mediation of will or intention via the sensory object – whether art or sport as such – may lead to interpretation, so that our games of expression and cognitive understanding mediated by games (of art, of sport...) is a social form of entertainment, a playful struggle. One who chooses to play the/a game is somewhat of an aesth(l)ete.

histories of art such as those by Arnason (1978), Gombrich (1960), Jansen (1967) and Hartt (1967) developing a narrative of art in terms of history, style, individual protagonists and iconographic meaning. While these are useful framing devices, the verbal descriptions and the reduced presence of the work of art in the form of photographs renders that story tamed. In the reformulating of the visual in verbal terms, the tactile, aliveness if you will – both in terms of the actual artwork and the historical context – is merely described, not lived. While this cannot be avoided in a textual analysis, one should be cogniscent of these obvious shortcomings and be aware of the *inner compulsion* of constructing, forming and making visible. In other words, as Bell (2007:10) eloquently says in his version of “the history of art” about early Palaeolithic art: “They would need to transfer this image, with the help of some tool, onto the body of the stone. Moreover, they would need some incentive to make this extraordinary assertion, this ‘let it be that’”. In those terms, creativity and ingenuity are precisely the idealizing tendency, that is, “that this is not just this” but one can make of it “that”. Therein, one could argue, lies the vision of artistic production and why Newman (in Johnson 1976) probably proclaimed that the first person was an artist. In making “this” into “that”, the function of the ideal is to make symbols, a making visible that which points to the existence of invisible thoughts. I would argue that this might be described as a religious impulse in agreement with Bell (2007:11) who asserts: “...it seems persuasive that abstract thought and its aural and visual expressions (language and art) arrived together with religion (that is, the turning of behaviour towards the invisible) in a single, interdependent evolution”. If that thesis is correct then we might infer that art is the “frame” for religious aspirations, religion defined more broadly as a turning of behaviour towards the invisible, one of many possible extra-aesthetic interpretations. The point here is simply that the “invisible” articulated through the “frame” that is art-making is precisely the realisation of form, which is historically venerated as ideal. However, in the “frame” - the art book - that ideal does not always become apparent, even curiously if that should be acknowledged within the textual analysis itself as is the case with Bell (2007). It appears that the thought-construct in the context of the art book may not be amenable to words that attempt to explicate images, while the images, one could argue also do not reflect that “inner compulsion” alluded to above. Without descending into mysticism here, perhaps the notion that “the Tao that can be expressed is not the Tao” hits the marks (or, as it were, misses it!). Or we might put it more simply that knowledge, whether construed in the form of a particular aesthetic and/or in terms of extra-aesthetic meanings, by definition is limited, whereas the “invisible” is not. That is not to say that knowledge cannot expand, only that there is always “more” and “beyond” as

new questions and ideals are formulated and answered which beget further questions and so on. In this respect, it would be wise not to revel in one aesthetic form/style and one corresponding set of extra-aesthetic meanings/interpretations. That is to say, we should not necessarily be certain of an aesthetic ideal. In such respects, the art book (theory and history) only offers partial knowledge and contracts even as it expands.

I think Bell is aware of the limitations of the book on art history as a framing device/form, as revealing an aesthetic ideal. His *A new art history: mirror of the world* (2007:456-457) is an art book that itself deconstructs. I say this as he ends the book in the following manner:

Has art a history? At the level at which I have described matters, only just. At moments, as I wrote, I seemed to glimpse all the static images reproduced on these pages coming together as facets of a single great verb, an ever-varying wave of the human imagination. But if art is such a verb, then this is not its grammar - merely a glance at a few general ways in which social circumstances have shaped its usage. What is beautiful in a work of art, what changes the life of the viewer, lies far beyond the range of such a description. Go in closer, to finer-grained art histories. Better, get close to the work itself. Best, make things. What happens next in art is up to you.

In this “frame”, the writer “gets out” of text and an authoritarian voice and motivates the reader to get closer to art. The authority of the art historical “frame” breaks and the reader is enjoined to pick up the pieces once more and construct a new “frame” and make art. In reorganizing the “frame” one makes visible the ideal. Or at least makes visible another “frame” or “body”. Put in other terms: one does not discover the ideal but *creates* it in some measure. In this sense, the art history book may reveal the meaning of art through a process of idealization, abstracting the apparently key factors that contribute to that meaning, or as in the case of Bell’s work, deconstruct that idealizing process and recognize the limitations of the “frame”, namely the “art book”. This then inspires the reader to contribute to an ideal that is art and aesthetic “play” defined in various ways. This somehow cannot be explained fully, that is discursively, in terms of various extra-aesthetic interpretations. This limitation on rational disclosure or at least making effable the reasons for art allows a certain latitude in art wherein even “everyday” life is significant. Contemporary (fine) art itself or in some respects, appears to be somewhere between the “everyday” and the ideal, where it is evident that arts’ rational (discursiveness) has led to a reconceptualisation which I think is well

“captured” by the front cover of Stallabrass’s book (2004)³⁴ where there is a shopping trolley³⁵ – a sculpture, a ready-made – that both in a cheeky way reifies the common-place and undermines “high” art. In this sense, the *activity* of art-making is emphasized, the activity of transforming the mundane into art³⁶, rather than its presumed aloof truth and disdain for the mundane, whether considered aesthetically or in terms of extra-aesthetic “subject matter”. One implication of recognising the potential beauty and meaning of the mundane is in drawing the body (for here “the author” [Bell] referred to above does not privilege mind) into the shaping of meaning, which resonates with sport, an ostensibly bodily activity. Thus a connection between art and sport is established precisely where the ideals of mind/content need the body/form, so to speak, to see and shape and symbolise the world. This then alludes to the convergence of sensuality (aesthetics) and abstraction (extra-aesthetic). Bell reminds the reader that abstraction in and of itself will not do if we are to understand art.

1.2.2. *The nude as ideal*

I have been describing and interpreting the concept of the “frame” as a holding device of the aesthetic ideal via art itself, the literal format and literal frame of a painting-object, the museum and gallery exhibition space, and the art (history) book. I subsequently questioned this framing. The nude too can be described as a means of representing and expressing notions of the ideal; it is a kind of vessel or light (or thought-content). It is a vessel or “frame” insofar as it is an accepted traditional genre, a specified label of sorts and also could be described as “light” as it is the outward embodiment or symbol of ideals. In the critique of the elevated image of the body (“the nude”), that “light” is critiqued. “Light” can be equated with a presumed aesthetic “depth”, that is, that the nude innately corresponds to an aesthetic essence and an extra-aesthetic “truth” that I have problematized until now and continue to partially cast doubt on.

I shall describe in the foregoing, the concept of the ideal, in the form of the classical nude in painting gleaned from Clarke (1956) and a brief feminist critique of the “classic”, namely the presumed aesthetic “depth” of particularly the male in action or male artists’ depiction of the

³⁴ Stallabrass, J. 2004. *Art Incorporated: the story of contemporary art*. Oxford University press: Oxford.

³⁵ Jacket Illustration: Serie ELA 75/K (Easy, Breezy, Beautiful) by Sylvie Fleury, Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Hauser & Wirth & Presenhuber, Zurich in

³⁶ This is not new. The Impressionists saw this in trying to capture “the perceived moment” or the Realists in trying to capture the “mundane” without embellishments.

female nude derived from Bostrom and Malik (1999). In this sense ideal “aesthetic distance” said to obtain between the artist and his model ignores social, erotic and political extra-aesthetic factors.

Clarke (1956:2) describes the classic nude as a balanced, prosperous and confident body and in this sense is the body re-formed. He argues that as a genre, the nude was forced into our vocabulary in the eighteenth century and that we do not wish to imitate, but to perfect (Clarke 1956:3-5). This tendency can be traced to the Greek heritage in Western art and recalls Aristotle’s idea that “art completes what nature cannot bring to finish. The artist gives us knowledge of nature’s unrealized ends” (Aristotle in Hazlitt 1934:25). Therefore, the nude, as distinct from the merely naked, as an image is said to have an ideal form of which the phenomena of experience are more or less corrupt replicas. In other words, the concept of ideal beauty has often been “framed” through images of the nude. In fact, the artist, in seeking after this ideal, would combine the parts from various bodies into a perfect whole. Thus, in the classic scheme we observe that wrinkles, pouches and other small “imperfections” are eliminated. Therefore, it is not a matter of simply reproducing the naked body, but an idealization of some artists’ view of what the naked body should or ought to be like³⁷. The imperative of the “ought” reflects the cosmic “man as the measure” ideal. According to Clarke (1956) this became apparent in the numerous fifteenth to seventeenth century drawings of figures inscribed in squares and circles. Such images demonstrated the geometric basis of aesthetic beauty and the ideal, linking in the process sensation and an intellectual model of proportion. The square symbolized the finite dimension of earth, and the circle, the perfect and eternal realm of ideas, so that the human body becomes a symbol for the merging of the visible (surface) and invisible (depth). But this ideal may be critically assessed when one considers that the genre of the nude is a complex set of agreements between the model, the artist and society and that its distinction to the merely naked is a historical construction. Furthermore, the classic ideal exemplified in ancient Greece is specifically of the male nude who is shown as athletic and muscular, a physical perfection that is said to reflect Reason and Logos, while the female nude, especially later in the history of art, is shown as passive and submissive. Bostrom and Malik (1999:44) argue that in Clarke’s book “the male body is the representative human animal. He is the original nude, developed according to the rules of mathematics...in his chapter ‘Apollo’ Clark describes in

³⁷ This can be likened to the alteration of images in popular culture with tools such as Photoshop.

rapt prose the source of this ideal form...". Again, this may yet be another social and historical construction determining power relations and "knowledge", wherein the male is hierarchically elevated above that of the female. For since form, body, object carries "content", the aesthetics/extra-aesthetic of such form does reveal a latent (and often blatant) bias. On this basis, "knowledge" and "content" is itself political, and often not inclusive of "voices" other than the dominant one. This draws from the "classical" foundation of Western thought and art, namely classical Greece. The example of Ancient Greece (or at least our interpretation of the signs that have come to signify "Ancient Greece") reflects a paradigm where male form more closely resembles "universal Reason" and the gods. The argument here is that this extends beyond Ancient Greece to the modern, but that current postmodern consciousness may be aware that this is but an aesthetic construction with no necessary truth. Accordingly one cannot say what form is ideal, which is to question our forebears, the ancient Greeks and Western culture/history in general.

The Ancient Greeks attested to (*produced* "knowledge" that...) the sense of the measurable proportions of the visible particularly in sculpture. They therefore made their gods in their image; the invisible became the domain of the human, predominantly male. This meant that the body could be something to be proud of and should be kept in perfect trim. It also served to unite spirit (or the abstract) and the body (the sensual) as one. This marriage of ostensible opposites means that the abstract idea once given sensuous form, human form, sets in motion a dialogue between the abstract and the tactile, physical dimensions of being. Clarke (1956:23) goes so far as to call such a dialectic a kind of "life-giving beauty," and as the "transmutation of matter into form". This spiritualising tendency, if you will, masks the fact that the male nude in history can be seen as the public (human) nude who strides through city squares, guards public buildings and is worshiped in temples. According to Bostrom and Malik (1999:45) "the female, although given the status of nude, never wholly transcends biology". They point to the fact that in most "how to" figure drawing books, almost all the bodies are of females and the heads are male, thus establishing the male as reason (mind) and the female as irrational (body), rather than recognising the rather arbitrary, historical construction of the nude, formal "aesthetic distance" and talk of essences that pertain to either sex.

This essentially "idealizing" tendency in concept and form may have been contested in Western painting during Mediaeval Christianity, wherein the body was rejected and the

ascetic life was considered the ideal. However, with the Renaissance and the inklings of secularism, nature became an ideal embodied in human form and it could be said that truth is naked. Whether religious or secular, the body – its contortions, its beauty variously perceived and represented, its energy, dynamism, sensuality and emotional nuances – allowed artists the facility to express, even if stylistically distinct, aspects of the ideal. This ideal may have taken on various forms, but perhaps Clarke (1956:273) is partially correct in observing that the nude “no longer confined by stasis, it can be used with greater rhythmic freedom” and so the disparity and variety of forms are linked by an idealization of the nude bent on discovering the joy of mobility, even as this is mediated by the static image that is the painting. So that while Matisse’s *Dance*³⁸ (1909) is certainly not classic, it perhaps captures the fundamental concern of the painter that uses the nude to convey his or her message, namely a kind of rapture, aliveness and movement that may lie dormant in the emphasis on classic beauty as defined by exact proportions and the like. In this sense, one can speak of different ideals or versions of the real, but idealization of some sort all the same. It appears to me that the *implied movement* of the nude links the stylistic approaches to the nude as a subject and object of one’s art. If *implied movement* appears somewhat misleading then *energy* may be a more accurate description. This would imply an inner compulsion of sorts, so that the nude can be said to embody more than a mere aesthetic surface and meaningless arrangement of colours. Rather an inner compulsion implicates a mind and in the way I have been using the term ideal, this would imply that the nude is, by definition, with various degrees of success, one of idealization, as harbouring extra-aesthetic meanings. However, this is said with circumspect as the feminist critique³⁹ of the nude rightly acknowledges that the nude is also a site for struggle wherein the male nude assumes an image of rationality, control and prowess whereas the female nude is subordinated to the “male gaze”. History – his story – thus needs to be (re)written with this in mind and art reflects (perhaps even causative of) that ideological one-sidedness in many respects. The nude in art is a peculiarly Western ideal, neither universal nor as necessarily expressive of a particular truth, beauty and goodness.

But with abstraction in Western painting, for example, beginning perhaps with the Impressionists, the traditional subject of the nude was no longer thought to contain aesthetic

³⁸ Museum of Modern Western Art, Moscow.

³⁹ It is interesting that Simone de Beauvoir considered sport a transformative and positive activity for woman reclaiming their body (mind).

“depth” (an ideal form). Manet’s *Olympia*⁴⁰ (1863) is another example of the desire to change the prevailing aesthetic/extra-aesthetic cultural meaning. With performance art, for example Fluxus, this was taken to a new height. Contemporary new media, installation and digital art represent a further radical aesthetic/extra-aesthetic shift and I am not sure one can predict where this is heading. The point is, the traditional nude transforms as does the form and methods that art assumes. So whether the method is abstraction or new media, it is unclear whether traditional genres even exist, and if they do, whether there is an ideal “light” contained therein. Post-1960s art thus is beginning to reflect one hopes a changing trajectory wherein art – and other spheres of culture – (re)present women, for example and are (re)presented by women in ways that challenge and subvert the traditional genre, an ideal that may enhance and shift and balance our understanding of a perhaps one-sided (art)history. In simple terms: more narratives of the disenfranchised need to be heard and it appears (aesthetically at least) that (Western) art is currently moving (towards) what I shall cautiously call that ideal.

To summarize: idealization in art can be seen as a way of extracting from nature to determine an ideal form, or critique that tradition. It is also a way of partitioning off the art object by a framing device in order to establish an ideal vehicle to present art. The consequence of a critique of the “frame”, the body that is art, may lead to aesthetics that embraces other aspects of cultural life such as sport. This can be said on the basis that art does not hierarchically dominate other expressions of cultural life as it may not contain aesthetic “depth” as an absolute ideal. This is further amplified by the need to recognise “other voices” and therefore reconstruct images of the (ideal) body. In the following analysis I will show how sport, insofar as it presents images of ideals – though without claiming a deep ontology – is concerned with some kind of aesthetic and symbolic pleasure. This immediately links sport to art and we can define that shared aesthetic/extra-aesthetic dimension as being concerned in theory and practice with the concept of the ideal.

1.3. Idealist theories of sport

Applying the concept of the ideal to sport and not only to art, is based on the fact that with the (self) consciousness that art undergoes continuous revision – “the shock of the new” as

⁴⁰ Museum of Impressionism, The Louvre, Paris.

Hughes (1991) puts it – is precisely the penetration of the aesthetic into realms considered less “ideal”, sport been one such domain. For, since we cannot speak intelligibly about an ideal without some language, sport *shows* an ideal, some of which as I shall argue is certainly artistic, rendering a watered-down version of a concept of the aesthetic, though no less a reflection thereof. In such terms, it is not that sport is lower than art; rather it concretizes the abstract in an apparently less intellectual format, though no less powerfully and meaningfully⁴¹. It draws from art and spreads its message “downward”, as a material framing device of the ideal that satisfies not only a need to relate and socialize, but an intuitive grasp of the hope for a better, more ideal existence. In other words, we can read “intellect” back into sport through being symbols of an aesthetic ideal. I say intellect *back* into sport to reclaim bodily action as congruent with abstract depth which an overly text-based Western, dualistic society has perhaps incorrectly overlooked as an after-effect of so-called Enlightenment thinking. To complicate the matter, the very notion of sport predicates a boundary between it as a bodily activity in contradistinction to more intellectual pursuits. One motivation therefore for extending our understanding of sport via art is to bring bodily and abstract dimensions of personhood together, and to define sport, like art, as being both physical and engaging on other, more abstract levels. One could perhaps dub this motivation as an ideal in itself.

Although there are no explicit theories of idealization in sport, the praising of the game itself, whether in terms of aesthetic beauty such as Gumbrecht’s (2006) description or Weiss’s (1969) relatively early account of sport’s capacity to assist a person in self-development and Plato’s (1973) vision of the gymnasium as integral to an ideal society, one could argue that sport has much to offer when assessed in terms of idealism. It will be argued that sport offers the participant and viewer a “frame” for his or her deepest emotions and that in so doing expresses visions of the ideal. These “visions” or moments are framed by the imaginative, fantasy world of the ideal encapsulated by the sheer order – both rational and mythical – that defines the sports event. In the process, the human body, while not glorified to the extent of being nude as was the case in the Ancient Greek Olympics, reveals “moments” that *parallel* traditional artistic imagery. In drawing out these shared aesthetics traits, one could theorize

⁴¹ In fact I would go as far as to claim that there is metaphysics in sport, that sport can be as metaphorically encoded as that which we assume is only reserved for high culture or fine art. For example, the diamond shaped baseball arena or the fascination with ball sports point to or are material expressions of metaphysical concepts. Ball sports are a kind of dance of the heavenly spheres, the planets and this is particularly evident when we see sport as aesthetic. This is, of course, but one interpretation.

that sport speaks the language of art, albeit covertly. In drawing from the arts, the material forms that define sport offer an idealized image. These “frames” are “the stadium”, “the trophy” and “the human body in action”. These demonstrate parallels between art and sport. Insofar as we can make such an application we might speak of a reconstruction of (the) aesthetic and an extension of the aesthetics of everyday life via art.

1.3.1. The stadium and the trophy as a framing device of the ideal

Ancient Greece and later imperial Rome developed the ideal framing device for the sports contest. Spectators huddled around a tier system that was ideal for consuming and playing sports. In the process, the athlete becomes the performer. This “frame” heightened the intensity and drama of the event. Modern sporting events through technological innovation build on this form. Massive stadiums are constructed, galvanizing masses of people and transporting them to a fantasy world. What is significant, I believe, is that the stadium creates a sense of awe and power that appeals to an intuition and sense of the hidden mystery of existence. This hidden mystery made somewhat visible is tantamount to saying that the “ideal” has assumed a framework, a pattern and thus becomes a cultural symbol, which by definition both effects and produces structural relations between the individual and the social environment. In this sense, once again “the stadium” reverts to its state as an “idea” or an ideal. There is an amalgamation of aesthetics and extra-aesthetic concerns. An example ought to make this clearer.

I argue that the elliptical shape⁴² of the famous Old Trafford stadium (one of innumerable examples), the official ground of the Manchester United Football club in England, in which the rectangular field is inscribed holds a certain beauty. The alternating red and white of the seats, signifying “the team” against the green of the field is also attractive. It is not only external, formal, visible beauty (the aesthetic) that determines an appeal to the ideal, but the notion that behind this formal coherence or appearance is the actual concept of the ideal. In other words: the appearance of the stadium is not merely a pretty picture, but a formula the world over for the concept “stadium”. It is therefore elevated to that of the symbol. As symbol it represents a cultural world that includes, in this example, the whole edifice of

⁴² While I am aware that there is certainly a “form follows function” reasoning here, which cannot easily be justified as a form of idealization, I am stressing the idea that the function itself is subject to the ideals and hopes of all those associated with the club, economic limitations and practicalities notwithstanding.

Manchester United Football club – its ethos, fans, paraphernalia, history, players past and present and so on. Thus the stadium is a vessel for the memories and aspirations of the club. It is the club's "body", as it were. It has entered a cultural domain and invests in the minds and hearts of its supporters. The stadium is the vessel for the ideals and emotions of all those connected to the club. These ideals I would go so far as to say, as contained in the "stadium-image", is precisely the hope for something better. Certainly in the case of Manchester United it would be easy to believe in some kind of victory and success, given the team's superb track record. But even in the case of minor, more modest teams with a less grandiose stadium-image, it is a "body" for ideals such as: overcoming barriers, never giving up, fighting against all odds and the like. Therefore "the stadium" is a "frame" for ideals with the sole intent to reinvigorate life and make it easier to bear and perhaps when the team wins, and when life is more comfortable to secure victory even if, in reality, the fan did not directly attain it. For the player, reality may appear ideal even if only momentarily.

Furthermore, the concept of "the stadium" can be likened to a gallery in that they both house and facilitate cultural exchange. An even clearer correlation is that between the stadium and the theatre, where in both cases there is a structure that "frames" a performance, and while sport is said to be more real than acting, I would claim that the sports-act, insofar as it is a kind of performance, is theatrical and many players are known for their antics or play-acting. Conceived as a kind of "gallery" or "theatre", the stadium is a field of dreams and thus corresponds to an ideal. This is because the stadium is an imaginative projection that has evolved over time to demarcate a fixed time and space in which energy is focused, somewhat insulated from the realities beyond it and thus reflecting a perfect, ideal realm. This ideal realm makes life easier for many, while at the same time suggests something beyond the toil of mundane existence owing to "the stadium's" sheer scale. I believe that the majority of fans or players do not grasp this consciously. In this respect, it is not clear to what extent "the stadium" is embroiled in some kind of ideological coercion. That remains an open question.

Another way in which the ideal is apparently framed is through the image of "the trophy". Trophies represent particular competitions. The formula is simple: gain victory and you will lift the trophy aloft to the delight of your supporters. Images of this moment reveal a declaration that an end point has been reached, the climax to the action is now associated with this stirring moment. In so doing, the ideal is manifest as a moment of joy and the trophy a physical embodiment of the effort, pain, dedication and perseverance which lead to victory.

It appears as if players and fans lose themselves in the sport and the team in order to acquire the trophy. The trophy is not just a material object, but a vessel or frame for the history and emotional and mental investment in the game that culminates in that final moment of elation with the cup. The cup then becomes an ideal, a secular idol of sorts. Even if it should change hands over a short period of time or as in the case of the FIFA World Cup every four years, players and fans alike wish to hold their hands aloft in a pose in which the hands are higher than the head, meaning that doing precedes thought, commitment precedes assessment. And the trophy that the hero holds aloft is the tangible symbol that indeed doing and commitment are trans rational, that the ideal cannot be sought and found purely through reason. The arms are held aloft to that which is above stretching the body ever higher and praising the ideal. The trophy embodies that ideal without which the hands aloft would not necessarily read as implying an ideal; it would simply be a momentary feeling, whereas the trophy is enduring and physical and the winning athlete or team is inscribed thereon. In this sense the trophy acquires value as an idealized commodity. An idealized, aesthetic commodity is certainly a kind of equivalent to an art object; it is only context that separates its meaning and function. In this respect it is an arbitrary form/aesthetic/designation.

1.3.2. The idealized body⁴³

While the stadium and the trophy are clearly integral to sports and developing a theory of idealization concerning sports, perhaps a more obvious framing of the ideal is via the human body itself. The body becomes a vehicle for the direct expression of perfection in the best moments of the game; it is an ideal as communicated via energized movement through and in space and with precise timing, tempo and rhythm. Furthermore, the dancing, moving, skilled athlete in its aesthetic appeal as experienced by the player and consciously, or not, by the viewer, could be considered beautiful and artistic precisely because the athlete encapsulates an ideal moment, move or image. In this sense, one could theorize that sport represents itself in terms that many people can identify with, where artistic ideals are attenuated and captured by a vessel that is easily understood, namely the joy of movement, game-playing and entertainment. In a way, the ideal shines through and thus I believe one can forge a connection between art and sport. Drawing from Clarke's (1956) analysis of the nude as well as Bostrom and Malik's (1999) feminist critique of the assumed innocence of the sporting

⁴³ I believe an application can be made in comparing images of the idyllic landscape in painting with that of the highly abstract and manicured sports arena.

body, I will briefly argue that such artistic ideals have resonated with the sports image of the body generally as well as being somewhat loaded ideologically in terms of gender inequalities and stereotypes as I argued in the context of the human figure, specifically the nude in art.

Clarke's (1956) conception of the nude regarding basic postures of the body is a useful interpretation that lends itself to a further set of categories of human movement in sport, and hence I have found recourse to incorporate these categories. Clarke (1956) divides his analysis into a few key chapters. I will mention just three that have a bearing on the argument, namely how sport is a reflection or parallel of art and can be understood as art-like insofar as sport and sports imagery force the human subject (the athlete) into an idealized space that bears a resemblance to portrayals of the human figure in art. However, I will set this against a feminist critique of how sport may often propagate a certain kind of body and its associated veneer of idealised meaning, excluding perhaps other, more accurate for want of a better word, readings derived primarily from the work of Bostrom and Malik (1999) and others.

One such chapter is entitled "energy" which he defines as eternal delight (Clarke 1956:162). He argues that the joy of the movement of the human figure that began with the Ancient Greeks was captured artistically by virtue of theories of perfection and the notion of the ideal form that was carried through into the Renaissance and beyond. In order for this energy to reveal that eternal delight there needed to be a distortion and emphasis of some kind. This is what makes Myron's sculptures, for example so idealistic, or Michelangelo's robust, muscular bodies so unreal. Now it appears to me that the sports contest wherein the athlete is enjoined to perform and play with great energy necessitates the athlete to push his or her body to the limits. In so doing, "everyday" movement is transformed into the unreal, the extreme and the distorted. It is a movement away from the expected to the unexpected or the unpredictable and conjures a sense of what things could be like. Therein lies the process of idealization, a drawing out of the usual parameters of thought and body movement into another dimension (different body positions or series of movements). When those moments in sport are captured we realize that, in fact, there is a resemblance to the fine arts, via the movement and action, its often monumental physicality as well as the formal composure.

Consider or imagine an everyday image of a soccer action from a match in a newspaper. As an image within a soccer match, such a pose is orthodox and not surprising. But looked at as an energetic moment of “eternal delight”, one cannot help but notice the aesthetic beauty, the sheer athleticism. More than this: the players may be furiously trying to control the ball; the crowd that has become a mass of dots forms the background and he is under pressure from the opposing team. In other words, the capturing of that moment is an idealization of the real; it raises that game and that moment and so reconfigures the real. I am aware that this description is of a photograph of a sports event and not the game itself, live as it were. However, this photograph was not intended to be art, but it appears to act as a portal to an aesthetic experience that ought to be accompanied by pleasure and delight. That pleasure and delight does not need philosophical justification in order to dub it an aesthetic experience. Nevertheless to experience it as such is already to imbed it – as a cultural system of signification – in a kind of artistic framework, at least to some degree and in some respects.

However, what really is this “cultural system of signification?” Theorists such as Marcia Pointon have, according to Bostrom and Malik (1999:47) subjected the innocence of aesthetics and the argument that this need not have philosophical justification, to sound feminist critique. What they have in mind is the male control over images of the female nude in art, a symbolic structure whose logic consistently holds an entire system of meaning together. More specifically stated, Bostrom and Malik (1999:45) quoting Nead observe, “...while the female nude can behave well, it involves a risk and threatens to destabilize the very foundations of our sense of order”. By this is meant that Clarke, according to Nead keeps that destabilization from happening and then “only through resorting to an almost arbitrary sense of personal taste mixed with reference to abstract form” (Ibid.). In other words Clarke’s analysis of the nude and my application to sport (the human figure in action), may effectively be seen as an attempt to clothe the nakedness of bodies with nudity in an attempt to what Bostrom and Malik (1999) describe as a return to the innocence of the Garden and/or to imaginary Greek paganism – and the further attempt to link that to sport, may in fact simply endorse a “signification” that corroborates a one-sided artistic-ideological paradigm, namely the ideals of male-centred Western values. In this respect a simple analysis of aesthetic beauty in terms of abstract categories, may already be ideological. I shall play off Clarke’s ideal “abstracting” with brief feminist critique in order to seek a balanced approach in my appraisal of sport as art-like. It may very well be that sport’s continuous progress and inclusion of female athletes may lead the way in circumventing this ideological impasse.

Consider the multitude of sports women partake in: rugby, cricket, soccer and so on. This demonstrates a more balanced approach. Nevertheless, the visible, aesthetic reality that women are represented in sport does not mean that the extra-aesthetic non-exhibited reality may be that women in sport still reflect some kind of imbalance in the overarching ideological strata of meanings. Consider tennis, where in the coveted Wimbledon title, the winner of the men's' single championship is rewarded more financially than the female champion. The male winner holds a beautiful gold trophy aloft whereas the female winner gets a silver plate. Thus the visible presence of women in sport does not mean that in the progressive twenty-first century there is equal treatment of athletes. In this sense, history has not been transcended.

A second chapter by Clarke (1956), is entitled "Pathos", wherein instead of the triumphant "energy", the overcoming of gravity and inertia, there is defeat and pain. Here he analyses images such as *Laocoon*⁴⁴, the numerous crucifixions and Rodin's *Three Shades*⁴⁵. What is evident in these examples is that pathos also requires a certain distortion and emphasis of features in order to reveal emotional depth. To that end, the harsher side of life, of art, is also idealized. In order for the viewer to placate his or her own pain, an image can be used to draw out his or her feelings that lead to an identification with that image and a form of therapy occurs. In that process, one can release that dark cloud and once more believe that things can and ought to be better. Via "pathos", the predominantly male image becomes identified with universal, humanistic "truth". In many art forms the male is reserved for images of moral strength, while the same "pathos" in depictions of women, is often associated with weakness.

An everyday example of the above may be that of an image of a marathon runner in a magazine on running (and there are innumerable examples). We can observe the thin body of the marathon runner soldiering on despite his grimacing and obvious pain. We might observe further that his forehead is furrowed, his eyes deep set in a kind of wildness, as he sprinkles water on his head, anointing himself with the hope of salvation, and an end to the race. His solace might be that another runner is enduring with him. Being a sports image we know that the man is an athlete. He is not suffering in real life. This is an ideal realm, an arena in which to think, feel and do. So while we identify the pain, we know that it is but a race and he will endure. And so we take that lesson from this idealized setting and apply it as a life lesson.

⁴⁴ Second century BCE, Pargamene, Vatican.

⁴⁵ 1908, Paris, Musee Rodin.

That we too should prevail notwithstanding the seemingly insurmountable difficulties. That even in the athlete's pain, he is a hero. For victory is sometimes just in the effort, not in making a mark in the record books. This athlete could thus function as a representative of human emotions. And who is the athlete but the consumer of sports that identifies with this runner and assumes the number code emblazoned on his vest shirt, and is enjoined by the Nike emblem to "just do it!" What I have been describing is not simply a mimetic projecting of the self into the sportsperson which has a similarity to arts' icons and images, but again, this "moment" emphasizes and holds the emotion not as simple resemblance, but as an idealization in that the athlete becomes the everyman, and in the pathos, paradoxically transcends it. The ideal element thus refers to the symbolic import of the image, that is, how the visible body elicits the invisible or in other terms how the everyday is elevated to the condition of the aesthetic and the artistic. But again: Is the above analysis, abstracting qualities such as "pathos" and spiritualising pain, not expressed via a dominant masculine hegemony? Do we have sports images of women that can have the same effect, exemplifying ideals that portray "transcendence"? I am not convinced that we do. Singling "pathos" as revealing invisible strata of meaning or truth would seem to continue the artistic male-dominated paradigm and confirm its one-sidedness within everyday culture itself. Or it may lead to the interpretation of sports in accordance with postmodern artistic ideals that recognise the need for alternative "histories", with a view to changing the way we think about and document sport.

Lastly, a third chapter by Clarke (1956) deals with ecstasy which he defines as "the body possessed by some irrational power" (Clarke 1956:264) and he analyses in such terms images as far apart historically as Greco-Roman images of Dionysus to that of Matisse's *Dance*. In so doing, he argues that ecstatic images of the human figure suggest a kind of rebirth that conforms to ideals of physical grace and more to the point, in reference to Michelangelo's muscular bodies and images of Christ, that "he has not lost faith in physical perfection and feels it almost as a recommendation to a higher world" (Clarke 1956:297). This "recommendation to a higher world" is precisely another way of saying a tending towards an ideal. In my estimation, images of the euphoria experienced in gaining victory or scoring a goal in sport and the like concerning both players and fans alike conjure the ideal or idealized. They may be described as artistic images of the human body in ecstatic "poses" and "moments", overcome as they are by their emotions or an "irrational power". This jarring of the sensibility and overwhelming emotion could be equated with the Kantian concept of

the sublime that tends to be formless, a kind of ecstasy. At the same time, one should be aware that similar images of women in sport is down-played, thus “enforcing” the dominance of masculine victory as it were. Perhaps a more balanced appraisal needs to shift in sporting activities and their consumption. In general, that is in most sports - elation, conquest, triumph and winning – is associated with men, and the vocabulary and language with which we describe sport – confirms this rather unbalanced appraisal.

An example is in order to *show* and verbally unpack the sense of emotional energy of an ecstatic kind that resonates with the fine arts. I ask the reader to recall moments of celebration, say when one team scores a goal. United as one entity, the group of players embrace as one. I would argue that this moment with all its enthusiasm and irrationality - for what is a goal in relation to life⁴⁶ - is a visible instance of the kind of climax that we hope for and hence we expect to find the partisan fans celebrating with equal joy and intensity. In other words: the athlete gives us a taste of the sense of rebirth, the culmination of a life lived, pockets of success and a cohesive force forged between players and fans alike that nullify individual aloneness. In so doing, we are given a vision of that ideal moment when self surrenders to a higher force - the group; when past failures are forgotten and worry for the future is suspended. I would further argue that the players create a sculptured mass and reveal facial expressions of heightened emotions. While this aesthetic aspect is not necessarily articulated or even a conscious part of a player’s and viewer’s perception, I would argue that the sheer, mass enjoyment of the spectacle including the ecstatic moment is precisely the intuitive need to experience joy and climax, and the pattern, rhythm and order that defines such moments. Yet its duration is relatively short. Ecstasy yields and while the game may soon end, there is always the promise of another.

One “rebirth” leads to another in an ever increasing tally of ecstatic moments, which is precisely the search for the ideal or put more crudely: a better goal that results in a more wild and euphoric state. It is a unification of entropy and order and in the unification of these polarities the ideal is that which joins the state of wild abandon and the desire for coherence. In other terms this is the combination of the irrational and the rational, connoted in simple terms as the body and the mind. But since the body-and-mind effect one another, this duality

⁴⁶ Perhaps I am being a little idealistic for certainly victory at that level of the game means economic benefit and fame. However, the case is strengthened that even in a simple social game we find that “moment” of wild abandon when one team overcomes another.

is inaccurate. A better formulation is to say that there is an integration of the body-and-mind as the ideal is vividly communicated, a theme explored in chapter 5 in relation to expressive theories of art and sport, but now that integration is more clearly defined as an aspect of realizing the ideal as it can be achieved in moments of victory on the sports field. Such visible ideals in sport and art are brought together by the presupposition that the aesthetic exists in the first place. In this sense, to claim that aesthetics exists is in itself an ideal. Granting this ideal, one might claim that athletic action and its similarities to the artistic concern with the human body imply an aesthetic that permeates various facets of human life. Notwithstanding this claim, one should with caution argue for the diffusing of the “aesthetic principle” without awareness of images (and perceptions or interpretations thereof) that merely promulgate certain stereotypes, prejudices and restrictive, perhaps chauvinistic “ideals” (certainly evident in some sports). In this sense, artistic interventions that question male-female binaries and the valorisation of the first term over the second, may have a positive effect in other cultural aesthetic domains, such as sport towards a more balanced conception of masculinity and the femininity.

But beyond issues of gender is the sense of the body in motion, in time and space. Duchamp’s *Nude Descending a Staircase* (1913) is a fragmentation of the figure in sequential series of movements in time and space. It is a breaking down of the transcendent figure captured at a given point in time without spatial-temporal sequencing – as it carries the dynamism of movement. This links to the sportsperson’s kinaesthetic awareness of his/her body in motion and the viewer’s empathetic projection into the physicality of a sports-act. Yet there is a further link, not simply through the mechanics of movement, but also the figure itself presented in art in relation to sport: we see the gesturing, implied movement (though actual in the case of motion pictures) of figure/s in art and intuit their humanness – their weight, tension, poise, feeling, will to art and science, and the internal rhythm of mind – and this is a similar kind of action that occurs in participating in sport in relation to other “bodies” and viewing sport, in the engagement with “fantasy” that is at the same time a physical engagement and projection “into” the “surface”, an awareness of the human figure in space and time.

The order and form we seek in art is the same aesthetic satisfaction we find in the fantasy and imaginative order we find in sport. It is taming of the minds’ chaos into pattern, rhythm and harmony that leads to kinaesthetic awareness, sensory perception (aesthesia), coordination

and a mental, inner balance. Yet some art is jarring (such as the sublime and various extreme acts in the art context) and some sports are dangerous and violent (such as extreme sports and boxing). Even then, there is an agitation felt aesthetically and conceptually that may lead to order and form, perhaps not beautiful but sublime. Such aesthetics may or may not be considered ideal.

1.4. Common-sense confluences between art and sport via the lens of idealism

The so-called power of art was that it was supposed to reveal an ideal or the ideal. But that has been deconstructed as the frame, the art gallery and the writing about art has changed considerably. This leads to the possibility that aesthetics is not restricted to art and that art is not clearly defined. In this light I analysed in parallel fashion, the “framing devices” of sport such as the stadium, the trophy and the human figure in action. In this section, I develop two observations that pertain to art and sport having discerned a similar kind of aesthetic framing. Now since the aesthetic is presumed to invoke a kind of truth, what has been said to convey an ethical truth at that, I shall look at the question of the moral in relation to art and sport. It is moreover not clear whether culture is necessarily political or personal. At best, perhaps one can claim that art and sport are simply constructions and though not wholly abstract, they can be described as imaginative. Bringing the common-sense observations of the moral and the imaginative together, I shall claim that since we expect a certain ethical conformity in even the game of art or the game of sport, there is a dialectic or at least an oscillation between the moral and the imaginative.

1.4.1. Observation 1: Morality in relation to art and sport

In this brief section, I will outline how art and sport are not clearly initiators of moral directives or simply used by other more powerful institutions. I derive the concept of “idolisation”, a word that conveys the struggle between on the one hand the desire for that which is higher, more ideal and at the same time fixating on those very ideals, defending them come what may, which may reflect an unyielding and implacable world view (and this may even apply to a particular aesthetic). That struggle might lead to consider art and sport as most free and beneficial to society if a-moral.

The reason art may be shocking or in its less severe form simply original, is that we assume art to be the vehicle for moral truth. Certain behaviours in art or sport for that matter would not be tolerated; how much more so in life proper? However art (and sport) are marked by an on going aesthetic revision and thus by implication, no clear moral standard. Similarly, sport as a puppet of consumer culture and politics often loses any naïve ethical truth (in fact the more so through its *apparent* political sterility). The institutional realities of art and sport that will be argued in chapter 4 recognizes that indeed art and sport are a reflection of these extra-aesthetic designs, namely philosophical, religious and political concerns which have moral implications. The upshot is the ideals of political regimes end up usually prescribing what kind of art is acceptable and the form that sport should take and in the process art and sport become less than ideal, and simply a reflection of a philosophical and political system. In other words: both art and sport are a platform for moral ideals that may reflect an overarching political dispensation or may be a site for a critique of those ideals or neither (as a self-enclosed game).

However, art and sport, intentionally or not, reflects a moral concern. For example: Minimalism reflected a positivist philosophical ideal and critiques that in its emptiness (Bell 2007). In sport, Jessie Owens's success at the Berlin Olympics of 1936 reflected that racial discrimination is unjustified. In both cases, one could argue that art and sport as culture does have something pertinent to say about ethical issues, that it is not simply a puppet or pawn in a larger philosophical and political super-structure⁴⁷, but at the same time one should be advised not to idealize art and sport. Moreover, it is here argued that a healthy scepticism mitigates the human propensity towards "final" truths and moral prescriptions which we tend to idolize and venerate in the name of some ideal. This tendency to find a stable form or image and thus restrict the "light" with the appeal to a set of ideals, I dub "idolisation". This begs the question as to whether there can be a moral agenda that permeates art and sport. Historically and based on theoretical perspectives the answer has been affirmative, but the consequences often dire, so that the very notion of "the moral" is not necessarily tenable as an ideal in either art or sport. In saying that I have projected a moral imperative, which in itself should not be idealized. In other words, there is a tenuous boundary between

⁴⁷ It may seem obvious to assert that art and sport both have something to do with politics. But this need not be that clear as it is precisely the argument that art and sport carry a meaning that is not merely institutional and political (national and transnational) that we carve a space for the "beautiful", the ineffable or the personal "untouched" by the social. This thesis has argued for all such levels without canceling one for another (say formalism in favour of the institutional or the expressive in favour of mere copying/mimesis and so on. All however are aspects of aesthetic, bodily "play").

idealization (aesthetics) and ideology (extra-aesthetic) and it is not clear how to negotiate that borderline. We are left with an existential abyss. Or we consign art and sport to that of an idyllic realm, an imaginative construction, which is the concern of the following section.

1.4.2. Observation 2: Of imagination and fantasy

Art and sport consist in the imaginative construction of “another world”. They require a certain pretending and “make-believe”⁴⁸. We recognize that in a certain sense they are not real: the drama is staged or “framed” in a particular way.

In both art and sport we praise the expression of an inner conviction well articulated which has the effect of enveloping the audience in creating a memorable experience. This may be achieved through imagination where a lateral, creative solution to a problem may be expressed. In the same way that an artist will develop a unique technique in order to elucidate a concept and feeling, a sportsperson may show vision and ingenuity in a particular play, which articulates a subtle nuance to the game: it provides for an imaginative realisation and requires an imaginative kind of vision. It is often attended with curiosity and joy.

Welsch (2005:14) argues that this “dramatic realization” or lateral, creative solution in sport “can display all the dramatic traits of human existence”, that is, the human condition. That sport is drama without a script may be poetic, but perhaps at times it is even more artistic than some of the arts, for example the performing arts, which are completely dependent on a script, choreography or a composition. While “in sport...the drama is due to the event alone. The freedom and event character of sport’s production of meaning is eminently artistic” (Welsch 2005:14). My intention here is not to assess whether in fact sport is art. I wish simply to draw the reader’s attention to the fact that in their both being ideals in varying degrees and in specific ways through being imaginative, there is a common theme that underlies them both. This I have suggested entails a redefining of arts’ boundaries and the consequent aestheticization of the everyday, in this case, of sport, in articulating an aesthetic ideal.

⁴⁸ Although sport may be considered as real-life drama, it is still a category of make-believe. We recognize it as but a game or as a diversion (even if it may be a profession). It is thus at a remove from the vicissitudes of life itself, even as it may act as a bridge (or metaphorical illustration) of values that are deemed pertinent to life. In the same way, art is said to represent (re-present) or comment on life.

Sport is generally imaginative as it is as distant from life as is art, even as, perhaps similarly to art, it developed from life and is symbolic in that it developed from types of aggressive action in ordinary life, but now the struggle is raised to the level of imagination. As Santayana puts it: “sport is a liberal form of war stripped from its compulsions and malignity” (in Welsch 2005:10). For example: Why constantly drive at high speed or shoot unreal pigeons that will not be for food? And the stage for example, like the sporting field is separated from “everyday” life as neither actor nor sportsperson “attack” the other beyond this arena. They are imaginative. Yet that is not to say they do not apply in some way to some kind of ethical system. In the dialectic between the imaginative and the moral, life itself is played out. In other words, the joy, creativity and celebration and also often the pain and defeat experienced in these activities highlight the coincidence of the real (its moral value and meaning in life) and the unreal (an a-moral, fantasy dimension). Art and sport in some measure both determine aspects of life and represent lifeworlds.

Now that we have defined the ideal in relation to art, extended that definition to analyse sport as an aesthetic ideal and then made two common-sense observations with regard to art and sport, we can ask whether, if all this data is in some way valid, we can apply a reading of art aesthetics to the domain of sport and perhaps extend our understanding of sports aesthetics. I believe we can and Walter Schmid (2012) suggests a Kantian theory of sport, which I then reapply to my argument that both art and sport reflect ethical and imaginative modalities.

1.5. A Kantian theory of sport

In the *Journal of Philosophy of Sport*, work has already begun in expanding the field of everyday aesthetics. That is, specifically within the domain of sport. The method for doing so is precisely the task I have set myself: applying art aesthetics, in this case that of Kant, to an understanding of sport and sport theory.

In this section, I will develop the argument that art aesthetics may be useful in extending sports aesthetics (or at least discerning confluences between them) by applying Kantian theories of beauty to sport. I will evaluate and interpret Schmid’s (2012) application of Kant with reference to my observations as set out above, namely sport, like art as moral training and as imaginative. This allows me to further develop the proposition that both art and sport are ideals, given the fact that the imaginative is precisely the realm of the mind as in

philosophical idealism and the moral is concerned with a vision of ideal behaviour within a certain context. In addition, one could argue that the moral is concerned with life-issues or extra-aesthetic concerns, whereas the imaginative is concerned with the medium of expression, its aesthetic import. The oscillation therefore between the imaginative and moral hitherto described reflects the complementary pairing of aesthetics and extra-aesthetic itself.

I take as my point of departure Schmid's (2012: 107-110) outline of Kant's theory of beauty. Specifically, in summary fashion such a theory involves beauty as being without interest or *disinterestedness*, that is, one appreciates beauty for its own sake. Secondly, that we expect others to agree with one's valuations of beauty; one would claim *universal* assent; thirdly, that the *formal harmony* is critical and appears necessary, and lastly that this elicits *pleasure* in the viewer that is both sensual and abstract. I concur with Schmid's (2012) project to apply this to an analysis of sport, though I have done so with my own objectives in mind.

Corresponding to the four points above, one may interpret sport in the following way:

Sport is defined as a playing of the game for no external interests, other than the goals within the game itself. It is an ideal realm in which the only real object may be joy in the game itself. One submits to the "logic" of the game, only so that one may transcend the senselessness in other areas of one's life. In other words: one plays the game for the game itself, which one may argue results in sports' aesthetic appeal.

Secondly, athletic volitional experience aims at universality. This is so in that the player is trying to achieve some kind of ideal, for example the perfect "shot" or perfect "run" and so on which everyone would seek to accomplish (Schmid 2012). This of course only makes sense within the context of the game played. But unlike other actions, like building a bridge or selling a product and so on, the outcome is not the chief goal (Schmid 2012). They are freely chosen by the player that plays the game. In this sense, the striving after perfection in sport, its intrinsic value is shared as an aesthetic ideal (for example: even when one's opponent wins, one can appreciate as player and fan alike the exhibition of a fantastic move).

Thirdly, the performance itself is the end goal just as in art, where the appearance or form is the end goal. It is a making real of the ideal. In the words of Schmid (2012:111) "whereas the aesthetic subject grasps the aesthetic object as presenting itself as a pure form for cognitive enjoyment, the sporting agent intends her action as a pure form of volitional achievement".

Although arguments against this attainment of the ideal form within sports games in terms of a Kantian approach may be countered by the idea that sport is just about winning and vanquishing one's opponent, Kant would possibly maintain that this need not be the case. Kant's theory of beauty may be applied to an appreciation of sport's creative and aesthetic dimension.

Consequently, sporting experience amounts to joy in performance and what it may represent as a sporting achievement, more significantly than for simply winning a bet or for financial reward and the like. It is debatable whether this ideal is realized at present. I think though one would concede that sport results in pleasurable effects, both physically and mentally. This one could prove through scientific analysis of the effects of sport in terms of health generally, though excessive sport could be harmful.

Now this Kantian ideal as applied to sport may be evaluated accordingly with a view to extending the argument that sport, derived from considerations within the sphere of art theory, is an imaginative construction with moral implications. To substantiate this view in regard to *disinterestedness*, I would say that it is precisely sports' tenuous connection to the "real", its merely apparent practicality that marks it as an imaginative construction. It is a temporary world fixed within parameters of time⁴⁹ established by the game itself. Within these limitations, the significance of human exchange takes on proportions "larger than life"; it may serve as a training ground for the acting out of moral prerogatives. Such a realm offers us a way to conceptualise our moral experience and moral life. Cultural life is such that these dramatic contexts provide a "stage" where we appear as moral actors. Sport is one such context where we can know and express moral sentiments (adapted from Schmid 2012). It is an ideal, albeit imaginative setting in which life is reflected.

In terms of *universality*, one may observe that the individual at the pinnacle of his/her sport, even if part of a team, captures the imagination of the public. Consequently, the sporting "idol" is believed to possess superior moral fibre. In supporting the sporting icon paradoxically, a Kantian theory of sport does not emphasize the desire for victory and domination. Guyer argues that this may lend a reading of sport such that "excellent sports

⁴⁹ Art and sport are in time; they can be described as "happenings". They are also "happenings" out of time, as unreal and not part of "history". Yet when this "happening" is sufficiently strong in time (and strangely beyond it), it may become a memory, personally and collectively, not only as a part of culture, but part of what we call history.

actions constitute forms of natural self-perfection comparable to artistic, political and scientific achievements: they belong to the realm of human culture or rational-natural development (*Bildung*) and constitute an apparent externalization of man as a noumenal being and culmination of nature” (Guyer 1993:116). Sport appears to carry with it Kant’s ideals of rational, free, moral action as a form of play that includes freedom, achievement and mutual respect. In this sense, sport appears to have universal value.

In terms of *form* manifested as action, Kant (1952 [1790]) emphasized both the lack of goal-directedness of action (“free beauty”) and that the aesthetic judgement is subordinate to ideals of excellence and mastery (“dependent beauty”) (Schmid 2012). I would like to suggest that this Kantian dichotomy is a useful way of conceptualising the aesthetics of sport. That is, that such experiences are paradoxical, revealing, on the one hand, a directed action, making the imagination a “reality”. On the other hand, the participant or the viewer is swept by the aesthetic play and loses intention to some degree. In this sense, the “real” is the imagined or the ideal. The participant and/or viewer are transported to another dimension, and forgets the troubles of life. So, on the one hand, the act or (the viewing) is highly defined, formed and rational (for example it is open to analysis, comparison and categorisation). On the other hand, the absorption in the “play” (as participant or viewer) is not so conscious. Kant’s dichotomy between free (subconscious) and dependent beauty (directed action) thus becomes a useful way to conceptualise the imaginative and formal aesthetics of sport. At the same time, the moral is that which negotiates the ideal (the imaginative realm of rules) with the real (form). One might say that to act in accord with the rules of the game is an example of moral action. It implies what one ought to do, that is, formal mastery, which is the quintessence of a moral imperative. In this sense, I believe that on the whole sport as a practice is good. This value-judgement was made on the basis that sport is art-like, art being ideally concerned with world-bettering. Or so I believe.

In terms of *pleasure*, one might argue that Kant’s idea that to perceive aesthetic beauty is to see it as it is meant to be seen. This principle can also apply to sport. One could say that to do it “just right” in sport resembles to make it “look right” in art and aesthetics. From the fan’s (viewer’s) perspective, this culminates in appreciating and enjoying the performance. This right action is marked by a harmony of will and one’s bodily nature in reaching for perfection. This takes place within a community of sportspersons; it is part and parcel of the moral society of the game. In striving for the ideal (in art, in sport...) one concretises the

abstraction of ethical “rightness” into a physical act or object. Together, the community of sports pursues a kind of “virtuous happiness” (Schmid 2012). Sport may promote equality and ethical norms; in fact often moral education and socialisation occurs first within the context of sport. For those who play in the Kantian manner, such ideals may indeed be realized. Kant’s philosophy of aesthetic beauty lends itself to an appreciation of sport where love of the game, freedom within the game and interpersonal community is emphasized.

One could thus argue that aesthetics offers us a valuable way of assessing various cultural expressions without the trappings of objectification and quantification, that is, aesthetic awareness gives rise to multiple aesthetic form/meaning, rather than a singular meaning. Using Kant, often thought of as positivist, to extend our understanding/application of the aesthetic, is I believe a valuable direction to take if we are to understand the aesthetics of sport, particularly in relation to an art aesthetic tradition that has something to offer it.

1.6. Conclusion

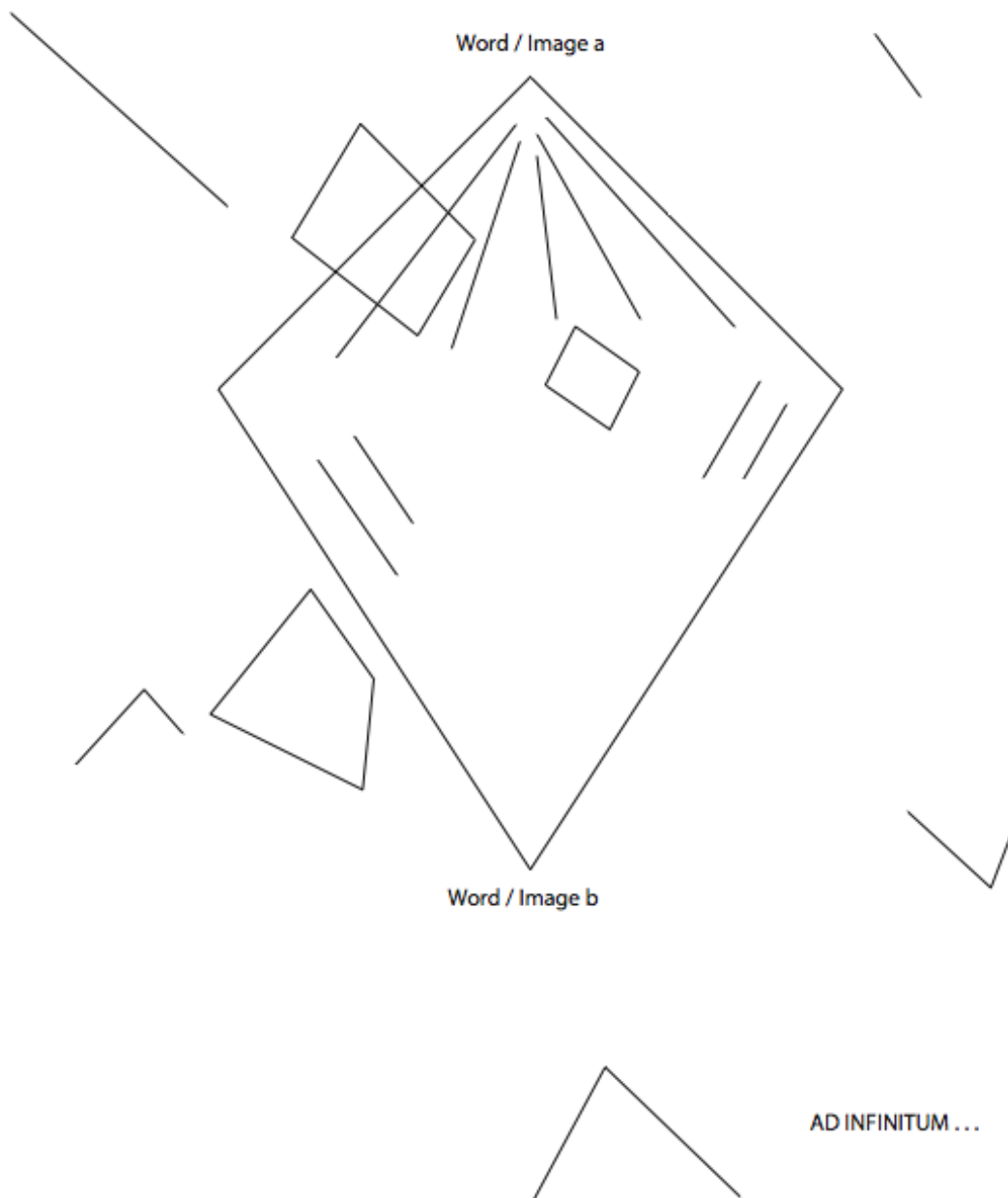
This chapter is concerned with defining aesthetic idealism as it applies to art and sport. It argues that art is a “frame” or “body” for the ideal. This takes place in definite ways, namely the ordering mechanism of its format or the literal frame; the modern gallery, and the art (history) book. It was, moreover, described that the form of the human figure is a further “frame” or “body” for an ideal. The deconstruction that these “bodies” undergo as it were, implicating a seeming eradication of an autonomous aesthetic ideal, and yet, quite paradoxically, this opens up the possibility for a broader conception of the aesthetic ideal, so as to include an aesthetics of the “everyday”. Thus the “framing of the ideal” may also be extended to include – or parallel - the so-called framing devices in sport, namely “the stadium”, “the trophy” and the human figure in action. These are the “bodies”, the visible forms of the ideal. However, this purported ideal was also critiqued bearing in mind a feminist discourse that questions the dominant male-centred discourse/surface of sport and art. Insofar as art and sport reveal a veneer that one can call an ideal dimension, it seems that one can speak of “the moral”. Here it was briefly argued that “the moral” as an ideal has been rather misused and that consequently one should maintain a scepticism regarding the ethical as it pertains to art and sport. However, the last statement is itself a moral injunction or ideal and consequently, perhaps an a-moral position vis-à-vis art and sport should be held, considering the dismal failings of overarching political philosophies and their “lumping”

together of the arts and sport to serve extra-aesthetic ends. We might then consign art and sport to the imaginative without a “moral truth” or a prescriptive aesthetic ideal. It is perhaps in the dialectic or at least, the vacillation between “the moral” and the imaginative that art and sport develop and specifically, develop an ongoing aesthetic ideal, even in dismissing such a notion.

Finally, having argued for an understanding of sport by applying a traditional art concept such as idealization including the critique of this presumed ideal, I evaluated Schmid’s Kantian theory of sport in order to extend my observations concerning art and sport as both imaginative and as engendering moral ideals. Accordingly, and in agreement with Schmid (2012), Kant might have seen sport as an ideal, suggesting a confluence with the ideals of art. Nevertheless, there is a sense in which art and sport simply reveal in some or other form what can be described as struggle. I have referred to this as a tension between aesthetic and extra-aesthetic dimensions. This has also been clarified through the disjunction between an/the ideal and the symbol thereof. Perhaps this disjunction is overcome when we have recourse to mimetic “play” insofar as resemblance, representation and make-believe more closely align idea and form. In the following chapter, I shall further extend our understanding of sport in the light of art theory, couched in terms of mimetic aesthetic “play” (play being a complementary pairing with struggle).

Figure 2 : Diamond image

Word / Image formation in infinite variation / mediation through finite structures within a given "form of life" or language:



Chapter 2: Mimetic theories of art and sport

2.1. Introduction

The first artistic “lens” through which sport was considered, namely idealism demonstrated that the aesthetics of art and its extra-aesthetic meanings can be applied to sport. This chapter uses the artistic “lens” of mimesis to argue for a further application of art aesthetics to sport. By applying a traditional art concept such as mimesis to sport, an interplay between art and sport results. More specifically, in this chapter I argue that mimesis as resemblance, imitation or copy in the strict sense is untenable. In this light Plato’s critique of artistic mimesis applies to a narrow version of the theory. Rather, as I will argue, the shift to a postmodern perspective that does not necessitate a correspondence between appearance (form) and reality (content) means that to talk about mimesis is more a matter of the “play” of surfaces (signs), of make-believe (according to Walton, 1990). That is, truth⁵⁰, defined as an accurate rendering of reality howsoever reality is defined, is deconstructed. There is, however, a constructive result in this insofar as an expanded conception of art, that is, as performing more than simply a “mirroring” function, may be applied to sport. This is achieved by building on the postmodern paradigm shift that redefines the limits of artistic mimesis. In such terms, artistic mimesis and its application to sport are both aesthetically autonomous *and* concerned with extra-aesthetic factors as it refers to other facets of life. The ensuing oscillation between aesthetics (form) and extra-aesthetic (content) consequently results in an expanded understanding of sport and what one might describe as an interaction between art and sport.

My method for arguing the above deconstruction of accurate artistic “mirroring” and the subsequent reconstruction in terms of the “playful” vacillation between aesthetic and extra-

⁵⁰ I am not implying that there is a “truth” that is nevertheless to be found in other ways than art. It could be that the whole question of “truth” is impossible to know. I believe that this is what postmodernists such as Derrida and Baudrillard argued for, foreshadowed in a parallel fashion in physics with Einstein’s relativity of space-and-time. More perspicaciously, one may borrow a metaphor from the sciences where Niels Bohr makes the point that (quantum) physics does not find out how nature is, but what we can say about nature. Or as his contemporary Heisenberg put it: “we do not observe nature in itself, but nature exposed to our method of questioning” (in Merrell 1998:89). Another way of understanding this is provided by the anthropologist, Taussig, (2011: 52) where he reflects on his visual and verbal description of what he saw in a freeway underground in Columbia, and says of the “event” or of its “recording”: “the anthropologist is not presenting a picture of another reality so much as inhabiting a switchback by which one reality is pictured in terms of the other, which, in turn, provides a picture of that which pictures it!”

aesthetic aspects is firstly to briefly outline Plato's theory of mimesis and begin to critique his thesis. This allows me to argue that the relinquishing of accurate artistic "mirroring" does not mean there is no place for art, that is, that it serves no mimetic function and fails to represent. Rather as I will argue in the "four orders of mimesis" that indeed, the move towards the "postmodern"⁵¹ wherein there is no necessary correspondence between aesthetic and extra-aesthetic meanings, allows a space for artistic endeavour without the metaphysical assumptions entailed in the previous "orders" or paradigms. This section requires a hermeneutic, historical approach rather than an analytical approach and makes use of Degenaar's (1993) explication of the categories of the premodern, the modern and the postmodern. With these categories, I briefly analyse the broad historical eras known as the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, modernism and the postmodern. This chapter and section will deal with the postmodern without considering poststructural language theory, which I will deal with in the following chapter. The section makes the concept of mimesis clear as it unfolds within broad historical periods.

Since there is no "essence" to mimesis in art given its historical change in meaning, it seems sensible to see if it can be applied in parallel fashion to other cultural domains such as sport with the same categories as were used to define mimetic art. Such an approach proved useful. Given this relationship, one can infer a common quality between the two, which is not to impute an "essence", but merely to reflect that a kind of mimetic meaning inheres in both. In this respect I introduce in section 2.5. the "play"⁵² element in art and sport. In so doing, the language of both art and sport converge. Huizinga (1949), in his seminal *Homo Ludens* is an important theorist in this regard, even though his writing predates the postmodern shift. Rather than consider Huizinga as constructing universal, humanist norms as per many Enlightenment philosophers, the notion of aesthetic "play" carries positive associations. "Play" rather becomes a function of everyday life so that we cannot easily separate mimetic activity from immediate "reality". In this section, Nietzsche too will be introduced in order to develop an account of "play" that pre-empts postmodern thinking in many respects. The use of the concept "play" in inverted commas expresses the idea that a kind of struggle is also

⁵¹ I have put postmodern in quotations at this point precisely to highlight that postmodernism is not a monolithic entity or "particle" but more akin to "a wave" spreading and difficult to identify.

⁵² By introducing "play", I have in mind Ricoeur's (1991, also as elaborated in Taylor, 2006) distinction between reproductive and productive imagination. The former is the old fashioned mimesis as correspondence wherein there is a disjunction between so-called original and the lesser copy; the latter, which I associate with the "play" factor is defined as imagination that creates, that discloses reality rather than simply being an inert copy. The reader should bear this in mind when I refer to "play".

implicit in this concept. It implies that there is ongoing creativity between formal aesthetics and extra-aesthetic content.

With the notion of “play” as a function of mimesis within the context of art and sport we will then be in a position to make two surface observations (section 2.4) that demonstrates a confluence between art and sport. Firstly, that the meaning and power of art and sport is owing to their aesthetically “playful” self-referentiality. That is, there is no need to substantiate these activities in terms of metaphysics. Rather it is a kind of game of a game (aesthetic autonomy). Secondly, and as an antinomy to the first cursory observation, art and sport as aesthetic “bodies” mimetically refers. That is, it is a game beyond a game (extra-aesthetic heteronomy). The idea of mimesis and mimetic “play” is not so much what we represent, copy, resemble and the like for that, following Plato and in a different sense, postmodern theory, is itself a “copy” but that, in seeming contradiction to the first observation, to allude to “something” beyond its own form and formal “play”, what I shall call an “absence”, namely extra-aesthetic concerns. This “absence” is somewhat elusive and not ultimate - and here I use Foucault’s critique of “the mind from nowhere”. What is important is not this elusive quality and the discursive theory that attempts to interrogate it. Rather there is a reinstatement of the bodily, for an “absence” always transmutes into some kind of “presence”. Thus it is the visceral, the emotive and the imaginative in art – that which is “present” or the aesthetic – and which is evident in sport, that is significant. Or more precisely stated there is a creative oscillation between aesthetics (presence) and the extra-aesthetic (“absence”). These observations can thus be seen as the mechanism at work implicit in the “play” of form and content.

In the final section, an application of art aesthetics to the domain of sport, namely Keenen’s , Peterson and Raney (2008) and Berlin’s (2012) argument that sport is a mimesis of tragic art, is a direct implication in theory of the findings above. I say this as sport as “play”; sport as a self-referential game and sport as referring to content – all a direct result of its second-order mimetic status – converge in my evaluation and (re)interpretation of the above writers’ argument, namely in their contention that sport is a dramatic and sometimes tragic form of art, mimicking the “play” and struggle of life. In this sense aesthetic considerations in either art or sport can be said to express or mimetically instantiate extra-aesthetic “depth” through a make-believe world.

2.2. Plato's critique of mimesis

Plato's (1974) theory of mimesis is the progenitor of the traditional and standard concept of the term and the basis upon which traditional art-making has been construed as a theory of mimetic resemblance. We shall see in what follows that Plato critiques mimesis as resemblance or more sharply as "copy" or imitation in his Republic, part X. This does not necessarily deny the mimetic thesis completely, but encourages theorists to redefine the term and thus include within a revised theory of mimesis a greater range of art objects, and by extension art theories too. That is, once mimetic accuracy or resemblance is rendered as untenable, it means that art no longer needs to serve the function of representing. Or rather art itself is a kind of creation (this may seem counter-intuitive, but consider that one often likes a painting of X more than X itself). This section is necessary as a means of laying the foundation for the standard concept of mimesis towards a revision of the concept in the following section. Moreover, by taking into account the standard conception of the term, aesthetic considerations of form are said to correspond with extra-aesthetic considerations, which will become more evident in the context of premodern and modernist paradigms explicated in the next section. In terms of the thesis as a whole this emphasises that sport as an aesthetic form is said to map onto definite extra-aesthetic considerations or content. The subsequent critique of Plato's definition and the move towards postmodern conceptions of mimesis then redefines the relationship between form and content as one of "play", first discerned in art and then applied to sport.

Plato (1974:421) defines mimesis as representation, literal interpretation and an imitation of life, which in itself has only a secondary reality. Secondly, the painter and poet usually do not have knowledge of what they imitate. Therefore, pictures and poems are second-hand, unreal, and tell us nothing about life. He argues this by writing that a painter or poet holds a mirror up to things, as it were, merely imitating. He is but a craftsman of reflection to use the mirror analogy. He produces but appearances. Plato decries such art owing to his metaphysics wherein the true form or the *world of forms* beyond space and time is "inhabited" by the "essence" of its material embodiment. Thus we have, for example, a "bed" that exists "in" the *world of forms*, a singular, perfect "bed" created by the gods; the second remove from reality is the imperfect, particular bed made by the carpenter, and the third, a mere reflection and appearance is that made by the painter. The artist represents what the other two make. In such terms, the artist grasps but phenomenal appearances of an object.

In effect, he is saying that to paint a picture of X is to create an illusion of X, and therefore pictures are false.

I consider Plato's view as necessary cognitive stock insofar as art itself, past and present needs to be critiqued in order for there to be accountability. That one should not give in to mere appearances (aesthetics) with the claim that such appearances reflects truth. As Plato (1974) argues, by being seduced by the appearance of things, one learns to admire and imitate the faults one sees represented. The problem with this view is how to determine and mandate what art to include and what to censor. It is unclear what is reasonable and noble art, who gets to make those distinctions and indeed what constitutes a "good citizen". Therefore, while I find Plato's view insightful, it does raise many problems. In fact, Plato goes so far as to banish artists bent on mirroring appearances via their art from his ideal state. In order to avoid this situation, we need to redefine mimesis that circumvents the binary truth/falsehood and reality/appearance as applied to art.

In what follows, it shall be explicated through a broad historical sweep that there has been an altering of the notion of mimetic meaning in art and its revealing truth, the truth behind and apart from life. When Degenaar (1986) said we tell stories because we are stories, he was making the observation that it is precisely because our art is so enmeshed in life (praxis) that we cannot so easily distinguish the two, and therefore the images of pop culture and the texts that write us, write our art as much as they do our lives. This blurring between ("everyday") life and art, between the "original" and the "copy", the counterfeit, is at the heart of the postmodern shift, which will be described in the following section, in contradistinction to artistic representation or mimesis as correspondence to "truth"⁵³. In this sense, the historical shift towards the postmodern as argued below appears to allow precisely a meaning through art without the kind of Platonic disdain for the artistic object (body). Therefore rather than deride artistic form or at least some form, we may celebrate the profusion of form and its possible meanings – and even claim that sport shares such meanings (content).

⁵³ As Culler (1982:176) aptly puts it: "The history of readings is a history of misreading, though under certain circumstances these misreadings can be and may have been accepted as readings".

2.3. Four “orders” of mimesis: a hermeneutic approach

Degenaar (1993) distinguishes between the premodern, the modern and the postmodern. In summary fashion, he says that the first involves a lack of critical awareness; the second is concerned with modern rationality,⁵⁴ while the last is the postmodern lack of trust in reason and the recognition of complexity, namely that there is no central point. The first paradigm can be said to inhere in the Middle Ages; the Renaissance can be described as partaking of both the first and second paradigm while the last is of particular relevance to contemporary art theory and practice. I shall explicate these “eras” in what follows in order to demonstrate that mimesis as a concept has changed in meaning over time. This is not to implicate a teleological unfolding and development, which is a modernist “tenet” as will be explicated, but that the very concept of a theoretical construct such as mimesis is problematic and thus mimesis is rendered void of “truth”, as the copy and original, theory and reality, art and life distinctions are “eroded”. This lack of “truth” does not, as hitherto stated, preclude meaning, but it does entail relinquishing the idea that mimesis is a reflection of – and correspondence to – a defined reality. In fact, why should art be treated as a form of propositional knowledge with a logical truth claim, as representing reality? Surely art as an imaginative activity does not conform to mimesis strictly defined as accurate resemblance? In this light, the shift in the meaning of mimesis as not simply correspondence thinking seems to me to make sense. The result is that form is not a transparent revealing of a definite content. This acknowledgment will be applied to sport in the foregoing with the argument that the aesthetics of sport proliferate with many possible meanings, that is, like art one might describe sport as “playful” which I shall develop in a later section of this chapter.

The first “order”: According to Haldane (1992:279–282), the art of the Middle Ages was based on the assumption that beauty exists independent of human awareness and involves a connection to the divine, to metaphysics and theology. There is an integration of religious, moral, political and artistic values – extra-aesthetic concerns - so that beauty and goodness are said to be aligned and fulfils a designated social function, namely the visual description of – and correspondence to - the narrative of the Christian bible, a pre-given structure or pattern.

⁵⁴ This is in terms of the modernist project to separate areas of knowledge which is described in chapter 6 as the tradition of aestheticism, later formalism and the rise of the institution of art, for example. In sport, this likewise refers to the rise of sporting institutions and later sports-sciences and the like. These concerns would need to be considered to supervene in terms of larger political, economic and nationalistic, modern structures. Of course, any monolithic structure is too simple and modernism in the arts also shows a marked tendency towards the irrational.

Moreover, the human figure in medieval art is without solidity and there is little awareness of the natural environment. The figure is a mere icon existing in some timeless state. In this sense, the Word is primary and the image was used not to depict pictorial reality, “but rather the divine biblical order, one imbued with harmony, truth and goodness” (in Haldane 1992:281), so that artistic aesthetic beauty was not autonomous, but represented the beauty of “G-d’s Word” and was useful, both didactically and politically in the Middle Ages of Europe. Simply put: a specific aesthetic was said to correspond to a specific extra-aesthetic set of meanings within a particular historic time and place.

The second “order”: In the Renaissance, the mimetic function in art reveals a surface that belies a “deeper” truth. The artist gained more independence and so this “truth” can be perceived also as the creative intention of gifted individuals. However, during the Renaissance, there was still a dominant programme that the individual subscribed to in one way or another, namely that art reflected some sort of idealization and idealization of order in variety. In this sense, there is a kind of ontological aesthetic “depth” with which art corresponds. An exemplary quote in this regard is Aquinas (1225–1274) who defines beauty as: “...integrity or perfection (*integritas sive perfectio*); second, proper proportion or consonance (*proportio sive consonantia*) and third, clarity (*claritas*)” (*Summe theologiae* 1 q. 39 a.8). “Beauty” is thus a transcendental quality identical in an entity to the things being, its unity, its “goodness”, and its “truth”. Sartwell (1992:46) therefore says of Renaissance painting that it is “simply imitation of all the living things of nature with their colours and designs just as they are in nature”.

There is, therefore, the notion that the sensible symbolizes the transcendent and thus “in making things according to due proportion as in the work of the arts, one creates beauty and, ipso facto, establishes a link with the Divine” (in Haldane 1992:281). This led to what may be termed humanistic naturalism, and was made possible technically by the innovations of perspective and the study of anatomy. This is reflected as follows in Alberti (vol. 3:52): “the function of a painter is to draw with lines and paint in colours on a surface any given bodies in such a way that at a fixed distance and with a certain position what you see represented appears to be in relief and just like those bodies”. Leonardo claims that the mirror should be your master (*Treatise on painting* in Haldane 1992:282). Painting thus could be reduced to a mathematical order and was part of higher learning – art being subjected (reduced) to a kind of science of copying nature.

One could sum up by saying that both the medieval artist and Renaissance artist imitated a pre-established world order both derived from the Christian bible – its extra-aesthetic reference - and to which a specific art aesthetic is said to correspond. However, the former did so without recourse to an accurate recording of the empirical world, while the latter, in a movement towards a secular, modern, Western world-view, regarded naturalism as the means for communicating “the Word” in visual, more empirically accurate terms. This accuracy, a certain classicism, was held to be the benchmark of “good” art, but modernism sought to supplant this mimetic ideal and develop an alternative aesthetic and mimetic ontology. I shall deal with this in what follows.

The third “order”: The onset of modernism is debatable. I will be focusing on the modernist aesthetic especially as it took root in twentieth century abstraction and abstract expressionism. I will be presenting the ideas as “the modernist” (artist) may have seen it and thus uncritically, but one should bear in mind that the modernist art for art’s sake dictum, in many respects the formalist approach articulated in chapter 6, assumes an ontological mirroring of an aesthetic “depth”, and that abstraction itself theoretically implicated a teleological mirroring of an aesthetic “depth” as well, indicative of the procession of early to mid-twentieth century art movements or in short: the avant-garde. This section ends off with the argument that the modernists aim to reconcile opposites between say spirit and matter, ideal and real, art and life, subjective and objective, with the idea of a “depth” and the like, ended up with Adorno’s negative dialectic and the sense of a failed utopia, thus negating, to some extent, the idea of an artistic ontology. Thus one is left with the kenosis of abstraction. I shall begin this account with Kandinsky, usually dubbed as the first abstract painter.

Wassily Kandinsky (1866–1944) eloquently describes his exploration of the metaphysical by means of abstract art: “speaking of the hidden by means of the hidden. Is this not content?” (in Thomas 1976:34). In order to achieve this, Kandinsky worked both with the element of chance, the unexpected and the attempt to clarify a symbolic colour notation that would mirror laws of the cosmic dimension. The cosmic dimension is an assertion of both the subjective and the objective, which one might argue reflects the concern of modern science, where the observer is said to act upon that which is observed and thus becomes part of the experimental context. His paintings therefore reflect a holism of personality, the direction of will to thematise, to use Wollheim’s terminology, in order to tap into a higher dimension.

This can be described as the visual analogue to music and thus a kind of mimesis from one area of expression in terms of the language of another, namely the visual.

When Kandinsky saw in his upside-down painting a certain formal coherence and meaning, it was probably not just aesthetics and more specifically formalism that interested him. He had altered perception and thus, conception. Gombrich (1959:303) expresses it in these terms:

...in turning away from the visible world, art may really have found an uncharted region which lies to be discovered and articulated...this inner world, as we may call it so, can no more be transcribed than can the world of sight. To the artist the image in the unconscious is a mythical and useless an idea as was the image on the retina. There is no short cut to articulation. Wherever the artist turns his gaze he can only make and match, and out of a developed language select the nearest equivalence.

It appears then that painting *approximates* what one wishes to “say” concerning the inner world⁵⁵. We might say that the language of art is miraculous not because it enables the artist to create the illusion of reality but in that “it teaches us to look at the visible world afresh; it gives us the illusion of looking into the invisible realms of the mind” (Gombrich 1959:329). In a sense, abstract art and abstraction is not new, for mimesis is an abstract process. Even Constable, a quintessential realist spoke of the scientific “breaking up of nature” and reassembling it (Hughes 1991), in order to reconstruct a semblance of the form of nature on a flat plane. Thus there is – at what level is uncertain – the intervention of the human mind, interpretation and filtering in all art. The modernist third “order” is merely a consciousness of those constituent elements, and in some forms of abstraction a reemployment of those formal aesthetic devices to elicit meaningful content and claims to truly reflect “reality”.

Pre-twentieth century painting from the Renaissance onwards is based on the empirical world or uses images recognizable from the world in order to express an idea, a story. Painting of the early to mid-twentieth century, however, in particular epitomized by abstract expressionism, begins with a form that reflects consciousness, precluding direct references to nature, in order to access profound truths or the collective unconscious in Jungian terms⁵⁶. It

⁵⁵ As stated in my introduction to this section I am not critiquing notions such as the “inner world” or “cosmic order” but will save that for the section on postmodernism so I present “the case” with the *language* of modernism itself.

⁵⁶ Jung (1983) developed the idea that there is a common template of universal archetypes that form the basis of the collective unconscious impinging in various ways on the individual’s consciousness.

thus seeks to go beyond narrative, image, and the object and access the truths of an inner dimension. In a brief overview of select “abstract” artists I will argue for the mimesis (read: visual-aesthetic correlate) of these truths.

Piet Mondrian’s (1874–1944) paintings reveal a philosophy where simplicity becomes the ultimate state, evolution a natural and mystical phenomenon, that is, the concern with pictorial reality or logic. The search for simplicity, that there is no one dominant force, that there ought to be balance and equilibrium, destroys the distinction between figure and ground of a painting, and by extension, in the area of philosophy, that between matter and non-matter. The water, pier, sea and sky behind the configurations dissolve as the relationship between the lines assume importance. Mondrian saw abstract art as liberating the old forms of oppression, a religion of sorts. He was trying to search for something beyond nature, a metaphysical substrate, as he reveals in the statement: “we need to look past nature, but in a sense see through it” (Thomas 1976:13). Here the mimetic function is thus to provide a kind of structural scaffolding behind the visible in terms of visual form, an underlying structure that the tangible world of objects share. In other words, he provides a picture of the unity of the external world.

Mark Rothko (1903–1970) asserts “painting is a means of philosophic thought” (in Polkain 1991:59). His paintings are an arena where unity and wholeness are expressed through large canvases of close-valued hues whose feathery edges are almost connected with the boundaries of the canvas. There is a sense of the loss of the individual in the “all” through colour and the negating of form and line. The flat form destroys illusion and reveals truth, the being of the painting-object. An exhibition in 1947 organized by Barnett Newman called the “ideographic image” reveals the common project of many abstract painters of the time, namely a concern for pictorial truth, a presence within the canvas surface. Rothko even referred to his shapes of colour as organisms, entities that have volition. Others, such as Reinhardt, achieved this presence of being in his paintings by eliminating elements for abstract painting. In his philosophy outlined in his essay *12 rules for an academy* (1962), it becomes clear that through negation he attempts to arrive at the absolute, the empty, a kind of meditation and silence, and painting as an end in itself. Thus one can describe the works of Rothko, Newman and Reinhardt as the attempt to mirror, as in mimetic resemblance in visual terms concepts such as “silence” and “meditation” or the gestalt of colour itself, such as the red of red.

Jackson Pollock's (1912–1956) paintings of 1947 to 1952 reveal a network of lines and inscribe the visceral aspects of the artist's energy at the moment of each work's creation. There is a flow of the artist's being at the moment of each work's creation. There is a flow of the artist's psychic energy and physical movement, as complex webs of poured and strewn lines, splattered puddles and coalesced pools of paint, develop. The influence of surrealism is important, though it can be said that they merely illustrated a magical world, rather than created it. Pollock saw his role as a kind of creative shaman. "I am nature", he exclaimed, not merely inspired by nature, but being a conduit of nature itself. This is not necessarily a stance of anti-intellectualism, rather it is an attempt to reconcile secondary (logic) and primary processes (poetic license) in a unity of unmatched intensity. His primal "drips" is a kind of mimesis of himself, that is, a record of his own movements reflecting that he is part of nature, not simply copying nature at a removed distance.

The innovations of the abstractionists of the twentieth century shattered preconceived notions of painting, painters and the painting-object and opened up the area of painting to an individual form of expression that explored the deep consciousness of the mind, creating new icons. One might be so bold as to claim that they were then monuments of a new faith – again all such statements are a presentation of modernist rhetoric presented uncritically. Both formally (aesthetically) and conceptually (extra-aesthetic references), the notion of mimesis was no longer a subservience to a likeness that could be observed or derived from the biblical source, or observed reality, but assumed a more abstract reality. The term "abstract" does not imply "without form", but rather without dependence on the forms historically incorporated in art. There is a new system of reference as Newman (Pohribny 1971:65) was quoted saying: "... there is no good painting about nothing". So that in a certain sense it is still "painting as a window into..." transporting the viewer (in)to another dimension. In such terms, one can describe Pollock's work as wild, but intelligent; Rothko's work often cries, but is meditative; Newman's work is mystical, but classic (rational); Reinhardt's work is solid, but light; Kandinsky's work is metaphysical, but full of the colours of the material world. In groping for descriptive words for these ineffable works we find that such art is, after all, referential and thus alludes to that which is beyond itself. Or in other terms: such abstract art aimed to be a mimesis of an ontological, pre-given aesthetic, a "depth" – an "inner world".

One may question whether modernism achieved the objective of finding this aesthetic “essence”. In the face of two world wars the artistic enterprise and its idealism appeared to have little effect. Adorno (1984:2) puts it like this: “in the face of the abnormality into which reality is developing, art’s inescapable affirmative essence has become insufferable”. He therefore calls for the continual disruption of the status quo, a “negative dialectic” and a disruption of the modernist aesthetic harmony with its implications of an ontology and teleology. In other words: one may counter the aesthetics of modernism as revealing deep content, that is, extra-aesthetic references. The move “away” from thinking of an “essence”, an “original”, “truth” – an inner reality or extra-aesthetic “depth” - and the like has been theorized as a movement “towards” postmodernism.

The fourth order: Many theorists such as Lyotard (1984) and others believe we have entered a new “phase” that is after modernism. This is the poststructural, deconstructive and postmodern “phase” which will also be dealt with in further detail in the following chapter. At this point, however, it is useful to analyse its relation to mimesis and the other “orders” hitherto mentioned, with a view to replacing “truth as correspondence” (“orders” 1-3) with that of the lack of a “truth”, and yet maintain artistic meaning, a point that Plato did not foresee. I shall define postmodernism and its discarding the “truth” function by contrasting it with the third “order” or modernism.

The “third order” is modernist in that it demarcates a specific place for painting in contradistinction to other forms of art. It entrenches itself further within painting itself in the sense that abstract art can, for example, be considered a separate domain from other styles. Moreover, it assumes the mimetic transparency of language and its capacity to represent an “inner” reality, a “higher” realm and assert the *presence* of the painting-object. In such terms, art is a separate activity from functional life. Postmodernism, by contrast, recognizes the “impurity” of the medium, its lack of *transparency*, that is, its mimetic function, and thus the spilling over of mediums, styles, techniques and categories into each other. Moreover, it critiques artists as original and that their style merely serving to express the smooth line from internal states reliably mirroring external form. In terms of such a critique, art is not easily parcelled off as a second-order reflexive activity. The boundaries between everyday life and art are not necessarily strictly defined.

An image may be useful here to problematize and illustrate the complexity and the lack of transparency of the postmodern, and the impossibility of mimesis as a recording of one aspect of reality through another, that is, art as a second-order reflexive and mimetic activity. In short I will problematize mediation (perceptual aesthesis), referred to in the preceding chapter as “framing devices”. The image I refer to is that of a *Spiral* (see figure 3, page 118). The “point” at the beginning of the spiral sequence represents the dimension preceding thought⁵⁷ or it can represent a physical object or at least the reality of appearance. This is the given starting point, which is then “clothed” and described via sensory impressions and finally described at the “edge” of the spiral, by language. And yet, language potentially also links back to the realm preceding thought or the “thing” and the spiralling sequence is repeated. Art is somewhere between the senses and language. The point here is that each “recording” device (degree of mediation), from the reality of appearance or a reality preceding thought; to thought itself; to the senses; to the arts and verbal language, both reveals and conceals the level preceding it, thus distorting and attenuating that which one order of experience, for example, sight, expresses via another order of experience, for example painting. And to the extent that there is concealment, the mimetic function, construed as *correspondence* (as in “orders” 1–3) fails.

What I have been arguing for is that mimesis functions like a mask, and that while the modernist (third “order”) took the “mask” to be real, a revelation of an essential underlying unity and principle, the postmodern (fourth “order”) seems to recognize the “mask” for what it is, namely that the “mask” is deceptive, with no origin or mimetic imprint. Is this not what concerned Plato, namely in the rendering of the shadow reality, the appearances, there would be no recall of an original, his *world of forms*? The difference being that the postmodern embraces this uncertainty and considers it to be creative rather than halting the process with stable, metaphysical postulates!

This creativity can be couched in terms of Baudrillard’s (1988) concept of the “Simulacra” and “simulation”⁵⁸. With these terms he wants to argue that we have no access to an “original”, and more to the point, we cannot trace an artwork, for example “back” to an “original”. The way we perceive or rather how we conceptualize what we perceive is already

⁵⁷ One could associate the “level preceding thought” with will. It is thus not surprising that both Schopenhauer and Nietzsche regard will as primary.

⁵⁸ This may be one way to read Baudrillard. Alternatively, his ideas could rather be seen as a critique of consumption and superficiality.

mediated via an endless array of surfaces and “copies”. Baudrillard (1988:55) puts it in these terms: “the simulacrum is never that which conceals the truth ... it is the truth which conceals that there is none. The simulacrum is true”. In other words, reality is replaced by symbols and signs that mediate “reality”. These “copies” cannot be said to be based on a reality, nor yet hide a reality, and they are infinitely mutable, changing and transforming, even as we attempt to grasp it. In terms of this theory we can say that historically, the premodern construes representation as a kind of artificial substitute for the real item, so that the uniqueness of objects and situations are real and signification gropes towards this reality. The modern, with the onset of the industrial revolution, began to blur the distinction between representation and reality when commodities became mass-reproducible, threatening to replace the “original”, and modernist artists, taking (their) cue from the romantic, sought to find a place for art as a means of delivering back that “original”. With postmodernism of late capitalism, however, simulacrum precedes the “original” and thus the distinction between “reality” and representation vanishes.

The result of this lack of a foundation, a “reality”, is that rather than seek correspondence between art and life and life and an *In-Itself*, postmodern philosophy enjoins one to celebrate these surfaces, that is, the lack of a “deep” structure predicated on a unified theory, a clear aesthetic/extra-aesthetic correspondence. This revelling, as it were, in the “surface” can be understood as a playful and joyful way of theorizing the meaning of art and leads one towards a reconstructionist aesthetics in favour of one that is more inclusive. It sets in motion the possibility of expansive interpretation and “play”. Before I discuss “play” as an inclusive concept, I shall show that a *parallel* shift in sensibility from the premodern to the modern and to the postmodern, can be theorized around sport.

Art theory has collapsed in on itself proclaiming that “it” does not, and cannot extract “truth” or mimetically correspond to “reality”, and in that collapse a space for “other” things is made available. This would explain why, for example, art museums and history museums may not always be clearly separated, and why a hybrid exists between art (both fine and popular) and sport in the form of an “opening ceremony” at certain major sports events.⁵⁹ In these terms, the embrace of aesthetics is much wider. Moreover, a creative space can now be said to exist

⁵⁹ Another example is the *Pavarotti: the duets* (Decca Music group LTD, 2002) where the operatic Pavarotti sang with popular artists such as Bon Jovi, Bryan Adams, Celene Dion and others. Or consider the exhibition at the Metropolitan in New York (March 2013–December 2013) entitled “legends of the dead ball era (1900-1919) in the collection of Jefferson R. Burlock” which is an exhibit of old baseball cards.

in the vacillation between content and form and between art and the sport. Conceived thus we might describe art as not distinct and differentiated from other cultural pursuits and furthermore that art may assist in our understanding and interpretation of such pursuits, for example sport.

2.4. The “orders of mimesis” in relation to sports theory

I briefly discuss mimesis in sport in order to extend the use of the term in art with its use in the context of sport. I do this through the application of the “orders of mimesis” within the general categories of the premodern, the modern and the postmodern as applied to sport. The reason for doing so is that, as hitherto stated, if a similar mimetic quality can be found in both disciplines (as forms of aesthesis), then it appears that there is a relationship between them and, in agreement with Huizinga (1949) and Nietzsche (1956) I contend that this common “element” is “play”⁶⁰ and more specifically that this commonality can be described as mimetic “play”. I am using the concept of “play” as coextensive with struggle. However, we first need to discern a common mimetic quality historically associated with sport.

2.4.1. The “premodern” paradigm

The “premodern” paradigm is that sport can be conceived at a root level as a kind of mimicry of the movement of animals, a copying of nature first developed as hunting-methods and evolved historically in the cultural form of sport. One can imagine a prehistoric hunting scene, which it is believed resembles what early man would have developed by *watching* animals on the hunt, and then developed into a human code of conduct, in other words as the hunting activity we so label. I further maintain that sport is a reconceptualisation of this in the form of sport. Consider a “discus scene”, a sporting code that shows traces of the hunt, though now removed from its natural and functional “origin” to that of the cultural. Thus we can include in this category, the pre-discursive (physicality); Arnold’s (1990) “integration of parts” necessary for movement whereby certain sports are said to require a diverse range of movements within a sustained and coherent body-language; Welsch’s (2005) concept of sport as signifying the “drama of existence” (a hunting-dance) or as a kind of metaphor for the range of human emotions within life itself; Vanderzwaag’s (1972) argument of sport

⁶⁰ Or playful *struggle*, though the phrase will subsequently just be denoted as “play” present.

as a releasing of the aggressive impulse with the welcome after-effect of movement, and Noakes's (gleaned from various discussions) notion of sport as pre-analytical and trans-rational. In these terms, movement in say war or hunting or sport can be conceived as mimicking the deftness of animal agility. This copying explains Weiss's (1969) thesis that sport is a nostalgia for the past, insofar as though we no longer hunt for food, our sporting contests offer us a semblance of our primitive roots, and a reprieve from actual danger generally. The difference is that instead of fighting enemies, exploring surroundings, swimming to secure food by throwing and jumping, are now isolated as particular body movements for its own sake – that is the aesthetic dimension of sport. I maintain that Pollock's rather aggressive artistic method and style both converge with and form a parallel to the hunt and the aesthetics of the sports-act, insofar as the body dances in order to make a mark and thus Pollock embeds himself in nature and as nature, rather than just mimetically representing nature as a scene or "a landscape". Rather Pollock responds to "the moment", that wild abandon that allows him to work with the medium towards a goal. This reading of Pollock applies equally well to the sports performance. Thus the premodern uncritical correspondence to a pre-established pattern (the stability of a "given") is in sports correspondence to the instinctive "wiring" of someone.

2.4.2. The "modern" paradigm

The "modern" paradigm is sport as engendering a kind of modernist utopia and order. This category could thus include: Weiss's (1969) argument that sport brings people together; Womack's (2003) contention that sport is a cultural code beyond verbal language and therefore, like Weiss, can have universal significance. Also included here is Hyland's (1984, 1990) argument that the sportsperson stands for a level of perfection, or in other words, the sense that we aspire to be *like* the sportsperson that has attained a certain level of perfection, and consequently top athletes are held in high esteem. They become, in effect, role-models. We empathise with them and with their performance, while the sportsperson empathises with past masters of his or her sport. Moreover, Olivova's (1984) argument that sport is a social body-language, having evolved from primitive festivals means that through sport one "copies" and acts out the codes and hierarchies invested in a particular culture. In this light, Markowitz and Ressimann (2010) are optimistic that sports may in fact be a certain "bridging capital", an inclusive activity that socially brings people together and thus

serves to reflect a culture that is based on high ideals, akin to the artistic modernist polemic of the so-named “brave new world”.

The “modern” sees sport in terms of its formal harmony. This will be argued for in chapter 6 on formalism using Gumbrecht (2006) who maintains that sport can be beautiful. Weiss (1969) too argues for the concept of “formal harmony” in sport and Smith (2006) applies this idea of beauty in sport through his analysis of cricket. As with the use of the formal elements of the visual arts in and of themselves, that is art for art’s sake, so here too one recognizes and acknowledges the individual components that feed into, as it were, a particular sports activity. This also includes the capacity to imagine as one projects oneself into the sporting arena, and in so doing conceptualizes and visualizes a better image (read: representation) of the self. Furthermore, one might also include in this category the scientific and reductive analysis of sports in terms of psychological focus and fitness. These are the components and constituent elements of the game, analysed in order to attain the best results. To do this requires a certain *abstracting*, a parallel to the abstracting of the visual world for artistic purposes necessary for sports science, dissecting sports movement, strategy and for developing a sports management system. These are the abstract formal devices of sport that parallel the formal analysis of art, a kind of intellectual mimesis of games.

2.4.3. The “postmodern” paradigm

The “postmodern” paradigm, analysed thus far as a counter-argument to modernism and the metaphysical postulate of “deep” metaphysics and aesthetic correspondence, can be found to gain theoretical leverage when one concedes that sport does not engender a metaphysical stance through the medium of philosophy and *as art*. Rather it is the “body” itself which is performed, contested and perfected, and through which philosophical and political structures may change, though this is not achieved with the vocabulary⁶¹ of metaphysics especially of the modernist variety. The “body” thus does not necessarily mimetically exemplify an already given metaphysical system⁶².

⁶¹ Gumbrecht’s argument of sport as aesthetic does not smack of modernist assumptions and, in fact, is a “down-to-earth” account of the aesthetics of the everyday without grand metaphysical postulates.

⁶² This may contradict my analysis in chapter 4 where I discuss the “institutionalized body” and chapter 6 where I discuss “the will to form”, that is, the discipline, the system that each sport requires to perform a specific move/form optimally, and of course, the rules of a sport. I do not think you can separate the United States’s or China’s success at recent Olympic Games without the argument that such sporting excellence does not reflect political systems and adherence to the discipline required for a particular sport or sports-move and to the rules themselves. The point I am making here, however, is that there is a degree of *freedom* in bodily sporting

In this sense, sport may be a means through which to experience one's freedom and the emotions associated therein within the safety of a "first order" remove from the immediacy of life, a point that one can also make about art. Kerr's (1997) attribution that sport includes a range of emotional dispositions other than just the aggressive impulse means that sport can refer to and mirror a plethora of human emotions and thus show us, both as participant and/or viewer who we are and what we can be, in the context of heightened physical and mental activity, a freedom one may not experience in a less well-defined segment of life. Secondly, insofar as sport is cultural rather than simply aggressive warfare, it offers us a useful metaphor such as that of the overcoming of barriers, of not simply being in competition with others, but rather the improving of oneself and increasing confidence and self-belief.

The "everyday" meaning of the above allows us to think of sport in a postmodern age as allowing one to enjoy sport without concern for mimetic accuracy or correspondence paradigms, but rather mimetic – and "bodily" – "play" which forms the basis of the following section. The significance of "play" is a necessary insight insofar as an intensely visual, textual and positivistic society is in need of *movement* and *participation* in sport, in order to reclaim the "body", rather than to exist in the fantasy, defined as Baudrillard's (1994) simulacrum. Rather than a world consisting of "watching" and consuming sport after the fact, we are summoned, to act upon, to do and to "play the game". In this sense, perhaps one needs to revert "back" to a kind of premodern consciousness. In this respect, I think the notion of "play" that Huizinga (1949) articulates encompasses both a premodern uncritical, pre-discursive awareness, and a postmodern refutation of the "serious", so that both art and sport share a feature which itself captures a sense of movement, appearance and becoming, rather than a stable "truth". I believe this is what Nietzsche (1997:88) was expressing when he said: "...nihilism, counts as 'truth', but truth does not count as the supreme value, even less as the supreme power. The will to appearance, to illusion, to deception, to becoming and change...counts as more profound, primeval, 'metaphysical' than the will to truth, to reality..." "Play", moreover, while not precluding effort, struggle and practice, also, encompasses the aesthetic. For in deriving beautiful form and in enacting beautiful form, whether or not there is a goal as in a hunt or winning a sports event or completing a work of art, requires an attitude of "playfulness". In this process, the "body" undergoes never-ending

performance (at whatever level) that defies the social, which chapter 5 on emotive expression and chapter 6 on formal-"play" argue for.

change that necessitates inventiveness as well as copying, for that is how we learn to form in the first place. And that what appears can be described as aesthetic “play”, rather than recourse to an abstract and possibly non-existent extra-aesthetic “depth”. In other words, cultural “play” endorses the continuous oscillation between form and content rather than a fixed meaning and a fixed aesthetics/form.

2.5. A common-sense observation: mimetic “play”

Considering art and sport as not reflecting a definite deeper structure, it can be described as a “play” of surfaces or as Nietzsche’s (1956) “will to appearance”. In other terms, it is an enjoyable activity for many and offers a playful release (Hyland 1984) that has its roots in childhood game-playing⁶³, and also, ironically, mirrors a social fabric obsessed with images, economics and power-relations. It is not clear whether art and sport merely mimetically “show” that reality, rather than pier beneath it or subvert it or even change the status quo. The point, however, is that playing is central to art and sport and is a mechanism whereby we in a sense create reality, or rather there is no clear distinction between reality and games. Thus one frees oneself from a certain kind of philosophizing (“metaphysics”) and claims to knowledge, and it is the notion of mimetic “play” that allows for this. Huizinga (1949) and Nietzsche (1956) in various ways highlight this element of “play”. Implicit in these theories is the idea that “play” entails a mimetic quality for the way we “play” constitutes a game and games are predicated on rules *more or less* so that to “play” is to exemplify, to mimetically instantiate some kind of structure, though we need not call this “reality”. This is so as rules are arbitrary and decided by convention. In analysing “play” and games one can expand on the interpretations of mimesis, here conceived not in terms of accurate resemblance or correspondence to “reality”. Art accordingly is not transcultural, that is, it is decided by convention. Its forms and meanings are embedded in history, in time. Sport likewise is but a “play” within a social setting. Insofar as this is the case, mimesis does not refer to a duplication of an origin which is equated with truth, but in accordance with the postmodern presented above, as but a “play” of copies that are defined with reference to other copies. In other words, there is no absolute aesthetic presence that corresponds to an absolute extra-aesthetic content. At best, and as argued in the introduction, there is but an oscillation between the aesthetic and extra-aesthetic, firstly discerned in art and then applied to sport.

⁶³ One could also argue that play is integral to childhood development (c.f. Piaget [1955] and Freud [1933])

The way in which these “oppositions” interact can be understood in terms of “play”, the theme of this section. In terms of the thesis as a whole this implicates a further “play” between art itself and sport.

2.5.1. *Huizinga's homo ludens*

In this section I develop an account of “play” drawn from the classical work on the subject, namely Huizinga’s *Homo Ludens*⁶⁴. In the first instance, I shall explicate his account of “play” as integral to everyday life that does not appear to derive from postmodern thinking (the fourth “order”), being a work produced before the middle of the twentieth century. Huizinga appeals to notions such as “civilization”⁶⁵ and man’s “essential” nature. However, there is also a premodern unification of the dimensions of a society - artistic, sporting, scientific, legal and so on - under the rubric of “play” and I would argue that it is in this horizontal equalizing of all aspects of human endeavour or culture that his work coheres in some way with the postmodern, which is precisely a kind of equalizing of differences⁶⁶ through the very notion of “play”, a term that is not riddled with power, oppression and certainty. In analysing mimesis as “play”, one deconstructs mimesis as a correspondence to an enduring “truth”; rather it is an arbitrary and creative vehicle for meaning-making. Ehrman (1968) and Fink’s (1960) critique of Huizinga’s sharp dichotomy between “play” and reality and of his disenchantment with the culture of commercial sports, allows me to extend the argument that an art historical account of “play” is useful in illuminating or extending sport aesthetics insofar as art’s mimetic power, the power to represent/create, may allow one to see in sport a similar creative role.

Huizinga (1949:7-8) notes that “play” has various meanings. He writes that “play” is more than just rational; it includes language as metaphor, which is a play upon words, sacred rites, mythology, law, science, commerce, art and games. But there is no exact definition, either logically, biologically or aesthetically. Generally, it is an interlude in daily life and the

⁶⁴ Cultural historian Theodore Roszak (1972:94) argues that this work “compares in scope, originality, and profundity with the seminal works of Marx and Freud, a superb effort to create a comprehensive theory of human behavior and social life”.

⁶⁵ Interestingly it was Friedrich Schiller who proposed that ethical education, ennobling ones character could be taught through the fine arts, that arts “play” drive is a mediation and reconciliation between intellectual and sensuous matters and that aesthetics relates to that which is common to all fostering harmony (Schiller 1982).

⁶⁶ This does not contradict the idea that postmodernism also acknowledges difference. My argument concerning mimetic “play” upholds both a universalizing, natural kind of concept *and* that it is arbitrary or conventionally constructed. Another way of saying this is that differences are maintained but not linked in any ascending or descending hierarchy.

contrast between “play” and seriousness is always fluid. There is also an arena in which “play” takes place like the stage, the court of justice, the screen, the field ...

Furthermore, “play” creates order; and it may be connected to beauty⁶⁷, law, war, poetry, while including opposites – the tragic and comic. We refer to music as playing, dancing as essentially “play”, and the plastic arts are less a matter of “play”, though in terms of the search for new forms, the “play” element is crucial. Sports as “play” reveals itself in the form of games and bodily exercises. In all these cases, Huizinga (1949:21) considers true “play” as knowing no propaganda, and being a kind of “happy inspiration”. I would argue that this “happy inspiration” is no less than a kind of reflecting of oneself through certain kinds of games, which are instances of mimesis. In other words, the game acts as a structuring device in which we can reflect on what ordinarily may go unnoticed when we are not ostensibly playing a game. As Henricks (1998:41) in an article on Huizinga writes: “... At such moments, people reconnoitre with eternity – or at least (to put the matter less grandly) concern themselves with matters that are timeless. This is very much the appeal of such activities; they allow us to experience ‘eventfulness’”.

Moreover, if art can apply to an understanding of sport then we should take Huizinga’s cue that the nature of “play” is that it is fun. He describes “fun” as the essence of play, even though the word “fun” is only really found in English and is of recent origin. “Play” is therefore concerned with a spirit of cultural exchange as this “fun” is more than just a biological response to the natural world. We can thus deduce that creating an image and playing a game represents, and is itself a mimesis of, aspects of human “play”, that are, in simple terms, “fun”. I maintain that “play” is fun simply because we are able to “loose ourselves” in the game. “Play” is irrational in that it seems to serve no purpose⁶⁸. The disinterestedness of “play” seems to be outside the immediate satisfaction of wants and

⁶⁷ By “order” one could easily substitute “pattern” or “symmetry”. These terms convey an aesthetic dimension to art and sports, both in participation and viewing. So far as the latter is concerned, modern technologies such as television certainly consist in an ordered, aesthetic dimension. “Order” also reveals an expressive intent in that it satisfies the emotional need for structure and avoiding chaos. By “order”, I also mean that sporting events often mark out time, certain sports events are a kind of island in time, a reference point. This latter sense of “order” perhaps applies more to sport than art, but the popular arts, such as film, also serve to impose order in that, by virtue of their popularity, one could say that specified times are devoted to their consumption.

⁶⁸ This may seem to contradict my earlier assertion that we play towards a goal (winning the race, completing the painting ...). This need not be the case, as the means itself requires one to almost forget the goal. Many sports coaches say that the team just needs to play well and the result will take care of itself. Or that in painting for example one must enjoy the process. In life many quip that one must simply enjoy the journey, that is, it is not simply about the destination (or goal).

needs, appetites; it is an interlude in our daily life. Our games are played out in a certain time and place, often with a “consecrated spot” (Huizinga 1949:56). All are temporary worlds within the ordinary world. Rather than the imperfection of life we have a temporary, limited perfection. Hence we may also say it is beautiful and involves a certain tension, poise, balance, contrast, variation, solution and resolution. It may be enchanting, captivating, rhythmic and harmonious. It may also be an ethical training as “play” tests one’s fairness in adhering to the rules of the game. “Play” therefore promotes the formation of social groupings; it is cultural.

If the reader should retort that cultural “play” is actually a rather serious business, one would do well to recall that such terms of seriousness, such as that of the ideal of “zeal”, “exertion” and “painstaking” are all qualities that may also be associated with “play”. Even in law and the juristic wrangling of a modern lawsuit, the seeming bastion of seriousness, one observes a sportsmanlike “playing” passion for indulging in argument. And in war, surely terribly serious, fighting may yet be bound by rules and therefore it “bears the formal characteristics of ‘play’ by that very limitation” (Huizinga 1949:89). And in music the perception of the beautiful and the sensation of holiness merge and therefore the distinction between “play” and seriousness is weakened in that fusion. In this sense, there is no clear-cut dichotomy between depth and surface; indeed the everyday may be described as a kind of playful seriousness or beautiful struggle.

Huizinga (1949) furthermore argues that the plastic arts, as opposed to music, dancing and some types of sport, are such that “play” is less evident. The plastic arts in Ancient Greece were not under sway of the muses (Apollo), but Hephaestus or Athena Ergane, the Athena of work. Such art is bound to matter and the limitation of form inherent in it. However, as much as plastic artists are inspired by the creative impulse, they have to work like craftsmen, seriously and with intent, always testing and correcting themselves. Though Huizinga (1949) does maintain that there is an element of “play” in enjoyment and the contemplation thereof, even if the art is not free, that is, it is commissioned. The visual arts may be considered less a matter of “play”, unlike the musical arts that live and thrive in an atmosphere of common rejoicing, the plastic arts appeal to silence, an inner language. However, Huizinga (1949) goes on to say that there are traces of the “play”-factor in the plastic arts. Buildings, garments, weapons beautifully ornamented contain a sort of mystic identity, a magic power, in their functional role as part of a ritual context – in this there is

“play”. In this sense, like music, to decorate an ornament and make resplendent is to create a culture of “play”, though we should be weary if it is used to adorn a political regime that is dangerous, for example. One may further observe that this way of seeing art surely lends itself to the art of the sports spectacle that consists of powerful visual symbols – the stadium, the colours, the uniform and so on that define the very structure of the sports event. As such the distinction between art object and sports event may become blurred when both are considered as manifestations of the “play” *of* culture, rather than simply “play” *in* culture. Both art and sport can be conceived as a mimesis – an externalisation – of our human drive for pattern recognition both as symbolic and aesthetic.

In earlier writings on American history, it is evident that Huizinga (in Anchor 2001:70) is critical of commercial sports, which is said to incur the loss of individuality and personality and not really being about “play”. He argues that the decadence of “play” is evident in the commercialization, professionalism and politicization of sport, which perverts recreation and reduces it to crude sensationalism (in Anchor 2001:64). He saw a spiritual crisis of culture, a kind of lack of “play” or rather a mixing up of “play” and seriousness. Ehrmann (1968) and Fink’s (1960) critique of Huizinga avoids this kind of pessimism and they argue in turn that “play” does not take place in isolation from or in opposition to the rest of reality. Rather “play is...coextensive with and reflective of culture as a whole” (Fink 1960:86) so that to “define play is at the same time and in the same movement to define reality and to define culture”. (Ehrmann 1968:125). In fact, the split between “play” and seriousness in Western culture may be traced back to the eighteenth century Enlightenment, whereby “play” is seen as mere adornment of “reality” which if subtracted would leave “reality”, albeit dull and ordinary. I suggest that this rift could be restored if one reclaims art as mimetic “play” in the postmodern sense and apply the symbolic (extra-aesthetic) and aesthetic values that pertain to art to other cultural dimensions, such as sport. Thus aesthetics, alongside studies in sociology, history, politics and so on may, for example, illuminate and even extend our understanding of the mass (post-)modern fascination with sport.

Fink (1960) offers a way to consider “play” philosophically that lends itself to how art (history) in particular may be useful in extending on our understanding of sport. Opposing Huizinga’s play/reality distinction, he argues that “play” absorbs “reality”, “seriousness”, ...through representing them. In a sense, we even play at being serious so that we are able to consciously exist in two different spheres at the same time. I would argue that “play” is often

precisely that capacity that enables the player to withdraw temporarily from the real world, and to assert his or her freedom by recreating it imaginatively, without losing touch with reality. In this sense the relationship between “play” and “reality” is not antithetical but symbolic. In such terms, the “play” world acts as a *mirror* of behaviour in the real world; the player is both object and subject. I would claim that art is the quintessential case of this kind of mimetic “play” and conceived in these terms, sport as “play” is also a (re)creation of a symbolic, no less than an aesthetic “world” that resembles what we call the “real”. In that resemblance or mimetic “play”, sport, like art may allow for a vision (image) of reality itself or of what it could be like.

We now move on to Nietzsche in order to further develop an account of “play” and simultaneously see how art aesthetics and philosophy may lend itself to an understanding of sport where the interaction between aesthetic and non-exhibited properties reflect a positive interplay between art and sport. One possible outcome may be the partial aestheticisation of life itself.

2.5.2. Nietzsche’s “play”

Nietzsche’s argument that considerations in philosophy are as much of the mind as they are of the body allows one to more readily link various cultural expressions and avoid final truth claims. I shall argue that his philosophy lends itself to a deconstruction of truth claims and an ascendancy of the “playful” flux of life, exemplified in art and carried through to other expressions of cultural life. By undermining “reason”, he points the way to a more integrated picture of persons, that is, as inclusive of both discursive and pre-discursive attributes. In this way neither aesthetics nor extra-aesthetic meanings are privileged.

In *The birth of tragedy* (1956), Nietzsche tries to resist the philosophical wedge between culture and nature. Culture, he says, is the perfection of nature, the refinement and not the replacement of instinct (Nietzsche 1956:78). Nietzsche’s Dionysian concept of the arts not only lead us to the life of the “free spirit”, but one that learns to “play” somewhat instinctively with intellectual and rational matters on a more conventional level. He seems to be trying to integrate nature and culture and with Huizinga’s argument of the essential human drive of “play”, one can argue that Nietzsche also recaptures such notions of “play”. The following brief analysis of Nietzsche’s views then serves to demonstrate that the mimetic

function is to be found in “play” and that this “play” is grounded in the body, in *activity*, rather than in a transcendent mirroring of “reality”. In such terms, art alongside the more obvious physical cultural expressions such as sport, are not purely symbolic.

Nietzsche dubs the conscious self, the “little reason”, and what is unconscious to us, “great reason” (Kemal & Gaskett 1998:310). The “great reason” he identifies as a kind of bodily consciousness. As he says (Nietzsche in Crawford 1998:312):

...behind your thoughts and feelings, my brother there stands a mighty ruler, an unknown sage whose name is self. In your body he dwells; he is your body”. The “little reason” says “I”, but the “great reason” of your body does not say “I”, but does “I” and there is more reason in your body than in your best wisdom ...

The true self laughs at your ego and its bold leaps: “what are these leaps and flights of thought to me it says to itself. A detour to my end. I am the leading strings of the ego and the prompter of its concepts” (Nietzsche in Crawford 1998:322). Underlying the self is, according to Nietzsche, the bliss of the will to power which is what a human being is, when speech becomes song and the dancing body, that is when culture does not simply take the form of reason, but of art and – extending the argument – the bodily, cultural form that is sport.

To unpack his Dionysian world-view we can make the following distinctions: Firstly, there is the language of conscious intellect, namely speech and thought including writing. This is the language of the ego or “little reason”! Secondly, there is the language of unconscious psychological feeling, exemplified in movement, concerning the whole body, in gesture and song and the heightened tone and gesture of the lips, which is music, rhythm, dynamism and harmony. This is the true self, the creative body – the “great reason”. Nietzsche believes that the “great reason” underlies the “little reason”. This bodily perspective is given substance when he says: “...a dancer wears his ears in his toes” (Nietzsche 1956:67). In such terms, I would argue that Nietzsche’s philosophy leads to an aestheticisation of culture in general, based on a revised playful conception of art. The very bodily movement and struggle in sports, for example is itself a mimetic mirror of his philosophy of the body, appearance, becoming and the will to power.

That is, his notion of the “will to power” is understood as the rhythm or energy underlying all movement that is exemplified in the image of dance, both art-like and sport-like. The spirit of

the philosopher is thus transformed from the heavy and grave to lightness; the unconscious self over the conscious ego. As he argues, the “little reason” merely is a dancing with words and ideas over such “serious” things as “truth”, “certain knowledge” and other desires of “little reason”.... (Nietzsche 1956:101). While the “great reason” and the true self, is content to simply dance upon the surfaces of things, figuratively speaking. In my estimation, this could be close to the delight found in the moving body expressed in sports. In this sense “play” derived from Nietzsche’s appraisal of aesthetics in general can be extended to include sport. This in turn, one may argue reflects a mimesis of the true self.

Nietzsche’s celebration of bodily awareness as it forms a knowledge closer to – or more in harmony with – the forces of nature, exhibit a marked scepticism regarding true knowledge of the cosmos and a not so wide chasm between nature and culture. This being so I maintain that art, as it extends outward to encompass sport, form the voice of both such reasons, even as they are held in check by cultural norms. This is substantiated by Nietzsche’s Apollonian account of art that is a counterpart to his emphasis on the Dionysian. I would argue that this polarity is another instance of a complementary pairing which is both playful and produces struggle. The element of “play” is the binding concept that unites art and sport or describes the artistic impulse to make images, music, dance *and* the sporting impulse to run, wrestle, and engage in games. They are united by “play” in that pre-discursive bodily activity and the cultural codification of both these disciplines is aesthetically and historically a marked feature of all human societies, present and past (Womack 2003). Nietzsche offers a “reason” for the ubiquitous nature of (bodily) “play”.

One may thus see a valorisation of bodily “play” and the unconscious which asserts itself over the dominant Enlightenment paradigm that sought to reify mind, the conscious, “rational” intellect and seriousness, as a precursor to postmodern themes taken up by other philosophers. As such, Nietzsche is considered a forerunner of postmodernism and of a revised notion of mimesis, one not construed as that of correspondence thinking, but as a “play” of “surfaces” or the process by which mind assumes form, that is, acts through and in conjunction with the body, which itself is considered to have a kind of “reason”. This immediately begs the question as to whether sport may even in some senses usurp philosophy as an expression of philosophy itself! The point being that we can only come to know ourselves in activity and activity itself cannot be divorced from the mechanism/mediation device that allows for such activity. There is always a dimension of perceptual, sensory and

pre-cognitive mediation or aesthesis. Nietzsche then subverts this and claims that the mechanism itself is a kind of “great reason”. In this light, his philosophy opens the door to an understanding of ourselves that requires – or necessitates – the other of the Logos. Construed in these terms, mimesis is a “play” of “play”, like a poem that speaks of another poem.

Both Huizinga and Nietzsche it may be said therefore do not reify the mind as bearer of truth without considerations as to the embodiment of self and in this sense one could envisage a kind of continuum extending, neither ascending or descending, from philosophy to art to sport – all of which are somehow captured by what in my estimation is a vivid, moving concept in the form of “play”. In the process, mimesis is no longer subject to one of correspondence, but rather a “play” of various mediation-devices (for example: we do not see X without the particular limitations and capacities of the eye, which is not to say we see X as such! That is, we see but the phenomenal which includes extra-aesthetic considerations but not a corresponding *Noumenal*...).

2.6. Common-sense confluences between art and sport via the lens of mimesis

I have argued that “play” is integral to art and sport, but that this “play” does not accord with a truth claim, a mimetic resemblance and correspondence to “reality”. I observe two aspects of mimetic “play”, namely its self-referentiality and paradoxically, that art and sport may *suggest* that which is not present or what I shall call the “absent” (the extra-aesthetic). However, the latter is said with circumspect, as that which is not present does not imply the need for a kind of Kantian (1952[1790]) *Noumenal* as a metaphysical substrate that explains the phenomenal. In this respect I use Foucault’s (1976) historicizing of knowledge to argue that this “absence” (or content) is not itself transcendent, but rather another surface (aesthetic). One can argue that these observations explain *how* it is that “play” functions in both art and sport. These two observations will be developed in the foregoing.

2.6.1. Observation 1: Self-referentiality (formal autonomy)

Kant’s postulate of the *Noumenal* cannot be known. This means that one’s sensory experience and even concepts in the mind, while satisfying conditions of knowledge to an extent, cannot grasp the *Noumenal* and hence the mimetic function cannot be considered as a Platonic mirror of “reality” so conceived. So what then is meant by mimesis? Or rather what

is meant by mimesis in art and sport when it is not defined as a transparent mirroring of “reality”?

In answering the above, and considering “play” as central to both, I observe that one could see art and sport as exemplifying concepts via sensory impressions and movements that are self-contained as a game of a game – its aesthetic irreducibility – rather than pretend to “point to” a reality beyond itself and proclaim knowledge about the supersensible.

In such terms, it appears that Kosuth pointed to this idea and “argued” that a work of art is tautological as opposed to past art being typological (“it is art because it looks like other paintings”). The tautological nature of art or conceptual art, specifically, is expressed in his work *Leaning, clear, glass, square* (1965)⁶⁹. There are four panes of glass, each 100 times 100 centimetres with the description - “leaning”, “clear”, “glass”, “square” - embossed on each pane of glass. Kosuth isolates art radically from non-art and art thus describes itself only. Each statement corresponds to a fact and “anything beyond that is falsification of the hermetic model of art as aesthetics. Art is the epistemological criticism of art” (Ruhrberg, Schneckenburger, Fricke & Hennef 2005: 535). In this sense, fine art does not refer, or resemble anything; the medium itself is the medium itself⁷⁰. And yet, this medium is not significant in the sense of creating an object of “beauty”; *that* is not crucial in the presentation of the concepts. In other words, conceptual artists were not bound to create objects, unless one describes them as “objects of thought”, or to use traditional art media. The primacy of “idea” abolishes concern for style, quality and permanence. Conceptual art need not “behave” as a label and may even apply to painting as Ad Reinhardt could be considered a conceptual artist in his rigorous “art-as-art” polemic in which art does not mirror life. It is self-contained and self-referential. Art *shows* concepts, for example in Kosuth’s work – “leaning”, “glass”... There is nothing beyond what is aesthetically perceived.

Sport too *shows* concepts. It instantiates concepts such as “fast”, “precision”, “strength”. To say that they exemplify in movement and through physical means a concept or many concepts, is not as a result of their resembling anything, rather sport is a language unto itself.

⁶⁹ Vares, Panza di Biumo Collection

⁷⁰ I am not implying that meaning is saturated, as the second observation as a kind of antinomy to this one, makes clear.

It is thus also tautological; it is structured in terms of its own language or constituent parts. Like art, sport may be seen as aesthetically irreducible. One may or may not see these concepts as embodying aesthetic ideals or as resembling anything beyond the game.

Nevertheless, sport like art may imply “concepts”, and thus borrow from verbal language or form part of a culture, like an Olympic event, for example. But is sports appreciation and activity thereof as with art not learnt languages, thus arguing against an unmediated understanding as a natural instantiation of concepts? The fact of sporting activity and the fact of art, the sheer universality of some kind of aesthetic and symbolic game structure, imply that although indeed one would need knowledge to play and appreciate sport and art, there is an aspect of sport and art that we intuitively grasp. This is because sport and art need not include knowledge of extra-sensible and aesthetic concepts, metaphysics and even social rules. We might not know what we see. We see what we see. This perhaps explains why as children we are naturally inclined to a particular sport and/or art form without prior knowledge. Therefore aesthetic self-referentiality curiously is itself a kind of extra-aesthetic, non-sensory content. For example, the beauty of running fast in order to express the beauty of running fast also expresses the *idea* of the beauty of speed.

2.6.2. *Observation 2: “Absence” (or content or the extra-aesthetic)*

If one wants to understand why one paints and/or wrestles or engage in similar activities, an appeal to the natural and purely logical does not explain why one engages in such activities. There is a sense that if one knows what one is painting and/or why one wrestles, for example, one may not have the need to paint and/or wrestle. I believe that this may be the case, because such activities reflect the fundamentally unknowable akin to Kant’s (1952 [1790]) analysis that the artist does not know where his or her ideas come from. What is expressed is both a controlled⁷¹ action that 1) conceals as it is a copy, as much as it 2) reveals, from one order and level of reality, for example thought into and through another, for example action.

⁷¹ Another way of saying this is that we cannot speak of an original. IJsseling (1990:29-30) aptly expresses it thus: “...now, the fact is that what is called an original act or event only *becomes* original in and through the doubling, or repetition of this reality, act or event – that is to say, in and through mimesis, which makes the origin into an origin and at the same time implies a withdrawal of the origin”. I would like to suggest that the notion of “absence” (or content) captures the idea of the “withdrawal” implicit in acts of expression or (re)presentation. To paint in a particular way or produce specific movements in a particular sport is not only an expression of those movements, but at the same time the absence of all other movements that are not those explicitly present. Thus expression is also control (in order for there to be potential meaning).

Auyoung (2010) is, however, hopeful that we can reveal that which is “absent” predicated on that which is aesthetically “present” or revealed. She says: “... something more lies beyond a suggestive but ultimately limited body of representation, and finding oneself arrested at this epistemic impasse” (Auyoung 2010:560). Like a sketch and a partial sports movement one “fills in” the complete image, that there is something more, via the limited mark or word or movement. However, she concludes rather pessimistically: “... she cannot move beyond the fixed, finite representation of the page (painting, sports-movement), despite all that it may seem to promise” (Auyoung 2010: 562, brackets my inclusion) and hence she argues for the limitations of recognizable form. Therefore, the “absence” (content) itself is itself only partially known.

One cannot even elide this “lack of foundation” with the notion that the artwork and sports-movement *suggests* a “truth”. The general sense is that art and sport are languages whereby material “things” are used to express an “idea” and emotional quality. And yet, since an infinite array of materials may be used and a further set of infinite combinations laid down, there is no transparent rendering of thought and feeling in that form it so assumes. Meaning proliferates; the content remains nebulous and inchoate and the “origin” is nowhere to be found. In other words: a “presence” (aesthetics) may represent what is “absent” (extra-aesthetic), but as Nietzsche understood this is itself part of a process, as the postmodern shift implies. That is, a particular interpretation is itself a sign of the times.

One need not consider it an impossibility that one language cannot express another, that is, mimetically reveal and bring into sharp focus what one wishes to communicate. It would appear that the moment you make art – and thus no longer question art, it stops being philosophy. The moment you “make” philosophy, that is, write in rational terms, it stops being mysticism. The moment you make music, that is, articulate sound, silence is no longer. Or perhaps precisely the opposite: art brings philosophy into focus; philosophy articulates the mystical urge; music accentuates the existence of silence. They are what can be called “embedded concepts”, one order of perception acting in relation to another. In this sense, sport could be seen to “hold” philosophical, social and aesthetic/extra-aesthetic concepts similar to those usually associated with art. Therefore, the “presented” can “hold” and *suggest* what is not apparent, but since we do not trace these “(re)presentations” to an origin there is no truth claim. There can, however still be meaning in the formal, bodily “play” of “presences”, a mimesis of infinite “surfaces” (signs).

Regarding these “surfaces”, I believe that Foucault (1976) was theorizing a way to argue for the necessity of the interplay between “presence” (aesthetics) and “absence” (extra-aesthetic). Or in other terms, to theorize a view of “truth” that does not assume a transcendental monism, an accurate mimetic “presence”. In Foucault’s analysis, the production of “truth” becomes inseparable from the production of power. Therefore, rather than the modernist project wherein power lies “within” the unique, cloistered aesthetic object that is the artwork, the artwork becomes a text to be unravelled by the viewer in terms of social history. Art may not have this modernist, transcendental value and in the focus on reception more than creation, cultural forms embody a temporal relevance. Reez and Borzello (1986:70, brackets my inclusion) put it this way: “... rather than a space in which such an understanding, achieved elsewhere by another process, is reflected (mimetic “play”) ... it permits cultural historians to argue that cultural artefacts make the world, as well as being made by it; it gives the cultural form under scrutiny historical, as opposed to eternal, significance.” That is, the cultural as potentially on-going mimetic “play”. In such terms, the extra-aesthetic modes of understanding are themselves structures subject to change and revision, rather than tools that unravel transcendent textual meanings.

Nevertheless, it appears that we still hold that art reflects an aesthetic that *says* more than sport, or says less and more stridently refers to an “absent” (extra-aesthetic) content. However, the analysis above provides philosophical justification that one need not “construct” this hierarchy. Instead, one might simply say that in *parallel* fashion fine art and sport encode. That there is a code in both necessitates the postulate that they are, in distinct ways, aesthetic devices or signs that mimetically refer to that which the code is not, in the same way, by analogy, a person’s name both “picks out” that person and in a sense is not that person. The “art code” then could be described as more difficult to comprehend – or partially comprehend and (re)interpret - than that of the “sport code”, because its language is more open to “play”, specifically as a metaphorical device for the creation of new meaning by recontextualising signs. This argument is made on the basis that sport is more rigorously defined by its rules. In this sense, art may be better placed than sport to critically comment and assess extra-aesthetic considerations, whether religious, political, philosophical, historical... The point, however is that this hierarchy, that is, that art is higher than sport, is itself arbitrarily socially constructed and further, that sport is art-like anyway. In this sense, we might “decode” sport with the same assumption of depth as pertains to art. My project is

to argue that that is conceivable by extending our understanding of sport from an arts' perspective, more specifically as embodying aesthetic and extra-aesthetic dimensions simultaneously.

We are now in a position to ask whether, considering the observations that art and sport are playful aesthetic activities in themselves and with reference to their extra-aesthetic content that the traditional concept of artistic mimesis can be applied to a direct reading of sport as artistically mimetic. Keenen (1975), Peterson and Raney (2008) and Berlin (2012), broadly hold the view that sport is dramatic in a similar way art is considered so. If that is the case, then both art and sport further refer to struggle/play itself both individually and socially, mirroring the often tragic nature of life itself. Or in other terms: by likening sport to drama and theatre, sport is somewhat elevated tending to the condition of art. Somewhat less grandly, we may say that at the same time, this drama refers to everyday life and the struggle (“play”) therein.

2.7. The athletic contest as a “tragic” form of art

My argument in this section is as follows: sport is concerned in many respects with its dramatic appeal. In this sense sport can be understood to fulfil a similar function as art, namely as a mimesis (or metaphor) of life's dramatic, and often tragic narrative. These confluences are made possible, because of my observations that both art and sport are self-referential (tending towards the aesthetic) and concerned with life-issues, an “absent” (or a tending towards the extra-aesthetic). I justify this argument by briefly outlining Keenen's (1975) analysis of sport wherein he applies mimetic concepts of playing, of a kind of art at a remove from life and yet mimicking life's vicissitudes. At the same time this mimickery expands our understanding of sport in terms of artistic-aesthetic concepts. The reader will notice that this is a rather early account, which gives further impetus to the field in terms of its historical relevance. Supporting the reading that art and sport share a common dramatic appeal are Peterson's and Raney's (2008) account of sport's suspense-factor using the lens of fictional drama. Further support is provided by Berlin (2012) who argues that boxing (for example) is the quintessential drama, a robust aliveness that resembles theatrical “play” and paradoxically, may lesson real violence in life as a cultural, mimetic aesthetic expression or at least simply reflects the struggle of life itself. Insofar as one can demonstrate that indeed

sport is dramatic in ways similar to art sets in motion – at least in theory – a positive interplay between art and sport.

To begin with Keenen (1975), he asks when is an athletic contest tragic in the aesthetic sense. To answer this he applies Aristotle's definition of tragedy to the athletic contest as follows where plot, character, thought and diction, melody and spectacle combine and may be interpreted to apply to the sporting context (Keenen 1975:48-62). In summary fashion, the plot is usually carried by a tragic hero whose will to overcome is comparable to the athlete's will to win. The plot's intensity is enhanced by its unpredictability, certainly an important ingredient in the sporting context. Furthermore, excitement is produced in tragic theatre when the plot takes an unexpected turn especially when this occurs towards the end of the drama/game. This reversal of fortune or "fight back" is certainly evident in sports contest and heightens its dramatic appeal. I shall present Keenen's ideas further in summary fashion in order to support the argument that sport is dramatic in ways similar to the arts.

Keenen's (1975:50) describes character as: "good athletes that give us good action in the plot". Such athletes reflect the seriousness and purposiveness of the plot. The quality of their performance determines the emotive intensity of the game. This in turn gives sport its dramatic appeal; its capacity to act as an intermediary between one's ordinary life in relation to the inner world of feelings and thoughts. The character of the plot assumes an aesthetic-mimetic instantiation of "a life lived". At the same time, this aesthetic acknowledgement is complicated by the massive integration of sport and life, so that to perceive sport as drama, as second-order, as tragic and so on, may be clouded by its pervasiveness and the fact that it goes on largely without reflection. Yet one can perceive sport as dramatic in that thought and diction, usually terms that apply to theatre, is a language or medium of the athlete through bodily movement. Excellence is achieved or meaning perceived when the movement is skilful in the context of the sport played. The diction, "how the movement is performed", is the articulation of the will within a specified language or form in a way similar to that of an actor expressing themselves. Considering another aspect of theatre, namely melody and spectacle, there is no doubt the athletic contest has a kind of circus atmosphere. Music, entertainment, the build-up (whether at the stadium or as a broadcast), colour, pageantry, costumes and displays add to the hype of the game. These things though are not essential to the tragic contest. They are likened to the technical aspects such as stage backdrop, though

the drama could occur without either music or spectacle. It is thus no surprise that in ancient Greece the theatre and the stadium were often juxtaposed.

The similarities enumerated above suggest that the aesthetic components of sports-games are self-enclosed (aesthetic) in the way theatre is and yet, their meaning is derived precisely because they are not bounded, but tell us something about the life we may lead, a latent content (“absent”, extra-aesthetic), an “other” that renders art pertinent to life and sport as more than just a game. This “other” is either life as it is or theoretical thinking, and sport, like art offers a way to live and reflect on our living, because they are kinds of mimetic “play”. They also offer us a language in which to enhance life through a reflection of “what life can be like” when sport, like art, are assessed in terms of their qualitative merits.

Moreover, such qualitative merits are further understood when one considers sport as artistic, as a kind of theatre. Arguing this using the example of boxing, Berlin (2012:23) makes the case that boxing is “primary, raw theatre”. This position is maintained by arguing that boxing is an unscripted theatre where body movement is a language of the here and now. Like all theatre it involves an audience who get caught up in the action, a kind of “canvas dance”. While one may critique this view as romanticising violence, where drama by contrast even when enacting violence is obviously not real, one would do well to bear in mind that “boxing holds nature up to a mirror, and what we see is a man struggling with an opponent but finally struggling with himself, testing the limits of his body and mind...the characteristics of such drama – action, conflict, character, spectacle, catharsis” (Berlin 2012: 26). This controlled violence, this struggle/”play” is not simply brute while art is fine and subtle. There is an aesthetic dimension to both as well as a relevance to life proper, indeed a reflection of life proper. But in the end, when time is up and the final bell dongs or one is felled, the fighters embrace. It is not simply open war and hatred, but cultural, noble struggle like the artist that wishes to express his/her own disparagement for, for example violence through a dramatic text that perhaps depicts violence or through art’s often aggressive statement-making. In this sense, opposites such as “hard” and “soft” are resolved through the intensity and suspense of the “fight” (drama) as it unfolds and also in the channelling of antagonism within the confines of culture.

This dramatic suspense – channelled antagonisms – is according to Peterson and Raney (2008:544), “a driving force behind media entertainment consumption”, by which is meant

that emotion-filled experience is associated with uncertainty about a future event. In that unfolding the antagonism/struggle will or will not be resolved (in culture, in life...). This is heightened as the audience often takes sides in the same way the audience may choose a particular liking to a character in fictional drama in the context of a plot. This is evident in the game being played and the difficulties and possible impending disaster experienced by such “characters” (players, teams...). Moreover, based on previous research of Carroll (1984) and Zillman (1994) as well as their own quantitative analysis of how suspense creates enjoyment in sports akin to theatrical enjoyment, Peterson and Raney (2008) assert that sport enjoyment is directly proportional to the unexpected turns in the game that is similar to a well-worked plot. Whereas the latter is already planned, sport is not, but this does not discount the same kind of emotional investment on the part of the players and audience.

Keenen (1975), Berlin (2012) and Peterson and Raney’s (2008) research all point to the common themes underlying sports contest and fictional theatre. This allows me to make the argument that both art and sport share an aesthetic dimension and are a mimesis of life-issues, perhaps merely reflecting them, perhaps even struggling against certain conceptions and beliefs concerning the meaning of life. With the unpredictable nature of sports-games and the complexity of theatrical plots, such meanings are indeterminate – a mimesis of life itself as uncertain. Siding with Keenen’s (1975) conclusion amplifies the merit of this interpretation: “Dramatic tragedy is proffered as a method of understanding beauty in the process of athletics and for *extending our human sympathies* to ‘tragic’ athletes” (1975: 51, my emphasis). It is precisely such an “extension” that mimetic “play” potentially carries with it a concern for others, an empathic reaching out. This is perhaps most clearly the case when sport is understood from an artistic-mimetic perspective. In such terms, aesthetic considerations may even have moral import, that is, form may engender an extra-aesthetic ethical prescription (though this itself is not immune to critique as already demonstrated in this chapter regarding the critique of correspondence thinking and in the previous chapter in terms of the lack of an ideal, both formally and conceptually).

2.8. Conclusion

One cannot logically argue for the autonomy of a language like art and sport, conceived as aesthetically self-referential *and* in its capacity to partially *suggest* that which is beyond (life issues, extra-aesthetic content). Instead we should seek understanding through appealing to

their capacity to delight, to bring joy, to entertain and invite “play”. This becomes possible through the positive and creative interplay between aesthetic and extra-aesthetic dimensions in both art and sport.

This conclusion can be made, having argued that Plato’s conception of mimetic art as inauthentic, because it is not true, only holds if we maintain that there is a “truth” with which art is said to mimetically correspond. Through a historical, hermeneutic approach it was shown that the shift to a postmodern perspective deconstructs the notion of “truth” and mimesis in terms of Plato’s mirror analogy. Having dispensed with the notion of “truth”, it was nevertheless, in a constructive spirit, maintained that “play” functions to explain that art has meaning, refuting Plato’s assertion that without “truth” in it, art has no value. This “play” was also described as mimetic, having discerned a fourth “order” and postmodern meaning for the term. In part this meaning can be seen to derive from the fact that art is more obviously about “play” and offers a vision of “aesthetic abundance”, so that we might accord an aesthetic “playful” meaning to sport. This in turn sets in motion a creative “play” (and struggle) between aesthetic and extra-aesthetic factors. The result is an interplay between art and sport.

Furthermore, this *meaning* or interplay was explained in terms of two observations. The “absence” (extra-aesthetic content) (observation 2) was described as a new “presence” so that, in terms of postmodern mimetic “play”, one is able to creatively “play” (productive struggle) with endless “copies” (or surfaces or signs). Foucault’s (1976) historicizing of knowledge emphasizes the fact that one cannot grasp “reality” so that one may infer that the mimetic is necessarily deceptive as applied to the activities of art and sport. At best, as mimetic “play” they form part of a cultural game⁷² of make-believe (c.f. Walton 1990). In terms of the first observation, that cultural game may not extend beyond the game (the artwork, the sports-“play” and so on); it is simply aesthetic. However, both observations obtain at the same time as form and content interact. This then emphasises how mimesis functions via “play” in order to negotiate the complementary pairing between that of aesthetics and extra-aesthetic factors.

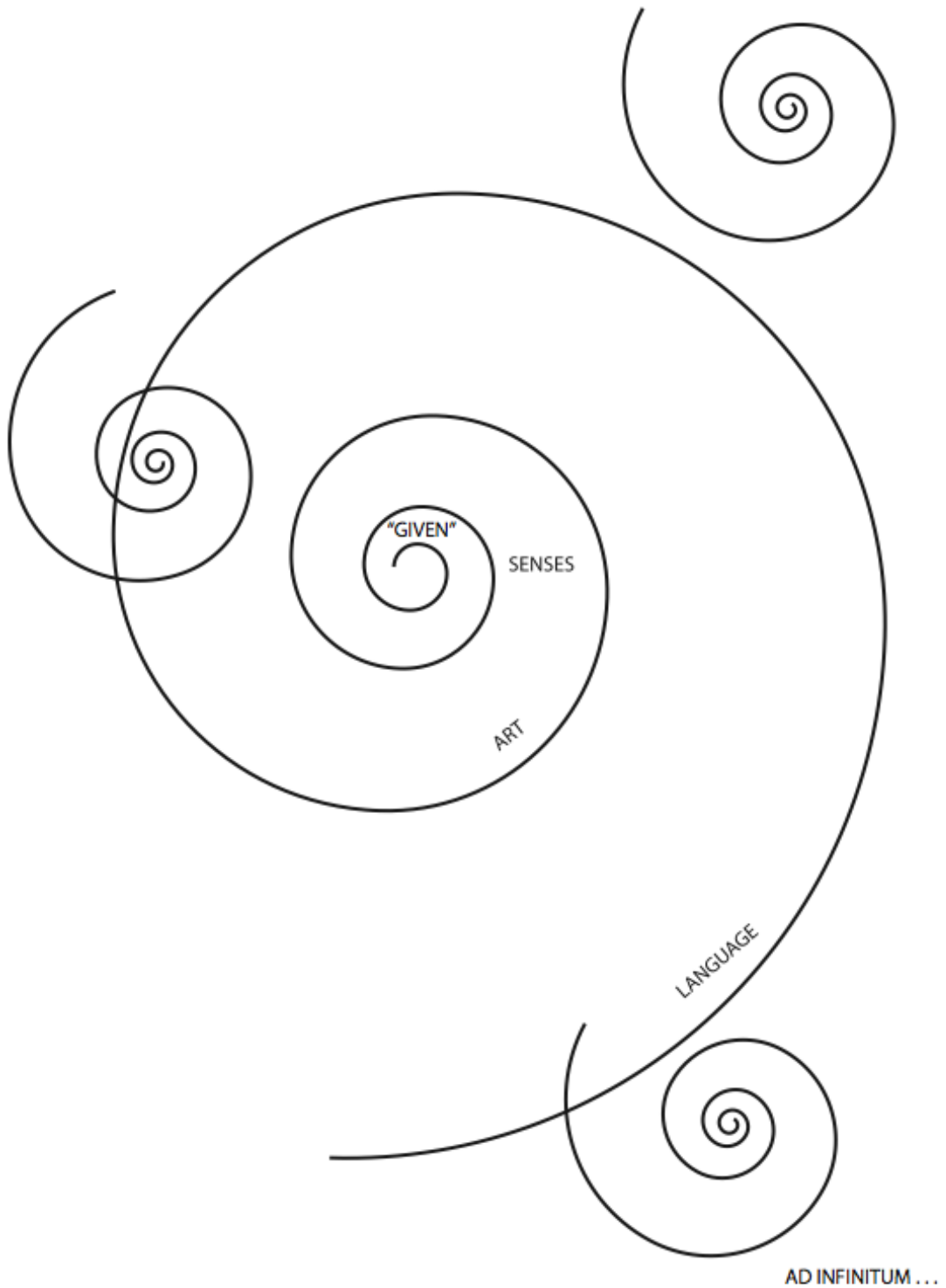
⁷² I have not been using the word “game” flippantly or to trivialize the matter. Game-theory is an important study in itself, and here explicates the idea that “play” is structured within the context of some or other game more or less. Significantly, a game can be repeated and has rules so that there is mimetic reproducibility, neither of which precludes the “play” factor. The point is that games are part of life (knowledge is historicized) and not a transcendent Platonic mirror that can reveal “truth”, “reality” and so on.

I ended with findings that sport may be considered as a mimesis of tragic art, a most welcome analysis as it illustrates that perhaps there is some sense in considering sport in the light of art, and sport as a kind of mimesis (or metaphor) of art itself which in turn reflect the protean nature of life itself. Insofar as sport, in ways similar to art somehow reflect life as second-order activities, we might further conclude or explain this as the product of the interaction between form and content and the lack of a resolution in their hopefully positive and creative oscillation. Consequently, in terms of mimetic “play”, art and sport also offer ever-nuanced meanings.

Having argued for the “play” element as crucial to an understanding of mimesis in art and sport based on the deconstruction of “truth” and correspondence thinking, the subsequent ascendancy of “bodily” knowledge and aesthetic pleasure, I shall analyse in the following chapter that it is precisely the postmodern “language turn” that justifies this deconstruction (and simultaneous postmodern reconstruction). In the process, a relationship between art and sport will be assessed in the light of contemporary aesthetic/extra-aesthetic considerations.

Figure 3: The Spiral

The complex and intertwined relationship and struggle between different 'levels' of reality or mediation structures:



Chapter 3: The postmodern “language turn” in relation to art and sport

3.1. Introduction

In this chapter, the philosophical justification for a critique of a transparent revealing of “reality” – art and sport mirroring “reality” as in the mimetic sense – is addressed via the problem of language. I argue that notwithstanding the “language turn”, a space for art and sport is possible in the context of postmodernism, but not necessarily so. Furthermore, the space that is art and sport has the potential to create never-ending meaning. In other terms: one can say that through the “play” of surfaces, of aesthetics, the contours of “the body” transforms and is (re)interpreted in ever-nuanced complexity. This complexity is a result of the idea that aesthetics inheres in many facets of human culture and also refers to ideological, extra-aesthetic content.

My method of arguing for this possible creative “space” is firstly (section 3.2) to define the “language turn” derived primarily from key theorists on the subject, such as Saussure (1986), Wittgenstein (1958) and Derrida (1973, 1976, 1982, 1984) in particular⁷³. I shall then determine what this paradigm shift constitutes for art theory and practice (section 3.3). Potgieter (2006, 2007, 2008) and Danto (1995) shall be assessed in order to analyse the consequences of the “language turn” for art theory and practice within the postmodern condition. Provisionally it can be stated that postmodern art and culture involves a dual co-existence of a seeming “anything goes” meaninglessness and detotalizing creative freedom, inclusivity and “play” derived from art’s ineffability.

Thereafter (section 3.4), I explicate how the “language turn” within postmodernism has impacted on sport, both in theory and in practice in parallel fashion to art, within the context of considerations such as technology, identity and image-construction, that is, the postmodern sport *text*. As with the analysis of art, a similar duality of meaninglessness and a kind of democratic detotalizing takes place. Interpreting this duality may lead to the potential for the never-ending creation of new meaning. I shall use postmodern sports such as NASCAR and extreme sports to argue for the implications of the language turn for sport.

⁷³ Heidegger (1971) is a precursor to Derrida and the notion of the “language turn” as he argues for the idea that one is “caught” within language and one cannot step outside it, as it were.

While it may be argued that sport is aesthetic and even that sport is art, I rather argue that sport metaphorically can be considered to be like art and that their languages are somewhat “intertwined”. The argument from “intertwining” tends towards an empathic appreciation of the other that may motivate an ethical world-bettering.

3.2. The “language turn”

Saussure (1986) defines the sign as being the combination of the signified and the signifier. The former is the concept designated, while the latter is the word or sound-image. The totality of signs constitutes the system of language or so-named *langue*. Language can thus be described as the structural, differential operation between signs. Therefore, the meaning of a sign is dependent on other signs within the signifying system. This means that “in language there are only differences without positive terms” (Saussure 1974:120). Whereas correspondence paradigms of language assumes that the word is a substitute for the object, reality “out there”, this structural conception of language means that one is operating within the context of language rather than reflecting on a stable world “out there”. “Reality” is mediated by language or *langue*, which refers to a “stable, intersubjective language structure. In other words, a pre-existing language structure that is readily available to all users” (Potgieter 2007:49).

Now, according to Saussure (1986:34), this pre-existent language structure is such that the controlling mechanism of the *langue* gives stability and order. This is because the *langue* is like a meta-language, a centre-point, so that individual speech-acts (his so-named *parole*) are regulated within this system. This structural conception of language does away with the distinction and correspondence between linguistic sign and “reality”. Wittgenstein (1958) appears to have foreseen this lack of correspondence in arguing that the meaning of a word is determined by its use and context rather than as in his earlier philosophies as picturing possible facts about the world (Wittgenstein 1958), that is, as a transparent medium. In this respect, Saussure, like Wittgenstein, defines the meaning of a word in terms of the system to which the sign belongs. Both Saussure and Wittgenstein highlight the *relationship* between words within the language system, and it is Derrida that takes this insight a step further.

Derrida (1982) agrees that language is an enclosed system, but argues that the relationship between signs is arbitrary, labile and the effect of ongoing “play”. Derrida (1982:26) states:

Whether in written or in spoken discourse, no element can function as a sign without relating to another element which in itself is not simply present. This linkage means that each element – phenome or graphone – is constituted with reference to the trace in it of the other elements of the sequence or system...Nothing, either in the elements or in the system, is anywhere simply present or absent. There is only, everywhere, differences and traces of traces.

In this quote Derrida explicates his notion of differance, that is the continual “play” of an endless chain of signifiers that refer to each other, in which case the signified falls away. Furthermore, the relationship between these signifiers is not stable. Cilliers (1989:3) states that meaning is potentially excessive and potentially proliferates. The results of this language “play” are the following:

1) Meaning is “decentered”: If the word is part of an infinite web, there is no central axes and “origin” to the word. Another way to say this is that the word is not ultimately present or absent. There is, in short no fixed reference point or logos from which meaning is said to “emanate”. Moreover, since one cannot speak of a “centre”, of a finite closure, meaning is perpetually deferred, perhaps even non-existent. More to the point, this infinite “web” is itself finite. Derrida (1973:102) claims: “...language can...no longer be conceived with the oppositions of finiteness and infinity, absence and presence, negation and affirmation”. My understanding is that Derrida is arguing that language cannot refer to “reality” in as much as one cannot attain absolute knowledge, as language, in trying to mediate this supposive “reality” self-deconstructs, as is evident in the following quote by Derrida (1982:11) where he defines difference as the “non-full, non-simple, structured and differentiating origins of difference. Thus the name ‘origin’ no longer suits it”. In other words, the decentring of the word precludes an ordering lens through which to conceive and perceive an assumed “reality” to which language is said to correspond. There is a certain chaos and complexity in language.

2) “Ideas” do not exist, but texts do: By doing away with “presence”, the “centred” meaning of a word, one could say that only the play of surface signifiers exists so that the “soul within”, the ontological being of the word that houses, so to speak an “idea”, is vacuous. Therefore, we are “presented” merely with “surfaces” or the text, the embodiment not of “idea” but as a “surface” open to interpretation, such that meaning is not in discovering the “idea” in the text, but is a form of creation and of making/interpreting, rather than finding.

3) Deconstruction: The acknowledgement of “deferral” of meaning blights the philosophical enterprise that consists in constructing grand claims to an ontological truth and epistemological certainty about the nature of “reality”. For such a system assumes that words refer to definite “things”, and that language is a transparent medium on which theories can be built. The postmodern “language turn” is therefore instrumental in the deconstruction of such philosophical exegesis. Norris (1982:31) defines deconstruction as: “ ... not simply a strategic reversal of categories which otherwise remain distinct and unaffected. It seeks to undo both a given order of priorities and the very system of conceptual opposition that makes that order possible”. In other words, the lack of a “centre” and logos renders language and by implication, knowledge as non-hierarchical so that as Margolis (1997:7–8) puts it: “that the norms of argumentative validity, evidence, confirmation and disconfirmation, truth and knowledge, legitimization, rationality, and the rest cannot be captured abstractly (‘syntactically’, ‘logically’ and ‘formally’ as said in the modernist idiom) but only in the regularized use of interpreted discourse, which is itself historically formed and transformed”. In this sense, in its most radicalized form, deconstruction is a critique of the logos and of a transcendent, discursive enterprise.

The poststructural “language turn” and its consequences can also be termed the postmodern shift or paradigm. Essentially, Derrida’s post-structural conception of language questions the distinctions one makes between literal and figurative language, and between sign and non-sign. The consequence of this is expressed by Neal (1988:209):

In *White Mythology*, Derrida demonstrates the futility of trying to expunge the trace and reveal the origin behind it. In principle, of course, concepts ought to be separable from metaphors that express them. In fact, however, not only is such an attempt difficult, the terms and procedures to separate the two are themselves metaphorical. There is no way for metaphysical discourse for that matter, to free itself from rhetoric. *White Mythology* reveals even ‘concept’, ‘foundation’, and ‘theory’ as metaphors.

It would appear then that language itself controls the language user, that one is inscribed in a field of language, and that it is not simply a tool used to interrogate “reality” in its pristine actuality. One would then think that Derrida maintains that one cannot escape the net of language or text. But this is not necessarily so. Derrida (1984:123–4) writes:

I never cease to be surprised by critics who see my work as a declaration that there is nothing beyond language, that we are imprisoned in language; it is, in fact, saying the exact opposite. The critique of logocentrism is above all else the search for the ‘other’ and the ‘other of

language'...to distance oneself...from the habitual structure of reference, to challenge or complicate our common assumptions about it, does not amount to saying there is nothing beyond language.

My contention is that Derrida is thus saying that language both *is* our “thoughts” and “experiences” and yet, to be consistent, he now argues that there is “something”, an “other”, not constrained by language and its mode of operation. From this, one can make the argument that art practice is specifically engaged in this “other” of language in an ongoing dialectic or at least an oscillation between itself and language, or as it itself – art practice, that is – becomes codified as art theory, it generates a further “other” and so on. This instability of discursively pinning down the meaning of an art object can thus be considered its creative ineffability. At the same time, this lack of solid discursive understanding renders theory and practice of art without clear parameters and therefore objective aesthetic values, which may lead to a sense of the meaninglessness of art. These two points (ineffability and meaninglessness) will be addressed in the following section and should be seen as a direct implication of the “language turn”. This is so in respect of the labile language system in which meaning is uncertain, or meaninglessness as signifiers that could mean anything or nothing. However, in the positing of the ineffable in terms of the “playing” with signifiers without definite concepts, derived from the “fact” that language is itself a limited tool and that there is recourse to an “other” of language, art has a significant place in human culture.

3.3. Postmodern art

The “language turn” and Derrida’s postulate of the “other” of language, means that the postmodern paradigm undermines notions of the “grand narrative” or a meta-narrative. In this light Connor (1992:120) writes: “Postmodernism rejects foundationalism, essentialism and transcendentalism...truth as correspondence and representational knowledge...they reject realism, final vocabulary and canonical descriptions”. Thus, this detotalising means that what is significant about art and indeed the very reason art serves a useful function that need not be reinterpreted and translated “back” and “into” language, is precisely because of a quality that cannot be articulated, namely its ineffability. In this respect one can also speak art as eliciting metaphorical language (1). In addition, there is a certain freedom and “play” (2) that this “spatial other” allows, in a sense, that signs and symbols now function within a framework that is not centred in a definitive language or a system of “given signification” or as a

description of an already theorized “reality”. Finally, the “play” (struggle) of language and its “other” means that postmodern art and culture seek to restore imbalances, rather than the valorisation of one term to the exclusion of another, and so seek the “voice” of the silenced “other” and an agenda of inclusivity (3). These three notions will be developed below as aspects of the “other” or in verbal terms, the ineffable.

3.3.1. The ineffable

I will further deal with this concept in chapter 5 on expressionism where I describe that art (and sport) is trans-rational and non-verbal. In chapter 6, I will further argue that visual language is a specific kind of language that cannot be reduced to verbal language. In chapter 1, I argue that the ideal itself may be ineffable and therefore impossible to theorize and implement and in chapter 2 on mimesis, I argue that the modernist allusion to an aesthetic “depth” can be understood as a product of art’s ineffability. All such descriptions can now be further explained by the “language turn” in that it appears that there is a “space” for art so described, precisely because, and not in spite of the seeming encroachment of language.

Language itself gives rise to the non-lingual and the “other” of effability. Art’s ineffability can be understood by the concepts of metaphor, freedom and “play”, and inclusiveness, insofar as metaphor is a subtler way of not saying what something is; freedom and “play” is a creative way of not settling for hard and fast finality, and inclusiveness implies a common bond, but without the humanist, discursiveness to sanction it – rather it is an ineffable quality that brings differences together. I shall develop each of these implications of the “language turn” for art and culture in what follows.

3.3.1.1. Metaphor

Metaphor (is) the likening of one thing to another in varying degrees of expansive connection between that one thing and that of the other. Metaphor is distinguished from literal language and thus a literal correlation between a thing and its description, that is, the thesis of correspondence thinking. Potgieter (2007:58) writes that “... whilst it is true that the metaphoric instability of language deconstructs the correspondence paradigm, it also inaugurates an understanding of art as a place for the creation of new meanings”, which he associates with the “metaphoric paradigm of art”. He draws from Heidegger’s (1971:62) idea

that metaphors, in a sense, assist in establishing new, concrete worlds. That is, metaphors assist in imaginatively projecting, and thus creating new possibilities. If we concede that the “language turn” implies we do not have access to a “true reality”, only endless surfaces, then art is not so much a copy of the real or original, but a new aesthetic, one that embodies the fractured state of signifiers that abound and that could become part of a process of open-ended discourse on the work of art, both inscribed and yet not inscribed by a specific language system. That is, signifiers may have a definite meaning (content) in the context of a specific language as a kind of Wittgenstein-like “form of life”, but the possibility of a signifier coming to mean something else in relation to a different set of rules and language also exists. In this respect, the signifier becomes disembodied from its literal (precise) meaning and functions in another way. So that when Potgieter (2007:59-60) says that “metaphor is understood as a relation between literal and figurative meaning, transparent and vague meaning, essential and decorative meaning, concrete and abstract meaning, original and imaginative meaning...”, this may point to the instability of circumscribing the signifier within a definite language game. I refer the reader to chapter 4 on the institutional theory (specifically pages 187-188) where I dealt with the “rule-following paradox” in which words and also now images can function in many ways depending on context and use, that is, the language game.

Another way to perceive the metaphorical play of images and/or words is to recognize the difference that analytical philosophers draw between different senses of the word “is” or as in mimetic resemblance. On the one hand, “is” means identity as in X “is” Y, that X and Y are necessarily the same entity. On the other hand, “is” specifies that X and Y are not identical but contained within the same set, so that they share in Wittgenstein’s terms, a “family resemblance”. Metaphor belongs to that second category in as much as one is not equating two seemingly disparate concepts, but rather suggesting a confluence, a similarity, while they still remain distinct entities. For example, to draw a likeness between a painted tree and the notion of, for example, a life generating principle is not to say that the latter concept “is” the tree in terms of identity, but merely pointing to a shared aspect of both such concepts. This renders the metaphoric play of art akin to a type of “fuzzy logic”⁷⁴ and “paraconsistent

⁷⁴ This term refers to a form of multivalued or probabilistic logic. It deals with reasoning that is approximate rather than fixed and exact. In contrast to traditional logic theory, where binary sets have two-valued logic, true or false, fuzzy logic variables may have a truth-value that ranges in degrees between 0 and 1. This also reflects the oscillation between complementary pairs.

logic”⁷⁵ and Godel’s “undecidability”⁷⁶ that coheres with my task of demonstrating parallels and confluences between art and sport and thus constructing an interplay - or a blurring of boundaries - between the two. If metaphor does function in this way, we may say that art is an activity that can forge new meanings and connections. Thus, although one may not be able to say what the precise meaning of an artwork is, and an artwork is not just a discursive idea, it is emotive, imaginative, instinctive, aesthetic...one can offer another metaphor to engage with the art form. This kind of ineffability prompted Potgieter (2007:56) to remark: “All meaning is a metaphoric interpretation of a metaphoric interpretation”. In other words, though postmodernism has discredited the correspondence thesis as applied to the image and/or the word, this does not necessarily foreclose on meaning, and here I suggest this meaning is in that art may evoke a kind of metaphorical “play”. Kearney (1988:358) states that postmodernism may “be the twilight of great art or the clearance of a space where alternative modes of communication may evolve”. In this sense, Lyotard’s paralogy (1984) comes to mind as metaphor may induce a constant changing of the rules of the game so as to inspire new games and ignite a metaphorical subtlety.

3.3.1.2. *Freedom and “play”*

Having acknowledged the role of the metaphor, one can be more precise and dub this notion of metaphor as a certain freedom and “play” within a postmodern context. For if fine art need no longer serve the ends of some correspondence programme, whether conceived as a mirroring of the biblical, the classic, an “aesthetic essence” and so on, then perhaps one may conjecture that such times emphasize a certain freedom and “play”. The “language turn” with its emphasis on “difference” implies that there are numerous fragments and any new evocation implies an “other”, so that the “play” is potentially without limit. Furthermore, the infinity of the sign expands and grows and adapts and evolves. One may take an example from language from Hegel’s “Aufhebung” where he makes the point that words transform from being bodily to being conceptually clear. For example: the simple phrase “I see” connotes both a sensory experience and means one understands something. Or “sensible”, which may refer both to that which is amenable to sense-impressions and that something makes sense. Thus language is embedded in both our experiences and intellectual

⁷⁵ This sort of logic attempts to deal with contradictions in a discriminating way so that one can reason with inconsistent information in a controlled and discriminating way. Some even maintain that some contradictions are true.

⁷⁶ This refers to the idea that a statement can be neither provable nor refutable in a specified deductive system.

abstractions, and since one cannot separate the two, we cannot objectify a “reality” or separate aesthetic from extra-aesthetic considerations. The result: one can merely “play” with the surfaces, with the realisation that art is essentially ineffable, because words themselves function according to arbitrary designations and art is already embedded in another language. And each language is a metaphor. With “play” we forge links between languages, rather than perceive and conceive an absolute “reality”. Nevertheless, there can be a certain creative freedom in this.

Warhol, the pop artist recognized this freedom, one grounded in a decentred, unstable and changing language field and “plays” with this. This freedom has nothing to do with the right style or manifesto. As Warhol once said, you can be an abstract expressionist one day and a pop artist the next week ... or a realist (Hughes 1991). This coheres with Danto’s “posthistorical” thesis (1995). Danto (1995) maintains that postmodernism is less a period than what happens after there are no periods in some master narrative of art. It necessarily lacks stylistic unity and is a period “of information disorder, a condition of perfect aesthetic entropy. But it is equally a period of quite perfect freedom” (Danto 1995:12). This freedom is not born out of “innate thought”, but through the “play” of what already exists and is mediated through different languages.

In terms of “playing with what already exists”, one cannot draw meanings of past art in its original “form of life”, though one can imitate the style of an earlier period, which is to say “play” with style and narrative itself. Thus Danto (1995) believes that painting and art history had reached an end point and that all that could be done was to revel in the freedom, that now the story of art exhibits no particular pattern. In this seeming chaotic freedom one is reminded of Nietzsche’s (1995:88) poetic line: “there must be chaos within to give birth to a dancing star”. Or to put it in other terms, Margolis (1999:30) makes the point that the final free “play” of all possible styles of painting is “discovering of once and for all the historical possibility of ever fixing a rational essence of painting”.

Part of this freedom and “play” is in the elision between art and “everyday” life. Danto does not seem to distinguish between art from a “mere real thing”. Thus the ideal forms of “Plato’s beds” for example, wherein the artistic version is a second or third-order copy of the ideal concept was ruptured when Rauschenberg, Oldenburg and Segal included real beds, for example, within the artistic framework. With Warhol’s *Brillo Box* (1960) this goes further to

the extent that the meaning of art could not be given via examples or via perception. Danto believes his idea, namely that you cannot easily distinguish between art and the “everyday”, brings art-making and art history to an end⁷⁷. The result: art can take any conceivable trajectory and this allows a certain freedom and “play”, or at least an “imitation of dead styles” (Danto 1995:65), where art no longer has transcendental value but “historical as opposed to eternal significance” (Reez & Borzello 1986:70). It is precisely in the elision of art and “everyday” life that this historicization comes to the fore, as works of art are treated as special sorts of signifiers, neither more nor less than any other tightly defined and highly institutionalized form of image, such as the advertising poster, the product label or the technical book illustration. In this sense, art’s freedom consists in the “play” of the endless possibilities of “surfaces” with no distinction apportioned to the a priori status of the work of art drawn from fine art as opposed to “kitsch” and the “everyday”.

3.3.1.3. Inclusivity and diversity

Having acknowledged “play” as the consequence of a certain chaos and instability or lack of definition as far as art is concerned and because language is open ended, one can deduce that it is the very inclusivity implied by the “language turn” and the constant hankering over an “other” that is not to be forgotten. One may posit that the notion of difference in language at the same time allows for the inclusion of otherwise oppressed and silent voices. In this respect, art theory and practice are well appointed to address these imbalances.

Ironically, these imbalances can be found to occur precisely when theorists attempt to write a humanistic account of people’s “sameness” and that art (or at least Western art) has a special role in that regard. Panofsky and Gombrich appear to give art “special status”. In a tradition dating back to Kant and Hegel they see art as bridging the gap between the sensual and the rational, as retrieving “lost” and “alien” cultures and subsuming them as one’s own which is said, in terms of modernist discourse, as enhancing the unity and composure of self. This allows for a critical procedure that traces historical continuity like the genealogy of motifs, and the meaning of a work of art as the reconciliation of conflicting elements. The “new” postmodern approach, however, is to construct a narrative or halt the existing narrative

⁷⁷ It is important to note that Hegel (1993) argued that having achieved “absolute knowledge”, art was no longer necessary or divine and had reached some kind of end (at least in those terms). Or in other words, the sensuality of art had performed the historically inevitable task of bringing forth rational, absolute knowledge; the latter now superseding the need for art.

wherein art is not part of the solution, but part of the problem, a kind of “ideological baggage”, be it bourgeois, racist or patriarchal. This task is one of deconstructing, a critique of visual images, from paintings to pop videos wherein the “contradictions and prejudices beneath the smooth surface of the beautiful” (Reez & Borzello 1986:84) are unearthed. The postmodern task is thus to deconstruct the polarities, that is, thwart the valorisation of a dominant pole, “rather than police their boundaries” (Reez & Borzello 1986:87). In this regard, the artist does not necessarily have privileged access to ultimate “truth”. The pertinent question about the meaning of art is thus aptly put by Reez and Borzello (1986:168): “It’s not what does it express but what does it do?” Thus there has been a shift from the assumption that one’s own point of view is the “truth”, that the “other” simply needed to be “edified” to see that “truth”, to one of a critical critique of one’s own position and so the question as to how art functions in culture becomes “central”. In this sense one’s own knowledge claims become contingent.

Once one recognizes the contingent nature of the “story of art” as a consequence of the theoretical “decentering” of language, the art theorist can be more inclusive as to what counts as art (and as aesthetic), so that there is a postmodern reaction to the assumed teleology in art towards a revisionist art history. In this respect, silenced voices and styles of art, for example film can become part of the artistic “mainstream” and this incorporation can aid in human understanding and communication.

Furthermore, the “decentering” of the word and/or the image means that many a sign may be linked to another and even in that relationship other linkages can be made so that an “other” is forever generated as the text expands. In this way, art is a powerful tool to create intersubjective, interdisciplinary cross-overs and hybrids. It would be misguided to call this intertextual “space” a unity of differences, for one cannot perceive the totality and thus grasp it as a unity. At best one may say that art is inclusivity compounded of differences. One might then regard this call to mistrust unities and totalizing as democratizing and detotalizing culture. This requires the undoing of hierarchical systems. In this sense rather than a “grand narrative”, one emphasizes seeming minor narratives. As Sim (1992:402) puts it there is a “Multiplicity of little narratives, all of which have their own particular integrity and sense of importance, but none of which can be considered to take precedence over any of the others. Grand narrative is held to dominate and suppress little narratives, and is therefore to be resisted”. Another more direct way of saying this is the observation that the valorisation

through art of the Western, first-world, male, Euro-American “fine” art is a myth and that it cannot claim to have universal validity, but is itself a Western construction. In this sense, the postmodern “language turn”, with its emphasis of endless differences becomes a self-reflexive activity of not only maintaining a sense of identity, but realizing that one’s identity and art is a) part of “others” and vice versa and b) has no moral high ground. If a) and b) are maintained within artistic circles and beyond, this would lead to an inclusive and diverse life-praxis and aesthetic sensibility.

3.3.2. *Meaninglessness*

Thus far I have been arguing that the detotalizing project of postmodernism derived from the “language turn” is a positive and creative paradigm shift to be celebrated. However, Potgieter (2008:53), in this rather lengthy quote, points to the fact that this may not be the case. While there may be distinctions of value, Potgieter, writing tongue in cheek, presents a possible implication of the “language turn” for art and culture:

If knowledge and experience are language-bound, and language itself is an unreliable creation, does this not mean meaninglessness? Are we entering a world in which all hierarchical distinctions are literally exhausted and lacking in authority, and in which no form of experience can be regarded as less, or more, valuable than another? A world in which we can identify no qualitative distinction between rap and Beethoven, Tretchikoff and Manet, Wilbur Smith and James Joyce? If there are no external points, no positive terms, to serve as final authorities in the hierarchical evaluation of knowledge, experiences and values, does this mean that all things are equal and that nothing then has particular value?

The above quote reflects the concern that an “anything goes” rampant inclusiveness attitude may mean the lack of discernment and value, for the deconstructive mode is precisely a debunking of “discernment” and “value”. Does this mean that art and the imagination within the context of the postmodern have “reached” a terminal point? As Kearney (1988:252) observes in his reflecting on the “crisis of the imagination” at this time that the “...Postmodern experience is of the demise of the creative humanist imagination and its replacement by a depersonalized consumer system of pseudo-images ...”

Conceived thus, I will analyse the down-side of what the “language turn” means for art according to the same categories in which the up-side was evaluated.

3.3.2.1 *Metaphor means we cannot really know*

The idea that an image is no longer authentic expression (Kearney 1988:3), as the individual, and the image, is already part of a language structure that denies the self as present, notwithstanding the power of the image, implies that the veneer of “metaphor” is just another way of saying that the artwork does not mean anything, for meaning is forever deferred. Potgieter (2007), though not necessarily in agreement with the following possible implication of the “language turn” on art, observes that: “Representations of representations, works of art which lose authenticity as a consequence of being mass produced, photographs of photographs, reflections of reflections, parody upon parody, the end of originality and the end of modernity’s search for the “real” inner structure of art” In other words if the nature of metaphor is to say X is like Y, and Y like X or Z and so on, one is caught in the “non presence” of the poststructural web of language. That is, if an artwork functions metaphorically, it means one cannot actually pin down a definite meaning and that while these “kindred associations” (Kant’s phrase [1952 {1790}]) may be creative, at no point can one claim final knowledge about the work of art⁷⁸. This may be liberating as argued above, but it may also be debilitating for if “anything goes” then boundaries are eroded. Consequently, there may be no logical distinction between a casino and an art museum as an institution of art!

Furthermore, the notion of metaphor does not allow one to escape to a non-conditioned unknown, because metaphors by definition refer to the web of known signs. Thus the postmodern “language turn” and the invocation of the metaphor amount to the same thing, namely the critique of the “original”, “the given”. Connor (1992:77) claims, in reflecting on the postmodern reality that it “reflects a pluralistic, rootless society, where consumerism, proliferation of media images and a multi-national capitalist economy make it unique in history. There is no privileged position, not even that of the artist, there is no new style or world, since individual interpretations are derivative”. That “individual interpretations are derivative” means that the individual subject is not in full control of language so that self-knowledge is impossible. Kearney (1988:253) concurs with this reading when he states: “the humanist conception of ‘man’ gives way to the anti-humanist concept of intertextual play. The autonomous subject disappears into the anonymous operations of language”. In this

⁷⁸ Another way of putting would be to say all (art) theory is mere opinion.

respect, appeal to metaphor in art amounts to relinquishing control over pinning down a discursive understanding and knowledge, for understanding is “of something” and knowledge is “of something”, but that “something” cannot be defined, for it is just part of the structural web of language itself, a “body” without contours. The fact that we do not have access to a “true reality” that is not already mediated by language, one cannot analyse the relationship between literal and figurative meaning and consequently it is unclear whether art or any language simply functions pragmatically as some sort of social convention at a given time, or whether it carries actual knowledge about the world rather than a provisional and contingent meaning. Or if it is simply an aesthetic, sensual surface. However, if one tends to regard art or any language as but a self-enclosed system, then meaning itself is highly suspect. Appeals to the “other” of language alluded to by Derrida above does not act as an escape from language for that “other” is circumscribed by yet another in an ongoing “sequence”, so that as it tends towards infinity, it also tends towards an indefinite meaning or an ongoing replication process that is in itself meaningless.

3.3.2.2. Freedom and “play” may mean there is no “inner” substance

This “ongoing sequence” of language and its “other” implies that while in traditional art (and language) there is scope for endless “play” and interpretation, it may also mean that there is nothing beneath the “play” of the surface signifiers.

Postmodernism undermines the modernist project of the independent, individual artist-genius and the “aura” and presence of the art object through which the artist is said to express his “deep, inner self”. Furthermore, language, whether visual or verbal, was considered a transparent vehicle for expressing this self. As a result of the “language turn”, however, the artist’s “inner” being is expunged and the work of art is no longer an authentic presence from which meaning is said to emanate; rather the latter becomes part of a construct of power relations, that is, contingent human knowledge. At best one can critique and “play” with images in order to reveal this contingency, and just reflect that art itself is indeed another “surface”; at worst, one laments the fact that there appears to be no deep structure, just endless particles zooming around in space so to speak.

Potgieter (2008) writes that the postmodern condition may lead to a kind of panicky schizophrenia (recalling Deleuze and Guattari) for as signifiers and signified no longer match

there is nothing absolute. The “play of surfaces” is the order of the day and change is but cosmetic. And cosmetic indeed! For in a world of cloning, cyber disembodiment, mass media images, the digital world and so on, experience, perception and identity are constructed without recourse to “truth”. This state of affairs can be construed as the “free play of the network of signs” (Hans 1980:307) rather than human agency, a cause ascribed to the “inner self”. Baudrillard echoes this idea of the subject being trapped in a network of decentred signs in the sense that within the postmodern condition one cannot make the distinction between “reality” and simulations thereof. These simulacra or simulations (Baudrillard 1988) are not simply false as opposed to the real; a distinction that one cannot make for the simulation absorbs the real itself (Poster 1988:6); “reality” is hyperreality. Thus “play” of signification becomes another word for hyperreality, a kind of chaos drawing from the “language turn”, in which there is no centre. Without a centre, there is an infinity of “surfaces”, and that which appears “deep” is but another sign that constitutes the language system. Therefore considered thus, art no longer has claims to ontological truth. The seeming freedom of the hyperreal and the resorting to “play” in art may thus amount to very little.

3.3.2.3. Inclusivity may mean the lack of discernment

Although to say there are “no positive terms” in language has led to the inclusion of previously silenced voices in art, for there is no positive term to dominate as it were. There is also the sense that with the end of the avant-garde comes the loss of a clear direction in art (and perhaps elsewhere in life). The fact that the “real” and the “imagined” (or represented) are no longer clearly distinguished means that although this makes everything equal, there is no Archimedean point outside this inclusive differentiation from which to determine meaning and thus forge some sort of direction. Therefore, inclusivity without direction can be thought of as aimless, without trust in any particular system. In Foucault’s (1976) writing we find the proclamation of the “death of man”, the death-knell of transcendental consciousness. This, he argues is made cogent by “exploring scientific discourse not from the point of view of individuals who are speaking ... but from the point of view of the rules that come into play in the very existence of such discourse” (Foucault 1976:88). Kearney (1988:266) writes that such a project is the “substitution of the postmodern paradigm of the structural unconscious for the modern paradigm of the creative consciousness ... which gives priority to the observing subject”. Barthes and Derrida too attempt to critique the subject who prides himself or herself to be the source of universal meaning. As such, postmodern inclusivity does not

entail a conglomerate of individuals that together give one a semblance of “truth”, but a kind of non-presence, an impersonal “play” of linguistic signs. The result is that “creating” and interpreting becomes a struggle/play of multiple fragmentation and dissipation. Therefore, inclusivity of multiple interpretations simply means that there is no “truth” to be unearthed in the text or art object. Or put another way, the extension of the notion of the text to include everything means that the distinction between imagination and reality evaporate and discerning what is true becomes difficult.

This kind of chaos means that ethically one is not enjoined to act in a specific way. While this may mean a certain liberation, it also equates to a lack of discernment in ethical matters, which Kearney (1988:361) is well aware of, as he states: “if the deconstructionist of imagination admits of no epistemological limits (insofar as each one of us is obliged to establish a decidable relationship between image and reality), it must recognize ethical limits”. He continues: “...in the face of postmodern logic of interminable deferment and infinite regress, of floating signifiers and vanishing signifieds, here and now I face an *other* who demands of me an ethical response” (Kearney 1988:361). Here, Kearney argues for a “depth”, but logically, inclusivity, equalizing and horizontal surface “play” does not necessarily accommodate this response. For moral directives, for example, are based on a premise of differentiation to that it so opposes, but if the “other” has as much a claim to be, then inclusivity might mean the lack of a discerning principle. It’s a double-edged sword: on the one hand, the wish to detotalize⁷⁹, but on the other hand, a foreclosing of a system of meaning, even while the latter can be endlessly deconstructed ad infinitum. Or one may opt out of this labyrinth and claim in rather esoteric terms that the foundation is the non-foundation.

It is obviously beyond the scope of this thesis to interrogate how contemporary art may instantiate the theories above – how current art is ineffable, resisting theory; diverse, resisting categorization and subversive, precluding definite ways to experience it. What I would, however, like to mention that much art today that makes direct use of the body (as opposed to indirect figure painting, for example, that is *representing* bodies) makes a case for arts (worldwide) proximity to activities such as sport. So we find skin pierced and live bodies

⁷⁹ Another consequence of detotalising is that process and context, rather than finality and transcendence come to the fore relating to the arguments given in chapter 4 regarding knowledge claims as contingent, historicized and institutional.

hanging from hooks (for example Stelarc's work), sub-cultural body piercing and tattoos; naked-bodies around an art performance; odd water-falls (as for example Olafur Eliasson's work) interspersed at key venues in New York; cloud simulation machines that give off peculiar aromas such as Cai Zhisong's "sculptures" (and other multi-sensory installations); digital bodily extensions and robotics (again Stelarc is an example of this trend) and improvisational dance performances (or the choreographed world-wide flash mob art happenings at designated social arenas). These interventions suggest a counter movement away from conceptual art, from art as idea towards a sensory-perceptual awareness (aesthesia), meliorative strategies such that knowledge is sought through the body, rather than alienated from the very tools that provide for knowledge in the first place. In this sense one might describe much contemporary art and "sub-cultural" practices as well as new age "art for living" (such as yoga, alternative medicine and tai chi) as well as sport practiced without hierarchy, in much the same way that art of the past may have included the mechanical arts and in Ancient Greece the gymnasium and the arts worked in tandem. But beyond suggesting a certain way of life or rather a practical, tangible kind of knowing and the subverting or blurring of hierarchical distinctions, one can discern that much current art on offer is extreme, such as bodies inserted with hooks and hanging in the gallery or other venues and this can easily be linked to the death-defying current trend commonly known as extreme sports which I briefly analyse further on in this chapter.

Before analysing what may be meant by postmodern sport, I would like to establish how much current art makes use of the body, which shall be described as the "extreme body" which immediately links it with the "sporting body". Xian (2015) in the *Journal of Somaesthetics* (2015: 144-159) makes a distinction between traditional art – by which he means premodern art – and modernist art. The former is concerned with beauty and the ideal body according to rules and ratios of proportion, whereas the latter he dubs the "extreme body" characterised by a refutation of beauty (or at least the accepted norms thereof), an exploration of the strange, distorted and shocking. In my estimation postmodernism has taken this to new heights and Richard Shusterman's innovation of a sub-category in aesthetics, namely somaesthetics provides a conceptual framework in which to consider the body in visual arts as determining how the body as a cultural issue has changed along with society. I agree with Xian (2015) who associates the modernist exploration and postmodernist continuation of the "extreme body" as dehumanised (strange, distorted, shocking...), especially as it initially formed in surrealist and abstract art and later in performances and

digital art. Yet at the same time this transgressive, one might say uncomfortable, aesthetic is such that “modernist (and postmodernist) artists view the body as an object (and subject) that needs reconstruction and deformation to push the limits” (Xain 2015:158, brackets my inclusion). So that while traditional, pre-modern art holds the body in art in sacred reverence where the viewer is evoked to admire (even in the case of crucifixions), in modernist and postmodern aesthetics the “body is meant to help people reflect, explore and question” (Xain 2015:158).

Many sociologists feel that there is a rise in body culture (Ryynanen 2015) and I conjecture that soma – the living body – captures this sentiment. I would argue it is precisely sport as an aesthetic, cultural phenomenon that exemplifies this. Moreover, it is precisely the agitated, extreme shock value invoked which counter much art of the past that determines an “extreme body” – again reflected in sport in various degrees. Consider body building, the elite swimmer’s physique, the athlete, the wrestler – these “body types” are a certain reconfiguration of the body to actualise what the mind wills, and is integral to a society where adaption, replication, subjectivity, enhancements and extending beyond to achieve records or maintain a body with a specific function. Thus one may say that arts’ representation of the body and in more recent artistic practice, the direct use of the body is such that some art forms parallel the enormous popularity and the pushing beyond the limits evident in competitive sport. Even at a level where art and sport are more about play rather than fierce competition, for the viewer, one can make the argument that with the sophistication of digital technology, the body has become stretched (stretched skin...) navigating in uncharted realms, giving us “eyes” and “ears” and “touch” beyond our immediate surroundings (as sport, for example is broadcast via satellite world-wide) and art is said to be pervasive so that play, aesthetics and “body-consciousness” appears to be the order of the day. Whether this is wholly positive is debatable.⁸⁰ One point, however, is that taken to extreme levels of distortion, intensely abstract (digitisation) and aesthetic play without a coherent system, may be damaging. It is in this light that even as I argue that sport is art-like, this does not entail a necessary good. It is in this respect that somaesthetics with its emphasis on “healthy living” and a possible return to beauty without notions of autonomy in art and unchanging truths – at least in the fixation on imagery – may redeem the situation. The moving body in sport, the body in flux and motion, the body reaching for a certain goal, the ephemerality of our games

⁸⁰ The core of my project is the realization that beauty has the dual nature of being both ideologically coercive and innocent – inducing healthy living and a better state of mind.

suggest, on a philosophical level, that it is the living body, not the static image that may lead towards healthy living. In these respects sport in turn offers art an image of beauty without an image! This is similar to the non-presence of the sign postulated by the “language turn”.

In art, this was sensed with the modernist repudiation of the traditional exemplified initially in Dadaism and later conceptual art; pop art’s inclusion of mass culture, later still the transience of performance and installation art and the digital revolution whereupon perhaps no image is sacred and rare (though this perhaps contradicts the immense price tags for actual esteemed artworks and in sport, the almost idolising of sports stars). I would endorse the reassessment of the “traditional” and it is in such a climate that art and sport can reasonably be understood as merging – the global village or the global construction is a contour that we cannot trace. The non-presence of the sign – the fading image – and inclusiveness of all signs including the “extreme body” – could be seen as a practical consequence of the “language turn” and its consequences for culture.

3.4. Postmodern sport⁸¹

The “language turn”, it was argued above, has implications for art, both in theory and practice, namely the duality of, on the one hand, detotalising creative play and ineffability, and, on the other hand, a potential sense of meaninglessness. Sport, as one instance of postmodern culture, likewise can be viewed via the lens of the “language turn”, especially as it, like art, is not necessarily an “authentic” expression, a natural and innocent game, but is embedded in a culture, where commodification, consumerism and idealistic image-construction is the order of the day. Nevertheless, sport may offer much in the way of articulating bonds between people over-and-above native tongue. Consequently, as with art, one may discern the place of sport in postmodern culture as engendering the dual aspects of 1) ineffability and 2) meaninglessness. I shall explicate these concerns below using specific sports to make things clearer. In arguing for similar implications of the “language turn” for sport as with art, there is a *parallel* cultural phenomenon. A cultural phenomenon must have aesthetic properties if it is to be defined as such, that is, as a phenomenon it must exhibit

⁸¹ The consequence of this “kind” of thinking is that postmodernism is weary of the processes that lead to a conclusive, (rational) perspective that mandates a particular course of action. Instead, one is, as it were to act responsibly before coming to (hasty) conclusions. Such ideas recognize the complexity of life (and art) and acknowledge the body (the act) as an important part of self, rather than the primacy of ideology (definite conclusions) to determine the actions of self. Sport itself is primarily a quickening of the feet, as it were, that motivates action, rather than the assumed loftiness of contemplation.

some sensual pattern and order for it to be recognised as a phenomenon. As a cultural phenomenon that sensual pattern and order involves a concern with aesthetics, at least to some extent which (in turn) bring to the fore extra-aesthetic considerations.

3.4.1. Postmodern sport: ineffability

If the “other” of language is the body in relation to the mind, then the latter’s employment of reason is given sensual expression via the body. The body then is not simply an embodiment of mind, but has itself a reason, and a logic grounded in biological processes. While one can understand these processes to an extent, bodily “play” is also trans-rational. Sport, that is bodily “play”, is also partly ineffable. This is particularly true in a postmodern context, where the number of sports increasingly “side-step” being quantified. Examples in this respect are NASCAR racing and extreme sports, which I have chosen to look at briefly as instances of the ineffability of contemporary sport. Thereafter I argue for a “poetic imagination” derived from Kearney (1988) and apply this reading to sport generally with the intention that the “bridging capital” of sports constitutes a “rational” that is ineffable.

Macgregor (2002), John (2008) et al argue that NASCAR is the quintessential postmodern sport. In postmodern society, everything is transformed into a saleable commodity and therefore NASCAR is the “...central postmodern metaphor: racing ever faster in circles, chasing a buck” (Macgregor 2002:2). The ineffability is in the latent postmodern overtones. That is, in the “racing ever faster in circles” there is a form of “play” that seems to go nowhere and yet may be captivating in that kind of ineffable redundancy.

Ironically this “ineffable redundancy” can be seen to be aligned with commercialism. Commercialism is so openly and honestly embraced and celebrated so that “NASCAR is an immanent semiotic system critically isomorphic with postmodern society” (Macgregor 2002:2). Fans can drive the brand of car driven by their favourite drivers. Postmodern life is often characterized by a desire to participate in such image-dominated experiences. Furthermore, the narrative of NASCAR’s colourful background means much to the sport. NASCAR could hope for nothing more during its current success than to be identified with the authenticity of the newly virtuous, rural South, so that myth and profits go together. In the identification with the car of one’s choice and the combining of rural mythology with profits,

the ineffable is that which is both a contemporary fixation with the high-tech and the mythologized past.

In terms of a “mythologized past”, postmodern sports such as NASCAR provide validating myths that rival those of the religious spheres. Postmodern athletes reconstitute the mysterious (the ineffable) into a mystic sphere of their own making. Earnhardt, a famous NASCAR driver, “did not perform to honour G-d; his performances were evident in themselves that he was G-d”. (Macgregor 2002:9). The number “3”, for example, which may have religious connotations, is emblazoned on the driver’s jacket and one could argue that it acts as a semiotic premise so that “signifiers become abstracted from the signified” (Gartman in Macgregor 2002:17). The “3” is a consuming image, and as such exemplifies the postmodern vision where the ability to reproduce the disembodied appearance of things portends a vast market in images. More importantly, the market value of the image gets magnified, or synonymously, made spectacular, through the process of mass production and distribution. With Earnhardt, as with other elements of postmodern culture, sacralizing articulations are used to distance the text from its superficial status as a commercial product. In this sense, the ineffable is maintained even as consumerism takes root.

To analyse the matter further, namely the ineffability of NASCAR, one should note that pre-modern sports were attached to the “realm of the transcendent” (Gurtmann in Macgregor 2002:26). Offering contests to the gods could be a way to appease them. Athletic festivals were forms of worship, for example, Ancient Greece. Modern sports, by contrast, were played for their own sake or for some other secular end (for example the nationalism of fascist Germany of the 1936 Berlin Olympics). They are intrinsically inimical to spiritual and mysterious encounters. Postmodern sports such as NASCAR, however, enter the realm of the immanent. In postmodern terms, immanence “refers, without religious echo, to the growing capacity to generalize itself through symbols” (Hassan in Macgregor 2002:18). In postmodernity, languages extend our senses, recasting nature into signs of their own making. Nature emerges as culture, and culture turns into an immanent semiotic system that as John (2008:8) puts it: “is a cite for conflicting ideologies” supporting Macgregor’s (2002:19) assertion that “NASCAR isn’t just a postmodern sport. It is an immanent semiotic system”. This semiotic system in question plays off the ineffable with the fetish of objectification and commercialism. One says it is ineffable for the fan may live a more “authentic” life through the racing car hero and the hero himself is said to be more himself when he is racing. In other

words, the fan is able to have a more heroic image of the self, which he or she may identify as “true”, and sports heroes may only truly feel themselves when engaged in their chosen sport. However, there is a conflict between quantification – records, times and commercialism – with quality – an imagined past/mythology and ineffable authenticity in the racing itself.

Another sport which reveals a certain ineffability is that of extreme sports, an alternative (“other”) to traditional sports. Redei (2002) argues that a common feature of post-industrial societies, as symptoms of postmodern life is individualism, post-materialism and alienation between natural and artificial environments. Redei (2002: 22-26) makes the point that people engage in extreme sports to escape the mundane, the monotonous, habit and routine, in contrast to over-regulated, competition-based and masculine dominated traditional sports. In this way the extreme sportsperson demonstrates his or her difference from mainstream society. But more than that, the prime motivation for such engagement is to accomplish a sense of aliveness and emotional satisfaction, which may be described as an attempt to do something in which an ineffable experience is made possible by overcoming fear. To put it in other terms: extreme sports are a means whereby one tries to “grasp” life itself so that the ineffable mystery of one’s own life is brought into sharp focus which can then reinvigorate the more controlled aspects of one’s “normal” existence. This may occur, because of the inherent risk factor. In this sense, extreme sports is a kind of counter-culture, setting itself against the safe, homogenous, regulated accepted sports.

Extreme sports often defy the traditional assumptions about sport, namely spectatorship and commercialism, so that the individual or group may take risks without public awareness. These risks may be extremely dangerous, thus denying the simple polarity between the “everyday” and the imagined, safe world of sport, or between the seriousness of life and the game that is sport. As such, extreme sports defy objectification and marketability, and in the search for an ineffable experience breaks the usual codes separating “everyday” life from sport (art) and art from life itself. Furthermore, stylistic advances in certain extreme sports, such as skateboarding, explode orthodox versions of upright skateboarding with an aggressively pivotal style so that, as Dinces (2011: 1517) notes “their unconventional skating and disorderly presence marked them as outsiders from the start”. In this sense, sport and specifically extreme sports may yield a form that communicates certain politics so that the ineffability of a revolutionary sentiment as an idea is made more concrete as it assumes the form of a particular skating style, to use one example. In this sense, one could argue for an

interaction between aesthetic and extra-aesthetic motivations, and the channelling of raw ineffability made somewhat effable, though this sub-cultural “aggressiveness” was soon to be prime targets for corporate exploitation effectively quelling that raw, ineffable sentiment through co-option into the “mainstream”.

From the two examples above, it becomes evident that the sign language of certain sports, whether embracing commercialism or not, is essentially about wanting an “authentic” experience, or in other words: a sense of the ineffable. Another way of arguing for the ineffable is by making the notion of “poetic imagination”, as defined by Kearney (1988) apply to a reading of sport, whereby the ineffable of sport is a function of the capacity to feel for the “other”.

Kearney (1988:368) writes:

the logic of the imaginary is one of both/and rather than either/or. It is inclusive, and by extension, tolerant: it allows opposites to stand, irreconcilables to co-exist, refusing to deny the claim of one for the sake of its contrary, to sacrifice the strange on the altar of self-identity.

Later he writes (1988:369):

The language of the unconscious, expressed at the level of the imaginary and the symbolic, is the portal to poetry. Poetry is to be understood here as the extended sense of play of poiesis; a creative letting go of the drive for possession, of the calculus of means and ends. It allows the rose – in the words of the mystic Silesius – to exist without the why. Poetics is the carnival of possibilities where everything is permitted, neither censored. It is the willingness to imagine oneself in the other person’s skin ...

Applied to postmodern sport one may argue that Kearney’s “sublime intimation of alterity”, of imagination, may enhance a sense of global unity. Markovitz and Rensmann (2010:2) observe that “hegemonic sport, as part of popular culture, play a crucial role in shaping more inclusive collective identities and a cosmopolitan outlook open to complex allegiances”. In watching the “best of the best” it may enhance acceptance of an otherwise possibly disliked “other” which Markowitz and Rensmann (2010) dub “bridging capital”. One empathises with the character and movements of the sportsperson (qua artist). Sports thus may have the power to cut across all national and cultural boundaries and transform identities, a “goal” often shared with art. Applying this, one might even argue that postmodern sports have the power

to topple political powers “from below”. Thus far from viewing sports as the opiate of the masses, they write: “we regard their contemporary global presence as antinomian forces that challenge encrusted sources of domination” (Markowitz & Rensmann 2010:30). Thus postmodern sports may oppose fundamentalism without itself being fundamentalist and intolerant. Because sports rules are arbitrary, they can be said to be value neutral and therefore readily accepted and understood across cultures, nations, communities and classes, bringing together human collectives. One may thus assert that the artistic postmodern “turn” wherein a utopian world-view is opposed on the grounds of its simplistic universalism and flawed reasoning, may allow a space for the embracing of a shared humanity through sports, without a metaphysical, epistemological and moral edifice to be adhered to. However, this lack of structure may tend to the meaningless, and is the subject of the following section.

3.4.2. Postmodern sport: meaninglessness

The postmodern language “turn” means that all signs operate together but that their structure is complex and shifting. In this regard, distinctions become blurred, especially with the assertion of sport as aesthetic. This may result in a decentred self as there is no clear indication as to what constitutes the aesthetic, and by extension, the sporting body (for example distinctions between the “authentic, natural self” and self-expression in sport).

Butryn (2003) writes that there are tensions within many world-class athletes between modernist notions of the “natural” body and postmodern conceptualization of corporeality. By this he means that in postmodern terms our “humanness” has been altered by intimate, available and seemingly unavoidable engagements with technology, and therefore that humans should be reconceptualised as posthumans, or cyborgs. As such the boundaries between humans, animals and machines are tenuous. Identities are thus constructed and reconstructed through human-technology interfaces. The “21st century self is no longer characterized by a singular identity, but an assortment of politicized and fractured cyborg ‘selves’,” writes Butryn (2003:17-18). He says this as in identifying the original “I” whose performance we want to enhance, may be difficult. There is no clear separation between the natural and the artificial, whether technological innovation, at a certain point, pollutes and takes away a certain “authenticity” or whether, as in modernist instrumentalism, technology is seen as value-free and neutral. In the latter sense, technological progress is deemed to be societal progress, a liberation from time immemorial, and optimistic. This latter conception is

particularly relevant in a postmodern context of scientific “progress”, but at the same time may render meaningless “the athlete”, the “I” that performs at a high level precisely because his or her identity and humanness is called into question.

As early as 1964, Ellul, for example, argues that sport is a total “extension of the technical spirit” (in Butryn 2003:34) and that the emphasis on quantification and efficiency which manifests itself in the performance ethos of elite sport precludes non-instrumental sporting practice (the enjoyment of sports for the innocent and natural enjoyment and spiritual growth) and the kind of poetic imagination that Kearney (1988) appeared to argue for as elucidated above. Eichberg (1998:32) noted that historical trends towards technologization has often been accompanied by ‘green’ movements and it remains to be seen whether track and field, and elite sport in general, witness a concerted back-lash against increasing cyborgification, and concludes quite ominously that “given the prospects of genetically enhanced competitors, robot competitions, and virtual reality sport, the infinite and fractured images of the cyborg will be highly relevant, if not vital, to those working within sport sociology and sport studies in general” (Butryn 2003:36). In this sense, sports at the high-end level may be rendered a kind of meaningless, anti-human and commercial cultural form, a “pretty picture” aesthetics with no real relevance to extra-aesthetic matters that pertain to life.

Another aspect of the meaninglessness of sport derives from its ideologically, relativistic nature. By this I mean that if we were to say that Roger Bannister was the first four-minute miler who achieved this accolade on 6th May 1954, one may note that this “fact” is not so “innocent”, so “authentic”. If one is politically correct, we may call the choice to focus on his success as opposed to the many “black” record-breakers of shorter distances at the time, racially biased. Furthermore, the date is not objective. It follows the Gregorian calendar by year, the month by the Roman goddess Maia which is a Eurocentric dating system, one not subscribed to universally; while one mile is the British unit of spatial measurement derived from the “Roman lineal measure of a thousand paces” (*Oxford English dictionary*) which is a traditionalist rejection of the rationalism represented by the metric system. So that one may question the meaning of “recorded” sports history at least as an ideological bias, rendering facts somewhat meaningless.

Another side of this “meaninglessness” may be gleaned from the commercialism of sport and thus the “inauthenticity”, the lack of innocence of sport. We live in a world saturated with

sports imagery. Wallis (1984:80-82) writes that the “death of the author” (Borges) and that meaning is in the interpretation of the viewer and reader (Acker) for the completion of the artwork or texts (Crimp, Owens), as opposed to the special value and time of the art object and artist (Krauss) – lends itself to the proliferation of images of sports. This is so as with the denial of the sacredness of art, the “intrusion” of images from the mass media, in particular that of sport becomes the new means with which to assert the celebration of the “body”, of global culture and a discourse that is understood (and enjoyed) by the majority. As Wallis (1984: xviii) writes: “Our society, supersaturated with information and images, not only has no need for individuality, it no longer owns such a concept”. Sports image after image confirms the desire to obliterate the subject, like the Greek Kouroi, copies after copies and so the modernist valorised polarity, that is the “original”, is played down. Rather, the surface, the bodily, the machine, the repetitiveness is given its due which can be said to find “a parallel” with Warhol’s emphasis on surfaces, repetitiveness, art as business and shallowness. Thus, the abundance of sport and the abundance of images around sports, minimizes the meaning that can be found in sport (consider a *once off* marble sculpture of a great athlete as opposed to innumerable photographs of the same athlete in a newspaper).

Thus sport is fated with what Baudrillard (1988) described as objects dominating subjects divesting them of human qualities and capacities, their sign-value masks seeming control and individuality. Modern societies are organized around production and the consumption of commodities, while the postmodern is concerned with simulation and the play of images and signs. Postmodernism is about “dedifferentiation”, implosion, and hyperrealism. In terms of the latter, we might say that entertainment, information and communication technologies elevate sports experience as more than the quotidian. Sports events can be experienced as more real than real and may even influence thought and behaviour. In the ensuing “ecstasy of communication...the subject becomes a pure screen, a pure absorption and re-absorption surface of the influent networks” (Baudrillard 1988:27), thus the participant and spectator alike experience a sort of non-self while engaged in sports. I mention this in chapter 5, but there such sentiments were the outcome of an inner conviction and connection to sports, here it is the spectacle itself, the hype itself which leads to such feelings; feelings, I would argue that are without “centre”. It can be described as vacuous and meaningless. Yet, our culture keeps adding to these empty experiences, sports event after sports event where the climax of a victory never quite satisfies so that the next season or match or tournament beckons in a meaningless circle going nowhere.

The “individual”, influenced by the media, technology, and the hyper-real (match after match ...) produces what Baudrillard (1988) described as a “narcoticized”, “mesmerized” media-saturated consciousness wherein there is no “reality”, only mirrors. The cultural tide seems to be a seeking after the spectacle rather than meaning and this is nowhere more evident than in the sports event. One may nevertheless impute the beautiful to the sports spectacle, a kind of aesthetics of the “kitsch”, which is to “elevate” sports to the category of the “beautiful”. One can find *parallels* in art and see pop art as a kind of aesthetic precursor in this regard; so too the prominence of the body in Fluxus. Furthermore, the dissolution of the “thing itself” or art in the form of the “ready-made” undermines the so-called power of the (artistic) image. From such examples, sport becomes an exemplar of the mass (re)produced, the “kitsch” and the aesthetically hybrid (in drawing out these parallels, one could say the cultural tide as manifest in, for example, art and sport, dialectically influence one another). Even conceptual art is influential here, in that one might argue that the non-sensory experience is perhaps akin to the disembodied experience of watching sports (or playing unselfconsciously) as the self is dissolved in the abstract form projected onto the television screen, and even in live sports, as the imaginative, patterned construct that is the game with its rules, geometric structures and fantasy take hold. In this way, the “body” is rendered a cultural and symbolic “entity”. In this light, one is pressed to call sport any more a real reflection of “reality” than art and therefore in eroding the boundary between art and sport, in what sense then is a sportsperson an athlete or actor/ress. This lack of clarity could be seen as a lack of meaningful content for in what sense then is “an athlete” real!

This lack of a “reality” means that to say that postmodern sport is only a matter of celebration and sensual creativity and as aesthetic in its very ineffability, is only half the story. The “body” can also be seen as a contested region of the personal and the political as Foucault (1976:25) warns: “The body is also directly involved in a political field; power relations have an immediate hold upon it; they invest it, mark it, train it, torture it, force it to carry out tasks, to perform ceremonies, to emit signs”. Through discipline and control for economic use, the “body” (the form, an aesthetic...) is maintained by the production and circulation of discourse (the extra-aesthetic, the ideological...). For example, there is the perennial patriarchal disciplinary power that pervades sporting culture. Furthermore, this is fuelled by the working on the seeming individualism of “desire”, via the mass media so that sport offers icons of youth, health, beauty, excitement and personal “freedom”. All this really is an inundation of consumerism which, I would argue, is as a direct consequence of sporting

practice. I believe that this consumerism is insidious to the extent of rendering “authentic” sport verging on the meaningless, unless we reconstruct it as instances of aesthetic “play”. In other words, rather than simply see sport as meaningless, because of the erosion of boundaries we may be in the creative position whereby we can interpret sport as being like art, given the latter’s equally questionable meaning/authority/definition. In so doing, one postmodern argument as presented by Welsch (2005), Kupfer (2001), Reid (1970), Elcombe (2012) and Platchias (2010) goes even further and argues that sport is one kind of art form.

3.5. The argument from “intertwining”

Philosophical discussions about whether or not sport is art already existed in the 1970s and 1980s. They were triggered by L.A. Reid (1970), D. Best (1979, 1980, 1985), S.K. Wertz (1984) and Cordner (1988). Rather than try to argue that sport is art (Welsch, Platchias...) or sport is not art (Best, Cordner...) or that *some* sport is art (Reid, Wertz, Kupfer), I shall argue that an “intertwining” of concepts aids one in meaningfully relating sport to art in a coherent manner. The “argument from intertwining” extends art theory into the realm of sport theory, while maintaining an open classification as to what counts as aesthetic. Moreover, that this argument is made when the language to describe art and sport together is metaphorical and treats instinct, sensuality and abstraction as forming a continuum, a composite whole, without either conflating art with aesthetics, art with some or all sport or that art and sport are diametrically opposed categories. To demonstrate the soundness of this argument, I draw key “moments” from several significant theorists who have either argued that sport is art or the reverse; in each case it appears that they all at least agree, in my estimation on a what I call “intertwining” wherein we need not come to a conclusive resolution as to whether sport is art. A subtler “sharing” of concepts at least allows one to speak of art and sport in such a way that they are not simply separate practices, without necessarily equating them either. What we can say is that aesthetic experience may be applied to different contexts if we so desire, which is not a question of equating these contexts. Instead, we can metaphorically talk about these manifestations of aesthetics, or in other words talk of sport as being *like* art, for example. This metaphorical “sharing” can be visualised in a Venn diagram (see figure 4, page 156), repeated so as to convey the numerous possible contexts in which this takes place, rather than an ultimate statement about art and sport, both of which evolve. Furthermore, the “argument from intertwining” sets up an ongoing oscillation between aesthetic experience and extra-

aesthetic interpretation that pertains not only to art, but sport as well should one accept sport as art-like. Should we confer aesthetic valuation to sport it would be reasonable to “intertwine” art and sport somewhat.

Art and sport share certain characteristics. They are both more or less aesthetic. They both present some body, something external to be evaluated and experienced. Many languages can be used to describe and understand art and sport, aesthetic language being one. I argue for what I have termed the “intertwining argument” whereby there is a co-existence of art talk, sport talk and aesthetic meanings. An example of this conception can be seen in the writings of Kupfer (2001:19) who writes (on sport):

...perfection in negation lies at one pole of aesthetic experience and human life – the pole of austerity. It is minimal, clean and simple with counterparts in sport, in both nature and art. In nature, we delight in the austerity of stark vistas of desert or ocean. The perceptually boundless expanse of sand or water provides an aesthetic intensity that is captivating in its bare repetition. In art, we appreciate the clean lines of Brancusi’s ‘Bird in flight’ or the minimalist painting of Rothko. At the other pole of experience is plenitude and proliferation. We also enjoy the seemingly endless profusion of flowers in a meadow or the starry galaxy that appears to spill forever into inky space. So, too, in sports. The counterpoint to perfection as negation is the aesthetic exuberance of abundance: the quarterback who throws for over 400 yards or completes a handful of touchdown passes; soccer and hockey players who score three, four, even five goals in a game...

We can enjoy abundance and proliferation as well as negation and austerity in nature, art and sport. The aesthetics of abundance and negation are “intertwined” in sport as art-like.

If we can thus metaphorically fuse art, sport and the aesthetic, then it seems that they can fulfil similar goals, that their task is somewhat akin. In fact, as Elcombe (2012:71) asserts: “... due to sport’s span of passionate appeal – from the local to the global – as well as its irreducibly embodied, kinaesthetic nature, sport is well positioned to perform art’s cultural task better than traditional forms of art”. Here art and sport are “intertwined” not in the sense that sport is simply dubbed “low” art, but in that sport as an aesthetic, cultural phenomenon may continue the work of art, namely as a meaningful human practice with the intent that as Alexander (1993:205-6) puts it - “a sensed texture of order, possibility, meaning and anticipation” - is potentially experienced. In other words, this “texture” of meaning is

presented in sport as it is with art, a “texture” that one can grasp experientially and aesthetically that gives rise to pleasure which, at the same time, gives one a sense of conceptual meaning should we choose to perceive it so. That is, in art we *look* for meaning, in the sense that should we be presented with X in the context of art, it is the assumed practice of art that X as an aesthetic object at the same time ought to be interpreted. If we take that same practice and say that sport too is aesthetic then we are enjoined to interpret what we perceive. Thus, the “texture” of perceptual experience may resonate with meaning. Or more accurately: cultural practices such as art and sport are “intertwined” should we choose to apply a similar practice of “right perception”, that is, aesthetic appreciation and aesthetic attention (which may or may not lead to its symbolic, non-visible extra-aesthetic meanings.)

Without conflating art with the aesthetic and eroding clear boundaries between art and sport, I still hold it makes more sense to allow the free play of “art”, “sport” and “aesthetics” and so develop a language that can apply to both art and sport. Here is an example from Platchias (2010:14) who writes (on sport):

...What ‘dictates’ that the athlete discern and instantiate a ‘winning pattern’ is the free play of the powers of cognition, which enables him to envisage the perfectly harmonised arrangement of means and ends (the whole) and then to employ the ‘special patterns’, each instantiation of which is the perfect arrangement of means and ends (the particular) and is what arouses the aesthetic contemplation or what gives aesthetic pleasure and, further what enhances the aesthetic pleasure is when the particular is harmonised with the whole ...

What we have here is a description (in the context of his essay) of the athlete clearly in the language of art. While Platchias holds that sport can be equated with art as is clear from the language he uses, my contention is rather that similarity of language simply reveals not a literal equivalence, but a metaphorical allusion from different domains of experience one to the other so that there is an “intertwining” of various cultural expressions and indeed in the very language of trying to understand them.

Even in Reid’s early 1970 article where he clearly separates art from sport, he does end off with the observation that some sports, like figure skating, are art as it is almost inseparable from dance. My problem with Reid’s analysis is that he writes as if art and sport or games are neatly parcelled into definite categories but subsequent art post-1970 – not only in theory – has shown this not to be the case. For example, Velez’s *The fight* (2008), a performance piece

wherein boxing clubs were invited to train inside of the iconic walls of the Tate Modern where elements of boxing were orchestrated with music and dance. The assumption is that art and sport are often in “a Manichaean struggle in cities like London: corporate built structures and mass mediation versus art’s utopian abolition of different spheres of life” (Velez 2008:5). By bringing them together, perhaps something that is neither art nor sport is created, subverting assumed structures in the process. This example shows the “intertwining” nature of sport, the aesthetic and art, their relational value, perhaps sensed by Reid but not taken to its logical conclusion – that is, a kind of indivisibility between seemingly different and incommensurate games.

If the argument from “intertwining” has some validity, then one can take many examples from the canonised history of Western art, and apply this reading. So, for example, *Laocoon*⁸² is a powerful image in which we can see struggling, fighting, writhing, *moving athleticism*, so that it is perhaps an image of profound aesthetic power. It is art cloaked with the veneer of sporting aesthetics or athleticism in the context of art. Laocoon is as much an image of art as it is of sport: it is aggressive and violent, yet one of beauty; the combination of Eros and Thanatos, of erotic pleasure and traumatic self-annihilation. The sporting image is not simply one of serenity and stasis, of rationality and purity, but knows itself through confronting the world, at once heroic, his musculature vivid – and disturbing - where self is potentially annihilated, analogous to a knock-out punch in boxing, for example. My argument is that sport’s attractiveness and prevalence draws from its artistic source such as in this example. Just as we apply aesthetic and extra-aesthetic readings to art, so we should do so for sport considering the sport in art.

Another widely different example is the abstract configuration of Newman’s zip paintings where there is a strong vertical line matched by equally strong colour fields and geometries. This can be likened to an emphatic move in a sport, its precision and aesthetic coordination or composition. The argument can work the other way around: The referee in soccer makes a line to indicate where the players must stand when a free-kick is about to be taken. He is probably not conscious that he has made a kind of artistic Pollock-like mark. The footballer assesses the angles and skilfully spins the ball into the vacant net. He or she is not necessarily conscious that he or she was motivated by the aesthetics of “accuracy”, “formal coherence”

⁸² Hagesandros, Polydoros and Athenodoros, Laocoon and His Two Sons, circa 1st Century. Marble, height 96 inches. Vatican Museums, Rome.

and “balance” over and above the functional aim to score, to win and to simply play a game in accordance with rules. So there is art in sport.

Art is the paradigm root of aesthetic experience, but it filters through – with our awareness, our choice to perceive in this way – into other domains such as cooking, cleaning, friendship, sport and so on ... Aesthetic motivations, that is, what we value and praise, proceed logical determination. They are like axioms without which there is no system, no sense of the direction as well as integration of logical and affective dimensions. We need first to value and praise something before we set to systemise its conditions and parameters. If we reinterpret art (history) in such a way that we celebrate its connection to the everyday, we do not thereby topple it from its “pedestal”. Rather, we may in fact invigorate the mundane, not in order simply to thus minimise the value of art. On the contrary to assess, nay experience and judge activities usually not associated with art, as being aesthetic, may enhance those activities. It is simply a matter of choosing this direction. Nevertheless, there is simultaneously an extra-aesthetic component, a politicisation of form and thus our value judgements and aesthetic predilection continuously needs to transform, be critiqued or else we run the risk of declaring “beauty!” when all around, there is the desolation of ethical norms in a given society, including the one we may be a part of. So, I believe that we need to recognise the pervasiveness of the aesthetic, drawing from the example of art (and nature) with the intent that aesthetic sensitivity in art and in fact all cultural manifestations, does the job of bettering society, rather than simply being the tool that institutions, including artistic ones, wield to usurp power to the detriment of society at large.

True power lies in *Laocoon's* struggle as an immediate, perceptual fact, rather than as a political, historical and mythical “fact”, but that power is tempered and often manipulated by these other latter associations. That power means the snakes and the struggling figure mean something, have a history and the pain of the “protagonist” is *real*, not simply a perceptual delight as art, as athletic, as aesthetic. As argued in the introduction, it appears that both realities co-exist, that is immediate perceptual fact (presence) and mediated conceptual meaning. Perhaps Duchamp recognised the necessary “impurity” of form (meaning over and above reaction to the present “image”) as he declared a found-object as art, in a sense trying to eradicate the aesthetic/extra-aesthetic narrative of (Western) history, in the elision between art (something supposedly created) and life. In the process, this declaration seemingly destroying art so that life itself could become beautiful (art), not simply forms to be venerated

as art while life need not be beautiful. The binary shifts in his act, though history (of art) is such that his “act” became canonised, its effect therefore repelled. By reclaiming everyday life (sport) as being aesthetic, one is attempting to present sport as a kind of “found-object”. This is perhaps not in a Duchampian sense as he rejected the aesthetic valuation of the object, while I am arguing that aesthetics enhances the appreciation and integration/”intertwining” of life-praxis.

Of course one could retort and say there is an aesthetic dimension to even violence. My response is simply that just as there are rules to sport and certain tacit rules in art (we would be outraged by certain things in the context of art⁸³), so life and the aesthetics of everyday life would be circumscribed by some rules (hence I could envisage an aesthetic of law...).

It may be more appropriate to speak of an “intertwining” of concepts that resists specification other than metaphorical integration of seemingly separate categories. In this way, I have avoided the “is sport art” question and argued instead for an insoluble unity of experience, an experience that one can potentially find in the everyday. I was not able to fully resolve whether that kind of aesthetic experience is simply an aesthetic one or if it may have a singular or numerous other extra-aesthetic meaning/s to what is “present” refers.

3.6 . Conclusion

In this chapter, I explicated the postmodern “language turn” according to Derrida’s development of the Saussurian linguistic structural notion. Derrida’s insight that this structure is not controlled by *langue* leads to a thesis of infinite differentiation and the non-presence of the sign. I dealt with this in the first section.

One of the implications for art is that the dual detotalizing project of the postmodern exists, both as a levelling of the “playing-fields”, and as a meaninglessness, as nothing can claim any value apart from anything else. This I dealt with in the section entitled “ineffability” whereby metaphor, “play” and freedom, and inclusivity were described via the lens of the

⁸³ The proof of this is that one does not bat an eyelid or consult a mental health practitioner if a person were to stand staring at an artwork – it is an assumed normal practice. Similarly, the way fans may act in the context of a sporting event – screaming, dressing up and the like – all this is considered normal practice. Of course, what renders such things normal is acculturated social practice and arbitrary conventions. Taken out of context, such behaviour may be considered “abnormal”.

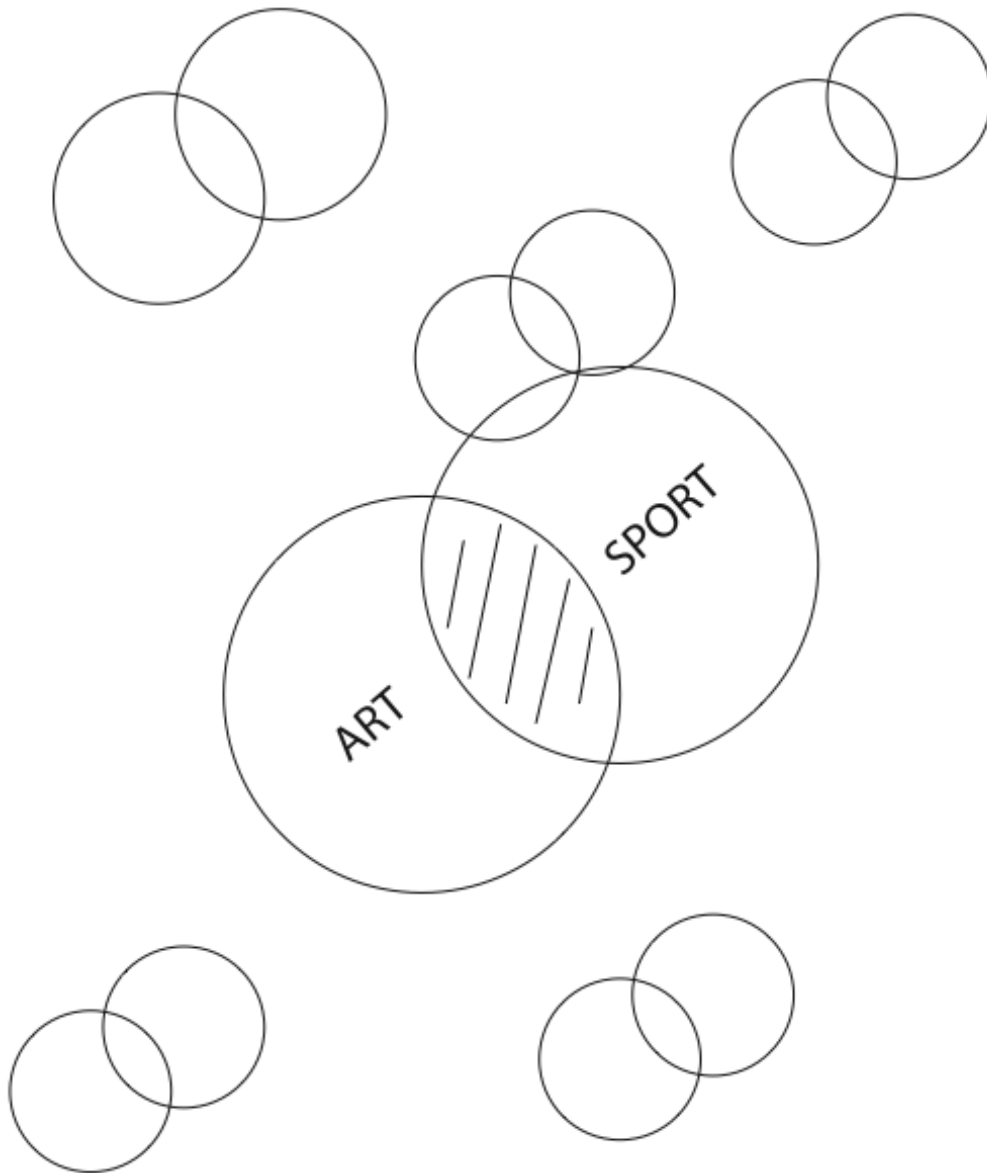
“language turn” as applied to art. However, in the same vein, the potential meaninglessness in art was assessed using the same categories as for the positive possibilities.

In the following section, I apply the reading of art as a mode of aesthetic play to another cultural realm, that of sport, where the sign “aesthetic” applies. In similar vein as in art then, sport reveals both an ineffability and meaninglessness, and examples were used to support the argument of this dual perspective. However, I propose that meaninglessness may be overcome, should we consider sport as an aesthetic modality and even metaphorically like art, that art and sport are “intertwined” concepts/activities/languages. At the very least, the shift in art aesthetics/extra-aesthetic (in terms of the postmodern paradigm) and the post-structural “language turn”, may contribute to an aestheticisation of everyday life-issues with potentially positive results. In the struggle between aesthetics and real-life issues, a resolution may be that aesthetics can enhance everyday life and vice versa. In this sense, communication across disciplines and within disciplines may prove beneficial for world-bettering.

Through an analysis of the post modern deconstruction of language as correspondence and its application to art, one moves beyond art as autonomous and instead may regard the aesthetic as all-encompassing, as permeating all aspects of life, including sports. By not acknowledging the potential widening of the aesthetic arc – and in particular the penetration of art within daily life – one impoverishes not only such “other” aspects of life, but art itself. Assenting to such an argument, in theory and in practice, we are better placed to eradicate a narrow view of art (which in the past was often based on a supposive deep ontology and teleology) and life. Thus the institutions through which art is mediated, as it were, may be better placed to express this kind of creative spirit. And it is precisely the institutional nature of art and sport to which I now turn.

Figure 4: Intersection

The meeting point of Art & Sport in multiple, plural instances:



AD INFINITUM...

Chapter 4: Institutional theories of art and sport

4.1. Introduction

The previous chapters built on the idea that while notions of the aesthetic ideal and mimetic aesthetic “truth” are suspect, especially in light of the postmodern “language turn”, this may lead to a relationship or interplay between art and sport. In this regard, I offered a reading of sport and sport theory based on an artistic perspective which is now developed further in this chapter. This is done through an awareness of the common institutional nature of art and sport building on postmodern cultural contingency.

This chapter is structured in the following manner: It begins with versions of the institutional theory of art as outlined by Danto (1983, 2000) and Dickie (1969, 1971, 1974, 1984), including a critique of such theories. I then describe the art world by way of a summary as outlined by Thornton (2008) and others, and based on field work consisting of various interviews I conducted, notably with Hayden Proud, acting director and senior curator at the South African National Gallery in Cape Town. This is done in order to glean a certain “feel” for the so-called art world.

In the second section, I focus on sport as an institutional force. I sketch its historical formation into the modern institution that we are nowadays bombarded with through the media. This is based on Rowe (2004) who develops his “sport-media-cultural complex” thesis. This is followed by a Marxist critique of sport, primarily through the writings of Brohm (1989) and Brambery (1996) which undermines the modern capitalist institution of sport, reminding one that perhaps a culture’s games are not that innocent and natural, but rather tied up with economic realities, colonialism, imperialism and political dogma, that is extra-aesthetic concerns. In parallel fashion to art, sport “reveals” an ideological bias, probably unavoidable when human pursuit is circumscribed within institutional frameworks.

In the third section, I observe that both art and sport are embedded in what one may term the “institutionalized body” and often operate together, so that ideology and an aesthetic of persuasion co-exist. In the process the dividing line between art aesthetics and the everyday

become blurred. In this regard, I shall briefly recount Ancient Greek and Nazi Germany as instances where this was most emphatically the case. I shall end with a rumination of a further confluence between art and sport in *Zugzwang* (1995) by Herz. Here the game of art and the game of sport coalesce, but life as a game or rather culture as a game appears somewhat sinister. In this respect an institutional account of either art or sport or the two in tandem hopefully invites “play” and as it were, a lack of robust institutional control.

In the last section, I apply a reading of Wittgenstein to sport, whereby it is the practical embeddedness of our games, of culture – its institutional base – that define sport as a specific autonomous language. This insight is in the first place gleaned from how we negotiate meaning in the arts. In this way, one can extend our understanding of the aesthetics of sport through applying art theory. At the same time, the language of culture is situated within a lifeworld whereby its “autonomous language” is related to a number of extra-aesthetic factors.

4.2. Institutional theories of art

4.2.1. Dickie’s institutional theory of art and its discontents

In simple terms, one can see art as a cultural function and thus relative to our institutions of art. I shall outline the analytic philosophy of Dickie and then Danto’s version of the theory, in order to determine in what sense the institutional theory adequately defines art.

Dickie (1969:45, 1971:53, 1974:10) states in various ways that “works of art are art because of the position they occupy within an institutional context”. His first attempts at the theory begin with the following notions: “... a work of art in the descriptive sense is 1) an artefact 2) upon which society or some subgroup of a society has conferred the status of candidate for appreciation” (Dickie 1969:23). Writing about this early formulation of the theory, he acknowledges that “society” or “subgroup” creates the wrong impression, that works of art are created by society or a subgroup acting as a whole, which he does not intend saying. Rather, what he wants to say is that it must be “contemplated by a single person’s treating an artefact as a candidate for appreciation” (Dickie 1971:17), that is, the action of artists. Here one would include Duchamp’s “ready-mades” – the “art world” need not concur.

It would simply require a kind of christening an object as art; a fiat that such and such should be a candidate for appreciation. However, Hanfling (1999) makes the point that there is a distinction between being *regarded* as a work of fine art and actually *being* a work of art. The former concerns knowledge about the language and practices of the people concerned (for example at the time of the Lascaux cave paintings); regarding the latter we need simply “look and see” (Hanfling 1999:194). It is therefore not clear whether the institutional theory makes this distinction clear, even in the following form.

Dickie then reformulates his theory as follows: “...a work of art in the classificatory sense is 1) an artefact 2) upon which some person or person acting on behalf of a certain social institution (the art world) has conferred the status of candidate for appreciation” (Dickie 1971:45). Therefore it is not society acting as a whole that defines art. Although Dickie has been criticized, most notably by Wollheim (1987), Dickie maintains that Wollheim misinterpreted his theory by focusing on the earlier 1969 version. Thus, when Wollheim cynically asks whether art is made, whether “arthood” is confirmed by representatives of the “art world” who meet and jointly act as a group to confer status on certain objects, he is apparently unaware of Dickie’s later claim that there is no requirement for consensus, or nominating representatives of a vague “art world” as a totality, that would have to record conferrals and meet and set forth an agenda and so on.

Furthermore, Dickie reflects that institutional theory seems to be informal, but that he errs by using formal language. Wollheim ridicules his expressions like “confers upon” and “acting on behalf”. Dickie dropped the formal language in 1984. He argues in the reformulation that artists participate with understanding to make artworks, that artworks are artefacts to be presented to an “art world” public, and that the public try to understand the object. Thus one may construct an equation linking artist to the work of art to the “art-world” public which together equal or constitute the “art-world system”.

This deceptively simple theory accounts for art that the “eye cannot decry” (Dickie 1971:84) and opens up the possibility on a level of theory for dubbing a work such as Warhol’s *Brillo Boxes*⁸⁴ (1960) which is indistinguishable from the “real” *Brillo Box*, an artwork. The institutional theory can make such a distinction and even call the one object art, because of the “characteristics that artworks have as a result of their relation to their cultural context ...”

⁸⁴ Museum of Modern Art collection, New York.

(Dickie 1969:97). And to give further weight to the theory, Dickie adds that this cultural and historical context is necessary.

Certain writers (Lord 1987; Scholz 1994) have argued that Dickie's "art-world system" is circular, that the definitions of each term are contained in the other. Dickie, however, embraces and endorses the circularity of his argument. He argues that we learn the "art system" as children and the cultural code of art, artist and public forum, the art potentially been appreciated. Accordingly, one can learn that as a "set" – artist, work of art, public, art world, art world system – co-create one another. They are "inflected concepts", that bend on themselves both "presupposing and supporting one another" (Dickie 1971:102). Dickie's (1971:103) "structural notion" as he calls it is meant to be a formulation of what we already know as opposed to theories such as formalism, expressionism, idealism and mimetic, which try to define art in other terms. The emphasis here is that the art object is a cultural "product" which is passed on through teaching and learning, like for example, eating in a ritualized way. Art is a cultural invention and practice, and as such artworks are acculturated objects that may become "consensual linguistic practice" (Dickie 1971:108).

There are problems⁸⁵ with this theory, however, such as the power that institutions may have in deciding what is to be considered art and seen as part of a particular culture. The institution in question may be wrong and short-sighted. Brand (1995) claims that being a work of art is incompatible with institutionality because creating, presenting and appreciating a work of art are not governed by conventions. In short: institutions, according to Brand (1995) may preclude creativity, while art-making is more often than not thought to involve creativity, originality and spontaneity (Brand 1995). Dickie's "acculturated object" therefore may be little more than the ideology of an institution, a game that the artist plays or defining art as objects that a dealer or gallery sell as art, without telling us anything about art as an ontological state of existence. Therefore, perhaps the "object" is just an object that acquires value owing to its place within the cultural game, or there may be an intrinsic "depth", but it would be unknowable and unquantifiable, apart from its embeddedness as institutional "play" (having social, economic, political, historical and cultural "value").

⁸⁵ C.f. Matravers, D (2000, 2007) analytic critique of the Institutional theory, especially his attempt to overcome the theory being reduced to an object of art simply by fiat with what he calls good reasons, though no trans-historical reasons are to be found in my opinion.

4.2.2. *Danto's institutional theory of art and its discontents*

Danto takes Dickie's notion of the "art world" a step further. He maintains that "x is a work of art at time t if and only if the theory held by the 'art world' at t canonizes x" (Danto 2003:15). Therefore, it is not so much a declaration on the part of the artist that X is a work of art or that X is accepted by a dealer or a museum or the like, but the writing in of X within the context of an art historical framework.

Danto's version of the "institutional theory" is a subtler and wider version than that of Dickie. One could argue that it "embraces all those aspects of our culture that need to find space for those exercises of the imaginative celebration that cannot be reduced to other cultural categories" (Appelbaum & Thomson 2002:253). *Brillo Boxes* (1960) by Warhol is considered an artwork in the context of the narrative of art history and perhaps spells the end of modernism, the end of a *purely* formalist concern and ushers in the posthistorical and postmodern age, wherein art can still be made, but without a clear direction and by extension – definition. It is therefore not what is in the object as such, that is, art as inviting a kind of contemplative aura and aesthetics. Rather the cultural theoretical edifice associated with the object, through which we see it or are taught to see it in a particular way, provides the framework⁸⁶ for viewing an object as art. This explains how it is that a new art theory may effect our view or perception of certain objects in an art context.

The fact is that today any object could conceivably be an art object. Danto asks what it could mean to live in a world where anything could be art. He maintains that the history of art is such that self-consciousness has reached its end, that we inhabit a kind of posthistorical and philosophical self-awareness⁸⁷. One could say a theory of this sort came about in tandem with and as a consequence of the art of the mid to late twentieth century. The "new vision" of the "absolute *Brillo Box* could only have drawn upon the associated meanings that gave life to *Brillo Box* as a work of art in 1964, not 1864, (that is) a space that opened up for at least a

⁸⁶ In the same way, we don't ordinarily see reality as it is (Kant's Noumenon), but what the eye is able to see (that is, specific wave-like frequencies that resonate as visible light). So that "reality" is the interaction between our limited, relative perception and external reality (the external world), though we know it to be inaccurate or approximate at best. This coheres with my earlier discussion of mimesis.

⁸⁷ This could be contested as it is perhaps only with hindsight, in the making/writing of "history" that any given time period is made aware.

certain segment of the “art world” to accept it as art without hesitation” (Danto 2003:ix, brackets my inclusion). Thus the historical situation contributes to an object’s status as art; “external factors” as Danto (2003: x111) puts it.

These “external factors” take time to ferment and enter public consciousness and may even mean the overhaul of a culture’s conception of beauty or even its eradication. Duchamp’s “readymades” of 1917 were not immediately accepted by the “art world” of the society of independent artists who sponsored the exhibition. Fry’s exhibition of postimpressionists at Grafton gallery in London in 1910 and 1912 caused an outrage because of the lack of its “life-likeness”. What Duchamp and the postimpressionists were trying to do was to be critical of the “retinal flutter” (Danto 2003:xv) and develop an intellectual art in Duchamp’s case and a revised aesthetic in the case of postimpressionism. Later Fluxus used food as art; the minimalists used sections of prefabricated buildings and other industrial products; pop artists appropriated cartoons on the inside of bubblegum wrappers and presented them as paintings; conceptualists such as Denis Oppenheim dug a hole in a mountain in Oakland, California and offered it as sculpture which could not be transported to a museum. A situation therefore developed wherein everything could be art. Beuys’s famous maxim that “everyone is an artist” captures this spirit. In dance someone simply sitting in a chair could be a dance-piece; avant-garde music challenged the distinction between musical and non-musical events. The life–art schism was blurred⁸⁸. In this maelstrom, Danto’s theory that such objects, once canonized, become vessels of meaning or art, allows for the proliferation of creative “acts” that widen the category of art, but situated within theoretical discourse, there are still intelligible boundaries. In other words, even as the form that art takes may vary, there is an ongoing debate and theoretical culture in tandem with art practice, such that categories, comparisons and what one might term an “ordering” give some kind of coherence to the arts, even if it is at first merely a label. Nevertheless, these interventions destabilize the traditional subjects and methods of art as they do an art theoretical paradigm – which Danto appears to take into account.

But Danto’s theory poses difficulties. The theory may allow for malleable readjustments, that is, as art changes and transforms so the theory adapts to co-opt it as yet another art form, this “malleability” may be construed as flimsiness, even vacuousness. Art may be inextricably

⁸⁸ Did this spell the “end of art” or the beginning of a new conception of art? Danto cites Hegel who purports that art is intellectual, not natural, but “born of spirit” (in Danto 2003:13) and that a higher state of “absolute-spirit” (Hegel’s phrase) no longer require art practice to satisfy its highest needs.

bound up with social institutions and artistic conventions, but none of these is so crucial and pervasive as to determine the nature of art itself, that is, rather than tell us what art is, such a theory relies on others to tell us! Since the “art world” and artists change historically, for example before museums, there could be no museum-goers, the historical argument is self-defeating. In other words, you cannot argue for a particular theory of art that says that the theory of art is subject to change with the art, for that very notion itself is embedded in an historical moment and therefore it too may change.

Relativising the “historical moment” one realizes that only in an “art world” of a certain sort, with artists playing a specific social role in concrete historical circumstances of the modern and postmodern twentieth century capitalism, could have generated the problem of status. It is a distinctively contemporary issue. The institutional theory of Danto is not so much a theory of art, but the question of status in contemporary art. It was not so much Greenberg, Rosenberg and others who introduced abstract expressionism into mainstream art theory as it was the “historical moment” of New York within contemporary society that gave such art status as great art and therefore a certain cultural clout to the said theoreticians. Knowledge becomes power; aesthetics and extra-aesthetic become one. This may be dangerous. Culture and civilization are equated. There is no self-critique. Totalitarianism under the guise of democracy and freedom is the order of the day.

Another difficulty with the theory is that the art institutions of a particular country may or may not support government and the latter need to justify the support of the arts given the fact that the arts certainly require financial assistance. Both institutions may have a different moral imperative or perhaps more ominously, the same moral conception of art, which may or may not curtail artistic expression. These issues will be looked at in the next section (4.3.), specifically in relation to my interviews with the South African National Gallery acting director, Hayden Proud.

4.3. The “art world”

Both Dickie and Danto developed the notion of the “art world”. In this section this idea of the modern “art world” will be defined and unravelled. This section is not a historical analysis of the changing nature of the institution of art from the tribal, the ideological of religious, mythical and so on, the nature of the artists guild system, patronage, commissions and the

academy, but rather some basic points regarding the contemporary art scene and the place of art institutions or an institutional theory of art in contemporary art practice. I will begin with Thornton's (2008), and to a lesser extent, Rodriguez's (2011), Peterson's (2012), Yogeve's (2009) and Lau's (2010) description of the "art world" followed by field-work in the South African context which assists in locating the role of the institution in defining and theorizing about current art. In all such cases, there is an underlying cynicism about the "rightness" of the contemporary art world which I myself concur with.

Thornton (2008:41) argues that "the contemporary art world is a loose network of overlapping subcultures held together by a belief in art". Rodriguez (2011: 322) defines the contemporary scene as moving from exclusive and centralised to "omnivorously all-embracing and self-revisionist". However, the "art world" has so-called capitals in New York, London, Los Angeles and Berlin, rendering the "art world" more polycentric than in the days of Paris and then New York. The "art world" consists in the main of the artists and included here is the role of the arts institution, that is, arts education, the dealer, curator, critic and collector, though artist-critics and dealer-collectors also exist. Thornton (2008) describes the art market as having symbolic value. In this sense, it is an "economy where people swap thoughts and where the cultural worth is debated rather than determined by brute wealth" (Thornton 2008: xii). She further describes the "art-world" players as consisting of hierarchies of fame, credibility, imagined historical importance, certain institutional affiliations, perceived intelligence, education, wealth and also determined by the size of one's collection. Therefore great works of art do not just arise; they are made not just by artists and their assistants, but also by dealers, curators, critics and collectors who support the work.

Thornton (2008) claims that art is like a new religion wherein art events produce certain conformity around shared interests. This conformity very often results in the artist who makes a work that looks like art that reinforce stereotypes; collectors buying fashionable painters, critics following public opinion, and curators being paid to uphold the ideas of museum boards. It appears that Thornton is rather discontent, that is, in a kind of cynical agreement with Dickie and his argument that art is simply a function of a *fashionable* "art world". One can also detect this discontentment in the writings of Lau (2013:22) who describes the "players" in the art world as wielding power in virtue of their "economic heft, rather than the capacity to produce or examine art".

Moreover, "... the art world is not a system or smooth functioning *machine*, but rather a conflicted cluster of subcultures – each of which embrace different definitions of art" (Thornton 2008: xix, my emphasis). For example, the "auction" sees art as a good investment opportunity, a luxury good; "the crit" defines art as an intellectual endeavour, a lifestyle rather than an occupation; at "the fair" art is a fetish and leisure activity; "the prize" creates art that is a museum attraction, involves the media and is evidence of artistic worth; "the magazine" promotes the artist and produces text about the art; "the studio visit" consists of all of the above, and the "biennale" is primarily a place for networking, international curiosity, and an ingredient in a good show. In all such definitions there are blurred lines between work and play, local and individual, the cultural and economic. In all these formats it appears to be a game at work, as Lau (2013:25, my emphasis) observes: "lists play upon the sycophantic imaginary of contemporary art, where the publicity *machine* seeks to gain advantage in naming the stars of the culture industry while pitting its players against each other in competition".

It was only since the late 1950s that art was sold publicly. The auctioneers know the seating arrangement at the auction itself, that is, who is likely to bid and be aggressive or not. Christies and Sotheby's own ninety eight percent of the global auction market for art. Thornton (2008:5) describes the auction as "high society spectator sport" or theatre, a coliseum of sorts with the proverbial thumbs up or down. The "art-world" talk is as much about paintings, sculptures and photographs as it is about property assets. There is a certain "sales rhetoric" (Thornton 2008:10) in the use of romantic notions such as "genius" and "masterpiece". There is a sense in the "art world" that art is only worth what someone is willing to pay for it. A hype is created that a certain work or artist is culturally significant and therefore owning it would bring further success. There is a new buyer's boom in that people want to become part of the lifestyle or fashion-scene⁸⁹ of the new "institutional multiculturalism" (Peterson 2012:195), by which is meant that there is a far greater inclusion of so-called non-Western art in the art institutional systems of the West.

In "The Crit", Thornton (2008) focuses on the prestigious art institute, CalArts, (UCLA). Educators seek to demystify art for students. They contend that art is not simply what is done

⁸⁹ I say "apparent openness" as I concur with Peterson (2012:197) that a hierarchy is perpetuated whereby Western artists gain recognition on the basis of their individual artistic merits whereas non-Western artists are only recognized as representatives of their own ethnic community and local culture to which they or their ancestors belong.

by the hands and wrists, but is in need of a conceptual basis otherwise one is “a pretender, illustrator or designer” (Thornton 2008:53). “The Crit” is like an oral exam to test the strength of the visual work which prepares the student for negotiating influences, conversations with critics, press releases, catalogues and so on. Most students will not make it as artists. “The soul of the institution”, writes Thornton (2008:53) “is to give each artist his voice, not just pander to the market”. The institution counters outmoded concepts such as “beautiful”, “creative”, “genius”, “masterpiece” and “sublime”; yet at the same time there appears to be a reconsideration of works of art from an aesthetic and epistemological point of view according to Peterson (2012) and Lau (2013). The crit is useful not only to develop aesthetic discourse, but historically artists need other artists and links are forged at such crits, the Young British Artist, who met at a CalArts is a case in point.

In “the fair”, Thornton (2008) focuses on “Art Basel”, the world’s most important contemporary art fair, which brings prestige for the galleries represented. Yogevev (2010:511) describes “the fair” as a conglomeration of social mechanism behind quality evaluation processes. Collectors, like artists, are not made in a day. In buying art one is, in a way, buying into someone’s life. The fair is more interactive than auctions and includes the artist’s presence. In turn, the artist’s work is enhanced by who owns it. This fate of the artwork or system appears to confirm “Dickie’s circle”. Art buyers look for what they love and for integrity on the part of the artist. Given the globalization of the “art world”, international art fairs have proliferated over the past fifteen years. Galleries’ roles differ: some are artist-orientated dealers who are often art school graduates who discover that they have an aptitude for organizing exhibitions; some are collector-focused dealers, often having apprenticed at Sotheby’s or Christies and often start out as collectors themselves, and some are curator-dealers, who studied art history and excel at scholarly justifications of their artists’ work. But in the “art world” there is no necessary set training or certification; anyone can call himself or herself a dealer or gallerist.

The “collecting types”, according to both Thornton (2008) and Yogevev (2010) are often speculators and resemble gamblers. They study the form, read the art magazines, listen to the word on the street and go by hunches. The “tankers” are collectors who cast a big net with the desire to say “I own that” or “I have one” or “I bought that in 1986”. Some like to “buy in depth” meaning to purchase many works of one artist. It is not always art historical knowledge that is telling but negotiating the difficult deal that is important. A lot of art,

according to Thornton (2008) is not art but just made cynically for a certain brand of collector who believe they are buying into a global kind of art. Peterson (2012) questions this sentiment and observes that “it is the institutional, economic and discursive system that sustains their production, distribution and reception that have become globalized”. In other words, it is unclear if we can speak of an international, universal or multicultural work of art per se, so that buyers simply buy into the prevailing network/system.

“The prize” that Thornton (2008) assesses is the coveted Turner prize. It was inaugurated in 1984. The winner receives twenty five thousand pounds, acquires great prestige and provides for the potential of long-term greatness. It often becomes a national dinner conversation, not surprising as the Tate Modern which hosts the finalists and their works, is the most popular tourist attraction in Britain and the most visited modern art museum in the world. There are four selected finalists who are exhibited at the Tate. The exhibition acts as a platform to help people reflect on art for themselves versus the curator’s perspective. The general philosophical position of the judges is that art should not just please the eye, but open up your mind-set. But from the public’s perspective, Thornton (2008:136) ruminates, “there is no time to be profound. It is like a football event, where you can share people’s anxiety about who is going to win and take pleasure in someone’s euphoria at the end of the game”. Whoever they choose is a reflection of themselves. A nomination and especially a win makes the price of that artist’s work much higher. As Yogev (2010:530) explains it is the dominant, well-known elite group that dictates the dominant artistic tone, that is, that determines who shall win various prizes, which are summarily described as due to the “ongoing self-validating nature of social judgements” even where “non Western art underwent an accelerated and surprising process of symbolic recapitalisation” (Rodriguez 2011:323), it could still be argued that this simply mirrors the prevailing Western discourse.

In the section on the “The magazine,” Thornton (2008) makes the point that while the “art world” may be decentred and global, Manhattan is still the print media art capital that supports more art critics than any other city. Here she is referring specifically to “Artforum”, the most influential art magazine. Artists’ careers can be boosted when they are included in the magazine. Rodrigues (2001) and Lau (2013) both argue that major magazines like the over-the-top titles “Artnews” (what, which, whose art is news?) or “art review” (which/whose art is to be reviewed?) include lists that are like a calling card – a who’s who for dealers or aspiring art stars to identify with and whom these dealers and buyers should curry favour – a

list based on who has bought or sold the most expensive items. Art critics, on the other hand, are “just spectators who say what they think” (Thornton 2008:151) – an idea that gives the impression that the “art world” is a kind of game or sport. The artwork is more than just an object. Things live not just by direct experience of them but by rumour, discussion, argument and fantasy. Thus critics create meaning; “... they are detectives of sorts” (Thornton 2008:156). Not just artists and their work but exposure for a gallery in this prestigious magazine is equally important. Therefore galleries may pay great sums to advertise. However, such magazines could be accused of being narrow and elitist.

On “the biennale”, Thornton (2008) describes the world’s largest single assembly of “art world” workers and their observers. There are certain social hierarchies and a visual overload as the biennale captures the global aesthetic moment. The show is not organized by galleries but determined by national identity and other curatorial themes. Art is often used as a tool for foreign policy. It consists in international dialogue and contact between people, in order to make a more diverse and richer “art world”. On the basis of much of what has been said, one could quite easily equate “richer art world” as simply a monetary concern, nothing deeper.

Although it is advisable that artists follow the appropriate channels, namely studying at an art institution, acquiring primary dealer representation, residency awards, reviews in art magazines, having art in prestigious private collections and enjoying exposure at the biennale sales at auction houses, contemporary art is such that there are no rules or at least nothing clearly defined. If there are no clearly marked rules, the possibility for variety and originality is emphasized. Therefore, many consider that the true worth of art is in its uniqueness, the necessity to break the mould. Thornton thus concludes that in contemporary art we are not dealing with the problem of definition, with the distinction between art and not art, but “between brave (a creative exploration) and eye-opening work and vapid (dull illustration), attention-seeking work” (Thornton 2008: 260). In this sense art seeks to redefine itself and in the process offer a new aesthetic or at least a widening arc of what can be aesthetic. Or less optimistically, the aesthetic is simply a function of institutional control, which itself has an economic base. Lau (2013:25) thus writes that “(art)...as a function of neo liberal economic ideology, competition is naturalized while inequality is the unfortunate, yet inevitable secondary result”. In this sense, art is reduced to a kind of brand(ing) where profit is the primary aim; critique is subsumed, becoming for the most part “mere cheerleading”.

However, in agreement with Lau (2013:26): “we can be privy to the degradation of criticism, but we never have to be complicit”.

In the previous section, the idea that the “art world” is suffused with certain primary “players”⁹⁰ and forums such as the art educational institution⁹¹, the art magazine, the Biennale and so on, there is also the role of a national institution in forging a definition and politics of art. I intend to give some idea of how this plays itself out particularly in the South African context drawn primarily from interviews with Hayden Proud⁹², chief curator of the South African National Gallery. I am aware this is only a particular perspective and a more thorough perspective would have been gained from perusing the gallery’s exhibition policies and the like and interviewing other “art world players” from the gallery, but nevertheless, a certain sense of the “art world” in the context of a national gallery can be gleaned. In this section as with the previous one, it is clear that whereas art has been described as pandering to economic realities, here we can add political extra-aesthetic concerns.

The National Gallery and its amalgamation with other collections are known as IZIKO. It is based on the example of the Smithsonian in Washington. However, Proud (2011, 2014) in an interview makes the point that “the new government forced the gallery into an amalgamation”. The National Gallery is a state institution and is partially state funded, therefore the gallery does subscribe to certain state policies. However, historically the National Gallery did not always toe the line under the old apartheid regime, much to the

⁹⁰ In an interview with David Zettler (12/03/11), a commercial dealer of thirty five years at the Hout Street Gallery in Paarl, it became clear to me that art was defined according to “classical” and conservative notions of painting. His aesthetic and concept of art was therefore his personal predilection or taste, though it consists in a narrow vision of what art could be. However, this “classical” perception is shared by his clientele and it is the kind of taste that motivates many serious and not so serious artists (for example, the traditional subject matter of the landscape or figure).

I also spoke to Rose Korber (16/03/11), a prominent South African dealer. Her views are broader, but she is swayed by the market when choosing works, in that she often chooses artists who are already established, even though her “gut feeling” about the work is important.

In an interview with Ed Young (04/05/11), a co-owner of the Youngblackmans gallery in Cape Town, it became clear that his view of the gallery was that it was to be a “project space”, in keeping with an experimental approach to art-making and what a gallery ought to be. It included such works as Kendel Geers “brick through a window” which was presented, curiously at the time of the 2010 World Cup in South Africa. In the interview, it became evident that his intention was not simply to sell art, but to invite debate about the very idea of what art is, breaking with the traditional mould, that is, classical painting or the like.

⁹¹ I had a discussion with Andrew Lamprecht, lecturer in the discourse of art at Michaelis (UCT) on the 9/3/11. I mentioned the institutional theory and asked him what he thought of it. He feels it is the *artist* that defines what art is. The artist is often institutionally sanctioned, he goes on to say, with a BA(FA) and the like, though sometimes institutions back artists with no such formal training, though that is usually the exception. The educational institution decides about the courses (curriculum) based on lecturers’ interests and knowledge.

⁹² I conducted interviews with Hayden Proud on 31/04/11 and 22/05/14.

irritation of the minister of national education, under whom the gallery fell, as there was then no department of arts and culture. It is relevant to note here that as an art gallery a certain political latitude ought to be the order of the day.

In terms of defining art, Proud comments that in the 1990s under Marylyn Martin a decision was taken not to make the distinction between art and craft, a legacy of colonial rule, and thus exhibit a range of cultural production, including beadwork, indigenous cultural artefacts, things made by anonymous female artists. Today this proposed definition is neither controversial nor unacceptable. However, the question as to the distinction between an art gallery and a cultural history museum remains somewhat nebulous.

Proud (2011) complains that the gallery has a compromised role as it is under funded. There is a need for bigger premises and storage facilities, that it “is pitifully small as a national art museum”. There are plans for a contemporary art museum next to the existing gallery because the colonial, neoclassical interior is not suitable for minimalist installation pieces that need much space. Globally, the gallery pales compared to First World countries as a national gallery. He cites New Zealand, a country of only four to five million, which he visited, as being so much more advanced than South Africa, because art is not a priority in this country. In this sense, Proud says that the old and the new dispensation are repeating the same patterns regarding a lack of interest in the arts.

Moreover, there is an “African identity prerogative” (Proud 2011, 2014). Therefore the National Gallery is mandated to fulfil certain prescribed governmental policies; there is a sense in which the gallery is watched by government, “even used by government” (Proud 2011, 2014). The government has certain priorities: HIV/AIDS, abuse and unemployment, and the gallery is expected to address these national concerns. Therefore, Proud goes on to say, an exhibition of Cezanne’s still-life’s’ would most likely not be exhibited, as it is not aligned with state concerns. But something like “Picasso and Africa” (exhibited in 2007) would be accepted, simply because it had to do with “Africa” – a Picasso exhibition without this theme would probably not have been brought to the National Gallery. The *Africa* theme has political ramifications⁹³. Thus one could perhaps argue that general, philosophical issues are sacrificed for political concerns.

⁹³ He cites Thabo Mbeki’s idea of the African renaissance and the president’s approval to join hands with the then French president who helped sponsor the exhibition.

However, these political realities in themselves constitute philosophical “depth”. Proud reflects on how the gallery has shifted its motivations in response to the political situation. This has resulted in a changing construction of identity: It began with the use of the gallery to uplift the “colonized philistines” and “show them what good painting was”, namely the European standards in around the 1940s. Local artists⁹⁴ were thus not included, including “white” local artists. Then with the New Group, the reaction against the academic tradition, the advent of modernism and recently, the “quest for an African identity”⁹⁵ (Proud 2011), South African art carved a niche for itself. These factors shaped the priorities of collections, so that the collections are a kind of reflection of the social history. In other words, the inclusions, exclusions and marginalization of certain artists, and kinds of art reflect an ideological, political and philosophical perspective that shifts as does the national entity that is South Africa, and perhaps more than any other gallery system, it is a national gallery that becomes the fulcrum around which these shifts take place.

It is also important to note that the shift in prices for an artist’s work generally improves immeasurably if an artist secures, say, a retrospective at the National Gallery. The case of Pemba is an example whose retrospective in 1996 skyrocketed the prices of his work. The gallery can thus be said to create “a yardstick of value” (Proud 2011) and Proud feels that dealers are often simply greedy, for example, in wanting to sell a Pemba back to the gallery at exorbitant prices, when in fact it is the National Gallery that established the market in the first place.

Finally, in response to my question as to what he considers to be the “art world”, Proud makes the point that there are “art worlds” in the plural. There is a South African “art world”, an international “art world” consisting of “art worlds” of other countries. That the “art world” is such that it “mutates and develops as we speak” (Proud 2011) given the digital revolution rendering the “art world” more “accessible, nebulous and a certain information overload” (Proud 2011). In South Africa, in particular, the “art-world” market is such that he is concerned about what he terms the “reversal of racial interest” and questions the very notion of a “national gallery” (Proud 2011, 2014). In a second interview, the gallery was dealing with a debacle with the out-going director which he described as a kind of “political football” (Proud 2014), but while all this was going on and the poorly state funded institution is in a

⁹⁴ Only in 1930s and 1940s did this begin to change, first with Piernief and later Preller, Batis and others. It was only in 1949 that the first full time director of the gallery was appointed.

⁹⁵ The gallery is mandated to show the cultural creativity of South African culture, “black” artists in particular (Proud 2011).

financial crisis, it was/is refreshing to hear the curator speak of art as one which “softens attitudes”, induces “empathy”, as “unifying”, as indicative of “a multiplicity of trends” and as subscribing to “no one orthodoxy”. Even though there is no clear-cut vision as to the trajectory of the National Gallery in the future prodded as it is by government officials who usually lacked any formal arts expertise/education, my sentiment is that there are some who care about art, not only as an arm of the state, but in its own terms (however difficult that may be to define discursively).

What is clear from this brief section is that one cannot ignore political – and other extra-aesthetic - ramifications insofar as what is presented as art and why this may be so. In this sense, art is a tool to further certain social ends, both positive and not so positive. Acknowledging that, claims of art as being culturally and aesthetically superior to “other objects” may be false. In this regard, the power that sport as an institution has on many may be regarded with the same caution as the institution of art. This thesis, however, is also concerned with a more, subtle aesthetic dimension attributable to both, and in the interface between institutional clout and aesthetic predilection, art and sport surface in the way they do.

4.4. The rise of the institution of sport

I concluded the previous section by saying that one cannot ignore the institutions that surround art if we want to deliver a theory of art, that art lives through a community of social relationships and assumes meaning (or rather a constructed one) as such. I would like to make the claim that the evolution of the institution of sports from mere play, survival and diversion towards the global phenomenon of modern sports can likewise in a parallel fashion be understood as a function of social connectivity. This is tantamount to a kind of social aesthetics, the cultivation of culture.

“Sport as an institution” parallels “art as an institution” insofar as one can make the observation that the art and sport of a particular historical moment takes the form it does based on the world view which is endorsed by the institutions of the day⁹⁶, which sometimes

⁹⁶ Only since the 1960s, for example, has science come on board to improve and enhance sporting performance. In a second interview (24/02/11) with Noakes (University of Cape Town), he makes the point that science as an institution is using its knowledge of physiology and human kinetics in order to get the best out of the sportsperson and thus sport today reflects the prevailing ideology of competitiveness which may be harmful. In fact, Noakes still maintains that sport must be fun and enjoyable and not only for the elite athlete. Personally, I feel one needs to inculcate this into the prevailing culture.

produce an overlap of the two. The modern form of art and sport could only have arisen in the context of certain historical changes such as industrialization, nationalism and capitalism, notwithstanding the long prehistory of art and sport⁹⁷.

When considering the history of sport, the shift from the premodern to the modern world-consciousness reveals the following: One can imagine this shift as an amorphous form wherein all activities occur simultaneously, such that there are no clear distinctions and consciousness of isolated activities. In this “state” – art, sport, religion, philosophy, dance, song are not separate areas of activity – the tribe engage in all and none specifically. They do not consciously define and circumscribe any of these areas of human expression. There is clearly some level of consciousness in that the rite is somewhat organized; specific practices are performed and an order is discerned. We may call it directed “play”, but this “play” may be serious too. The point I wish to make is that no one area is specified and exists in its own right. It is more akin to a fair or pageant or ceremony where all sorts of activities and disciplines come together in one arena. This refers to the premodern world-view. The modern consciousness, by contrast, is a taming of this hodgepodge of expression and a rigorous defining and shaping and separating of areas of human enterprise, that is, the creation of institutions. Rationality, discipline, science and knowledge guide this new way of dealing with reality. One might say the premodern way of knowing is to exist in the singularity, the modern way is an expansion of this point of “origin” into separate domains – stars, galaxies, planets – to extend the metaphor – specific and more limited, autonomous forms. We may say that the former is a kind of wild ecstasy tempered with the order of a specific ritual or festival or ceremony, and the latter is a more scientific approach and control of nature and society, though this latter project perhaps failed to a degree leading to what we now call postmodernity. However, one finds traces of premodernity, modernism and postmodernism within each phase of history⁹⁸, though one such world-view predominates at various points in time and place. To the extent that this is the case, sport contains traces of the earliest human culture and they reveal a process of secularization. By establishing a premodern towards a modern shift in consciousness and the prevalence of both at the same time, one can argue that the institution of sport is both a pre-cognitive *and* rational enterprise. Sport is a meeting point

⁹⁷ Zuchora (1980) makes the observation that both art and sport are related to the hunt, a kind of magical quality in order to control one’s surroundings and rise above nature. The convergence of art and sport in the experience of the hunt and its cultural expression as cave paintings or organized athletics means that however complex our institutions of art or sport may be, one can trace its origins in pre-literate societies.

⁹⁸ This is observed in cases where art and sport come together as in the “opening ceremony” of the Olympics and other major sporting events.

of – and satisfies – instinctual, aesthetic and cerebral aspects of self. This is substantiated by the Ancient Greek principle applied today in which a healthy mind is said to “reside” in a healthy body. Another way of saying this is that sport both expresses an instinctive need and an aesthetic “play” – to order, to form and to communicate.

In terms of “secularization” (modernisation), I agree with Womack (2003:220) who states:

... the same existential conflict that lies at the heart of religion also gave rise to the sporting contest. Originally, the parallel symbolic systems of religion and sport operated in tandem. However, they diverged through time. Religion has adhered to the realm of the sacred, whereas sport has undergone a process of secularization. As a result, athletic contests have had to leave the protection of the gods and enter the forum of public debate.

Modern sports are therefore no longer aimed at appeasing the gods but at making a mark in the record books.⁹⁹ Womack (2003:223/24,) goes on to say that:

...when we can no longer distinguish the sacred from the profane or even the good from the bad, we content ourselves with minute discriminations between the batting average of the 308 hitter and the 309 hitter. Once the gods have vanished from mount Olympus or from Dante’s Paradise we can no longer aim to appease them or to save our souls, but we can set a new record. This is a uniquely modern form of immortality.

However, the elements that have gone to create the desire for the “record”: human need, combative spirit, spectacular excitement is not so modern. Techniques of survival developed into random practice, organized practice, competition in practice, competition for its own sake, interest in competition by the non-competitor, audience participation and then, almost audience control (adapted from Olivova 1984). As such some sports developed from older athletic contests, others were artificially created, and some were the result of adapting to the needs of modern sporting kinetic activity and games from all parts of the world and from the most varied periods of human history. Hence the ancient past is encoded in sports today.

Historically speaking, sport also originally had a secular meaning. From the fourteenth to the seventeenth century, it was considered a “pleasant pastime”, “entertainment”, “amusement”,

⁹⁹ Cf. Guttman in Dyck (ed) 2000: Guttman fleshes out this modern idea of sport as follows: 1) secular nature of modern sport (one runs not in order that the earth should be more fertile), 2) equality of opportunity to compete and the creation of equal conditions of competition, 3) specialization of roles in modern sport activity – professionalism, 4) rationalization through standardized rules, 5) beauracratc organization of sport to decide and enforce the rules and manage competition, 6) quantification – national and international standards of achievement, and 7) “record” concept – whereas Greek, Roman and medieval Europe does not keep such records.

“recreation”, “diversion”, “taking one’s own pleasure” (Welsch 2005:4). In the late sixteenth century sport came to mean “lovemaking”, designating sexual intercourse as a “game” (Welsch 2005:4). Only later did the concept of sport shift from pleasure to discipline, though Nietzsche refers to sexual love as a kind of sport. Thus contemporary sport is such that “the recognition of games and bodily exercises as an important cultural value was withheld right up to the end of the eighteenth century” (Huizinga 1949:196). Sport as the institution we are so very familiar with in contemporary society may have occurred relatively late that is, under the British Empire in the nineteenth century, but the argument can be made that the necessary process of secularization which gave rise to sport as we know it, is merely like the proverbial chameleon that changes hue depending on the environment and thus whether sport is a means of enacting the activities of the god, as mere diversion, or as a means to etching a record in history, the drive to engage in sport of some kind remains a constant, though it is structured in a particular way by the institutions – sporting or otherwise – of the day. In this sense, it is useful to recognize the historical development that gave rise to sports as we now have it.

Behringer (2008) argues that the institution of sport began with the establishment of permanent sports grounds¹⁰⁰ from the fifteenth century onwards. The modern period of sport was further developed with the advent of the printing press, resulting in the binding of rule books, standardized sporting grounds and halls, professionalism and commercialism, sports instruction, equipment, sport tenders, sports reporting and promoting. In short: the rise of modern sporting history coincides with early capitalism, state formation, or the “civilizing process” or in other words, the military revolution, the communication revolution and the industrial revolution (Rowe 2004).

The result of such change meant the intermeshing of sport and media through the rise of capitalism and industrialism, mass consumption and the co-modification of leisure time in particular. Rowe (2004: 14) writes that “the world of sport in the age of mass media has been transformed from nineteenth century amateur recreational participation to late twentieth century (and early twenty first century) spectator-centred technology and business”, the Olympics being the quintessential example. It must, however, be noted that the history of sport, in particular the Olympics, does not reveal a steady evolution from Ancient Greek Olympic games; not only because the original games were discontinued for at least sixteen

¹⁰⁰ C.f. Uhrich, Bekenstein’s (2010) study of Arousal and Sports Stadiums, *Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 3, No. 8, pp 24 – 41.

centuries until its revival by the French aristocrat, Baron Pierre de Coubertin, but because sport as a recognizable social and cultural institution is not universal, but emerged in Britain at a particular time, namely during early industrialization.

A whole economy of sport developed: clubs and associations with subscribing members were formed, competitions with attractive prize money were established, imposing venues with large crowd capacities were built, a labour market was established to handle the transfer and valuation of professionals, state funds were used to develop sport as part of nation building, sports gear and fan merchandise were manufactured and sold, and the media became devoted to sport. The latter is what Rowe (2004:14) calls the “sport-media-cultural complex”.

Modern sport is precisely the institutionalization¹⁰¹ of sport as media, economics and politics converge on a scale never exceeded in history. Therefore this section, while assuming the incessant flow of text, image and dialogue around sport in contemporary society, deals with a historic unfolding of sport and the institutions that have given rise to the current global phenomenon. In contrast, in the earlier section on art, I did not deal with the institutions of art historically, but contemporarily, as I wished simply to deduce an institutional theory and apply it to the current debate, though, one could, admittedly, also develop the argument that there is a historical dimension to taste and the very nature of the contemporary art world is indeed informed by the various institutions that shape “art”. In this sense, aesthetics could be described as fashion.

4.5. A Marxist critique of the institution of sport

The fact that sport as an institution is so ubiquitous and postmodern does not necessarily mean it is positive in all respects. The first sustained neo-Marxist interpretation of modern

¹⁰¹ In a second interview with Rashied Begg (Sociology, University of Stellenbosch) on 21/02/11 he highlighted the sport-media-cultural complex and how sport has changed in the last few decades, because sport is part of media and culture, a matrix. Subsequently, the rules of the game often change to suit cultures (for example, refereeing via television in the game of cricket). Culture demands these changes, the cultural demographics is such that the “big game” creates the institution of the barbecue (braai) in some cultures and furthermore, matches are often shifted in time to coincide with times in other parts of the world. There is thus a homogenizing tendency that tells people what to watch and when to watch, a globalization of sorts (he cites FIFA as a case in point in that they just about took over South Africa when it hosted the 2010 World Cup) so that it is perhaps no longer “pure” sport. The institution of sport is consequently often more about capital and control via the media than the celebration of sporting achievement, according to Begg.

sport arose in the 1970s with the argument that sport is a microcosm of the American capitalist system, that it functioned as an ideological state apparatus. I will focus on Brohm (1989) and Bambery (1996) primarily in order to elaborate on this theme. In arguing that sport is “tainted”, one critically reflects on the idea that the institution of sport and, indeed, the culture that gives rise to the forms that it takes, are not necessarily an indication of the joyful spirit, the beauty of movement or courage and the like, but reflections of a society and its institutions that seek to dominate rather than affirm the “other”. In this respect, sport becomes an ideological tool.

Brohm’s work (1989) is a negative Marxist analysis of sport. He argues that the institution of sport is stifling, that it focuses on elite athletes and is the driving force behind mass and leisure culture in that sport is the predominant physical activity in general. That is, apart from the act of labour, sport is the dominant and fundamental way humans relate to their bodies in a state capitalist society. The sporting legend is above all else a story of the pain barrier, of “going to the limits of endurance, of being drunk with animal fatigue and of getting a kick out of bruises, knocks and injuries” (Brohm 1989:23). Bambery argues similarly and claims that discipline and training in modern sports often equals a massive distortion of the human body which can lead, ironically, to the loss of youth, inhumane methods and even violence off the sports field (and he cites examples in this regard), because of the stresses associated with high level competition.

Furthermore, Brohm regards the sports institution as exemplifying “practical reason”, which he asserts are the values of traditional, repressive morality, the model of behaviour promoted by bourgeois society. It is the cult of duty for its own sake, the sense of sacrifice for the community, the ideology of the super-ego, of obedience, and discipline. In this respect, the institution of sport is the sublimation of the libido, a sublimation of aggressiveness. It is the experience of every aspect of the body via longed for torture through a controlled process of self-inflicted punishment which Brohm equates with a kind of institutional neurosis, an outlet for moral masochism. The institution of sport is thus an outlet for the instinctual drives deriving from a “schizophrenic relationship to the body” (Brohm 1989:27). Again, Bambery (1996) echoes these sentiments and argues that sport’s obsessive repetition of the body leads to alienation and conceals the real structure of productive and social relations under capitalism. He argues this based on a reading of Marx (1974:152) that: “At the same time the factory work exhausts the nervous system to the utmost, it does so with the many-sided play

of the muscles, and confiscates every atom of freedom, both in bodily and intellectual activity”

Brohm (1986) goes on to say that the institution of sport is an ideological apparatus of death and torture, held up to be politically neutral and culturally legitimate. Bambery (1996) likewise takes this position and argues that the desperate search for the “right” shape in reference to the body results in pain and misery, that perceptions of the body are thus socially constructed. The “ideological apparatus” puts this in effect through the control of time and quantity (what to eat, how fast one needs to run and so on), drawing once again from Marx (1974) who wrote: “...time is everything, man is nothing; he is, at most, time’s carcass” with reference to the ideological control under capitalism of both work and “leisure” time. These apparently extreme views are rhetoric of sorts by which Brohm and Bambery (following Marx) wishes to unearth the structure behind the mechanism of consumer culture as manifest in sport. The former does so by taking note that the vocabulary of sporting culture is such that the language of the “machine” dominates. Terms such as “human motor”, “animal machine”, “she’s burning up the track”, “he’s working well – turning our results”, “producing the goods”, “seizes up” and “runs out of steam” (Brohm 1989:29) create a false edifice of teamwork or a collective mechanical operation. Brohm cites Adorno and Horkheimer¹⁰² who have observed that, “...the oarsman, who cannot speak to one another, are each of them yoked in the same rhythm as the modern worker in a factory”.

Brohm further maintains that even though Capitalist society is competitive as sport is, the repressive function of sport is such as to make athletes docile, rather than to build a non-alienated culture of the body. “The body” is a social institution understood in its functional relations to other institutions so that “each society imposes on the individual a rigorously determined utilization of his/her body” (Brohm 1989:63). Therefore, Brohm wants to argue that modern sports impose a “fetish of the body” as it becomes a product to be exploited by the ruling class. Bambery (1996:3) develops this further maintains that the sport belongs to the realm of “unfree activity”. The “rationality” of Capitalist production, based on commodity exchange, reduces all individuality to a minimum. It organises and controls people not only in their work, but in their leisure. In other words: leisure activity is a kind of extension of work in that in the wish to escape mechanised work processes in, for example

¹⁰² C.f. Adorno, Horkheimer, 1971, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, London: Allen Lane, 65.

sport, is in order to face it again. Yet ironically, this very escape constitutes a regression back to the service of the machine of industry.

Brohm then goes on to say that sport developed in modern times between 1880 and 1900 at the beginning of the age of imperialism. The first modern Olympics were in Athens in 1896. In Paris, in 1900, the first major sports competition was the Tour de France and in London there was the advent of the FA Cup. All these major institutions are related to imperialist capital according to both Brohm and Brambery and were linked in conjunction with the universal exhibitions or trade fairs. He claims that sport is the “repressive cultural codification of movement” (Brohm 1989:65) and says this as the institution of sport at the super-structural level is such that sport ideologically reproduces the world of work, that it is a symbolic parallel. The internal structural parallel between work and sport is a “...fact that cannot be denied. That is why sport is a distorted reflection of the serious business of work” (Brohm 1989:69). Hence, sport developed at the same time as the Capitalist industrial mode of producing in England during the eighteenth and nineteenth century, alongside the primitive accumulation of capital, the spread of imperialism and colonialism. Thus, a historical analysis which simply states that sport as an institution emerged during the industrial revolution is a first order fact, but via a Marxist account one sees in this a deeper structure, namely the relation between exploitation, sport and sporting institutions. This is a second-order analysis or a meta-theory, a kind of “finality” and one-sidedness that may be extreme.

Brohm believes that sports institutions, such as sports administration consisting of clubs, federations, regional organizations and Olympic committees are all linked to imperialist organizations such as Unesco. Therefore the institution of sport reproduces all the principles of bourgeoisie society in a concentrated form. One way in which this is achieved is through the reduction of space to geometry, that is, a sports arena. It is an abstraction of what is real, tangible and concrete in nature. The grass is artificial; the athletics racetrack loses connection to the earth (Brohm 1989). Consequently, the abstract space parallels a machine-like approach to human beings, a neurotic desire to order, a reductive as opposed to holistic way of thinking, that is, a mathematical rather than sensual and experiential acquisition, like seeing people and things in terms of quantity rather than qualitatively. Hence, like the mechanized assembly worker, the sportsperson has one specialized set of movements. The sportsperson may experience alienation as scientific “support” is such that his or her body

does not belong to himself or herself. The crowd itself is reduced to one mass; the so-called individualism of capitalism gives way to uniformity and conformity.

Furthermore, Brohm (1989:77) argues that sport trains people to respect the “fetishised state”, the national flag, the hierarchy of the factory, school and so on. Brambery (1996) develops this further when he argues that, for example official school gymnastics manuals of 1862 and 1868 prescribe exercises modelled on Prussian military drills of 1847. This is enacted through ritualistic ceremonies at sports events which are proto-fascist, militaristic rites with military-type music, medal ceremonies, rhythmic marches and Nuremberg style rallies. Alongside this is the cult of the “Superman”, of individual success and efficiency. This, contends Brohm, is an ideological strategy that creates a mythical idea of permanent competition reinforced, that sport is a preparation for the struggle for life, that one ought to be “fit” (Brohm 1989:118). This is the productive “body” fantasy allowing the labour force to be further exploited. According to Brohm, the Olympics is really a fight for the domination of the market; top level athletes are state servants with the job of promoting the regimes’ official propaganda. Sport, in this sense, maintains the social order or status quo. Those who control the space, namely the institutions, aim to control those in the space (Brohm 1989:165). The message is tantamount to saying: rather throw the discus than a brick. Sports thus soften the inclination to challenge the system, another opiate of the people.

Sport creates order and law, which is maintained through the police and army. Brohm (1989:187) thinks that the notion that sport creates “wellbeing and peace between people” may not be the case as it is but a holy alliance - politically, economically, ideologically - of the great powers against the small, the oppressor versus the oppressed people/classes. Brambery (1996) concurs and lists a number of Olympic games marred by political unrest and violence. This may not be so in the vast majority of cases, but one may legitimately ask: surely state money would have been better spent to combat hunger, illiteracy and underdevelopment rather than major sporting fiascos?

Thus, in accordance with Marxist philosophy, one might conclude that sport masks reality. For example, it appears to be about equality, that is, that everyone starts off at the same point, under the same conditions. But the “reality is that there is a hierarchic structure of Capitalist production relations” (Brohm 1989:123), that economic competition presented metaphysically as eternal, physically represented in sport, is a ritualistic practice of the political through the ceremonial, institutional rules of behaviour.

Sport is sold as “natural” and therefore impervious to the political and to criticism, but, in partial agreement with both Brohm and Brambery, it is transitory and historical. In this sense the institution that is sport is subject to change and with recourse to its obvious affinities with capitalism, this shift in sports practice (and theory) may yet do so as political and economic changes occur.

I am not going to develop a detailed critique of this Marxist slant (and admittedly these two writers fit into a rather extreme view of Marxism which may be contrasted with “softer” forms) of the institution of sport, but I will explore a few points. I do concur with Brohm and other neo-Marxists that sport is not the last bastion of innocence. However, I think he may err in thinking that the athlete’s engagement with sport is simply dronelike and uncritical. Recall Tommie Smith and John Carlos in the Mexico Olympics of 1968 who gestured with the black power salute on the winners’ podium. In this act they breached Olympic consensus; it was a tentative expression towards a criticism of the institution from the “inside”. Sport itself can be a catalyst towards peaceful democratic change and national unity, the case of South Africa being a good example. As far as performance and training goes, it could be an expression of love for the game, a playful love, individual expression, a pleasurable love that motivates the athlete, rather than the glum, alienating picture Brohm and other neo-Marxists paint. Furthermore, that “sport can be positively possessed and valued by the working class and used by that class for its own purposes” (Coakley & Dunning 2002:315) is also important, for example, for social upliftment. Finally, in some respects I find a critique of this sort perhaps outdated in the digital and information age, that the critique is consequently too sweeping and broad, though elements of the theory may be sound. What is particularly important for this thesis is that the institution of sport manufactures an image of “the body” which has both an artistic, aesthetic, imaginative function *and* has a social, economic and political function, the extra-aesthetic. In this sense, there is no clear boundary between art, sport and the “everyday”.

4.6. Two observations: How does this comparison enrich our understanding of both art and sport?

The “world of art” and one might say, the “world of sport” are what they are as a result of the institutions that make them part of a particular society. These institutions extend from within the art circle and sports circle and relate to economic, political, philosophical and religious

institutions, each incommensurate and none all encompassing. Integral to this is the concept of “the body” or rather the construction of the body image.

The analyses below links the image of “the body” to the canon or paradigm of a particular society at a certain time. This is “advertised” by the institution of art. The first observation, then, “the institutional body” puts forward, albeit briefly, the notion of how art represents “the body” in accordance with institutions with a religious, political and philosophical outlook. One might thence infer that style in art is dictated by such institutions, the result of which is the “institutionalized body”. Demonstrating a confluence, sport imagery similarly uses “the body” to express its vision of what the athlete can be and by extension, ordinary mortals, as these athletes are a kind of imaginary reflection of society as a whole. However, such images also reflect political¹⁰³, economic and disciplining forces of society as a whole. In all these respects, the power of Ancient Greek culture and the “culture” of Nazi Germany concretise these concerns reflecting a symbiotic relationship between art and sport.

The second observation links the "world of art" and “the world of sport” with a particular language construction. This linguistic function makes art and sport cultural artefacts that have a certain positive effect on a given society. I take as my point of departure Wittgenstein’s (1953) language game thesis to argue for the observation that institutions govern the way we form communities around art and sport, which may or may not reflect other institutions.

I conclude with an artwork that reflects on the power of institutions as a kind of game and more specifically, the sport of chess. This work will be described as a thoughtful reflection on the past and the amalgamation of the “institutionalised body” and aesthetic experience offering hermeneutic “play”.

4.6.1. Observation 1: The institutionalized body through art and sport

The Ancient Greek example serves to illustrate the blend of the conscious and the unconscious, of mind and body in a dynamic unity that demands not only reason, but the primal urge of the pre-discursive body. Classical Greek sculpture as a representation of

¹⁰³ A quote by Rowe (2004:118) eloquently expresses the relationship between imagery, language and politics: “...sport (art) incorporates elements of external discourses in interpreting events in the sports world (or “artworld”). In this way, sport texts (art-texts) and social ideologies, mediated through different institutions and discourses, can be in constant interaction, each appropriating and relinquishing imagery and language in the unending process of representing the social world” (brackets my inclusion).

athletic nudity provided the opportunity for the exploration of the beauty of a well-conditioned body. It also promoted the development of the artistic portrayal of "accurately" carved figures, what we might now refer to as "classic naturalism" – a model that was instituted on the Greek standard and harks back to the idea of "man is the measure of all things". This standard was greatly enhanced by the proliferation of setting up victory statues at Olympia and other game sites. But these artists sought more than simply rendering form as it apparently appears to the eye. They wished to convey the inherent beauty in action and the refinement of the person who achieves excellence and *arête*. For example, the discus thrower steps towards the line, preparing to cock his arm and twist his body into the corkscrew position that will help his throw. The *Diskobolos* by Myron of which copies survive is such that "the body is twisted, the diskos raised at the top of the backswing, the arms and legs balanced in untenable positions – the athlete must spin forward or fall, and the viewer mentally completes the motion" (Miller 2004: 229). In this sense, the human figure perhaps becomes a metaphor of both flux, as time moves inexorably forward, and stasis, wherein the body is stable and balanced, a link to both the temporal world of humans and the immortality of the gods. The human form in its aesthetic beauty perhaps links this chasm between the finite and the infinite. Art is the vehicle through which the body becomes a source of physical achievement and divine grace, of a kind of perfection. At least that was the image that the institution of art, using athletics as a model, attempted to depict and further reflecting the Ancient Greek belief in harmonious balance.

The facial features of such classical statues as a result are not overtly emotional, but portray a calmness and modesty and are "serenely detached" (Cook 1972:15). Sometimes though the scars of battle are visible, but even then the image is suffused with a kind of pensive and philosophical outlook as is evidenced in the *Boxer of Apollonius*¹⁰⁴. Although the body appears resigned, its obvious musculature and strength indicate the power of the individual athlete, which is further emphasized by the head that tilts upwards, perhaps implying that his spirit is not beaten even as his body is at rest. One could compare this sculpture to the many bronze statues of a god (for example, Zeus¹⁰⁵) where the god strides forward, his face bearded and forceful like the boxer. Both are in their prime, both seem to look towards the future. Even as the god is upright and active, one gets the impression that the boxer is merely at rest and contemplating, soon to take up the fight. Both god and athlete are idealized forms

¹⁰⁴ Boxer of Apollonius, Deutsche Fotothele, Dresden in Schobel (1965), 73.

¹⁰⁵ Bronze statue of a god striking with his trident. Second century BCE in Boardman (1985), 55.

expressing the concept that beauty reveals the divine in man and the humanity of the gods. Thus this would serve as a visual depiction of the amalgamation of intellect and athletic prowess that served the classical institutional model.

Having said that, the presumed ideal aesthetic form, the outcome of reason and imagination and its convergence with sport, does not necessarily entail a moral and intellectually broad and healthy sceptical attitude. This will become clearer in the following brief analysis in which I look at the uses and abuses of sport and art in Nazi Germany, wherein certain stylistic forms were borrowed, in an ironic twist, from the classical Greek ideal.

Sport is to a certain extent a bodily art. The *Volk* was identified with the deep well-springs of nature, a Romantic spirit, so that “the (sporting) body” was conceived as the muscular strength of the *Volk* that linked the nation to its beginnings in antiquity towards the collective organic “body”, the unified Reich of modern times. In this sense, sport embodied principles of German solidarity, discipline and racial purity. In order to depict that “strength” in artistic form and in a language understandable by the majority, classical realism was used as is evident in the work of the official sculptor, Brecker. In his work, we see that the body, while exemplifying classical standards of beauty, does not invite dialogue and relationship: they are “ideals” abstracted from sensual, vulnerable beauty. The strong “impenetrable” solitary “athlete” often carries a torch or sword. To further the aims of the Nazi political institution, popular media such as film was used, evident in Riefenstahl’s¹⁰⁶ infamous *Olympia*. In the process, sport was aestheticised. Roche (2000:122) puts it like this: “...sport culture became part of an aestheticisation of “everyday” life and mega-events became elements in a theatre of power”. It is the numbing effect of the sensual and aesthetic that allows propaganda (extra-aesthetic ideology) to weave its spell unchecked.

One could thus argue that the racial and ethnic nation as a kind of organism represented an “institutionalized body” that needed to flourish and weed out undesirables to make a glorification over others possible. Victory was seen as but protection of the groups’ health, the hallmark of the stronger and superior race that had the right to expand against the weaker in order that the German “body” should thrive. In other words: the way to the mind is through the control of “the body”, even if its presence is marked by “play” and aesthetic

¹⁰⁶ The classic “Olympia” by Riefenstahl, while pioneering in sports “documentary” and artistic subtlety, conceal the political overtones, ironically through its artistic use of montage and its introduction linking Nazi Germany to a pagan, Greek example, wherein artistic effects appear beautiful, innocent and natural.

considerations. In this respect, the Berlin Olympic games of 1936, the festival of youth and seeming aesthetic play, has rather sinister connotations.

Both Ancient Greece and Nazi Germany serve as examples where “aesthetic considerations” led to the confluence between art and sport so that imagery became the means for institutional control, specifically what might be termed the “institutionalized body”. As a result, aesthetic “beauty” either appears to lose its definition or it includes everything. Or rather we should say, paradoxically, that the aesthetic both loses definition and yet, embraces all aspects of “everyday” life. This is when a specific aesthetic has come to assume a singular extra-aesthetic meaning, rather than a playful, open one.

4.6.2. *Observation 2: Art and sport as culture*

In this section I argue that to see art and sport primarily in terms of institutions is to say that art and sport are primary means through which a culture is created and enhanced. I begin with Wittgenstein’s (1953) notion of language games and based on that describe art and sport as forms of communication and contact between people – a social nexus or culture.

Wittgenstein says that when we “look” at how a word is used, that “...to obey a rule, to make a report, to give an order, to play a game of chess are customs (uses, institutions) ... to understand a sentence means to master a technique” (Wittgenstein 1958:81), we see that we cannot understand a term in a vacuum. Therefore, one may extrapolate, the terms “art” and “sport” are part of a public system of communication that is relative to a particular time and place; a language game that assumes meaning not defined by reference to the objects and things which they designate in the external world, nor by the thoughts, ideas or mental representations that one might associate with them, but rather by how they are used in effective, ordinary communication. For example, we need not postulate that there is something called “good” that exists independently of a “good deed”.

Thus definitions emerge from a “form of life” or the culture and society in which they are used. Therefore, there is a social aspect to cognition. To reiterate: A word carries meaning in relation to context, which defines a certain language game and this is how Wittgenstein deflects his own proposed rule-following paradox. In the *Philosophical investigations*, Wittgenstein (1958:201) states the rule-following paradox: “this was our paradox: no course of action could be determined by a rule, because any course of action can be made to accord

with the rule”. The rule-following paradox threatens our ordinary beliefs and practices concerning meaning because it implies that there is no such thing as meaning something by an expression or sentence. If there cannot be rules governing the use of words, as the rule-following paradox apparently shows, this intuitive notion of meaning is utterly undermined. Kripke (1982:60) writes that this paradox is the “the most radical and original sceptical problem that philosophy has seen to date”. Wittgenstein proposes that meaning and rule-following necessarily belong to a practice. This suggests that the phenomena of following a rule are basically patterns of activity in human life and that there are no further grounds for these patterns. He rejects a private usage, but rather one that is community-based or a “form of life” (Wittgenstein 1958:44), in that there is nothing detached from a “form of life” or that is “ultimate”. Sport can be construed as one such language game, art another and by “grammar”, Wittgenstein means the possible condition for the “moves” made in the language game within its prescribed set of rules. Or, in its strongest form, Wittgenstein holds that “aesthetic positions are an indication of how well you have learned your cultural tastes and prescriptions” (Paskow 2004:55). Or, in other words, whether the institutions that define art or sport have been effective in teaching and communicating the subtleties of art or sport. I am suggesting that there is a further subtlety “between” art and sport.

While Wittgenstein rejects an ontological essence and by implication an aesthetic “depth” that we could ascribe to the term “art” or “sport”, preferring the subtler “family resemblance”, he does allow us to appreciate art and sport without theoretical groping for definitions and paves the way for the necessity of a social and public use of such terms: he implores us to recognize that the game of sport and the game of art are embedded in our culture – and thus relative – human practices.

At this point, it becomes equally clear that art and sport are communal activities that are understood, appreciated and meaningful within the context constructed by a culture and engaged in by language users who speak the speak of sport or the discourse of art. And how do we language users held within a culture, speak of our sport and art? What does the institution of sport and art consist of? Schall (2003) observes that when we are playing and watching sport or making and viewing art, we are outside of ordinary time, the time we measure on our watches. Indeed, Aristotle asks us to notice that when we are wholly interested in something, be it writing, playing, or loving, we do not notice the passage of

time. Aristotle goes further and says “game” time is closer to eternity, “not the complete evaporation of time or its complete denial” (Schall 2003:304).

Sport tests our human limits such that when we play and watch a sporting play, we live more truly and get beyond mundane life. Schall (2003:314), in contrast to Brohm, goes so far as to claim that “sports are the last bastion of clarity in morals”. Furthermore, our games and sports are played for their own sake and thus like things beyond use is analogous to our absorption in art – as in a good symphony, painting, dancing, liturgy or play. In both art and sport, we are taken out of our time to behold something for its own sake or as Nietzsche would have us believe, to reinvigorate life itself! Therefore, it is not clear whether we can distinguish between art and “everyday” life.

The institution, ironically, provides the framework in which to think, speak and act in accordance with sensible language, namely one that we call art or a specific art form or sport or a specific sport. We may describe such play ontologically as “beyond time” or the mundane, yet at the same time I have argued that such descriptions are not entirely accurate and that sport and art are not innocent: its institutions may be embedded in a theory of alienation, ideology and manipulation. In this sense, the notion of aesthetic “beauty” was not clear.

The above point notwithstanding, Courbetin’s vision of a “healthy body, healthy mind” is the Olympic maxim that sought to embrace a culture of international understanding and made military combat less likely. Sport is communication and contact via the “body”, via games; art in a subtler sense is also “bodily contact”. Both may have as their objectives a kind of “collective consciousness”, transcending class, gender, ethnic, religious and regional distinctions.

As far as the institution of sport is concerned, one may observe that the deepest appeal of a game like soccer, for example, lies not in its undeniable moments of beauty but in its capacity to act as a “vehicle for fans to expressing an ongoing, intergenerational discourse that takes as its starting point familial ties – ethnicity, nationality, history – as determined by such factors” (Efron 2008:42). One acts as participants in the creation of a “continuous narrative...” (Efron 2008:126) with a particular type of discourse, for example: written texts, sacred canons of rules and official histories, pure ephemeral materials such as match-day programmes, radio and television commentaries and journalistic summaries of games. Fans generate an oral

tradition passed on through the generations which creates a community and relationships. As I mentioned in the section on the “art world”, that art too is social and involves a particular discourse. My attraction to the institutional theory of art is that it “forces” one to see that it is the artists’ community, like a scientific community or sporting community for that matter, that is entrusted with the task of navigating art, experimenting, theorizing art and forging a paradigm. The paradigm necessarily entails change, and thus in different societies the creative energy of the individual artist is in a state of flux and redefines itself. So, while we can’t pin down art, it remains an “open concept” (Wertz 1993), which is perhaps closest to its alive nature. I venture to say that it is art’s “openness” that allows for its challenging nature, in that the public is not always cogniscent of what to look for, whereas in sport the public is generally there to be entertained. It is no wonder then that the institutions of sport carry such economic weight and media coverage¹⁰⁷. Here one can derive aesthetic pleasure in consumption. My project is concerned with also recognising the extra-aesthetic “surfaces” of the aesthetic.

At its best it seems that institutions function in order to satisfy cultural needs. Blanchard (1995:36) defines society as the fact of people and relationships, while “culture is the character, quality and abstract nature of those patterned interrelationships”. He analyses culture further and describes it as universal, that all participate in it in that it is a learned behaviour. In this sense we are said to be “acculturated” (Blanchard 1996:39) – a process whereby one internalizes a particular tradition and gradually develops behaviour patterns consistent with those manifested by other members of his group. In addition, culture is adaptive to the environment and a form of survival; it is an integrated whole; symbolic and a guide for behaviour. These “cultural needs” are learned. We learn “to appreciate performances more deeply” (Cashmore 1990:26). In other words: “the sports fan like the art critic who acquires a knowledge of what to look for, knows how to evaluate, the meaning of a specific move” (Cashmore 1990:27). Certain cultures equate acculturation with a – or as an – aesthetic sensibility.

Combining both observations, art and sport as institutional and art and sport as cultural, we may assert that cultural institutions may be ways of imposing order, with a particular

¹⁰⁷ I attended a 2010 FIFA World Cup match between Spain and Portugal. It was a surreal experience; the sense of being part of history was palpable. But this was only possible because the media hyped up the event. I wonder if one would have felt the importance of the game without this media hype.

aesthetic endorsed. The relationship between art, sport and aesthetics is “expressed” by Herz’s *Zugzwang*¹⁰⁸, a juxtaposition of seemingly “impossible bedfellows”. He wallpapered the gallery space from floor to ceiling with juxtaposed portrait-images of Hitler and Duchamp. There is the paradoxical fact that the greatest terrorist of the twentieth century and the hero of the twentieth century avant-garde were photographed by the same cameraman (Hitler in 1932, Duchamp in 1912), referring to Hitler’s beloved photographer and the mastermind of his public image – Heinrich Hoffmann. The alternating images of Hitler and Duchamp appear to embroil them in some sort of game or sport, like chess, while both were artists and so, their proximity, seemingly ludicrous, transcends both art and sport, or is philosophically wedged between art and sport, as the work asks questions relating to the proper ethical, cultural “game”.

The artist questions whether Duchamp somehow killed art or opened it up to such a degree that one cannot discern an ontology of art. But, at the same time, it seems the artist is comparing this “destruction” to Hitler’s violence, which is a curious comparison. The layout suggests a chess match, a sport of wits: Duchamp, one may argue is trying to outwit Hitler in his broad-minded modern vision of art, so hated by the dictator. Perhaps the art of Duchamp kills megalomania. Artists also seem to assert through repetition that we forget who they are, and therefore the viewer transcends philosophy, politics and history, or that they are reinforced and replayed. Kleeblatt (2001:118) suggests an approach towards understanding when he says that the piece is “conceptually calculated, *Zugzwang* refracts both the historical and the art historical in an installation that is at once physically empty and visually saturated. Its restrained form straddles a rapid-fire trajectory of references from Dada to Pop, collage to montage, Minimalism to Conceptualism to installation art”. In this way, modern art, the seer of which is Duchamp seems to outmanoeuvre the deplorer of modern “degenerate” art, so that the “cultural war” Hitler was said to have won, has not materialized.

Yet, perhaps, as the title suggests, namely a chess term that refers to a player who is limited to moves that will have a damaging effect on his or her position, neither can claim victory as there are points of similarity: Both were born only two years apart, both images show them dressed in a bourgeois manner, both are artists, both debunked aura and originality. The interpretation I favour is that the chess match is a fight between Nazism and Dadaism,

¹⁰⁸ *Zugzwang*, 1995 by Rudolf Herz. Photographic reproduction. Installation in the National Gallery, Berlin, 1999 in *Mirroring Evil: Nazi Imagery/Recent Art* by Kleeblatt (ed), 2001, p 102.

“contrasting notions of nihilism” (Kleeblatt 2001:119), and the repetition of the two is distinct in that for the Nazi’s, repetition was a show of power, of dehumanizing multiplication and the Messianic image of the Fuhrer, whereas Duchamp uses repetition to “dispel notions of power, originality and genius” (Kleeblatt 2001:119).

The work above asks questions about the relationship between culture and politics in the form of a game, the sport of chess in the context of art. It is probably best to remain critical when blandishing the word “culture” as Robert Cecil (in Petroupolus [1996:309]) says: “...[there is the] vexed problem [of] how the people of thinkers and poets had temporarily become transformed into the people of judges and executioners.” There is something clinical, even violent and final about reason or necessary logical thoughts – a “beauty” that is uncompromising as in chess, military strategy, sports tactics – which is emotionally augmented by the “depth” of feeling and emotion derived from art. In this sense “aesthetics” or “culture” are alarmingly powerful; culture is a muscular aesthetics.

4.7. On Wittgenstein and intransitive knowledge

We may deepen our understanding of the above two observations, namely the institutionalised body and art and sport as culture, by applying Wittgenstein’s philosophical investigations. The implications are that his aesthetic considerations naturally lead to an analysis and inclusion of different aspects of “everyday”, cultural life such as sport. This is argued on the basis that there is a kind of knowing/knowledge not amenable to verbal articulation (which is not to say that it cannot be articulated); in fact it may even form the basis of verbal language itself, namely intransitive knowledge or tacit knowledge. Aesthetics, that is, ideally first-hand experience of pictures, music, poems ...the skill in craft and attunement to the specifics of the senses all require this kind of knowing/knowledge which finds resonance in the ineffable, non-verbal language of games, particularly sports-games. This upshot epistemologically is a pragmatic conception of knowledge in forming a discursive understanding of aesthetics.

Wittgenstein’s forays into art are well-known and like his philosophical writings in which form was as significant as content, reveals that his philosophical views draws from aesthetic considerations. One reason why this is so, as Escalera (2012) observes is that it reveals basic aspects of human knowledge; they lead to what he termed intransitive understanding. By this

term, Wittgenstein wishes to convey that we cannot approach the world conceptually as “a large part of human knowledge does not have a propositional character” (in Escalera 2013:55). Wittgenstein also referred to this as “experience” (in Esclalera 2013:56). Such knowledge requires following a rule where there are no explicit rules for following it, just examples to learn from. So for example, in art, if one wants to understand a picture, it requires one to understand it as it is, given that it cannot be substituted by another one. It depends directly on the particular work we are appreciating. It requires engaging directly with it and to participate in aesthetic inquiries. One must learn from those already steeped in such inquiries, but one should also apply what we go on learning. For this one would need many other painting-examples and be aware of the issues discussed in aesthetic discussions of paintings. Furthermore, one would need to learn about the painter and the rest of his or her oeuvre, taking into account other paintings by other painters (adapted from Esclalera 2013). In short: learning has practice at its base, rather than mere description. Or as a Marxist may put it: philosophising alone does not change the world.

What Wittgenstein is saying is that practice shows us the way and shows us our understanding, similar to using a word correctly by paying attention to how other people use it and then applying it correctly in context. Following a rule (how to use a word, how to understand a painting...) is praxis. This is how “concepts (rules) are inscribed in established ways of acting” (Wittgenstein 1958:34, brackets my addition). In this sense, Wittgenstein privileges practical over theoretical knowledge.

For Wittgenstein, art aesthetics became the model for intransitive understanding as it is the kind of experience that is not simply verbal language. Often we do not know what we understand or even how we may understand, and we may be unable to articulate our perception. It is a non-propositional dimension of knowledge. It is often a spontaneous reaction. Wittgenstein wishes to expand the horizons of aesthetic education, drawing on the fact that much understanding is acquired in practice and copying, and not conceptually reflective verbalisation, for there is a kind of ineffability to art (life). For example – do we learn a dance by copying the choreographer or verbally reflecting on each move? Obviously, the former. This should in fact be humbling as it implies that one cannot control one’s understanding and that art (life) escapes our reasoning processes. Though art may not deliver facts as such, it does “speak” to our values. Aesthetic education has the potential of changing our attitudes to life for the better.

Applied to sport, we may say that sport too exemplifies the “non-propositional” – as emotive, imaginative and beautiful. Sport requires one to put into action what we can conceive. It spurs us to be active rather than passive, to motivate contemplation towards deed. Though one might not have certainty that the action is right, it would be unreasonable to only act only when completely certain – a near impossibility.

Stickney (2008) offers a solution (to a lack of certainty) by noting that one can still speak of degrees of certainty, which are relative to various language games played. These are based on participation within a form of life. A new theory accordingly is just a new point of view, not an unveiling of objective fact. Furthermore, one cannot undermine other forms of life - “truths” - using one language game to refute another. Training in language games (and not correspondence) tells us what they are, such that together we act in ways that become for us “natural”. As such, there is no ultimate game. Sport offers us a metaphor of this in its variation of the number and type of games played and indeed that it is but a game. Furthermore, games are complete in themselves, incommensurate and thus action is deemed “right” in relation to the game being played. Wittgenstein’s theoretical position thus not only has an application to sport, but sport itself is a kind of material embodiment of his philosophical musings.

Another aspect of Wittgenstein’s aesthetic philosophy that may be applied to sport is that the primitive form of the language game in contrast to the argument above, is certainty, not uncertainty. As Wittgenstein states: “for uncertainty could never lead to action. I want to say: it is characteristic of our language that the foundation on which it grows consists of steady ways of living (*feste Lebensformen*), regular ways of acting” (in Stickney 2008:623). So sport again can be seen as a paradigmatic example of “certainty in action”, something often lacking in “everyday” life, and therefore as an ideal to which one can strive. Wittgenstein avoids metaphysical assumptions about this certainty, instead preferring to suggest *ways* in which we grope for certainty. In other words, we do not need a complete picture in order to then act appropriately. In the same way one need not know all sports to play a particular sport. The correct course of action therefore does not entail a metaphysical and epistemological “grand narrative”, but the more modest “correctness” within a particular set of circumstances. And that is precisely what we mean to say when there is, for instance, a “good move” in a particular sport (and perhaps less clearly in art).

In a sense, we can say that we are trained into ways of thinking and seeing, such that these become for us a world-picture that seems to hold itself up before us inexorably (Stickney 2008:625). The philosopher cannot dispel pictures that captivate us; only changes in practice can free us from negative patterns of behaviour. Sport then may be understood as a kind of healthy deed, offering us *alternative ways* via games, of acting and practicing. This in turn effects our philosophising, our “picturing of the world”. Applying Wittgenstein’s views to sport suggest an account of sport as offering kinds of active freedom that in turn may effect the way we think (philosophise) about the world. In my estimation, this inverts the gap between thought and action and suggests changing behaviour, being involved in games, effects how we see the world, rather than the opposite, which is a common, but perhaps mistaken assumption. In this sense, the institution of sport (of art) both creates a space in which to “play” and in itself, needs to evolve.

It is worth noting that there may be a useful oscillation between verbal and non-verbal language. For example, the sports commentator like the wine connoisseur aids one in finding a kind of equivalent in verbal terms for the action or taste experienced – to an extent. At any rate, the vacillation between the “poles” of aesthetic sensibility and “named” experience I believe enriches one’s attachment to such experiences. However, in some sense the two language games do not correspond; they appear to match but actually do not. One may say the “experience” itself is primary for the one that experiences, but commentary, like wine connoisseurship may in fact help one see/taste more and in that sense primary and secondary experience may reinforce one another and develop one’s sensual and analytical grasp, neither exhausted by the other. In this sense, (aesthetic) experience is mediated (extra-aesthetic).

Seeing a painting and reading the text “about” it; tasting wine and articulating in verbal language some kind of description; watching a soccer match and listening to the commentators’ description yields a kind of knowing wherein we only tacitly grasp what we see or hear or taste, with or without the verbal language. But this still amounts to a kind of knowledge in a pragmatic sense. By this is meant that our conceptual hold on the world is not exclusively revealed in our ability to formulate clear propositions about reality. It is anchored in certain forms of action/practice: looking at paintings, tasting wine, playing soccer – knowledge thus conceived is not purely intellectual. Wittgenstein (1958:150) himself had this to say: “the grammar of the word ‘knows’ is evidently closely related to that of ‘can’, ‘is able to’. But also closely related to “understand” (mastery of a technique)’, and later he writes

“...but there is also this use of the word ‘to know’: we say ‘now I know’ – and similarly ‘Now I can do it!’ and ‘now I understand!’ (Wittgenstein 1958: 151). In my estimation, the correlation here between knowing and doing is significant and allows me to argue that the intransitive nature of aesthetics applied to art applies equally well to sport because in both cases certain practices and actions are required in order to say that one knows how to or more to the point that one can do it (paint a picture, play a game of chess, improve one’s soccer and so on). Conceived in this light, metaphysics as a grounding for art and the castigating of sport as simply “low culture” may well be unfounded. Knowledge as practice, knowledge as not propositional in all respects, however, may give one the latitude and freedom to “play”, to struggle nobly whether in art or sport or as something “in between”.

4.8. Conclusion

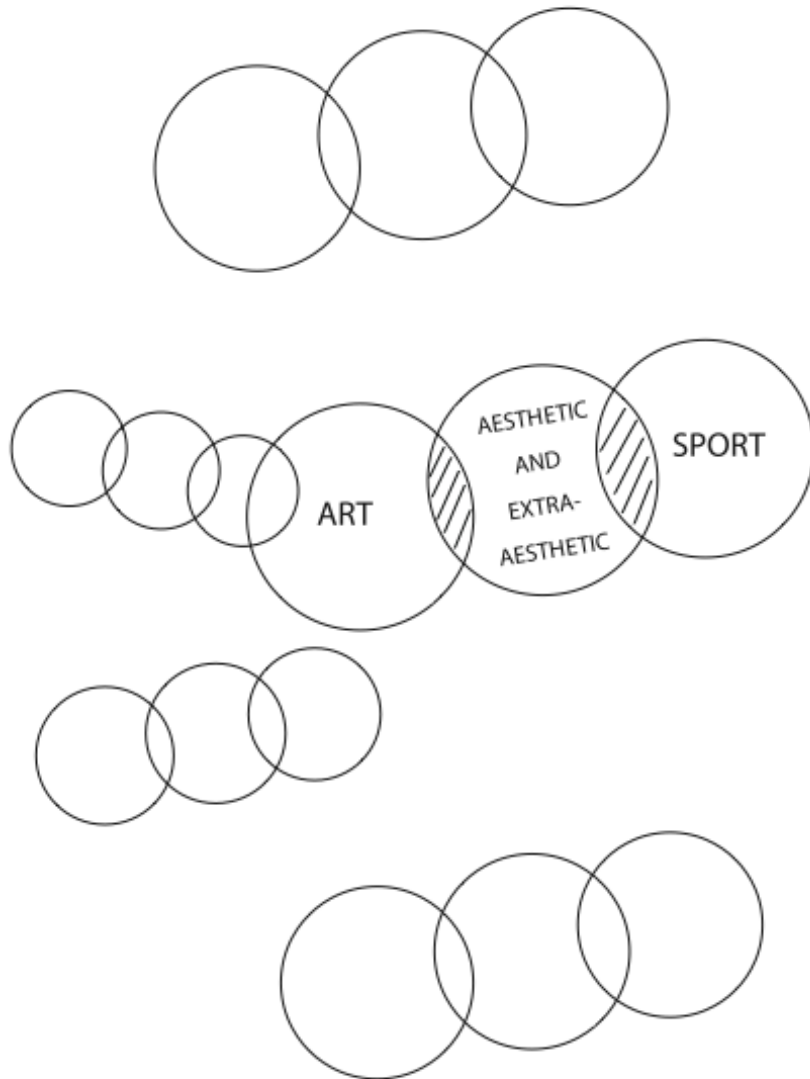
This chapter is concerned with defining the institutional theory of art according to Danto and Dickie. Both theorists endorsed the notion of the “art world”, which was dually described based on Thornton’s experience in the said “art world” and by formal and informal “players” in the South African arts community. Then, parallel to art, the historical secularization and rise of modern sporting institutions were described, followed by Brohm’s (1989) and Brambery’s (1996) Marxist critique of sport. Two observations were then proposed indicating confluences between art and sport. The first argued that given the institutional nature of both art and sport, there is a mechanism in a particular culture and world view that presents and views “the body” in a particular way, reflected in a kind of marriage between art and sport as in the case of Ancient Greece and Nazi Germany. The second observation, using Wittgenstein’s (1953) notion of “language games” and “forms of life”, argues that art and sport are cultural manifestations and culture is augmented and concretized by the institutions of the day. A further application of Wittgenstein to sport was then briefly analysed in the concept of intransitive (tacit) knowledge and the power of action (in games) towards a pragmatic conception of knowledge. In these respects aesthetics becomes somewhat wedded to particular extra-aesthetic meanings/content (institutions *make* knowledge).

One might conclude that insofar as art and sport are institutions and that these institutions are married to larger institutions, the meaning of art and sport is not to be located simply in the individual artist and sportsperson or art object and sports act, but as a total “act” of a society. This one can deduce from the fact that art and sport are historically located or defined. Lest one considers the “act” of a society as mitigating the need for individual “acts” and an

individual aesthetic and style, I shall now consider expressionistic theories of art and sport. The first four chapters have been concerned with purging “high” art of a “depth” aesthetic – as a struggle between meaning and form - in order to illuminate the aesthetics of sport. Chapters 5 and 6 will take this further and offer a vision of aesthetic play and “bodily” strength that reconstructs an aesthetic of the “everyday” motivated by personal vision and formal pattern-making, even beauty. In this sense, modernist theories such as expressionism and formalism will be introduced as (still) offering valuable insights, without subsiding (exclusively) into notions of the “centred” artist and formal “presence”. Aesthetics is not necessarily cancelled when we consider social, institutional and ideological meanings in art and sport and in relation to everyday life.

Figure 5: Similarities

Institutional politics and other aesthetic/extra aesthetic multiple combinations that render art and sport as similar:



AD INFINITUM...

Chapter 5: Expressive theories of art and sport

5.1. Introduction

The “everyday” meaning attributed to art and sport was explained as both linguistic and “playful” within a social, institutional sphere. This would seem to over-ride individual, expressive agency. This chapter then serves to elucidate expressive theories of art and what may be termed expressive theories of sport. In so analysing, I intend to argue that, notwithstanding the limitations of such theories, expressionism in art can be applied to an understanding of sport, so that the athlete may be conceived as a kind of artist.

Key writers relating to the expressive theory of art include Tolstoy (1898), who was first to outline a version of the expressive theory and which still has resonance today as it had in the late nineteenth century. Another important theorist Collingwood (1925) following Croce (1956:11) in the early twentieth century argues for the significance of inner states of the artist. Tolstoy’s and Collingwood’s version of expressive theories follows an analysis of how the term expressiveness became embedded in our conception of art, which in fact is a recent phenomenon, albeit a very popular way of appealing to the meaning of art.

In the second section of this chapter (5.2.), in a parallel fashion, I focus on a broad theory of sport, namely sport as the expression of (surplus) energy and sport as the expression of aggression, both of which can be construed as kinds of expressive theories of sport, though an attempt at a theory of sport and an intellectual analysis thereof is a rather recent academic advance. One cannot simply draw a one-on-one correspondence between expressive theories of art and expressive theories of sport. Key theorists in this regard include Weiss (1969), Osterhoudt (1973), Hyland (1970) and Kerr (1997).

Having outlined expressive theories of art and that of sport, the third section of this chapter proposes two surface observations, two confluences. The two observations are: art and sport as an expression of the ineffable and art and sport as a harmonious link between the mind and the body that plays itself out in the games we humans engage in. These observations emphasise ways in which art aesthetics can “open doors” to appreciate and understand sport

aesthetics and an oscillation between the mind-and-body and between the effable and ineffable is no less a reflection of the oscillation between aesthetic and extra-aesthetic dimensions.

The last section is an application of Kant's aesthetics by Guyer (2011) and my further application to that of sport, in order to argue that Kant as the forerunner of expression in the arts – rather than the misconstrued label that he is simply a formalist – suggests ways to accommodate an expressive theory of other domains of aesthetic, cultural life. The argument also suggests that sport may be considered as an expression of “deep” metaphysical content, usually reserved for the arts.

5.2. Expressive theories of art – definition and history

The advent of the significance of the individual artist is quite a late occurrence, notwithstanding a sense of personality and individualism that characterize some of the foremost high renaissance artists.

One can visualise the artist in terms of a three-tier system which one could call a) the artist's inner drive or mental state or intentions, b) the performance or execution and c) audience reception or contemplation.

In terms of a), one can draw on the idea of the artist being possessed or infused by the muse, a concept in Ancient Greece and many other cultures. In premodern cultures, for example Egyptian art, we find that the artist had little expressive choice and so expression in art could only come about when art had lost every other purpose, but the free choice of the artist. Only quite recently, say from the nineteenth century onwards, do we notice the growing awareness of the role of the individual artist and the search for “truth”, or determining what we really see.

The move towards art as essentially expressive can be discerned from roughly the romantic era onwards. Here we find a reassessment of the prehistoric or primitive, gothic and folk art which served the romantic and modernist cause and set itself apart from academicized classicism which assumed a universal ideal of “beauty”, as outlined by theorists such as Winckelmann (1717–1768) and Wolfflin (1864–1945). In the modernist reformulation begun

by the romantics and reconsidered by German expressionism and inspired by Riegl (1858–1905), new expressive possibilities were applied. This allowed for a direct, transcendental, spontaneity in response to the alienation of industrial culture. As such “...the primitive assumed more than specimen interest, the gothic reaffirmed its northern identity, and Romanticism itself achieved its modern historicity” (Masheck 1982:93).

Characteristically speaking, romantic is the shift from imitative, mimetic theories of art to expressive theories, that is, to express self versus to imitate nature. Thus the importance of the artist increases, and in a sense the artist replaces the audience. This is aptly put by Shelley: “...a poet is a nightingale who sits in darkness and sings to cheer its own solitude with sweet sounds...” (Eaves 1980:784). Eaves (1980) thus asserts that the question about what is poetry is really a question about what is the poet and this requires the artist to be sincere in order to express the true voice of feeling, honesty, integrity and therefore expression in the arts. In Coleridge’s words: “...the arts are to express intellectual purpose, thoughts, conceptions and sentiments which have their origins in the human mind” (Eaves 1982:46). Another romantic poet, Shelly, claimed that art is the expression of the imagination. According to Shelly art “compels us to feel that which we perceive and to imagine that which we know” (Eaves 1982:69). Wordsworth makes the point sharper: “...all good poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings” (Khatchadourian 1963:335). There is a sense in these quotes that energy is the expression outward from the individual artist, a way of reflecting on nature and ideas, whereas reason is a kind of repression, an inward recoil that lacks the imaginative and feeling content.

This nineteenth century romantic advance contained a certain intensity and new feeling or energy. The concept of hero, namely the notion of an exceptional individual, of superhuman nature, was central. This individual may lose balance and not be perfect, touched by madness, but grander, natural and with physical strength. It resembles the man-centaur or an image of the hero riding the horse: self-realized; individualism opposing the universe with its solitude. In this state the individual communes with nature, this genius within senses the infinity - the inexpressible - that abounds. Hence we see in many romantic paintings of the era a flight from the real to the imaginary, the exotic, and an interest in prehistory, a certain anxiety in the face of nature. There is a desire not to reproduce, but create, a going beyond mimesis, and the need for energy, which one may say is a peculiarly modern phenomenon.

A theorist who would have influenced the spirit of the art of the romantic era is the German philosopher, Baumgarten (1714–1762), whose notion (invention) of the aesthetic depends less on reason than on emotion and individuality. And it is precisely emotion via the imagination and individuality, via what one may term “the centred artist”, that combines to produce an expressive theory of art.

The romantic emphasis on the uniqueness of the individual artist and the significance of his or her emotional state, and thus expression, are themes taken up and explored in the early twentieth century: The fauves (1905–1907) can be described as expressionism that enhances the visible particularly in the works of Matisse (1869–1954), and most notably German expressionism (1905–1913), which may be described as expressionism that relieves. Even cubism (1907–1913), though more cerebral than the latter two movements, used the expressive possibilities that tribal art offers. German expressionism, in particular taps into the romantic spirit in accessing the lifeblood of nature versus bourgeois civility.

In terms of German expressionism, Die Brücke¹⁰⁹ artists of 1905 were not specifically called expressionists. The term was first used and found in France. Gustav Moreau emphasized the personal, the individual, the spontaneous aspects of self-expression and the need to express oneself. Matisse reflected the teachings of Moreau, with whom he studied between 1892 and 1897. In “Notes de un peintre” of 1908 Matisse writes: “...what I am, above all, is expression...the simplest means are those which enable an artist to express himself best...[the artist’s] expression must derive from his temperament” (in Gordon 1966:368).

Die Brücke and Der blaue Reiter, also German expressionists, appear to express a much firmer, more robust expressiveness than the lyrical, less confrontational Matisse. Only in 1914 was the term “expressionism” first applied to Die Brücke and Der blaue Reiter artists as part of XXII Berliner Sezession at the Sturm gallery (Hughes 1991). There is a great sense of honesty, as especially Die Brücke artists do not only depict the pleasing side of life.

I have been exploring the origins of the term “expressionism” as applied to art, specifically painting. Expressionism may also include postimpressionism of the late nineteenth century,

¹⁰⁹ A movement founded in Dresden by Frith Bleyl and some artists from the Dresden technical school, namely Kirchner, Heckel and Schmidt-Rottluff. They moved to Berlin in 1910 and the group disbanded in 1913. They emphasized authenticity, directness and compassion. Later Nolde, Pechstein and Muller joined the group.

which Fry (1866–1934) suggested be called expressionism. Die Brücke artists are clearly influenced by the so-called postimpressionists, namely Van Gogh (1853–1890), Gauguin (1848–1903) and Munch (1863–1944). We can see that “the art was not a decorative embellishment of life, as art had been in periods in which it was in some harmony with the ruling classes; it was rather an illustration of all that was contradictory, gloomy, disagreeable and monstrously iniquitous in life” (Hughes 1991:267). Der blaue Reiter (the blue rider) from a title of a picture by Kandinsky, was perhaps less angst-ridden, more international in spirit and tended towards abstraction, but is also considered a form of expressionism. The group included Kandinsky (1866–1944), Klee (1879–1940), Macke (1887–1914) and Marc (1880–1916). Kandinsky was the leading exponent of abstraction and abstract art and in his distortions of form and exaggeration of colour, he believed he was expressing a truth far surpassing literal truth, in order to fuse with the laws of the universe in mystic union. As Klee aptly states: “...art does not reproduce what can be seen: it makes things visible” (Jaffe 1963:4). Kandinsky in his *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* (1914) tried to make a science out of the spiritual correspondence between form and feeling and so argued for a kind of universal grammar.

It is also common to find that “expression” is a blanket term for modernism from the romantic era up until the late 1950s,¹¹⁰ and thus refers to the general modernist tendencies characterized by the notion of artistic genius, the search for artistic ontology and the idea of an artistic teleology. One may argue that expressionism reached its climax in Western painting in abstract expressionism of the 1940s to early 1960s in New York. Here intention and execution ((a) defined above) or performance ((b) defined above) appear to flow one into the other, and perhaps contemplation thereof (defined as (c)) is equally that much more fluid, that is, the emotions are easier to read by the contemplative and engaged viewer. This expressive purpose relies on its surrealist influence, as well as eastern Zen Buddhism and oriental calligraphy. One may describe a De Kooning (1904–1987) or a Pollock (1912–1956) as ecstatic painting, in a way containing the Dionysian impulse, a wild excitement, as brush and palette are abandoned. An important art critic of the time, Harold Rosenberg (1978) developed the notion of “action painting” to describe this sort of expansive expressivity, as a way of encapsulating the gestural painting of De Kooning, Pollock and others. As with the German expressionists, there is still the sense of the (tormented) self on one pole, the chaotic

¹¹⁰ I am thinking of such movements as post-impressionism, fauvism, cubism, German expressionism, dadaism, surrealism, futurism and abstract expressionism.

world in the centre and the vision and hope for a utopia at the other pole (Newman spoke of the “helplessness before the void” [in Hughes 1991:259]).

The expressive impulse and its theoretical formularization are neatly put in the writing *In der Expressionism* by Piper in Munich in 1914:

...Expressionism puts the accent essentially upon the experience of feeling and on it's formulation in the most intensely concentrated manner possible. The perfunctory satisfaction in making the picture conform to reality is eliminated. Appearance is subordinated to the wish for expression...Nature relinquishes her precious sovereignty once more to the artist, to the human soul (Gorden 1966:22).

In this quote Piper sums up the expressive impulse, namely that the subjective world is more significant than external reality, that it has a logic and truth in itself, as it emanates from the human soul. In this sense the artist is central, “nature relinquishes...” to the creative energies of the artist.

However, while I have been pressing the idea of the import of the individual artist, there is also both in the romantic spirit and in modernism in general, a simultaneous sense of teleology that goes beyond the artist's individuality, and encompasses a zeitgeist, a general longing of the times and a movement towards something better: it is only the artist or the various movements of which he or she is a part that is privy to prophetically divine this historical moment and its future ramifications¹¹¹.

The German expressionists decried “mere talent”, craft, causality, conceptual and visual accuracy, science and were, in a sense, anti-intellectual, immersed rather in heightened human emotions and spiritual considerations. The intuitive was essential, as was the creative process versus the decorative, which Fechter (1914) linked to the Gothic and Germanic origins. Fechter believes that: “...the essence of art is always to give concentrated, inconceivably direct expression (Ausdruck)...to some feeling induced by human existence in this world” (Gorden 1966:379). This reiterates what I have hitherto said regarding the spiritual and psychological striving of the time, and the importance of inner perception, as opposed to simply traditional beauty and the decorative. This was first postulated by Riegl, Lipps and Worringer between 1893 and 1910 which Fechter now applied to a new body of

¹¹¹ It is not surprising that the Nazis' expelled German expressionism labeling it, alongside other modern art as degenerate. It was mainly the stylistic conventions of expressionism and its individualism that did not best exemplify Nazi propaganda art.

art. It was an art to counter materialism and rationalism, a latent and profound emotion, which, like spirituality, cannot be seen, but it can perhaps be represented.

One need not subscribe to modernist patterns of thought to see that art as expression still might carry weight. A fairly recent and important theorist that subscribes to what could be construed as an expressive theory of art is Wollheim (1978, 1993). Wollheim argues that a painting realizes the artist's intention, which he defines as the desires, thoughts, emotions, beliefs and commitments of the artist. The artist's intention steers the beholder's perception which constructs a world view created by the artist's style. He distinguishes two types of style, namely the general style which are classed as schools, periods, eras and conventions – all of which may be taught – and individual style, which is the artist's creativity. The latter is not acquired, but formed and is the basis of artistic value. Following Rosenberg (1978) mentioned above, he considers the activity of painting important, such that brute materials are transformed into a medium, as the power of materials are unearthed and an individual way of working with it is developed and formed over time. His theory sets itself against deterministic theories, be they biological, evolutionary or historical materialist, as Wollheim emphasizes agency and intention. The engines of “agency” and “intention” are the emotions. While we may decry expressive theories as peculiarly modernist, we still hold to some belief in artistic will and intensity of emotions.

5.2.1. The expressive theory of Tolstoy

Having described the rather recent use of the notion of expression in art, I will now briefly look at Tolstoy's exposition of expressionism in the late nineteenth century in order to further demonstrate the theoretical underpinnings of our common-sense attitude towards the expressive theory. By common-sense attitude, I refer to the rather glib remark made by many who view art without any background training, who simply exclaim: “I know what I like”, or state they feel such and such when viewing a work of art without the need to explain *why* this is so. Personally, I believe that rather than deride such convictions, we ought to pay careful attention to this common perception. In point of fact, one may find that such convictions bear an affinity with some of Tolstoy's ideas. I shall present his ideas uncritically in order to strengthen the argument that the expression of emotions in art speaks to a seemingly innate, or at any rate taught, intuition that art's value lies in the artists communicating and expressing their emotions to an audience that wants to be moved in some way. This goes some way to

pointing to the fact that popular entertainment too is founded on this notion and it appears that the ideas presented here orientate one towards thinking of art as not simply falling within the confines of fine art.

Tolstoy¹¹² (1898: 50) says that “art is a human activity consisting in this, that one man consciously by means of certain external signs, passes onto others’ feelings he has lived through, and that others can be infected by these feelings and also experience them”. Artists do not have to be in that state, but by imagining it or recollecting (a type of imagining) in tranquillity is enough. An artwork is successful to the extent that it awakens a feeling of empathy; initially in terms of the artist in relation to his or her materials and meanings and then in terms of the viewer feeling for or into, that is empathising with the creator or artist via the art object.

In his seminal work, “What is Art?” (1898), Tolstoy says that thoughts are revealed by words, whereas art transmits feelings. The artist is to convey to the viewer what he has experienced so that the viewer and/or listener is to experience what he himself has and so: “...it is the capacity of a man to perceive another man’s expressions of feeling and experience those feelings himself, that the activity of art is based” (Tolstoy 1898:48). That is, artists express via external signs, what they have experienced and actually feel what they have lived through while expressing – in reality or imagination – and then others are so infected. Therefore art is not the manifestation of some mysterious idea or absolute or G-d, or simply letting off steam, nor the presentation of pleasing objects, or of eliciting pleasure. Instead, art consists in being a union among men according to Tolstoy, “joining them together in the same feelings, and is indispensable for the life and progress towards the wellbeing of individuals and humanity” (Tolstoy 1898:48). This aesthetic clearly leads to the inclusion of other aspects of culture that bring about unity.

¹¹² The subjectivity of his approach leads to his odd condemnation of the work of specifically Wagner and Beethoven, whom he considers as examples of overly cerebral artists who lack real emotion. Furthermore, Beethoven’s Symphony No. 9, according to Tolstoy, cannot claim to be able to “infect” their audience, as it pretends, with the feeling of unity and therefore cannot be considered good art. He concludes that children’s songs and folk tales are superior to the work of Wagner and Beethoven.

Tolstoy's vision thus is that it is not just art at galleries, concert halls and the like in which "true art" is said to occur, but in dress, utensils, ornamentation of houses, cradle-song, church services, triumphal procession; it is an art for all. Thus he opposes the lack of emotion in realism, a copy or ready-made subject matter, all of which are the art for the elite, the academies and conservatories. He envisions a "universal" art, a broader range for aesthetic experience.

Furthermore, according to Tolstoy, there is no need to explain feelings; true expression needs no critics, which are the province of the upper class and elite, otherwise the painter would express himself or herself in words. One cannot teach the transmission of that special feeling or "true art". Therefore, he prefers the song of the peasant woman over what he terms the indefinite feeling (therefore infections) of the last sonata of Beethoven.

Infectiousness which is the measure of art depends on: 1) individuality of feeling transmitted, 2) clearness of feeling transmitted and 3) sincerity of artist (that artist feels the emotion he or she transmits). He refers to an "inner need", to the "depth of his nature" and "feelings accessible to everyone", and he cites in this regard, feelings of brotherhood and feelings of common-life like merriment, pity, tranquillity. One may thus say that Tolstoy employs a version of the expressive theory in which the artists' art is a galvanizing force whose social import ought to have mass appeal. Thus, as early as Tolstoy, a kind of postmodern democratisation takes place.

5.2.2. *The expressive theory of Collingwood*

Collingwood (1925) addresses another aspect of the common-sense attitude, that is, that art expresses the emotions of the artist, namely the significance often attributed to the inner struggles that the artist experiences before he or she even puts paint to canvas, writes out musical notation or whatever the case may be. As such, Collingwood claims that the artist only discovers the emotions he or she wishes to express through the *process* itself. One cannot decide beforehand what to express. The act of expressing externally is not merely a "letting off steam" notion of expression, but includes a process of selecting and making right, as he or she watches himself or herself in the act of painting, for example as he "convert(s) it from a psychological into an imaginative activity" (Collingwood 1925:30). The imaginative activity is akin to a language, for example a sad emotion or feeling could be expressed by a

slow, soft and hushed line or sound. The artist feels and communicates – he or she wishes to be “read” and thus forms an empathic relationship with the yet unknown viewer; just as the viewers empathise with the artist through their connection to the artwork. Similarly, the sportsperson expresses and wishes to perform whereas the viewer empathises with the sportsperson, almost feeling “into” that movement. Consider how even the physically distance act of watching on television a sports-play creates a sense of movement, rhythm and presence as the viewer mimic the movement of the sportsperson. Skill and genius then is the quality that makes empathic projection possible – wherein the artists “control” of the medium is said to convey thoughts and feelings.

In keeping with the romantic and modernist idea of the artistic genius, and also elaborated by Kant (1952 [1790]), Collingwood argues that it is not just the craft element and the skill that characterizes the artist and that makes for a good work of art. Rather, the true artist is above tuition; artists are born. Therefore it is not their technical ability, but vision or “intuitions”, or following Croce (1866–1952) before him, their “artistic ideas”. He describes that the intuitions are at first confused, but through working with this spark, through gestation in the subconscious, finally a finished conception is born in the artist’s mind. Thus, we have the significance and consciousness of the (modern) art process, as a working through of these ideas into a well-articulated and organized work of art. When the art process is completed in the artist’s mind, when the final intuition is present to his or her consciousness, the process of expression is also complete, for the intuition *is* the expression. The gradual development of intuition in the artist’s mind is the process of artistic expression. This deviates from the common-sense view that expression is done with the hands. Here the craft is just the externalization, which can be learnt, while intuiting and expressing cannot. The externalization is the communication of ideas to us – the recipient or audience or viewer. Thus it is the assumed central origin within the artist himself or herself that is significant.

The work of art proper is thus in the mind of the artist and can exist in the minds of those who, by means of the artefact, come to share his or her intuitions. Collingwood then distinguishes between “true art” and “false art”, much as Tolstoy did previously. The following he does not consider to be art: mere imitation or craft, to write calculatedly to satisfy the market, just to arouse others to feel an emotion one does not himself feel which he dubs propaganda art, religious art, amusement art, inauthentic emotions – “art falsely so-called” (Collingwood 1925:39).

As opposed to the above, the “true” artist does not know the end until he has expressed it. This will sit well with those who believe that art exists essentially in the mind. Again: intuitively, we like to believe that regardless of the artefact or art object, its real power (and value) lies in the fact that it refers to a mental and emotional state of the artist.

Collingwood consigns the emotions to an unconscious state and through the process of working it out internally; through as he puts it, “freedom”, he comes to express himself whereupon he feels “lightened”, “eased”. Hence it does good to express our emotion (Swift 2006:103). First it becomes clear to the self and then to the audience. In order to exercise this freedom, there is no recourse to technique, as one is not simply describing emotions. Rather, there is a need to individualize emotions in order to make it clear. Expressivity is thus akin to a process of self-discovery, including that of the audience and viewer. In other words, art is of the mind as is emphatically clear in this quote: “the noises made by the orchestra are not the music at all, they are only the means by which the audience, if they listen intelligently can reconstruct for themselves the imaginary tune that existed in the composers head” (Collingwood 1925:88). Collingwood’s version of the expressive theory emphasizes the internal state of the artist and vision, and considers that “true” expression.

5.3. Critique of expressive theories

A popular view of emotional expression through art may be parodied as the idea that somehow feelings and emotions may be held within a person, “pent up”, and in need of removal by being healthily expressed outside. Aristotle’s (in Irwin 1988) account of the art of tragedy, as being a catharsis or purge of inner pity or terror, indicates clearly enough how ancient this idea is. For Tolstoy the healthy expression of emotions may result in true communication with an audience, and for Collingwood, expression is a means through which a viewer or listener can pier into the mental state and inner conception of the artist¹¹³.

¹¹³ The problem here is that both Tolstoy and Collingwood assume that a certain “sensitive” audience will be moved by what they consider to be great art. But what do they mean by “sensitive”? What is considered great art in one epoch rapidly changes over time. Can that change be attributed to an “acquired sensitivity” or is it merely random or by convention. At any rate, disagreements about what constitutes beauty (if that were deemed the aim of art) abound so that to be said to be “sensitive” to art may be simply a subjective construct.

Following both Tolstoy and Collingwood one may argue that serious art is thus the presentation of emotional states or situations which must inevitably be charged with emotion for our imaginatively engaged reflection. That serious art moves from the private and personal sphere outward to the public domain and insofar as the private is certainly constituted by emotion, it seems natural to ascribe an emotional quality to a painting, a piece of music or prose.

However, a quote from Appelbaum and Thomson (2002:48) reveals the ontological problem or a metaphysically strange position in attributing emotional states to inanimate things. He says:

...but the relaxed quality of a line or the nervous quality of a line of music can hardly be a symptom of the line's, or the sound's, inner emotional states. Hence, either such descriptions are metaphorical or are elliptical ways of claiming that the states of mind of the makers of such things, are induced by them in their hearers or beholders.

Not only are such descriptions “elliptical” or “metaphorical”, we need to also recognize that the emotional expressiveness of a work requires that neither the composer nor the audience, neither the reader nor the beholder of the work, should feel such emotions. Moreover, the “states of mind of the makers of such things” need not be consumed by that particular state or emotion. Good performers can give an emotional quality to a passage of music or dance with a quality of feeling which they certainly need not feel themselves at the time of the performance, and paintings may exhibit a quality of lyrical and joyous calm that may be different to the state of mind of the painter at the time. In fact, a good performance or strong design often means the performer has simply mastered his or her craft, in order to induce the viewer to feel a certain something, rather than they themselves being in that state.

The point of the above is to critique this “private realm” - so central to both Tolstoy and Collingwood - which is clearly not just a matter of knowing what is in the mind of the artist based on external signs. The “intentional fallacy” therefore states that the mind of the artist is not critical, that the actual meaning of the artwork is separate from the artists' intentions. While Collingwood (1925) makes the point that often the artist's intention is not even known to him or herself until the process of making a particular artwork is complete, Collingwood perhaps overestimates the play of “intuitions” in the realisation of an artwork.

This dubious nature of the inner drive and thus the intense individuality and cult of the genius or “centred artist” – that intention – argues against Greenberg’s (1973) avant-garde polemic wherein the artist dictates his own future as he progresses art towards its inevitable apex. This is expressed none more succinctly than by Kandinsky (Hess 1975:139) when he said “...form is content and our art is a language, an inner secret which the artist can divine” or Mondrian’s (1872–1944) statement that “...art is not the expression of the appearances of reality such as we see it, nor of the life we live, but it is the expression of the true reality and true life...an inner search” (Hess 1975:144-5). This is the peculiarly modern phenomenon of a utopian vision of society; the artist being an integral component. But once we question the authenticity of inner truth¹¹⁴ and conviction, once we are critical of the assumed innocence of expression, this aspect of the expressive theory is not necessarily true on all accounts.

Another problem with expressive theories as outlined herein is that ironically, rather than express for the sake of clarity, it may, in fact, resist rather than promote communication. This is so as self-expression implies a kind of inner language or private language, such that the “externalization”, to use Collingwood’s term, does not aid communication. This leads to a moral point, namely that it reduces the artwork to a single audience¹¹⁵ – the artist himself or herself – and therefore has no real value for society as a whole. Plato (1974:84/85) himself warned of the excesses of art, because of the individuality of the artist, which has an unethical base. He says this as he argues that art undermines reason in that it fosters emotions and the appetitive sides of our nature, which, when not balanced by reason, may lead to immorality. However, one can counter this and argue for the moral base of expression, insofar as it includes imagination which is necessary in the projection of self in “another man’s shoes”, and, moreover, perhaps a more rounded, *emotional* grasp of a particular situation in which people find themselves, is integral to being fully human ethical agents.

¹¹⁴ Intention cannot easily be inferred from the artwork. The initial feeling may be vague or take a form unimagined. And that feeling may get modified in the process. There may be numerous changes from the original feeling/intention, consisting in reworking, planning, thinking, technical manipulation of the medium and that initial feeling and emotion may play a relatively small part. There can even be the extreme case that what one does say may be different to what one intended to say. Therefore the expressive theory does not account for the varied and complex nature of the creative process.

¹¹⁵ But Eaves argues that romantic expressive theories may, without self-contradiction give an idea of the audience for art and also the idea of a social order; and concludes in accordance with Wordsworth, who says: “the poet is an upholder and preserver of human nature carrying everywhere with him relationship and love” (in Eaves 1980: 798). This emotion extends beyond the work to the audience like lover to beloved and so, Blake says: “Art is the glory of a nation...genius and inspiration are the great origin and bond of society.” (in Eaves 1980:798).

Furthermore, “expression” is itself a drastically slippery concept. In many contexts the idea of what something expresses can be virtually synonymous with “meaning”. On the other hand, when we refer to such things as a facial expression we may mean little more than that we are presented with a symptom of a state of mind. Perhaps the romantic notion is narrow, namely that a work of art consists of expressed emotions, moods and feelings. Works of art also express thought, attitude and character. Emotions are complex, ambiguous, often confused and resist verbal articulation. In this sense the term “expressive” is used when we cannot properly describe what is expressed, which renders it redundant, that is, “expressive of what?” We seem to think we do not need to identify of what it is expressive, but if we do not, of what use is the term!

According to Collingwood’s expressive theory we may question whether there is an order, namely: 1) expression or intuition and then 2) externalization. I would argue that it is not so linear, that one “gets” ideas when working with the medium itself. Artists often must experiment painstakingly in their chosen medium before intuitions finally crystallize. Secondly, technique is not limited to the externalization process. Techniques involved in musical composition include knowledge of such matters as harmony and counterpoint, which have to do not with the externalization process but with the structuring or arranging of one’s musical intuitions. Therefore, there is no clear-cut demarcation between expression and externalization.

As I understand Collingwood, his theory suggests that the artist could choose any medium if he or she were to externalize. Though surely the particular medium does matter? An artist will refer to himself or herself as “a painter” or a “poet” or “a cellist” and so on, so that the identity “artist” is too vague as compared with a kind of description of the medium, by virtue of which one is an artist and through which one is said to express or articulate oneself. The “stuff” of words or paint or musical notes or certain movements are not simply a physical garment under which the real intentions live and breathe, they are the intentions themselves, if ineffable, a theme I will develop towards the end of the chapter.

Having discerned some problems in the kinds of expressive theories that have emerged historically, I still maintain that one cannot do without an individual, emotionally centred theoretical account of art and for that reason, expressive theories will probably always have

some appeal. For in problematizing individual expression as such one does not necessarily prove that the theory is wrong, only that the definition of the “expressive” needs to change, that is, it is not only art that instantiates “true” expression. In this light, one can speak of the expressive impulse and artistic merit as inclusive of other domains of experience. It is with that in mind that sport can be understood in terms of some kind of expressive theory.

5.4. Comparative expressive theories of sport

While there is no “expressive theory of sport”, there is certainly, according to Hyland (1984, 1990), Osterhoudt (1973), Kerr (1997) and Weiss (1969), a pivotal role played by emotions and feelings in sport, which amount to a type of expressive theory and in that sense sport can be viewed in an art-like way and the athlete as a kind of artist.

After a brief analysis of the emotions in sport, I give a simplified historical outline of sport, which describes the feeling-basis of “play” that forms the foundation for modern sport. I then examine what I have termed the “surplus expressive-energy theory of sport” which I have gleaned from the above writers, a theory that argues that sport is the expression of inner emotional states. Such states are in need of expiation of both the practitioner and the expression of certain basic emotions on the part of the audience. A narrower version of this theory is that sport is the release of aggressiveness, which coheres with its instinctual origins and the “surplus theory”. A critique of sport as expression follows with a view to highlight some shortcomings in the ideas presented and thus the need for further theories to account for the multi-faceted nature of sport, a similar requirement that is needed for art given the shortcomings of expressive theories as applied to the arts as outlined above.

5.4.1. The emotions of sport

Corresponding to the “images” of (a) to (c) above, we find a similar tripartite system of emotions that is reflected in sport. First (a) is the inner emotional state, the sportsperson’s drive and will is highlighted as he mentally prepares himself or herself for the task at hand which needs to be supplemented with hours of physical training. Then (b) we see the necessary emotional involvement in the sports-act itself. To perform an action at optimum level the sportsperson needs to emotionally immerse himself or herself in it and be totally involved. We find that in many cases the sportsperson will yell and summon all his or her

feeling while executing a particular manoeuvre. Although such points may be obvious, it is a necessary link or parallel towards a conception of sport as fundamentally expressive. The “product” is the focus on aspects of the emotions and expressivity in sport as they relate to the viewer and fan (c). In these “images”, one can visualize a sense of the mass euphoria created by the sporting event. In addition, the individual and personal meaning that sport holds and the appreciation of good or bad play as the case may be, resulting in an expressive show of the emotions. Obviously in a rather brief account of this sort, I am isolating very particular instances in order to make general points about sport itself.

5.4.2. Genesis of sport

As my argument is broad and general in terms of isolating the expressiveness in sport and thus an expressive theory of sport, it is useful to consider how sport was said to have taken shape in terms of “expression”, without recourse to a detailed history of sport, which is not the focus of this thesis.

Early man, according to Noakes¹¹⁶ and Olivova (1984) expressed their thoughts in song, poetry, story-telling, painting pictures, *playing* games (sport) and by evolving all sorts of customs and rituals. One of the particularly significant forms of expression was that of physical movement. A special body language was created, which was not only capable of expressing and communicating ideas but of passing them on from one generation to another. This particular function of physical activity, as distinct from utilitarian movement, was developed during man’s free time – at festivals (Olivova 1984:76).

The result of such evolution meant that human beings no longer only needed to be concerned with food gathering, but learnt to store, thus providing periods of rest for eating, sex, making images and movement – indulgency of which submerged emotions of fear and aggression.

During the rest periods, communities would engage in various ceremonies and festivals. The power of these events contained an overlap of “play” which was brought to the fore in the organized bodily movement. There was a communal dance of an ecstatic kind, the catharsis of trance, elementary movements of the human body, gestures made in children’s

¹¹⁶ I conducted interviews with Tim Noakes (University of Cape Town) on 20/08/2010 and 11/ 03/14. He shed light on the fact that human evolution so predisposed man to engage in sporting-like activities, in fact it enabled such a progression into modern sporting codes.

spontaneous games, and in useful daily tasks, mixed together. They¹¹⁷ would mimic movements of plants and animals, while including also the other senses like sounds, an early form of music, as the leaping flames, intoxicating scents, beverages and drugs influenced the appearances of spirit – ancestors, defeated enemies in symbolic form. In all, it is believed that these festivals helped express human emotions as stories were told of the origins of the world and man, the miracle of birth and mystery of death, of the community and its leading figures. The result was a complete physical and mental exhaustion which it is thought brought relief and relaxation to all – human happiness and creativity – as human instincts had free play for a certain period of time, limited to the degree that there was social control. This freedom of expression was the “presenting in embryo the many activities that were later, after specific development, to separate disciplines, ranging from dance itself, to drama, painting...(and sport)” (Olivova 1984:14, brackets my inclusion).

The point of the above serves to articulate that human evolution leads to a certain athletic prowess - that is, “a special body language” - and demonstrates that such athleticism was a basic mode of human expression. If this thesis is correct than an expressive theory of sport, namely that sport allows for the individual expression of surplus energy and specific emotional states, may in fact be plausible, a thesis which is convincing to some degree when applied to that of art. Since we ascribe aesthetic principles or properties to art, one might do the same for sport having linked art and sport as expressive.

5.4.3. Sport as the expression (of [surplus] energy)

To reiterate: The three “images” above divide the sporting experience in three segments forming an extension to the three-tier system as applied to art. First we have the “image” of focus, mental concentration, in short, an expression of inner calm and control or even Existential angst. We may term such an image “the expression of the inner drive or intentions of the sportsperson” (“act 1”). Then we have the ubiquitous “image” of the excellent sports moment, capturing the performance and expression of the sportsperson in full flight, as he or she brings all his or her resolve into the execution of a particular, perhaps complicated, movement or set of movements. He or she can be said to express him or herself through the

¹¹⁷ This thesis is not a detailed anthropological account of early man. “They” refers quite generally to early man from Paleolithic man and their art/games/sport or hunt (30000-9000 BCE) to Neolithic man and their art/games/sport or hunt (8000 – 3000 BCE) up until the more settled and complex Ancient World (the premodern).

medium that is his or her sporting code (“act 2”). The angst so to speak is released. The third “image” is the reaction of the fan, reflecting a multitude of emotions and expressing pleasure or displeasure, as the case may be, in a particular play or even towards the sportsperson, coach, manager or team in general (“act 3”). The viewer empathises with the sportsperson and sports-act. All three cases show an expressive dimension that reflects a process consisting of training, mental state of the sportsperson and then expression in the actual event, the latter being a logical consequence of the former, a type of sequence that one can liken to Collingwood’s “process-and-then-externalization theory”. The appreciation or anger or angst expressed by the supporter reflects a Tolstoian-like sense of either kinship with the sportsperson or indignation, wherein universal brotherhood is not expressed.¹¹⁸ This latter “act” of expression is paralleled by the athlete’s joy or anger or the like at his or her performance, his or her response to the expressive action.

Focusing on the first “act” of expression – inner intention – we may follow Weiss (1969) who argues that sport consists of the achievement of excellence and perfection,¹¹⁹ and gives us a measure for what we do. It reveals to us the magnitude of what can be done if *energy is channelled* and of what we can be at the limit of bodily capacity. The successful sportsperson intuits this and wishes to push the yardstick of human potential and make actual a new level of sporting excellence. It is only with a fine-tuned inner quiet, specifically before the expression in the actual sports event, (“act 2”) that it leads to achievement in that performance. Noakes speaks here of the need to shut out the cortex, the analytical, conscious mind and focus, as in a meditative state, on the task at hand, where analysing happens only on the subconscious level. In fact, at the higher levels of sport, a sports scientist may be required to teach sportspersons various techniques to enter that meditative state in order to be, as it were, “in the zone”. The energy reserved for sport, the surplus needed, can then be utilized most favourably when the sportsperson overcomes fear and is ready, poised like a cheetah before the kill, for the task at hand. When this is done, the sportsperson expresses himself or herself most fully.

¹¹⁸ Sport (like art) can create a great sense of national unity, but when a player cheats (disregards the rules, takes performance enhancing drugs, match-fixing...) or a referee blunders, this sense of bonding among people is often compromised.

¹¹⁹ c.f. Perfectionism and mood states among recreational and elite athletes, Stirling, A & Kerr, G (University of Toronto), 2007 in *Online Journal of Sport Psychology*.

The second “act” of expression and channelling of surplus energy is the performance. If the first “act” is at its optimum, a good performance follows. Maslow (1954) speaks of such “peak experiences” which is a performance of a particular intensity, meaning and achievement. It is characterized by a certain focus, effortlessness, smoothness as if time slows and the performer exudes confidence. It is the addition of energy over and above one’s usual amount or surplus. Pele (born 1941), the football player, describes such energy in the following way: “...it was a type of euphoria; I felt I could run all day without tiring, that I could dribble through any team or all of them, that I could almost pass through them physically. I felt I could not be hurt. It was a strange feeling and one I had not felt before” (in Hyland 1990:79).

This “surplus energy” is said to be expressed without thinking, as an unconscious activity where there is the non-interference of thoughts. Suzuki (1975:82) in *Zen and the art of archery*, describes it as a “letting go of yourself, leaving yourself...”¹²⁰. When the sportsperson arrives at this state, his or her performance is greatly enhanced and he or she can become a hero, an international icon, one even more popular and sought after than the contemporary artist of notable fame. The romantic ideal of the artist appears in contemporary society to be reserved for the sportsperson who, aside from his or her sublime proficiency in his/her sport, is held to be a paragon of virtue, a representative of the indomitable human spirit.

Furthermore, this notion of the indomitable human spirit, enables a person to express an awareness of a subtler dimension of the self in relation to other selves. Fraleigh (in Osterhoudt 1973) argues that sport as expressive of “surplus energy” enables a sense of self-identity, making one aware of one’s individuality and of being a member of humanity, hence the timeless significance of records. In Ancient Greece this was articulated as the idea of *arête* – manly excellence - epitomized by the gods who were perfect men. The modern Olympic vernacular is faster (*citius*), higher (*altius*) and stronger (*fortius*). In both cases the energy involved in sport are types of expression and a language which are replete with symbols to dominate the world, that is, to create order, measure, rhythm¹²¹.

¹²⁰ Many sportspersons will attest to the fact that their best play occurred when they almost lost control and cannot even remember what it is they did. Reviewing the play on video post-mortem, a common response is: “...that was not me”.

¹²¹ There is a curious link between the natural, instinctual dimension of sport, for example the regalia of the sportsperson individually or in team sports resembles the recognition by one animal of another species, a

One can substantiate the above, namely that sport is expression, a peculiar language, by acknowledging that "...there is no society known to man which does not have games of the sort in which individuals set up purely artificial obstacles and get satisfaction from overcoming them" (Weiss 1969:8). Given this universality of sporting expression (of games...), it is not surprising that the notion of the athlete is that he or she represents all. It is as if the more we are driven to be and do our best, the better we epitomize all and represent the rest. Hence we get the idealized portrait of self as expressed in the muscular body – in most cases – that typify the sportsperson. Weiss (1969:22) inquires as to why young men wish to live up to this ideal and utilize their energies in sport as it requires discipline, possible failure and humiliation. He answers by saying that sport affords "opportunities to master the very way their energies are expressed" (Weiss 1969:22). This expression of energy in such a context sharpens judgment and there are the benefits of strenuous work gained from discipline, and being pushed to the limit. He continues: "...they must, it seems, live through tensions and crisis before they can be at peace with themselves" (Weiss 1969:23). This expression is also a surplus of joy, not simply energy to burn, one that builds character through overcoming obstacles, with the promise of elation in victory. The universality of sport and individuality converge producing heightened emotions.

I have been describing "act 1" and "act 2", which requires that they express themselves by accepting their bodies and thus training, by identifying with their equipment, by defining what they are by what they do. And in achieving that, I have argued, the sportsperson represents others. They can thus become heroes if they unite sufficiently with the game and equipment through their bodies to realize the mind's intentions. The result – even if unconsciously – that the athlete aspires to, namely beauty, grace, coordination, responsiveness, alertness, efficiency, devotion and accomplishments, harmony, rhythm and flexibility. These are the attributes that set the athlete apart from others as an individual as he or she carries out a role larger than himself or herself as was mentioned in the case of the modern artist.

distinguishing device that propels them to act in a certain manner – and the cultural, that is, instead of sport being instinctual, it is of cultural import and in this case, the special clothing and equipment are an assertion over and above the instinctual.

Perhaps it is also necessary to add that I have been focusing on elite sportspersons and their plying of their craft to express that ill-defined energy within. There is, of course, also those people who do sport far less seriously, for whom sport is merely the after-effect of relaxation after conquest (Vanderzwaag 1972) and as Schiller describes it, as an “aimless expenditure of exuberant energy” (in Vanderzwaag 1972:109). Sport may be a means of revitalizing after and for work. But even so, I contend that the elite athlete defines the way the recreational sportsperson approaches sport, whether simply for relaxation, to support a team or an individual. It is as if our fun and games also carry a kind of seriousness, a make-believe that we too sacrifice for the game in our efforts to compete and improve, at whatever level.

In the third “act” of expression, in particular, is clearly where we may see the role of sport, that is, as a source of inspiration not just because one is a spectator, but it’s near universal quality of participation as mentioned hitherto. Sport for the audience is a space away from the pressures of life and allows those so inclined to express – even yell – an opinion or disagreement with the authorities, either the coach or officials. Goldstein (in Novak 1979:221) contends that most sports viewers are not merely spectators, but rather participants as are the true believers of the religious rituals to which Novak likens the sporting event. It is surely no coincidence that “fan” so closely resembles the word “fanatic”. Likening the sports event to an expressive work of art, we may say that sports events provide a real-life drama containing the thrill of victory and the agony of defeat. As Goldstein (in Novak 1979:321) contends, “...only a hard fought battle produces the affect, the intensity of triumph and only the fully committed competitor suffers and agonizes”.

Moreover, Crawford (2004) argues that the audience is part of the text itself – internet sites, fanzines and radio discussions - which are then consumed by others and contribute to the text of the “live” game and opens up expressive possibilities of the viewer, a kind of participation, if you will. In late capitalist society’s consumer culture as evidence in sport is so heavily packaged, promoted, presented and played as commercial products (Crawford 2004). As such, the sporting event can become festival-like and combine a multitude of expressive possibilities. Whether this is just economic or that the sporting event has an almost religious significance as a form of worship (Begg 2010¹²²) given the festival-like atmosphere at the

¹²² I interviewed Rashied Begg (University of Stellenbosch, 13th September 2010), a sociologist, who also specializes in the sociology of sport, in particular its relationship to the media. He alerted me to the idea that

game, is not clear. The fan is said to be safe within the “festival”, as he expresses various emotions. Psychologically, one can argue as Wann does (in Crawford 2004) that his behaviour acts as a buffer against depression and alienation. Furthermore, he contends it allows for a greater self-esteem and group esteem. Being knowledgeable about sports means a certain cultural capital that allows access to certain social groupings. Sport is said to be a useful discussion point which cross cuts class boundaries. This latter point is related more to the application to sport of the institutional theory, but I mention it here to make the point that sport provides for healthy expression as part of an audience. Thus one may make the case that, indeed, playing sport and viewing sport is a form of expression, one which quells anger or expresses it, makes one feel better through exercise, or tempers one’s spirit when the team that one supports wins.

A narrower version of sport as the expression of energy and in particular, surplus energy, hitherto outlined, is that sport is the manifestation of aggression. Weiss (1969) asks whether sport expresses an accidentally acquired cultural habit or admiration for successful violence within confined rules. In other words, sport is a way of being aggressive without actually subjugating and destroying.

However, the aggressive impulse need not monopolize the feelings expressed and I concur with Weiss (1969: 185) who says: “...sport is a constructive activity in which aggression plays a role together with dedication, cooperation, restraint, self-denial, and a respect for the rights and dignity of others”. Sport expresses “depth” precisely because in spite of its obvious aggressiveness, the human spirit simultaneously reveals sensitivity, graciousness and humility. Perhaps that is why our culture emphasizes “sportsmanship”.

Weiss (1969) observes furthermore that in our culture where physical strength and agility are less necessary for daily life than before, we elevate to hero status people whose activity exhibits just those increasingly anachronistic values. He says we do this as sporting prowess reminds us of the way things were; it is a nostalgia for the past. Secondly, and in relation to the first point, sport engenders qualities that we are in danger of losing and want to preserve; thus it serves as a model of the way we want to be. Thirdly, spiritual values are involved, for example self-discipline, team-work, concentration and lastly sport, even as a mode of

within sporting events are embedded religious undercurrents, that the spectacle is a form of veneration not dissimilar to a ritual.

aggressive behaviour is a form of “higher” culture or at least validly associated with art, a “soft” form of war such that sportspersons are seen as better than soldiers as agents of destruction (adapted from Hyland 1990).

This “aggressive”, expressive tendency means that the athletic contest offers one of the few places where people can freely express their emotions without fear of censure, though within the confines of rules. Aggression in sport may be seen as the “opening” through which other emotions emerge. In other words, when sport is played aggressively, one is more likely to experience the range of emotions. Insofar as this is the case, sport can also express exhilaration, sadness, loneliness and so on. Its lessons are exhibited from and for life itself, that is, as the metaphor of life as a game. Therefore, it requires courage in overcoming obstacles, perseverance or the folding under pressure. In summary, sport and sporting activity can express something of our passion and personal standpoint in the *way we play*,¹²³ inspired by a certain tenacity and aggressiveness. That *way* may appeal as an experience – and object of – aesthetic consciousness.

In view of the above, Hyland (1990) argues that to play sport requires being more aware of things – a certain openness – which he here calls a phenomenology of aesthetic and sensuous play. Other than “openness”, a certain responsiveness is required, which is here defined as thematising, which is to work with the finite and bring out the best, via freedom. It is pertinent to note that Hyland (1990) argues that this “openness” and “responsiveness” parallels artistic creativity. Both are said to also include a modicum of improvisation. All these attributes are said to be fun. I think “fun” should not be taken lightly. At the highest levels of sporting and artistic achievement, pleasure and fun is a necessary motivational and performance-enhancing aspect of what it means to play the game. To take pleasure in what one does is certainly an important factor in expressing oneself and continuing and persevering in one’s chosen medium. Aggression may be a significant aspect of “openness”, “responsiveness”, “improvisation” and “fun”. These concepts in turn may be described as “aesthetic expressivity”.

¹²³ This counters Best’s (1979) argument that sport, unlike art cannot be said to comment on or reflect life issues. I suggest that indeed they do: the way a sportsperson chooses to express himself or herself not only has national and political ramifications, but the actual *way* he/she performs speak of an individual philosophical statement (such as: freedom in movement, group cohesion, peaceful co-existence and so on) or simply as beautiful.

5.5. Critique of an “expressive” theory of sport towards multiple emotional states

For Freud (1920) aggression is a primary drive and energy needs to be expressed or else it will re-emerge in perhaps unhealthy ways. Sport would be one such way to temper an emotional outburst. Sport is therefore primarily aggressive as I pointed out towards the close of section 5.4.3. However, there is no evidence that aggression is more basic and universal than self-maintenance or kindness or sociability, as the mystic, pacifist or martyr attests to.

An expressive theory of sport may also lend itself to negative values, such as the mindless devotion to authority, a win-at-all-costs attitude and a spirit of competitiveness. The last perhaps turns people in the other team into enemies that should be hurt, intimidated, cheated and may lead to ruining one’s health to win. From a Marxist perspective, competitiveness in sport as a primary, socially expressive need may ideologically reinforce the values of capitalism and its concomitant alienation¹²⁴. Rather than the spirit of – and expression of – aggression, one needs to alter the theory along the lines of the spirit of cooperation. In this sense, the “expressive theory of sport” needs to be modified from the desire to win and express inner aggression, to a subtler, softer version akin to a more socially beneficial kind of expressivity. This coheres with the original meaning of “competition” and “contest”. Sadler (in Osterhoudt 1973:100) observes:

...the concept of the good strife is implicit in the word competition as derived from cum and petere – literally to strive with one another rather than against. The word contest has similar implications, being derived from con and testare – to testify with rather than against him.

In addition, a purely aggressive mode of expression is inaccurate in that most sporting codes and success therein require the experiences of the self as both violent *and* tender, a channelling of various emotions, emotions that may seem to oppose one another, in order to control space, time and gravity.

A more accurate and meaningful conceptual or theoretical map, therefore, if one wants to argue for the “expressive theory of sport,” does not isolate or foreground one particular kind

¹²⁴ Rather than being aggressive and purposive, one could argue that sport lulls people into a sense of passivity, through its order and structure. This Marxist spin would thus argue that sport renders the consumer of sport as accepting of the status quo.

of emotion as central as say, aggression or pleasure. Such is the basis for the “reversal theory” as outlined by Kerr (1997). Here it seems is a comprehensive theory of motivation and emotion in sport. It concerns the oscillation, depending on internal and external changes when engaged with sport, of emotional states and other mental properties. The polarities are given as: the telic (planning ahead) and paratelic (the spontaneous, playful); the conformist (complying with rules) and negativistic (rebelliousness); mastery (control, toughness) and sympathy (cooperative, sensitivity), autic (egoistic) and alloic (altruistic). These are described as the alternating four states of meta-motivational inner drives (Kerr 1997:45). Inducing agents, that is, causing the reversal from one polarity to the next, may be contingent, as a result of satiation, or simply frustration. The “reversal theory” claims that, at any one time, the intensity of the emotions expressed by a person will vary with the level of felt arousal and felt transactional outcome being expressed. Transactional emotions are the polarities of humiliation and pride, resentment and gratitude, modesty and shame, virtue and guilt. Arousal or somatic emotions are the polarities of anxiety and relaxation, anger and placidity, excitement and boredom, provocativeness and sullenness (adapted from Kerr 1997:38-47). This account I believe is a more thorough exposition of what occurs emotionally in sport and argues for the simultaneous presence of key emotional polarities, rather than a single foundational emotion, like say aggression. In this form, sport is aesthetic precisely because as with art it encompasses a range of emotions, a creative “play”. Moreover, it is precisely the alternation between polarities and opposites that ignites the flame, so to speak, to the drama, effort, depth, play and humaneness that sport offers to practitioner and viewer alike. At the same time, these conflicting emotions may yield something not altogether positive.

5.6. Two surface observations

Having outlined various aspects of the expressive theory in art and how that may apply to sport, this section proposes two observations, and a certain confluence. In the process, one may reclaim the expressive theory as explanatory of both art and sport in some measure without grand claims that the individual and the body of work expresses “truth” as such.

5.6.1. Observation 1: An expression above language and towards the ineffable

Our findings above concern the fact that physical activity and picture-making is crucial to our evolution; they need their primitive roots. Such activity, it was noted, in both art-making and

sport are also trans-rational and thus beyond the analytical mind. Furthermore, both are perfected through training, and require the special inner drive and intuition. The upshot of all this is that the artist and sportsperson allows us to extend the range of our expressive powers beyond that which we find within our own resources. For example, one may say that a Rothko or Bannister's running helps me to express a feeling which defies description. One may attribute to such performances a kind of sombreness, serenity, even the mystical. It is, perhaps as Kandinsky (in Jansen 1967:115) says: "...painting (sport)...needs its materiality for that very dematerialization that shows the road from the external to the internal" (brackets my inclusion). Figure 6 (page 231) envisages this process that applies equally to that of sport or art.

Via the "external" of say, a Newman painting, the onlooker may become aware of his own body. It is therefore no surprise that Newman asked his viewers to see his paintings close-up wherein a sense of the aliveness of the onlooker was conjured, a sense of place and awareness as opposed to separation. The visual experience may be said to be permeated with emotion. I would claim that to follow sports events on television does a similar thing to the onlooker. The "external" close-up of the action vitalizes the viewer. In this close-up, we may experience a kind of non-verbal identification with the "external" that borders on the ineffable.

As for the practitioner of art and sport, one may surmise that in striving he or she can experience wholeness. By expressing themselves, they "press" themselves out. This "pressing themselves out" is like love and friendship which is both predicated on a lack and a giving of self. Similar perhaps to a Tolstoian desire to communicate and share, the practitioner is in a position to express "...a gift of the abundance of what we all are" (Hyland 1990:141). This is expressed in the non-verbal language of art and sport. The language of the sporting event or artwork may have the veneer of linear time and logic, but in reality, given their primitive origins, they are both expressions of an intense unnamed emotional need that defies verbal articulation. Metaphorically, we can say it is like *that* ballet move or *that* sound without being able to pinpoint exactly what *that* movement or *that* sound expresses (or is).

In order to perform at a high level, one has to become one with the game or one with the act of painting or be in *that* ballet movement or in *that* sound, just flowing with it with full concentration. To the extent that one can do that, the sportsperson may say "the game played

me” or the painting told me what *it* wanted. This attitude transcends competitiveness. Bannister, the famous sub four minute miler expressed a great sense of thankfulness at fulfilling his aims, rather than a sense of vanquishing his opponent. In sport as in art, one is ultimately against oneself. This means that both sport and art require introspection and incessant refinement to find and express that spark within. That “spark” is not easy to define – one may be able to express it in the repetition of the same great play and by forging a style. One has thus said it non-verbally and beyond conventional language.

Keenen (in Osterhoudt 1973), referred to in chapter 2 argues that sport is like theatre, in that it consists in performances within a special and contrived world, as “an idealization of the everyday”. Like dramatic tragedy it has its “acts”, for example, half time; “players” refer both to sportsmen and women and actors and actresses; there is clapping for a good performance and a quest for the great struggle. Camus (1913–1960) in Osterhoudt (1973:306) says: “...even today, the stadium crammed full of spectators for a Sunday match and the theatre which I loved with unequal intensity are the only places in the world where I felt innocent”. I believe that this “innocence” felt by Camus can be located in the primordial child-like quality to find meaning in games, the spirit demonstrated by the “players” and the inexpressible somehow represented to the senses as an aesthetic experience.

Womack (2003) concurs that the arts and sport are mediums of expression without recourse to words when she says, “sport communicates through the language of symbols and, like art, it dramatizes complex ideas that cannot readily be expressed in words” (Womack 2003:27). In this light, one can make the brief argument that Yves Klein (1930–1965), an artist and expert judoka, sought an overlap of his love for art and understanding of the art and science of judo. He sought to express that which is above words in his performances¹²⁵ and paintings. Klein’s blue monochromes were his language that creates a sense of weightlessness, the essence of a correct judo technique and spatial determinacy. The viewer may feel drawn into the depth of blue that appeared to transmute the material substance of the painting support into an incorporeal quality, tranquil and serene (adapted from Weitmeier 1995:19). I cannot say it better than Yves Klein himself: “What is blue? Blue is the invisible becoming visible ... blue has no dimensions. It is beyond the dimensions of which other colors partake” (in Weitmeier 1995:19). I believe it was this same ineffable search that he sought in art and

¹²⁵ For example his performance piece “Leap into the void” (1960) demonstrates the freedom of art and judo simultaneously.

through judo-movements, that the latter could also suggest a boundless sensibility, that which “has no dimensions”.

While I have been describing how an art-like perception may apply to sport, paradoxically they both appear to “refer” to that which defies expression. Nevertheless, in light of this thesis it is hoped that both can be experienced aesthetically and that they do bear some similarities in these respects. Of course that acknowledgement cannot be mandated; it is but an argument. In this respect, the idea as to what constitutes the (a) aesthetic is a healthy debate.

5.6.2. Observation 2: The integration of mind-and-body

I have been arguing that emotions and the expression thereof play a pivotal role in both art and sport. Now if emotions can be construed as the link between the bodily and mental, then an expressive theory of both art and sport could account for a meaningful interweaving of mind-and-body through such endeavours. The benefit of such an “interweaving” is that art and sport galvanize people in meaningful ways. Weiss (1969:39) puts it like this: “...because art and sport involve a controlled expression of emotions, making it possible for minds and bodies to be harmonized clearly and intensely, they offer excellent agencies for unifying men”. Shusterman’s somaesthetics, rationalised with recourse to significant philosophers points to the unity of mind-and-body and the interrelation between sensory experience, feelings and cognition, often using the phrase body-mind or mind-body.

The individual too may benefit from this mind-body relationship. Weiss (1969:54) once more says: “...only he who expresses his emotions through such a possessed and structured body can become well-unified and not be undone by what he feels”. In this process, the artist and sportsperson is said to have a mind to quicken and guide his body and a body as a source for acts desirable and effective. It is a body used, not simply worked on by what is external to it. Weiss thus uses the analogy of not hand-in-glove to represent the nature of the mind and body and its apparent dualism, a perennial problem in philosophy. Rather the mind-body interaction is like fingers to a hand – the fingers or body presuppose a hand or mind. Through practice both tend towards a rule-governed, well-controlled action. It is in this action defined as “act 2” that we can grasp a sense of unity and integration of the self.

To unpack this further, we may say that there is a similar process and language at work in both art and sport. There is first a desire, then more clarified intentions, followed by “performance” which contribute to the realisation of a prospect and finally commitment to continue performing in a certain way. This requires focus. I tend towards a phenomenological position which describes the unity of mental and physical activity as a kind of “lived body” in opposition to dualism. According to the phenomenological position, expression itself is considered a unified whole and an “integration” mentioned above. Hyland (1990:102) puts it in these terms:

...an amalgam of man’s incarnation reveals that man is an opaque and partially concealed being subject without clear and precise points of demarcation for the various aspects of his being; he is a unity of physical, background and psychological relationships necessarily interrelated and only meaningfully investigated when analysed as a whole.

This “unity” means that I do not simply have a body, but, in some sense, I am my body, and in sharper terms: mind, senses and use of the body cannot be isolated and mechanically described, all act in unison which is an expression of the “I”.

Furthermore, in the same way that the artist forms a style (see Wollheim above) and his individuality vitalized by artistic feeling and training in his craft, so too is the sportsman inspired by feeling and training in his craft. The net result of this may be perceived as “...a reunification of spiritual and corporeal faculties, that can be achieved only by an assiduous training in movement in time and space, and a diligent cultivation of a muscular strength” (Osterhoudt 1973: 42). This point applies equally well to the arts because movement too is a basis for the arts. One needs to train our motor-tactile faculties, and expression is a succession of movements. Even where the art is more conceptual and abstract as in the case of music, there is an imaginative construction of movement as the music has a rhythm which could be applied to a dance routine, and its “playing” certainly requires a certain dexterity and the like. In recognizing the indissoluble link between the mind-and-body in sport and art, one can say both activities have the potential to express a unity of self. This “unity of self” exists because the aesthetic can be embodied, that is, expressed.

If sport, drawing from artistic expressive theories, can be understood as expressive, then it is likely that we would be able to find “moments” in traditional aesthetics where there is a shift for considering “other” activities as aesthetically expressive. In modifying Guyer’s text somewhat, I believe this shift is forthcoming, no less from the philosophy of Kant.

5.7. An extension of sport aesthetics by applying Guyer's "Kant and the philosophy of Architecture"

In this section I apply a reading of Guyer on Kant in which he argues that Kantian aesthetics and metaphysics may be read so as to argue that sport is concerned with the expression of aesthetic ideas. In this sense, sport is not just formal aesthetic "play", but grounded in extra-aesthetic meaning-making comparable to the arts. The argument is based on the fact that Kant shifted his attention away from the arts as simply about disinterested formal harmony that tends towards the "mere" practical and beautifying logic in architecture, but that the latter is concerned with the expression of ideas. The very fact that this may be applied to architecture – a practical art – may lead to the argument that other aesthetic and perhaps more practical domains like sport can be similarly described.

Kant did not write much about architecture in his aesthetic deliberations and has had little influence in the theory of architecture. Nevertheless, Guyer (2011) argues that given the indisputable influence of Kant's aesthetics on German Idealism in particular after the 1790 *Critique of Judgement*, it seems natural to look for the *shift* in philosophical thinking about architecture within Kant's aesthetics. This shift, explains Guyer (2012:15) is from a Vitruvian conception of architecture, where the main goals of architecture are utility and beauty, to a cognitivist or expressivist conception of architecture. The expressivist is here understood as, like other forms of art, as communicating abstract ideas, not just aiming for beauty and utility. This shift can be seen in Kant's thesis that all art involves the expression of "aesthetic ideas", that is the expression of rational ideas in a form that yields inexhaustible material for the play of the imagination. Guyer further maintains that given Kant's "loose specification" of just what sort of intellectual content aesthetic ideas have, means that it could express 1) its own function, 2) nature of its structure, 3) the physical forces that underlie the structure and 4) metaphysical ideas (adapted from Guyer 2011: 5-12). In this regard, form is merely a springboard to that which is not-form, that is, meaning-making.

The very fact that Guyer has applied Kant's aesthetics to the realm of architecture, usually considered an applied art and not art as such, perhaps invites an even more radical *shift* of Kant's thought to other domains. In light of the proposition that art and sport share an aesthetic dimension, applying Kant's thoughts on "aesthetic ideas" to that of sport, is not far

fetched. Sport expresses, albeit covertly in many cases: functionality (1), structure (2), physics (3) and even “deep” content (4) which I shall unpack in what follows.

Sport’s movement is functional (1) in the sense that it requires economical movement. In fact, the founder of judo, Jigoro Kano describes the excellent judo technique as one where efficiency and economical movement will lead to a successful throw. In being functional, sport has a formal, structural cohesion (2) that is expressed in the very “logic” of a series of movements. What appeals to the observer and what needs to be at play in participating in most sports is a certain composure – both bodily and in terms of mental focus. Thirdly, the tensions, the gravity, the inertia, the energy expressed by a sports movement, exemplifies physics in the form of action (3). Many sports somehow encapsulate in visually pleasing ways the potential of the body (mind) at the precipice of physical (and mental) possibility. We admire and praise how the sportsman (artist) uses his/her craft to show us what can be achieved through his/her mastery of the sport (art) within the confines of the limitation – temporarily overcome – of our embodiment. Lastly, there is a metaphysical aspect (4) in that the first three more physical attributes are all given impetus by human will. Will itself, in a kind of Schopenhaurian and Nietzschean sense, might be a more fundamental or metaphysical property “behind” the veil of nature and natural movement, giving one an intuitive sense of action that defies the ordinary, which might be particularly evident in sport especially at the elite level. The expression of will-power, of surmounting difficulties by performing optimally in sports-acts (or through art) is simultaneously an expression of the spirit, hence we emotionally identify with the sportsmen and women (or artists for that matter) that express and ply their craft come what may.

To unravel further *what* the sportsperson and artist may express other than simply the effort in expression itself, I concur with Guyer’s claim that Kant’s influence on architecture may be responsible for the idea that not only that it (architecture...) should express ideas, but specifically *what* those ideas should be. For example, in the case of the post-Kantian leading philosophers, such as Schelling, Schopenhauer and Hegel, one detects this Kantian influence. In the case of Schelling, Guyer (2011) argues that architecture, in order to be art, need not be concerned with utility as such, but as the expression of something intellectual. By this he may mean, in his words that: “...the most primal sequence is numbers...that architecture, as the music of the plastic arts, thus necessarily follows arithmetical relationships” (in Guyer 2011:11). Architecture should express or symbolise arithmetical relationships; that should be

the architects goal. Schopenhauer argued that, as Guyer (2011: 12) simplifies: "...that the work of architecture should express not their function, but rather the nature of their own construction and the physical forces involved in and affecting that construction". With Hegel, architecture should express metaphysical ideas about divinity and spirit (here equated with reason) itself, but that this project is undermined as "art, considered in its highest vocation, is and remains for us a thing of the past" (in Guyer 2011:13).

This account above serves to suggest that Kant influenced these philosophers in their move away from architecture as utility towards an expression of aesthetic ideas. Kant's attempt to explain what these ideas consist of, however, deconstruct in his own writing, as form and matter, that which suggests rich intellectual content, "cannot be reduced to any rule but instead triggers inexhaustible and pleasurable motion or free play in the mind of its audience" (in Guyer 2011:16). With this, the door is opened for an expansive theory and practice of art, and this applies to architecture as well. The implication for sport, if we are to maintain that it does express aesthetic ideas, is that an overarching discursive theory of sport is not forthcoming as its forms - the evolution of existing games and the creation of new games – forever changes and grows exponentially. In this spirit, one might maintain that sport does express a kind of mathematical pattern according to Schelling; that sport does express the coming together of natural forces according to Schopenhauer and that the "death of art" posited by Hegel is itself a thing of the past, as art aesthetics does exist in spheres usually considered not aesthetic, such as sport. The shift from a Vitruvian conception of architecture to an expressive one may be read in postmodern terms as a shift from an aesthetic-technicist conception of sport to an aesthetic-expressive one in the Kantian sense.

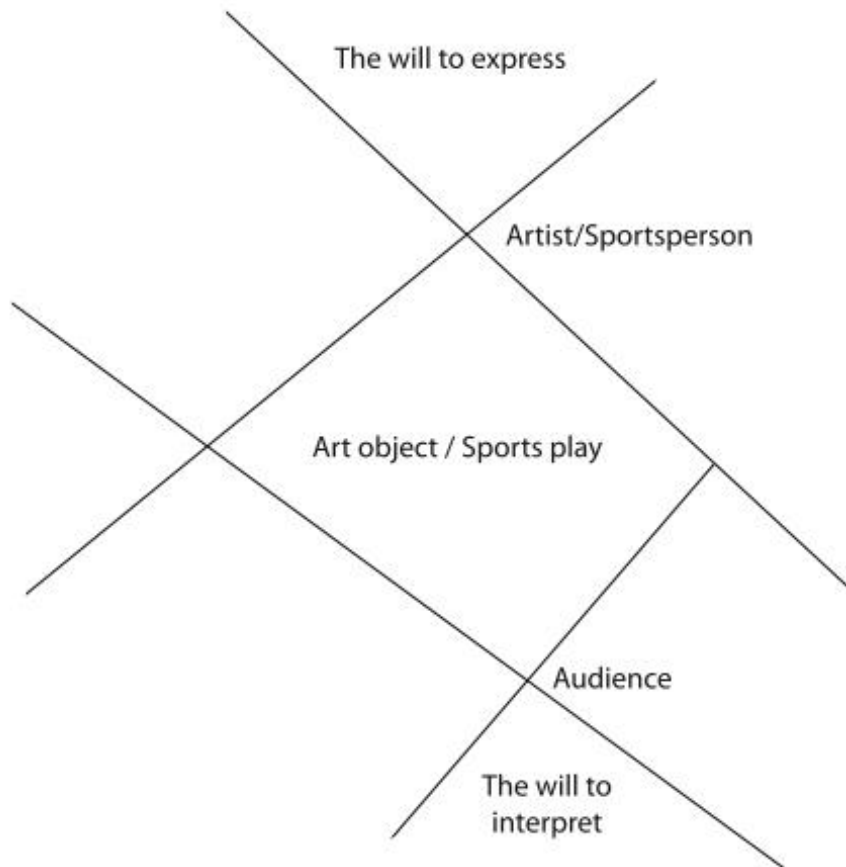
5.8. Conclusion

This chapter developed the theme of "expression" as applied to art and sport. While it may be intuitively appealing to consider a parallel "art as expression" and "sport as expression" informed by types of expressive theories, we noted certain shortcomings of such theories. However, in its favour, we were able to extract two observations that strongly recommend the theories do hold a kernel of truth. I concluded with a "deeper" application of expressive theories of art to sport by applying Guyer's reading regarding Kant's scant remarks on architecture.

I believe that an individual, emotive appeal is not only a primary motivation in art and sport, but also the by-product of a delight in sensual pattern-making and harmony. In this respect, one would do well not to simply recognise the emotional flavour of that delight, but the more cerebral, formal dimension of artistic and sports play. At this point one could, however, say that “expression” which at the outset may appear to be riddled with modernist notions concerning individual agency and centrality, really becomes one in which aesthetic “play”, (aesthetic) struggle and emotional satisfaction can apply equally well to a range of cultural domains, thus deconstructing the idea that “true” emotions are only reserved for “higher” culture. An expressive account of human agency offers a reprieve from a social account of art and indeed, sport. In this respect, the expressive does not dismiss the significance of the self, without necessarily lapsing into asserting one aesthetic over and above another. The early formulation of the expressive theory of art outlined by Tolstoy and perhaps to a lesser extent by Collingwood, are natural links in a chain that leads to an aestheticisation of the “everyday”. Furthermore, the expansive interinclusion of a number of emotional states that bear when producing the aesthetic object mimics the range of emotions one might ascribe to “everyday” living as such and sport in particular. Guyer’s application of Kant in the realm of architecture as an expression of ideas was read (interpreted) as applicable to the “everyday” life of sport because such “ideas” carry content made possible via self-expression.

This reconstruction of an aesthetic inhering in the “common place” as sport certainly is, is developed further in the following chapter, wherein expression is precisely the realization and desire to make form, to see form and in that pattern-making, the aesthetic abounds. Thus I shall be looking at formalism towards determining how art may extend our understanding of sport aesthetics. Recall that formal theories more closely are “purely” aesthetic, rather than being reduced to an “absent”, extra-aesthetic meaning or meanings.

Figure 6: The process of expression
The process by which inner and outer realms become manifest



Chapter 6: Formalist theories of art and sport

6.1.Introduction

The expressive potency of an art object and sports action is largely determined by the state of mind of the artist or sportsperson. This is one aspect of the meaning of art or sport. The actual *objecthood* of the art form and sports play is perhaps better understood through a consideration of the *form*¹²⁶ itself, that is, the salient visual features that constitute an artwork and this view is applied to perceiving a set of sports “moments” and movements in a parallel fashion and even similarly so. This chapter then serves to elucidate what may be termed formalist theories of art and sport. Formalism is a definite subset of the purely aesthetic. However, at the same time a purely formalist description of art has lost currency at least in applying solely to art. This then leads to an aestheticization of other facets of life.

My methodology is similar to that in the preceding chapter. I will first outline formalist theories of art that would seem to entrench art further away from the “everyday” as an autonomous aesthetic, followed by a critique of such theories towards a kind of “moderate formalism” (Zangwill 1999) that acknowledges the combination of formal aesthetic properties, content and extrinsic social extra-aesthetic factors. In terms of this version of the theory, the sporting “object” (“body”) benefits from traditional theories usually associated with art. Thus I will develop the theory of formalism as also applying to sport, followed by a brief critique of such theories. In the former case (formalism in art) key theorists are Bell (1913) and Greenberg (1961, 1973), both of whom made a strong claim for formalism, while in the latter case, Gumbrecht (2006) and Arnold (1990), and to a lesser degree, Weiss (1969) are the central writers on the subject. The primary task here is the evaluation of sport as beautiful, as formally beautiful, and thus the iconoclastic concepts of “formal harmony” and “disinterested contemplation” applying solely to art need not be the case. Yet as with arts, this kind of aesthetic theory is but partially sound and partially all-encompassing.

¹²⁶ This exclusive focus on form may be equated with qualities such as proportion, symmetry and perfection. Such qualities were associated with beauty in nature and art and corresponds to the “great theory”, so named by Tatarkiewicz (1972) in his excellent essay on “The great theory and its decline” in which he outlines the almost two thousand year reign of theories of beauty that accorded such qualities to things. The correspondence between aesthetics and beauty has, however, been somewhat critiqued as has the later formalist rendering.

In the third section of the chapter, I will argue for an observation that is suggested by the above analysis. This observation of the third section, namely what I term “the will to form”¹²⁷ develops the central argument of this thesis; specifically, that aesthetics permeates other domains of experience, such as sport, rather than exclusively art – and yet drawn from art. And it is precisely in the critique of “beauty” in art itself that has curiously led to “beauty” inhering in other aspects of culture. The ensuing relationship between the two disciplines as forms of aesthetic play and “bodily contact” yields an enriching dialectic and suggests an experience of “everyday” life itself that is metaphorically content rich founded upon a revised formalist aesthetic or more accurately, a more encompassing one. The soundness of formalism applied to sport, and in particular the further explication of the “will to form” through the idea of embodied meaning and Nietzsche’s “will to power” suggests that “play”, struggle and competition within the context of rules in sport may be an extension of art aesthetics.

6.2. Defining formalist theories of art

Kant (1952 [1790]) is usually regarded as the founder of formalism, which might equate with aestheticism, though not aesthetics as such (Guyer 1997:80), because formalism is also a kind of ideological stance, rather than simply a general approach to art theory. In this respect, one can only talk of formalism as tending to the aesthetic. Provisionally, one could define formalism as the belief that aesthetic appreciation lies in the pleasure and satisfaction gleaned from the work of art in response to its formal characteristics rather than its subject matter, ideas and content. Kant writes: “beauty is the form of purposiveness of an object” (in Crawford 1974:92). The type of pleasure that this peculiar sensitivity inspires as described by Kant is disinterested passive contemplation. The “aesthetic” viewer is not interested in the use of the object per se, or even in what can be understood by it in terms of a particular cognitive law. Rather, the viewer gains a general pleasure from appreciating the object’s aesthetic properties, even if they cannot be described in language.

¹²⁷ The way I am using this term is different to what Riegl may have meant by his term “*kunstwollen*” or “artistic volition”. I say so as I think Riegl has in mind that the artist is somehow directed by the epoch’s “*kunstwollen*”, whereas I believe that the artist (whoever that may be) does have his/her own freedom to disengage from the time and place in which he/she finds themselves. Yet insofar as he/she does this through the medium/game/cultural activity that is art (and even sport) larger institutions (political, economic, religious...) may re-appropriate (for good or for ill) such cultural activities, or they remain ineffective as mere play and diversion, a game insulated from other aspects of life. In these respects perhaps Riegl is right and the artist is directed by the epoch’s “*kunstwollen*”, though “will” is a rather esoteric idea, and it’s not “*kunstwollen*” as much as a Hegelian concept of the Absolute, whether defined in esoteric and/or materialist terms.

These “aesthetic properties” entail a search for an artistic ontology reflected in the modernist call for an aesthetic essence as exemplified by the phrase “art for art’s sake” and consists of such notions as an aesthetic attitude and contemplation, aesthetic harmony and the belief that significant art is timeless and universal. In order to actualize these ideas, artists tended towards the “purity” and artistic “autonomy” of abstraction, formalist criticism and the universalist conceptions of internationalism.

Furthermore, such ideas correspond to a belief in an aesthetic essence. Maurice Denis, who is a generation younger than Degas (1834–1917) and who was inspired by the example of Gauguin (1848–1903), wrote the following oft quoted sentence in an essay published in 1890: “Remember that a picture – before being a battle-horse, a nude woman or some anecdote – is essentially a flat surface covered with colours in a certain order” (in Jansen 1967:81). This view transforms the focus of art from its usual representative, expressive functions to a self-awareness and reflexive activity, and thus a certain self-consciousness. This “self-consciousness” is motivated by a search for the essential nature of materials and a revealing of a “depth” lurking beneath formal relationships.

A “depth”, an aesthetic harmony pervading art through its formal coherence leads to the modernist “art for art’s sake” dictum. It advocates for art a function that is “pure”, that is, not simply for use and practical activity, which is in line with Kant’s concept of “disinterestedness”, and in the process seeks to counter a materialist age and demarcate a separate, pure realm for art, maintaining its distance from the social world. As such, some variants of formalism, tend towards art’s own purported spiritual “essence”, which is to engage a viewer on the aesthetic level, that is, in terms of a kind of correspondence between inner and outer harmony.

To lend support to formalist theories, that is, that art’s value is gleaned from its aesthetic properties, its formal harmony and the like, a theory supporting the nature of visual perception might validate (to a certain degree) the fact that art’s significance resides in some basic, intrinsic visual laws that give rise to an aesthetic experience. Rudolf Arnheim (1974:89-90), applying the processes and findings of modern psychology within the realm of human perception, argues that the eye organizes visual material according to definite psychological laws. He describes how the following tools of visual language operate and interact with the perceiving consciousness: balance, shape, form, growth, space, light, colour, movement, dynamics and expression. Art historian, Ernst Gombrich (1960:67) argues that the

eye is not a passive instrument, but rather that it serves a mind that is selective if it is not to be swamped by indigestible messages. Arnheim (1974:5) concurs with Gombrich by saying, “All perceiving is also thinking, all reasoning is also intuition, all observation is also invention”. Arnheim (1974:93) recounts the same conclusions researchers in art education reached, specifically with regard to “the trust in the objective validity within the visual experience”. As an example of this, he cites Gustav Britsch, who successfully proved that the mind works according to logical laws and proceeds from the perceptually simplest components to patterns of increasing complexity (Arnheim 1974:617). Gombrich (1960:65) thus explains that “what an artist constantly worries over whether he or she has got it ‘right’ is much more difficult to put into words”, that is, the concern is with a visual language. Such theories give a certain weight to the claim that the viewer responds to formal patterns over and above its associations and literary content, and that we are hardwired to perceive in a certain way such as is the physiological basis for empathy theories of art. Accordingly, it may not be arbitrary when we value one work over another. Furthermore, if the history of taste is not arbitrary¹²⁸, then formal changes follow an evolutionary logic.

In 1936, Alfred Barr, then director of MOMA, published a diagram depicting the evolution of modern art. His ideas reflect the fact that art develops according to its own internal debates and that this debate is simply a matter of form and formal changes. His theory is thus a-political. As such the artwork is an object in its own right, a pictorial reality (Greenberg uses terms such as “...the integrity of the picture plane” [1973:67]), rather than a window into another world, which tends to conceal the illusion, an art of art.

An “art of art”, which recalls the “self-consciousness” mentioned above, articulates that art is a specific language that has at its disposal specific tools. The medium is thus not transparent; the form may become the content. This is what led Rozanova (in Harrison & Wood 1993:202) to make the bold claim that:

...only modern art has advocated the full and serious importance of the principles such as pictorial dynamism, volume and equilibrium, weight and weightlessness, linear and plane displacement, rhythm as a legitimate division of space, design, planer and surface dimension, texture, color correlation, and others. Suffice it to enumerate these

¹²⁸ Kant appears to be saying this as if the beautiful object is aesthetically pleasing, that is, if its spatial and temporal properties (proportion, line, shape) are aesthetically pleasing, then it reveals a “purpose without purpose” – it is as if it were designed for us. Or in other words, one can claim universal accent; taste is not purely subjective and arbitrary.

principles that distinguish the new art from the old to be convinced that they are qualitative – and not just quantitative – new basis that moves the self sufficient significance of the new art. They are principles hitherto unknown that signify the rise of a new era in creation – an era of purely artistic achievements

It would seem that formalism is a central theory of much modern art, that is, in particular the abstract art of the early and mid-twentieth century. However, its significance as a theoretical lens can be applied to art generally, as I would claim that formal components are integral to art and many artists wish to induce in the viewer an aesthetic experience so gained by the contemplation of the art object *quo form*. Braque echoed such a sentiment with the statement that “the aim is not to reconstitute an anecdotal fact but to constitute a pictorial fact” (in Harrison & Wood 1993:102).

Moreover, formalism is a blanket theory that stretches beyond the visual arts. Sheppard (1987:67) in speaking of music¹²⁹ also appeals to formal quality like the following description of one classical piece: “...the work opens in C major but then changes into a minor key; the theme introduced by the oboe is taken up by the violins; the rhythms become increasingly syncopated...” Formal features appeal more to knowledgeable audiences. And perhaps with music, of all the arts, formal components are most readily perceived. In ballet too, beauty is conceived in the formal pattern made by the movements of the dancers. In architecture, for example, the Renaissance architect, Palladio modelled his buildings on principles of symmetry. In literature too, we find meter used for verse, ordering of the words, structure of the plot, arrangements of themes of a play are all organized according to specific formal arrangements. The crucial component then is the “body” or form. So, in fact art is but a “playful” surface. Therefore, formalist theories need not be seen as simply a modernist search for “essence” and a deeper, underlying structure or meaning but as an acknowledgement of a kind of aleatory or indeterminism – or creative “play”. Or that the aesthetic (visual) sense, following Arnheim, Gombrich and Barr are determined by visual rules (or hard-wiring) over and above what an image represents. We are responding to a “body” as a “body”.

¹²⁹ Hansliek’s (1986) musical formalism is such that beauty is specifically musical, that is, no extra musical (aesthetic) concerns are required. Circumstances and external background of the composer are not important, only the structured pattern of sound is relevant. He thus argues for free or formal beauty as opposed to non-absolute music which depends on a non-musical purpose such as marching, dancing, narrative, meditating, praying.

6.2.1. *The formalist theory of Bell and beyond*

Having described a general approach to formalism, I now focus on one such variant of the theory, namely that of Clive Bell. Writers such as McLaughlin (1977) and Bywater (1975) assist in describing Bell's theory in brief terms, which allows me to extend the argument that a case can indeed be made for an almost purely aesthetic appraisal of art, that is a kind of experience that according to Bell is exclusive to what some artists are able to apprehend and what sufficiently "cultivated" viewers are able to perceive. I partially agree with Bell, but in line with this thesis also argue for the "impurity" of aesthetic perception in art theory and practice and also that aesthetics as such extends beyond art to encompass other aspects of life, which runs counter to Bell's project. Having said that, this section articulates Bell's version of formalism in order to define formalism as closely aligned with pure aesthetics. A trace of Bell's "exclusivism" (pure aesthetics) persists in this thesis, even where I apply it to a reading of sport as formally arresting, beautiful and significant.

Bell's theories of art recorded in his work, *Art* (1958 [1913]) is precisely a concern about formal properties. He lauds the postimpressionists and in particular, Cezanne, as they best exemplify his view that what is pertinent to art are "lines and colours combined in a particular way, certain forms and relations of forms" (Bell 1958:84). As such representational form has value as form, not as representation. Representation is irrelevant. By form Bell wishes to conjure the notion of *significant form*, the type of form that best reveals quality and it also teaches one how to look at the history of art. In so doing, Bell wishes to shift us out of Renaissance perspective and what he perceives as a "cultural burden", and thus reform taste (Bywater 1975:22). His invoking "significant form" is a departure from a sterile, cold, fixed space towards a dynamic, tense, vibrant, emotionally charged space. One can call this "emotional seeing". In such a state, such seeing breaks down the split between subject and object (Bell 1958:91). This vision is such that "it is no longer a matter of finding beauty in a painting. It is a matter of emotionally encountering a painting so that beauty – significant form – becomes present" (Bell in Bywater 1975:35). The net result of such a perception creates a "good state of mind" – some works of art support emotional seeing. A further effect is that being and knowing converge in *significant form*.

Looking at the history of art, the paucity of meaningful form is such that
craft holds the candle that betrays the bareness of the cupboard. The aesthetic

significance of form is feebly and impurely felt, the power of creating is lost almost, but human descriptions have rarely being painted according to Bell (in Bywater 1975:38). Rather primitive art – with its sensibility to the profound significance of form and the power of creation – is alive with formal interest. Similarly, in Cezanne there is a sense of depth but still a dynamic relationship between foreground and background planes, even as Cezanne flattens the work somewhat. Recognition of *significant form* is not a totally intellectual exercise. It is “emotionally thrilling, a discovery of connections, and not a further goal, but with a song of their own”, writes Bell (1958:96). *Significant form* is, furthermore not verbal or with linguistic characteristics. The forces of the forms are balanced and controlled vis-à-vis the two-dimensional picture plane, for example, the tensions are controlled in the painting. At the same time, he opposes an academic, analytical relation to the work, the pretext of the label, and so he desires the viewer to “prehend”, as he calls it, which is a mode of perception that is more than mere observation, but is able to sense the dynamic tensions of space, or in short: *significant form*. McLaughlin (1977:434) explains this “dynamic tension” further and writes concerning Bell’s proposal that aesthetic experience while being detached, impersonal and amoral, at the same time the work of art as representations of the external world (that is, forms as illustrations) one may see “visual patterns”. It is this that evokes the aesthetic emotion as distinct from the common emotions of everyday life. Only forms that are seen as ends in themselves can achieve what Bell considers the purpose of art. It is this that results in the “thrill” of the aesthetic emotion. His theory is strengthened when, as McLaughlin (1977:436) observes that “Bell admits that he might not see significant form in a work, and yet have not quarrel in theory with a critic who did, so long as both agreed on the quality being discussed”. It may also be noted that Bell’s theory accommodates the modern art of the time when theory and practice were somewhat divided.

Bell derived his theory by answering the question: “what quality is shared by all objects that provoke aesthetic emotions?” and with conviction, he answers: “*significant form*”. *Significant form* entails combinations and relations of forms. This is for example opposed to futurism, wherein form simply conveys information and ideas that associate art with politics. This Bell considers a mistake, and go so far as to claim that such works are not works of art. Rather, as hitherto mentioned, it is primitive art, rather than accurate representation, for example, that communicates this *significant form* and he cites the examples of Sumerian sculpture, pre-dynastic Egyptian art, archaic Greek art and the Wei and T’ang masterpieces, early Japanese

works and Byzantine art of the sixth century as good examples of the theory he proposes. The common characteristics of such art are: “absence of representation, absence of technical swagger, sublimely impressive form” (Bell 1958:26). In perhaps the more emphatic statements of his theory, Bell claims outright that the value of a work of art is only in its form and that, to reiterate, representation is irrelevant and moreover, to “...appreciate a work of art we need bring with us nothing from life, no knowledge of ideas and affairs, no familiarity with its emotions” (Bell 1958:27). Art is thus, at best, a kind of aesthetic exultation that is shut off from human instincts, wherein “anticipations and memories are arrested” (Bell 1958:27) and we are lifted above the stream of life, like the mathematician we may perceive intellectually the rightness and necessity of the combination. Or as McLaughlin (1977:439) puts it: “...an artist’s training, his inevitable familiarity with the works which proceed and surround him, determine his very vision of the world”. In this sense, significant form is the expression of the artist that sees a certain order in the world derived from a “kingdom” not of the world, namely the creative and spiritual tradition of art.

This rather lengthy quote that follows perhaps summarizes Bell’s views and in the process he asserts his theory against the prevailing artistic orthodoxy, hence his reference to “they”:

...When confronted by a picture, instinctively they refer back to forms of the world from which they came. They treat created forms as though it were imitated form, a picture as though it were a photograph. Instead of going out on the steam of art into a new world of aesthetic experience, they turn a sharp corner and come straight home to the world of human instincts. For them the significance of a work of art depends on what they bring to it; no new thing is added to their lives, only the old material is stirred. A good work of visual art carries a person who is capable of appreciating it out of life into ecstasy: to use art as a means to the emotions of life is to use a telescope for reading the news (Bell 1958: 29).

Here, Bell makes the point that the “pictorial logic” is important, not its associated references to something external, and therefore a single line can determine a good artist, not just facts and ideas and feelings. This is the profound significance of form that allows us to rise above time and place, wherein the problems of archaeology and history are impertinent. Furthermore, not just representation, but even provenance is irrelevant. According to Bell, great art is universal and eternal and the feelings it awakens are independent of time and place, its “kingdom is not of this world” (Bell 1958:29), whether created yesterday or five centuries ago.

His theory has further far-reaching implications, for in this Kantian-like pure form, art as an end in itself, as disinterested, as a direct means to emotion, stripped of association leads to a Kantian-like notion of the “thing-in-itself” and ultimate reality. This Bell calls the “metaphysical hypothesis” in *Art* (1958 [1913]). It is an ultimate reality that breathes through forms, through line and colour, as the work of art rises beyond “...the chatter and tumult of material existence which is unheard or heard only in the echo of some more ultimate harmony” (Bell 1958:51). I believe that this “retreat” to a pure formal frame of reference does strike an important cord. It does explain the kind of vision that we associate with many an artist who sees into form or the gestalt of form or the connections between forms. It explains what we mean by a kind of Schopenhaurian reprieve from “utility thinking” and positivist thinking, by relinquishing the will to a kind of surrender to the *beingness* and at the same time, the ebb and flow and transience of life that reflects at the same time the inner world. In a kind of Buddhist frame of mind, Bell (1958:51) asserts that “right forms imply right feeling”. “Right forms” thus overcomes the barrier to direct experience, even ecstasy. One does not look at art for facts in which one is to see things as ends, labels, symbols, as part of a historical discipline, and this opposes Barr’s scientific formalism referred to above, for here it is not history and art appreciation through comparison, rather, according to Bell every work of art must be judged on its own merits.

To sum up: Bell proposes an aesthetic hypothesis whereby the quality of a work of art is given by *significant form*. Secondly, *significant form* is the experience of a peculiar emotion felt for the reality of the artwork. This emotion is an aesthetic emotion which gives rise to a good state of mind. Like Tolstoy’s vision, Bell says that art is not something that lives in museums to be understood by the learned alone, rather it is a kind of religion, a refuge from life. This refuge takes place as one is immersed in the pictorial reality of a work of art as Bell (1958:187) aptly puts it: “To appreciate a work of art one brings with us nothing but a sense of form and colour and a knowledge of 3 dimensional space”. An extreme denigration of Bell’s formalist reductivism is to my mind an ignoring of the significance of the work of art as a work of art. A more moderate perspective, I believe unifies a formalist-aesthetics in art and in its application, or a drawing from art to the beyond (or “other”).

6.2.2. *The formalism of Greenberg*

Another version of formalism is provided by Clement Greenberg and I now turn to his theory. An elucidation of some of Greenberg's ideas assists in developing the argument that indeed there is a specific aesthetic experience; that art is concerned with its own formal-aesthetic development and that the critic is instrumental in forging formal links as art marches on. Such ideas argue for the aesthetic dimension of art, while its loss of currency shows a tendency towards art as a function of social, political...extra-aesthetic factors, other than that related directly to what one may call an art of art.

Greenberg sees his project in terms of this self-critical tendency that began with the philosopher Kant, as it was Kant who postulated the notion of "disinterested pleasure" that one attends to in the appreciation of formal design.

This formal approach was championed by the art critic Clement Greenberg, who speaks of these formal changes in terms of the purity of a specific artistic medium, which thus constitute its "depth", such as the "flatness", "opticalities", and "formal factors" (Greenberg 1961:125). This purity or autonomy or "self-criticism" would be given a reductive, essentialist reading: to be self-critical is to strip down to differentia, to what is exclusively one's own, and stick to it. Mack (1994:343) says that this kind of constant struggle for each art to purify its means requires that "it must acknowledge rather than conceal the mediums materiality and resistance".

Greenberg developed a kind of artistic teleology, a linear progression: Nothing could look more different from a Raphael than most modernist paintings. Nevertheless, the aim of Greenberg's formalist-based criticism is to show the continuities in art history, by showing how, through a series of formal transformations, the artist can move from Raphael to Olitski. Hence, Greenberg says, there is nothing in modernist painting "that cannot be shown to have evolved out of either Cubism or Impressionism...just as I cannot see anything essential in Cubism or Impressionism whose development cannot be traced back to the Renaissance" (in Fabozzi 2002:36). Greenberg (1961:190) continues: "I think Western painting holds pretty much together from Giotto right up to Pollock and beyond". Even more emphatically, he states: "I find that I have offered no other explanation for the present superiority of abstract art than its historical justification" (Greenberg 1961:12). In this way, Greenberg constructs a

narrative whereby modernist painting is the necessary and natural consequence and perfection of past art. This is closer to Barr's understanding as mentioned above in its historical perspective and deviates from Bell's more extreme a-historical approach.

However, Greenberg, like Bell, carved a special place for the aesthetic experience. He says: "... art is autonomous...its aim is to provide humanity with aesthetic value or quality and therefore trying to justify art by assigning it a purpose outside or beyond itself is one of the main causes...of art's obfuscation, of all the misleading and irrelevant talk and activity about art" (Greenberg 1961:81). In a series of eloquent and highly persuasive essays published from the 1930s to the 1960s, Greenberg argued that the ideals of modernist art were objectively verifiable, that they conformed to certain immutable laws. In this sense, he saw modernism as fulfilling the promises of the Enlightenment, during which rational determination governed the parcelling of all disciplines, and during which all fields of knowledge were divided into discrete areas of competence. Abstract expressionism may thus be regarded as the "high" point of the art of painting, as it facilitated the imaginary space of ideal reflection, where art separated itself from the real world, an idea that parallels Kant's notion of "disinterested" aesthetic contemplation.

It appears then that formalism outlined the aesthetic basis of art. Greenberg theorized an art that was not political. As Man Ray (in Harrison & Wood 1993:274) echoed:

...throughout time, painting has alternatively been put to the service of the church, the state, arms, individual patronage, nature appreciation, scientific phenomena, anecdote and decoration. But...absolute qualities is common...colour and texture of pigment, in the possibilities of form invention and organization, and in the flat plane on which these elements are brought to play...the artist is concerned solely with linking these absolute qualities directly to his wit, imagination and experience without the go-between of a "subject"...the universal language of color, texture and formal organization, uncovers the pure plane long been hidden by the glazing of nature imitation, anecdote and other popular subjects. Accordingly, the artist's work is to be measured by the vitality, the invention and the definiteness and conviction of purpose – within its own medium.

Greenberg lauds the importance of formal mastery of the medium, not in order to express emotion as such, but in order to assert the presence of the art object as a harmonious whole, as opposed to his contemporary, Rosenberg who emphasized emotional "action painting" as essential to the formalist agenda.

Greenberg (1961:73-98) endorsed formalism for the following primary reasons: 1) it was a way of resisting mass culture, 2) it lauded high/fine art and its autonomy and “purity”, 3) it acted in defence of abstract painting and its value, its self-referential nature and art-as-art, 4) and therefore each form of art ought to narrow its area of competence, thus securing the accomplishment of abstract expressionism which he also dubbed “American-style painting”¹³⁰. One could further see Greenberg’s project as a materialistic attitude as it eschews religious and metaphysical propositions; the paintings are an assertion of fact, of its own physicality and bodily sensibility towards an aesthetic experience. Such art is thus “exclusive of intellectual, effective, spiritual, moral or social relevance” (Tekiner 2006: 35). In this way one might call Greenberg a radical aesthete, though different to Bell in that he found modern art to be the truest indication and reflection of his version of formalism, whereas Bell may have found it in so-called primitive art (though not necessarily so).

If art according to the formalist theories enumerated above set “high art” apart from other objects, then in the following critique, quite paradoxically, it is precisely in arguing for “formal harmony” and the like, that points the way to a recognition and consciousness that the “common object” indeed can be considered in formal, aesthetic terms as well. This then argues against art’s separateness or at least diffusion into other domains. Furthermore, where art itself denied the formal as in Duchamp’s intention regarding his ready-made’s, and in Conceptual art, this in fact simply demonstrated that art itself need not only be about formal beauty, and thus if art itself could be redefined, then so too its assumed monopoly as to what constitutes aesthetic, formal beauty. Moreover, formalism transmutes precisely into and as a “play” of surfaces. Nevertheless, as this thesis contends that no one theory is all-encompassing, so formalism itself is limited in its explanatory scope.

6.3. Critique of formalist theories of fine art

There are numerous problems¹³¹ with a formalist theoretical viewpoint. I will cite some areas of concern in what follows:

¹³⁰ This is a curious label as it contradicts an outright a-historical, formal approach and becomes a form of nationalistic propaganda.

¹³¹ The arguments against formalism began in the 1950s. Herbert Read (1952) said his Farewell to Formalism in *Art News*, Vol. 2, No. 51 pp 36-39, and regarded Wollflin’s formalist principles to only apply to figurative art of the humanist traditions, not to earlier traditions, with no application to various types of modern art. In the case

In the case of Bell's version of formalism, we may note that he never really explains what sort of forms count as significant. His examples are restricted, and we are left wondering about formal significance; we are also bound to ask "significant of what"? Bell does maintain that in seeing "pure" form, the artist glimpses "ultimate reality", but again such descriptions are mysterious, relying on intuition rather than reason. Formalism seems to extol when an artwork "works", but fails to explain why this is so, other than by enumerating further formal components of the work. Thus art's apparent "depth" may not be forthcoming.

Another problem with simply equating appropriate form with the aesthetic or aesthetic emotion and so on is that such experiences may be wider than that of art, and in fact after Duchamp's ready-mades (1914 onwards), we could say anything could potentially be aesthetic, since it could be art and formally arresting. That the aesthetic attitude is sometimes referred to as being a distinctive mode of consciousness is not necessarily true as a particular way of perceiving something, as Stolnitz (in Arnold 1990:161) observes, anything can be an object thereof and such a "state" need not be confined to the visual, but to taste, touch, sound, smell and the kinaesthetic. The taste of wine, the touch of silk, the sound of music, the smell of fresh cut hay, the feel of a tennis serve and the motion of scything, for example, are all possible aesthetic "objects" and are all capable of yielding aesthetic satisfaction. Therefore, an aesthetic object may or may not be art and art need not be aesthetic. If this is so, it is difficult to locate the meaning of a peculiarly "disinterested" formalist, aesthetic experience.

A further problem is that since formalism is a-political, perhaps it causes "insidious erasures" (Dillon 1997:3). In trying to omit the political from aesthetic discourse, there is often an attempt to argue in favour of a kind of universalism, resulting in "fashioning subjects and discursive forces in uniform shapes without regard for political and historical specificity"

of the latter, Wollflin's ideas were adequate to an analysis of formal structure, but "could not account for artists sensibility or feelings expressed by the artist in executing design which could not be deduced by observing formal elements" (Read 1952:37). Modern art accordingly ought to be understood in terms of the symbolist or transcendentalist content which went beyond formalism, requiring symbolic interpretation. In the 19th century – Ruskin, Baudelaire and Pater were the chief symbolic critics. Read (1952:38) thus concludes: "all criticism that was worth anything and that has survived its brief day of topical relevance, was symbolic in this sense, taking the work of art as a symbol to be interpreted, rather than an object to be dissected". Another trajectory to take as a critique is simply by noting the different varieties of art that proliferated post 1960's: video, performance, photography, body art, earth art and conceptual art so that the Modernist notion of steady and measurable development within a given medium was increasingly irrelevant.

(Dillon 1997:64). We can therefore say that Greenberg omits social¹³²and existential concerns. As such the art critic is neither antagonistic nor threatening to dominant ideologies: “its advocacy of a radicalized and artistic autonomy and purity obviated any implication for social critique” (Tekiner 2006: 34), under the banner of “art for art’s sake”, the social import or ramifications of art were undermined. In fact, Piet Mondrian (1872–1944) wrote extensively on art’s role as a “dialectical revelation of harmonized oppositions” (in Tekiner 2006:32) and Greenberg skirts over Mondrian’s theoretical intentions and merely says “he has theories” (Greenberg 1971:64). As such, Greenberg disregards Mondrian’s idea of content, a typical formalist strategy. Of Kandinsky (1866–1944) too, Greenberg simply evaluated such works only in terms of formal properties. Therefore “if he acknowledged content at all, he gives short shrift, dismissing a priori as not pertinent to the value of art” (Tekiner 2006: 32). However, modern art is littered with explanatory literature and statements by artists (and I would suggest erroneously ignored), instances of obvious extra-aesthetic concerns.

When Newman (1905–1977) says of his art that it ought to be “a carrier of awesome feelings ... felt before the terror of the unknowable” (Newman in Arnold 1990:108), Greenberg surely cannot only refer to formal properties; there must be a metaphysical allusion. Tekiner (2006:33) thus says that “Greenberg and the Formalists took full avail of abstract expressionisms susceptibility of misunderstanding”. Newman himself fought formalist criticism of his work and in 1963 refused to participate in the show entitled “the formalists” and claimed that such a description or category is “a distortion of meaning of my work” (Newman in Arnold 1990:221). He opposes that the art object is merely a fetish and ornament, and emphatically remarks that “the fetish and the ornament, blind and mute, impress only those who cannot look at the terror of the self. The self, terrible and constant, is for me the subject matter of painting and sculpture “ (Newman in Arnold 1990:187). A purely formal approach would appear to miss the mark so far as such content is concerned, been solely about the dissonance or aesthetic resonance of shapes, colours and lines, while oblivious to its construction of a particular meaning. The work may contain important ideas, an emotional expressiveness, even accuracy of representation, and insight and an analysis of

¹³² Although a closer reading may suggest otherwise and an interaction of form (aesthetics) and content (extra-artistic) in Greenberg’s “austere formalism” as Greenberg himself saw the clarification and purifying of the medium of arts itself as reflecting the dialectic of class struggle toward a better society so that his seemingly reductive a-political art criticism is in fact political.

the moral and psychological problems of humankind, cognitive merits and so on. Hence, Bell's analysis of African sculpture, for example, in purely formal terms must be seen as problematic.

One could say that formalism is historically linked and even locked within the very particular confines of a modernist impulse. As a result, one might make the claim that a postmodern "era" beginning with pop art with its repetition, quoting, inclusion of mass images and materials and moving on to Conceptual art with its dematerialization of the art object, a focus on questioning art and redefining it, the fusing of various processes and media are an affront to formalism and the concomitant notion of an aesthetic disposition, and therefore modernist tenets such as ontology, teleology and the centred artist, the intentional "origin" that is the artist as argued for in chapter 5, are no longer all together sound.

In fact, in terms of ontology and the notion of a "disinterested" contemplation of the art object, we find that writers as early as Nietzsche (1844–1900 [1956]), predating formalist/modernist theory as such, lend further weight to counter the argument that art consists in this "disinterested" state of mind. He asks: "...what does all art do? Does it not praise? Glorify? Choose? Prefer? With this it strengthens or weakens certain valuations ... art is the great stimulus to life; how could one understand it as purposeless, as aimless, as *l'art pour l'art*" (in Kemal & Gaskett 1998:3). I think this is a strong point. It breaks down the iconoclastic distinction between art and "everyday" life and it refuses to regard the recipient of art as but a passive and/or contemplative viewer or listener. Given that art and life may be indissolubly linked, it has moral or political and social import, while the individual, according to Nietzsche (in Lamarque & Olsen 2004:266) "...has our highest dignity in our significance as works of art – for it is only as an aesthetic phenomenon that existence and the world are eternally justified". As an "aesthetic phenomenon", the individual and social realm is a matter of negotiating reality, not simply hanging it on a wall. As Nietzsche (1956:15) writes: "all our cognitive activity, including the abstracting and generalizing tendencies, are profoundly practical – ways in which we try to master the world and to make ourselves secure in it". Thus for Nietzsche, art is not detached from life and "disinterested"; art is for life's sake. And certainly this kind of attitude applies to other forms of "play".

As art appears to be a vague and an ever-changing concept, the advent of Conceptual art undermines the very foundations that art ought to be visual, that is, concerned with formal properties. Weiner (1970) produced work that is considered a Conceptual artwork. He said:

1. the artist may construct the piece
2. the piece may be fabricated
3. the piece need not be built (Wolfe 1975:107).

And Wolfe (1975:109) then exclaims in this long quote:

...and there it was! No more realism, no more representational objects, no more lines, colours, forms and contours, no more pigments, no more brushstrokes, no more evocations, no more frames, walls, galleries, museums, no more staring at the tortured face of the god flatness, no more audience requiring just a “receiver” that may or may not be a person, or may or may not be there at all, no more ego, just “the artist” in the third person projected, who may be anyone or no-one at all, for nothing is demanded of him, nothing at all, not even existence for that got lost in the subjunctive mode – and in that moment of absolute dispassionate abdication, of withering away art made its final flight, climbed higher and higher in an ever-decreasing tighter- turning spiral until with one last erg of freedom, one last dendrite aperture...and came out the other side as Art theory...Art theory pure and simple, words on a page, literature undefiled by vision, flat, flatter, flattest, a vision invisible, even ineffable, as ineffable as the angels and the universal souls.

It is here rather poetically described that no quintessential essence to art is to be found in a *visual* language of art as argued for earlier in the chapter; art could be abstract, intellectual, even undetected, that is, not fully amenable to the senses, at least not in the usual way. As the art object loses significance and therefore formalist-type analysis, the viewer is transformed to that of a thinker, rather than responding to formalist “visual music”; art theory itself enters the domain of art. In Conceptual art, the artist takes over the role of the critic to frame their own propositions, ideas and concepts. This was initiated by Duchamp who says: “a certain state of affairs that I am particularly anxious to clarify is that the choice of these ready-mades was never dictated by any aesthetic delectation. Such choice was always based on a reflection of visual indifference and at the same time total absence of good taste” (Duchamp in Meyer 1972:IX). This opposes the view that art is simply an ornament, an aesthetic object and rejects the myth of the precious and stylish object d’art, a commodity for the benefit of museums and status seekers. Duchamp’s and later the Conceptualists’ interest turned from the tradition of painting to the challenge of invention.

My arguments against formalism are related to an extreme version of the theory. Zangwill (1999) proposes what he terms “moderate aesthetic formalism”. Here some aesthetic properties of a work are formal, while others are not. He incorporates a Kantian system of thinking when he argues that a work of art contains non-formal aesthetic properties or in Kantian jargon “dependent beauty”, namely concept, end, purpose, fulfilling an intention, or function *and* formal properties or “free beauty”, where there is no end purpose, such as, drawing from Kant, wall paper designs, music without words. A combination of free and dependent beauty means that one can say that “there is beauty in the way something is represented, which is beauty over and above its beauty as abstract design. Something is not just a beautiful pattern and a picture of a tree, but beautiful as a picture of a tree. The two properties are not merely added but multiplied” (Zangwill 1999:615). It would be too extreme as in Bell’s formulation to say that all aesthetic properties of representational paintings are formal. Bell plays down the representational element. *In Zangwill’s more moderate form, the abstract, the formal and the representational all find a place simultaneously.* In this version art’s aesthetic “purity” is compromised, but at the same time lends itself to the invocation of “other” aspects of life. In this sense, formal, aesthetic “play” creates a “body” that is both logically self-referential and has content, the “truth” of which cannot be ascertained. In this respect, even where we are enjoined to see one aspect, namely the aesthetic, the extra-aesthetic is still latent. The beautiful and the symbolic in art are interrelated and ought not to be taken as final in and of itself. One implication is that art does not assume the monopoly on what counts as beautiful, for example, and yet one can extend art’s concern with beauty to other areas of life. This immediately also means that such “other” areas also have symbolic value. In this way, an analysis of art can be applied to readings of such other domains, such as sport.

6.4. Formalism in sport

Although there is no so-named “formalist theory of sport”, one can derive a kind of theory of sport that incorporates the aesthetic and the beautiful in sport that resembles an artistic formalist agenda. In this regard, Arnold (1990), Weiss (1969) and Gumbrecht (2006) are useful writers to help argue for a theory of this sort.

6.4.1. Towards a formalist definition of sport

One may ask in what way formalism applies to sport. One obvious point of parallel and convergence is that sport, to a greater or lesser degree, includes formal components whether as participant and/or viewer. It seems clear to me that we should experience and describe a cricket stroke, for example, as formally attractive, that is, that it exemplifies grace, poise and delicacy. Or that a certain manoeuvre in a team sport such as rugby dazzles and weaves a wondrous pattern before one's eyes and as experienced as such through "playing" and commentators go so far as to declare that a certain try was simply sublime, that it was aesthetically pleasing.

Although it is not my intention to argue that sport is art, the question does come into view when we consider sport as aesthetic. Arnold (1990) argues that to say that sport is aesthetic does not mean it is art, for the aesthetic is a broader category than art, even as art is the paradigm case of the aesthetic. To argue that sport is art, because it is aesthetic, conflates the concept of the aesthetics with art, as hitherto mentioned. But something need not be considered art in order to demonstrate that it can be beautiful and a source of aesthetic experience. Sports, it will be argued, exist on a continuum: one pole are those sports where the aesthetic is not important; another, that aesthetic "beauty" is integral to the very nature of the game and, indeed, some sports may be considered art.

Although sport can be described, interpreted and evaluated it does not and cannot be a necessary guarantee for providing an aesthetic experience. Conversely, an aesthetic object need not be art, but it obviously could be. Best (1978) distinguishes between non-aesthetic sports or purposive sports and aesthetic sports. The former are those sports that can be specified independently of the manner of achieving it, as long as it conforms to the rules (for example: football, rugby, hockey, track and field, baseball, tennis and so on). In such sports, the aesthetic is not intrinsic. It is simply the most points, goals or best times that are essential. They can be aesthetic, but these moments are not necessarily or logically a part of their purpose – their purpose can be fulfilled without reference to the aesthetic. Then there are the partially aesthetic sports whereby: "...the aim of the sport cannot intelligibly be specified independently of the means of achieving it" (Best 1978:165). Arnold (1990:162-4) cites gymnastics, synchronized swimming, ski jumping and surfing as examples, because the way and manner of performance is important, a necessary feature of the activity. Importance is

given to “elegance”, “ease”, “precision”, “style” and “rhythm”, “faultless execution”, “right amount of force”...“originality...virtuoso integration of parts” . The movements may be matched to music and a formalist description might be most applicable. Thus: “The aesthetic sport in one in which the purpose cannot be specified without reference to the aesthetic manner of achieving it” (Arnold 1990:167). Then there are those sports that are not just aesthetic, but may be considered art, for example dance and mime, wherein there is no separation between the nature of the activity and its mode of presentation. One might call it an embodied meaning, as Friessen (in Arnold 1990:167) states, “the dancer must remain one with the dance to preserve the unity and continuity of the aesthetic image. The technical competence of the dancer includes not only the physical skills required to perform the dance, but the ability to exist within the dynamic illusion of the dance”. The difference between being simply an aesthetic sport and being an artistic one, is that in the case of the former the gap between the purpose and the aesthetic is never entirely closed; the purpose could still be achieved in absence of the formal coherence.

To give substance to the idea that sport is certainly aesthetic, as it is concerned with formal coherence, we can look at the writing of Smith (2006), who argues that “significant form” – the relationship of structured, meaningful, cultural activities in a given time and place, and the mastery of these forms by a few, as well as the active interpretive role of the media in the event – is the crucial element in the game, rather than just success or winning. Smith (2006:47) said the following about Wooley, the cricketer:

...he gave thousands and thousands of his countrymen a conception of the beautiful which artists struggle to capture in paint and on canvas...and they recognized in him something beyond the average scorer of runs, some elegance of line and harmony of movement which went beyond the figures on the scoreboard. That, indeed, will give him his place in the game, a place higher than many who won more matches for their side.

Smith (2006) treats cricket with the kind of interpretive parameters usually reserved for “higher” forms of culture; that it too should inspire a sonnet. He wrote of the *style* of play, the attitude of the players, the discovery of new shots or styles of bowling ... these are the significant formal aspects of the game in the same way that modernism or tragic realism are formal literary developments which can be historically discussed. Hence we find a list of sports writers in Smith’s mould, as they describe signature strokes, posture, response to specific circumstances and the like. One may thus argue that there is a formal element to sport, both in terms of historical formal developments within the game and individual style.

Lowe (1977:45) also relates sports-movement¹³³ and aesthetics. He speaks almost mystically of the “total comprehensive capacity” and “imagery” of the sports moment. As I understand it, he refers to the ease and effortlessness of correct play, as well as the poignant instance of a good performance, the result of which is a picture of high definition. Furthermore, this “high definition” may be described as beautiful, pleasurable and joyful for participant and viewer alike. The price for beauty is effort. Another way of describing how this beauty is achieved is to say that sport is a “relational pattern” (Smith 2006). Smith perhaps takes his cue from Bell as this “relational pattern” consists of pure forms and unities and is thus comparable to what Bell appeals to when he talks of *significant form*.

The beauty of movement and its formal ordering, if you like, is a result of the fine-tuning of the mind acting through the body, a theme developed already as a observation towards the close of chapter 5. Suffice it to say at this juncture that the very competence of the athlete is as a result of the training of the mind and body in a formal language, both beautiful and effective as it pertains in specific and distinct ways, depending on the sport.

Weiss (1969:68) helps clarify the type of formal harmony of the body that I am arguing for in the following quote:

...he who makes golf his game finds that he never comes to the end of the work of perfecting his stroke. His is the perpetual problem of getting his wrists, fingers, arms, legs, shoulders, neck, head and hips to function in harmony. The mind makes the body be almost indistinguishable from himself. He must submerge himself in it, at the same time that he keeps it under his control. Only because he has become his body for a while is he able to bring about the results he seeks.

In this quote, one sees that one can only achieve and enjoy a specific sport if one makes out of one’s body a form that articulates a sense of constructive action and unity of parts; achieving this may be beautiful and invite aesthetic contemplation and the like.

It is clearly articulated here that an athlete actually arrives at this point where he hardly notices his equipment. He acts with and through it, as though it were just his body extended beyond the point at which it normally can function. The hunter hardly knows where his arm and fingers end and his rifle begins. It is barely a metaphor to say that a polo player is a centaur (adapted from Weiss, 1969). The athlete, as an exemplar of human perfection in the art of running, jumping, wrestling and so on, offers the viewer and the less serious and talented sportsperson, no less than the athlete himself or herself, a vision of beauty and grace, of the body-beautiful as the athlete’s coordination, responsiveness, attention, efficiency,

¹³³ Which is further related to dance and by extension, music.

devotion and accomplishments; his or her splendid unity with the equipment are all geared to produce a result at the limits of bodily possibility which set the athlete apart from the rest of men. When we watch a sublime play or somehow perfect a movement, it is the form that we are admiring and/or that we have created and developed. I think Weiss (1969:247) sums this up best in the following line: “Something similar to what the mathematician attains when he thinks (and/or does mathematics), the athlete attains when he acts...”. It is precisely the mastering of language (of symbolic logic or precise movements) that engenders a formalist conception of say, sport, which is articulated in a mind acting in a well-structured manner through the vehicle that is the body and the equipment of a particular sport. In the following section the beauty of such an “act” will be looked at more closely.

6.4.2. Gumbrecht’s contention that sport is aesthetically beautiful

In this section I outline Gumbrecht’s (2006) project, namely to lend scholarly weight to the idea that sport is aesthetically beautiful. I contrast that with Edgar’s (2013) and Young’s (2008) critique of some aspects of this assertion. My position is to maintain an aesthetics of sport, but also to extend that or derive that by applying traditional art concepts. This allows me to determine a more thorough understanding or language with which to speak about sport within the humanities generally.

The front cover of Gumbrecht’s book encapsulates much. It shows what is probably a male diver in a diving pose coloured in black against an off-white background. My interpretation of this image (and in the context of the book) is that on the one hand it draws attention to the beautiful form of the athlete, while on the other hand it conveys that which is beyond this particular form. I say so as in the case of the aesthetic description there is an emphasis on the outline and beautiful agility, yet on the other hand the infinity implied by the deep black form (that is, endless space or the surface of text) suggests something that escapes that particular form. Black is indicative of letters and text and since it eschews the details of the divers’ form, the “text” hints at multiple levels of interpretations. Such interpretation is, I believe social, extra-aesthetic dimensions of meaning that inform the form or sports act. This interpretation may not be sound, for the void in the shape of figure possibly reveals and highlights formal, aesthetic matters as they pertain to sport, concealing that which is not form. In this respect, perhaps the “infinite form” is merely an invocation that the aesthetic

dimension of sport can be written about, explicated and discursively analysed or more aptly: praised.

The shared aesthetic trait in art and sport is what Gumbrecht (2006) presents to the reader. Gumbrecht (2006), a leading figure in the philosophy of aesthetics, offers in his book, *In praise of athletic beauty* (2006) a new aesthetics of sport in order to retrieve sport from the margins of intellectual enquiry within the global academia. He begins by challenging the tendency within the Western academy to deny athleticism intellectual praise, though the classical Greeks were an exception. This has occurred because human physicality and related sportive activity have often been pushed to the margins of Western cultural life, where it joins other forms of popular culture outside the realm of “high culture”. This situation can only be redressed when sport performance is reclaimed as potentially beautiful, and by extension, establishing a case for an aesthetic “essence” in sport which is tantamount to a formalist project, in that an aesthetic dimension can be reduced to – and analysed as – a set of formal properties and an abstract configuration of sorts.

Young (2008:6) makes the point that to stress the aesthetic appeal of sport is to see it as not simply subordinate to other powerful systems, but that at the same time that it does not express anything as such. This contrasts the Enlightenment paradigm and the metaphysical tradition that is characterised by an urge to interpret and look “beyond” and “upwards”. Gumbrecht concern is to avoid this and instead argue for what might be termed “presence” (*praesenzeffekte*) by which, as Young (2008:8) defines as “dimensions of culture that emerge from the relations of bodies to the things by which they are surrounded”. In order to argue for this, Gumbrecht emphasises spatial elements over temporal, time-based factors. He is concerned with the epiphany, the instant or moment in time rather than continuity and narrative. The appearance of things, gestures and drama rather than meaning as it develops over time is stressed. However, Gumbrecht does seem to recognise the significance of the oscillation between presence and meaning, the former being most applicable to understanding sport. Yet according to Young (2008) the idea of presence is highly suspect, for that which is made present and the mediation devices that create such presence is complicit with ideological factors and in that respect is precisely part of a constructed narrative in and of time. In this sense, the appeal to aesthetic beauty cannot be easily isolated from other non-exhibited factors. One can isolate the aesthetic, but that requires the ignoring, not the negating of extra-aesthetic factors.

A further critique is taken up by Edgar (2013). Edgar (2013) writes that the aesthetics of sport is a largely unchallenged presupposition of much aesthetics about sport (Lowe 1977, Gumbrecht 2006, Moller 2003) and a theme in de Coubertin's conception of Olympism (2000, 605-634). There is an assumed centrality of beauty in aesthetics generally and in particular in its application to sport. But the aesthetics of beauty in sport is ambiguous and vague. It's a hangover of eighteenth century aesthetics that affirms the illusion of "givenness" and modernist self-critique that disrupts the "given". In agreement with Edgar (2013) this leads to "disenfranchisement" of sport (and art for that matter), that is as seeing it only fit for sensory pleasure and the like and an appeal to a vague intuition of beauty. This is so as to argue that sport has intrinsic aesthetic properties, is to see it as lacking relevance to everyday life. It is reduced to a kind of sports-for-sports-sake mantra, which like art-for-art's sake, is problematic. One may take this idea of "disenfranchisement" further by noting that the divorce of experience and the aesthetic object from any non-aesthetic concerns (historical, political, psychological), for example in Gumbrecht on sport or Bell on art, is simply to look at syntax, not semantics. It is to see sport as a kind of Sabbath from everyday life that expresses nothing. Sport becomes an embodied presence obdurate to any intellectual interpretation in this respect. Aesthetic judgements of beauty, according to Edgar (2013:103) only expresses a personal and idiosyncratic satisfaction, then it is not available for discussion and cannot be contested discursively and intersubjectively.

Having said that, Gumbrecht's appeal is the rather nostalgic even romantic writing about sport as sport and he does this by looking at Kant's notion of disinterest, those moments of aesthetic transcendence resulting in the observer or listener moving into a state of pure appreciation, detached from other dimensions of worldly existence. It is this that creates the beauty of art in the first place. Gumbrecht uses the term "focused intensity" – borrowed from the swimmer Pablo Morales (2006:49) – to describe the disconnectedness both athletes and spectators experience at heightened moments of sport appreciation. The wondrous surprise occurring in the moment of appreciation "can be thought of as a kind of epiphany" (Gumbrecht 2006:54). Therefore, the aesthetics of sport recalls a kind of artistic inspiration. In this respect, Young's critique of presence and Edgar's idea of "disenfranchisement" need not apply as sport's meaning is both its powerful and often violent aggression, as well as how that in turn may be applied as a kind of metaphor for everyday living as well as the meaning found in other practices (scientific, political, psychological...).

In the final section he makes a case for “gratitude” (Gumbrecht 2006:202) being given to the athlete for his or her creation of beauty, via the terms “watching” and “waste”. He writes about two aspects of watching sport, namely analysis and communion. Analysis is a more personalized viewing experience, whereby sport is watched on television with a critical eye. The communal watching experience¹³⁴ occurs at the sport stadium. Here followers are collectively gathered usually in support of a team. Gumbrecht (2006) believes that there are moments when the energy of the crowd connects with that of the team and suggests that in this ultimate moment of communion, the prospect of collective aesthetic experience is heightened. “Waste” refers to athletes whose lives fell away since their retirement from sport, but this would not indicate that they wasted their time; their subsequent demise is not indicative of waste, but sacrifice. Thus, those of us who have seen beauty in the performance of the sports person must be grateful because the potential sacrifice gives to us an awareness and appreciation of joy in our own mortal existence. So Gumbrecht appears to make the case that sport certainly is aesthetic. That the “wow”¹³⁵ we may feel for a painting correlates as “aesthetic entities” to that of the “wow” we feel for sport. Therefore, an analysis and understanding of sport requires a formalist theoretical perspective as, in the making of beauty, sport is composed of a language of sensory artistry.

Applying Gumbrecht’s “findings”, Regier (2008:31) analyses Zidane’s winning goal for Real Madrid in the 2002 Champions League final as beautiful. Such a judgment satisfies the following criteria:

- 1) The goal can be said to be “purposive without purpose”, because it is a goal as of its kind with no further function.
- 2) It represents disinterested beauty – regardless of whom one is supporting one can appreciate the goal.
- 3) One ought to claim subjective validity universally, no necessary prior cognitive stock is required, that is, contextual knowledge. Though one cannot prove its beauty, the Kantian model is maintained.

¹³⁴ I cannot help but feel a sense of communal kingship is established at the theatre as if the audience goes through the drama together. To a lesser extent, the art gallery offers a space of communion, certainly where performance art is concerned, though here, in general perhaps the experience of the gallery is rather more isolated.

¹³⁵ This “wow” may take a number of forms depending on the language-game, or “form of life”, each incommensurate and none ultimate.

Following Gumbrecht, Regier maintains that sport tends to the condition of beauty. In appealing to beauty, one is led to a formalist-type description of the performance and viewing thereof. This may explain the attraction of sport on both a conscious and subconscious level. In other words: while sport seems to be the counteraction to contemplation, Gumbrecht now contemplates it (sport) which in a sense breaks the circle, namely that between “action” and “contemplation”. And what unites them is the invocation of formal aesthetics. On the other hand sport may be read as a social text so that an appeal to aesthetics is merely an instance of other extra-aesthetic factors or its prelude.

6.5. Critique of formalist theories of sport

The limit of the formalist project as it applies to sport is that sport is obviously not “disinterested” – there is always some objective within the game itself, namely to win, rather than simply movement for its own sake. Such activities have a competitive and economic reality and are wedded to institutional, social and political concerns as Edgar (2013) and Young (2008) make the point. But the same could be said about art.

Moreover, perhaps one is going too far to claim an aesthetic experience is induced by sport. Given its competitive nature, perhaps it is a minor point to claim an aesthetic dimension. The ubiquitous nature of sport means precisely that it is amenable to all strata of society, that is, it is easy to enjoy as both viewer and practitioner precisely because it does not require a special aesthetic sensibility, an intellectual response or an ability to be sensitive enough to intuit a formal structure within a particular play. This remains an irony, as often the very aim of the artist is to appeal to everyone.

Arnold (1990), furthermore points to the fact that it need not be the “beauty” in sport that so appeals, but the illustration of skill and talent. In that sense, what we admire in a good documentary photograph capturing the sporting moment need not be dissected in terms of its formal components and arrangement, but simply the ability to perform at a high level. We marvel at the ability to perform a certain manoeuvre, rather than the creative capacity to express something meaningful through formal relationships. It is therefore not meaning and beauty that we see in sport, but craft. Art could be seen as craft too. But then craft could be seen as art. Thus as arts definition changes (and evolves) so its concern for beauty “touches”

other areas of human “play”. In this sense, I do not think the formalist project as applied to sport is incoherent.

6.6. An observation: The will to form

Having made the last point, I wish to propose an observation that devolves from such a position and coheres at the same time with a formalist approach to art. Fundamentally, if one subscribes to the view that art and sport appeal owing to their formal structure and their beauty, then could one not claim that inherent in the desire to make art and/or to move in specific ways, is what I term “a will to form”. Secondly, but no less important, this “will to form” is a kind of freezing of time, a capturing of the moment and the creation of an eternal present (this applies to documentary photography of sport and the like). It is to this observation that I now turn.

I refer the reader to for example Brancusi’s “Bird in Space”¹³⁶ (1928), figure 7 (page 271) and figure 8 (see page 271), a documentary photograph¹³⁷ of Yamashita’s judo throw. What could these two images have in common? There is a certain tension, weight, physical aliveness, a sense of grandness, even transcendence in both images. I attribute such perceptions to the fact that such imagery appears to me to exemplify formal mastery.

In figure 7, Brancusi makes the viewer feel a sense of upward joyous surge, a sensitive linear mobility that is all the more sacred given the gold bronze colour. His sculpture is soft and sharp simultaneously, strongly vertical, and yet curved and organic. Brancusi was quoted as saying: “art must penetrate into the spirit of nature and, like nature, create beings whose forms and lives are independent” (in Walther [ed.] 2005:427). In this quote, the artist reveals the desire to create new, original forms, to create forms that exist independently, that speak the silent language of art. Form is thus the vessel of meaning and formalism, a theory that emphasizes the unique visual language in contradistinction to other languages *and* the aesthetic disposition that certain artworks may induce in the viewer, helps clarify why we may attend so favourably to a work such as this.

¹³⁶ *Bird in space*, 1928. Polished bronze, height: 137.2 cm. Circumference: 9.5-37.7 cm. New York. The museum of modern art. In *Art of the 20th century*, vol. ii, Tachen, Walther (ed.), photography: K. Hannef, p 427.

¹³⁷ In *Kodokan judo*, J. Kano, Kodansha international, 1986, photography: Kodokan judo, p 59.

In its abstract quality or its abstraction, Brancusi desires to reveal “deep” reality. Now, although this position has been criticized, this modernism certainly holds a kernel of truth and “he (Brancusi) unerringly and painstakingly seeks an increasingly pure and perfect body of form that is transcendental in its immaculate finish” (in Walther [ed.] 2005:425, brackets my inclusion). Formalism therefore may be “spiritual”, as it speaks of the “essential form” containing “metaphysical reality” (according to Bell) or as is the case with Greenberg, materialistic, in that we simply assert the fact of a form without attending to meanings. In either case, it appears that there is an inner need for form, a desire to be graceful, harmonious, rhythmic, effortless, in control, to flow, to hold power and if one cannot *be* these things or some of them, to realize them through visual perception of form, in an artwork! We are empathic to other.

We may then describe dance and performance arts as poetry in motion, as a revelation of symmetry, unity, as not been discordant. We may perceive qualities of balance and timing, pattern and design ... all this through creating form and/or simply viewing eloquent forms, such as in Brancusi’s sculpture.

In a self-same manner, the documentary photograph (Figure 8, page 271) recorded in *Kodokan Judo* (1986:59) inspires a sense of balance and power. The two fighters create a vertical line, offset by the strong horizontals of the background. The sense that the physics of stasis is about to change as the uchi-mate throw¹³⁸ will inevitably lead to the demise of the one fighter – that moment before chaos is captured and we momentarily witness the intense, forceful action just before the plunge. Through this image, we can learn what is required to execute a good throw or photograph and choose to identify with the judo player. In so doing, we project ourselves into the form as we empathise with other, as one may do so with figure 7, and in this alignment of self with image, our empathic projection “into”, we transform ourselves; we intuit that the form poses a question. Perhaps the question is not only as a result of its aesthetic quality; perhaps it enters the domain of our will – do we wish to feel like a “bird in space”; can we also perform a judo throw with such gusto and verve or fall victim to it? My contention is that images enter the mind on this level, because we need to see who and what we are and can be in order to think on it: it is the will to form that makes us; it requires an empathic emotion for other.

¹³⁸ Judo is my area of expertise, being a 2nd dan and sensei (teacher) so I have a particular passion for the form exhibited in the sport/art, especially the Kata which really means “forms” and “randori” which is creative, free practice.

Or in other words, we may say of art that it allows us to see the world from another perspective, as with Hegel's notion that art is the midway between sensual embodiment and the abstractness of pure thought, or at least the play between these "things". That which makes meaning is sensibly exemplified, rather than understood in logical terms alone. Sport too may also reveal an action, encoded with a picture of the sublime¹³⁹. Brancusi's "Bird" is finite but its eloquent form hints at the infinite and that which is of the mind, the "realm" of ideas. The sporting documentary photograph captures the singular moment of a series of movements that was the alive, vigorous activity of that sporting event, and in that stillness creates the potential for that which has no limit – the idea of the sublime and the "realm" of ideas.

On the other hand, Brancusi's abstract configuration may be arguably locked into a modernist aesthetic of "pure form" and "disinterested contemplation" and then subsuming the interpretation of the photograph of the judo throw under the same aesthetic, but clearly labels the former as "art" and the latter as "sport". Klein's performance piece (figure 9¹⁴⁰) operates differently. It is art and it is sport. It exists aesthetically as an embodied art form that is at once a sport-like dive and an artistic intervention breaking the code of the "white cube". It therefore offers an aesthetic that is neither disembodied contemplation, nor embodied contest against other bodies. It therefore offers, at least in theory, a life-praxis where aesthetic expression is mediated by the body. Of course the fame of the photograph means that it does suffer the fate of being "merely" an art object with a certain value, a photographic relic of what promised so much in terms of transcendence through action. By transcendence I here mean the going beyond binary categories such as that between thought and action or art and science and indeed between art and sport. As such one could see a work such as this as one of many significant precursors of performance art, subversive counter culture and the recently so-called somaesthetics initiated by Richard Shusterman where it is the expression of the living body as a "site of sensory appreciation (aesthesis) and creative self-stylization" (blurb of somaesthetic online journal) that make many contemporary artistic interventions in performance, installations and digital art and in particular the way the body in movement, space and time dimensions determines one's experience of reality, disrupting the old

¹³⁹ Here I use the term "sublime" in Kant's sense of both overwhelming mathematical plenitude and as an indescribable "formlessness". At the same time there is the more controlled and ordered or beautiful.

¹⁴⁰ Yves Klein – *Le Saut Dns le Vida* (Leap into the void [1960]). Photomontage by Shunk Kender of a performance by Klein at Rue Gentil-Bernard, Fontenag-aux-Roses, October 1960.

Cartesian mind/body polarity. In this sense neither concepts nor a singular aesthetic defines art or rather defines how one may understand sport as artistic. The proximity between art and sport is intuitive, sensed and somewhat conceptually analogous.

Klein's "jump" expresses the freedom in bodily action like an accomplished diver and at the same time it is an impossibility as he (the body) must plummet to the ground. This reflects our dual desire to both overcome gravity and work with gravity, of being inscribed in and as a world. This could be seen as a precursor to some contemporary art, especially that linked to somaesthetics, where art and science interlink, where the visceral quality of the senses, movement and actual bodies also suggest a blurring of the distinction between art and sport. And in the process one may surmise that Brancusi's abstract configuration dissolves into a forceful – gravity-intensive – sport act such as the judo throw. This then resolves itself in a new art performance such as Klein's, which yet begets another comparison to a sporting moment (though this is not explicitly shown as another illustration as such, one may imagine it so). The only difference then between calling one thing sport and another art is 1) intention of the "actor" and 2) context. It has nothing to do with what is merely visible or aural. Should we however expand our horizons and choose to see the "world as sculpture" (following James Hall, 1999); should the sportsperson see himself or herself as expressing an artistic act, and should the artist acknowledge the sport of his craft and its institutional, highly competitive reality, then there cannot be a rigid distinction between art and sport. Or at the very least, this argument should buffer the thesis that we can talk about sport as art-like. Perhaps, allowing some speculative licence, we can say that this discursive assessment points to an art of living beyond both stadium and "white cube". Art and sport are only a taste of what could be beyond the limitations of a fixed space-and-time constraint.

When we see an image or picture the flow of time is arrested. When we watch a sports event, the world of make-believe¹⁴¹ usurps the rather more serious flow of time that is life. In this way, art and sport transports us to a kind of eternal present. Halt (2008), reflecting on Gumbrecht, believes that in the evocation of athletic beauty, the "everyfan" as he calls it, suggests a choreography of beautiful play in which "... the sudden, surprising convergence of serial athletic bodies in time and space" (Gumbrecht in Halt 2008:52) create a larger than life

¹⁴¹ Depictions of early cricket matches, for example, are almost as potent as hunting prints in constructing a pastoral idyll in the midst of the Industrial Revolution. Or in tennis we have young men and woman in white set against the soft grass of summer. Other than spatial considerations, there are technical aspects as in the notion of "classic" shots, and an aesthetic orthodoxy, where cricketers, for example tended to be captured in portraits with one hand on the hip and the other on the handle of the bat in a heroic manner.

moment. In the athletic ideal there is an aesthetic, formal quality. This is also due to the kind of sculptured body of the athlete. The sports arena is an ideal space in which that moment is elevated. Halt argues (following Gumbrecht) that there is a sense of “oneness” in such “moments of intensity”, a feeling of communion, even a “momentary loss of self”, or transcendence of individuality, that actually begins with beauty. He continues by saying that “the unexpected appearance of a body in space, taking a beautiful form that just as quickly dissolves, can be thought of as a kind of epiphany” (Gumbrecht in Halt 2008:56). I would claim the same effect may be inspired through the images presented in this section. Figure 7 and 8 imagine the relationship between inner and outer dimensions in making an art object or performing in sports and the reception thereof in visual terms which may or may not lead to the appraisal of the beauty of the art or sports’ “object”. Figure 9 (page 271) resolves the tension by allowing art and sport to “touch”, and in so doing cannot easily be named. In this sense it is ineffable but mutable in the same way the figure of the artist apparently “flying” will descend to the earth unless gravity should cease. Yet we are the figure, the body that will meet its end. But it is a construction, a game – obviously the artist will be fine after the staged event. But then art and sport are a form of trickery and illusion – or rather “play”. (Then we need not worry so much when the body has run its course).

Gumbrecht makes the point that “Beauty is not the goal of competitive sports, but high level beauty, the human beauty we’re talking about here is beauty of a particular type. It might be called kinetic beauty¹⁴². Its power and appeal are universal. It has nothing to do with sex or cultural norms. What it seems to have to do with, really, is human beings reconciliation with the fact of having a body” (Gumbrecht in Young 2008:10). It is the pre-discursive body through which the self acts; it is the body that becomes the very materials out of which form is composed. And in that presence of self through the body, there can be a dramatic moment, a sensual, though aesthetic, perception. One is not referring elsewhere and treating the sports moment or the execution of an artwork as symbolic. That is, like Kant’s ideas, we attend to beauty for its own sake without a definite concept, via the free play of imagination and understanding. It is disconnected from “everyday” life, and not grounded in concepts, since nothing in the “everyday” world is at stake, that is, it’s really a game, fantasy, a picture...though here it serves to elucidate the question of form in and of itself. Yet

¹⁴² In an interview (02/08/13) with Calder (UCT, Sports science – vision expert) it became clear that considering sport as an art and the sports person as an artist were both agreeable notions and she added that “sight is clarity of vision”. To me this means that both art and/or sport require the combination of mental (vision) and physical (sight) aspects working together.

paradoxically, it is precisely the “everyday”, the (cultural) world saturated with forms and images.

What I have also been pointing to is the role of the pre-discursive body¹⁴³ in human meaning and understanding, the inscribing of the body in order to be aesthetically moved by the sensory impressions that constitute both art and sport.

I would further conjecture that this “will to form” is predicated on the need humans have for order, pattern and harmony¹⁴⁴, sensory stimulus that calms or exhilarates us. In that sense, art and sport might offer us a vision of clarity and precision. Form is therefore necessary for intellectual, sensuous, intuitive and emotive dimensions of being, the four-pronged compass of human agency as expounded by Jung (1875–1961). Allowing some speculative license, one might claim that Kant, for example sensed this integration of the “the four-pronged compass of human agency” in not being able to define the aesthetic experience in literal, discursive language. Furthermore, the very fact that Kant (1952 [1790]) even deals with humour and its health benefits, implies that he recognised the “other” of universal reason and the gamut of human cognition and affect.

6.7. Elaborations on the “will to form” extended with reference to Nietzsche and others

In this section, I will firstly combine the institutional conception of art with an aesthetic modality. The institutional conception here refers to the institutions of art and other¹⁴⁵ institutions (political, religious, social...) that have a bearing on the kind of forms and their extra-aesthetic meanings that may be produced in a given time and place. From this I argue that art can be understood as embodied meaning, which is tantamount to my “will to form” thesis. Embodied meaning encapsulates why the drive for concretising ideas as form is a significant part of human, symbolic meaning-making. This is then given further impetus

¹⁴³ The pre-discursive body refers to imagination, feelings/emotions and the “body”, that is to say, physical embodiment, wherein are included such properties as “weight, balance, containment, in-out, front-back, texture, line, colour, force, gravity” (c.f. Potgieter, 2009) which conspire together under suitable aesthetic conditions.

¹⁴⁴ C.f. *The mind*, Wilson, R, Life science library, 1971. Psychologists have conducted a series of experiments proving that the lack of sensory stimulus *or* stimulus that is chaotic and the like, is dangerous to human health. We have some kind of drive to see and hear a sequence that produces a coherent state of mind, that is, forms that “speak to us”, a pattern.

¹⁴⁵ In this section I refer to the Institutional theory of art as only pertaining to the theory, history and practice of art itself and the institutions of other disciplines that overtly or covertly have a bearing on the art of a particular time and place. Both such connotations of the “institutional” are extra-artistic, though there are differences therein.

through a discussion of Nietzsche's "will to power" which is a kind of "will to form" insofar as such form embodies the power of will. I shall then apply these findings to sport, namely in the contention that struggle, competition and "embodied meaning" or "will to form" may be a useful way in which to theorise around sport derived from art aesthetics.

As discussed in chapter 4 concerning Institutional theories of Dickie and Danto, it was found that an artwork assumes fine art status by: (1) presenting an artefact (2) to an art world public and with further reference to art theory and art history. In such terms extrinsic factors determine whether or not an object is art, such as an art context both theoretical and practical. Institutional theories severed the connection, it would seem, between art and aesthetics and identifies an object as art within the context of various institutional systems and practices/games. However, at the same time, the "rule" that this requires an object, a body or artefact means that certain features amenable to sensory experience needs to be presented. The result is that aesthetic features are equally significant. As I shall argue, if art is the embodiment of meaning, and the very purpose of embodiment is presentation to the senses, then the aesthetic is indeed essential to art, even under the Institutional conception. It is through the subjective, "in the first person" sensations of material properties of works of art that the meanings manifested by the work emerge. As Graves (2002:348, my emphasis) put it: "...Thus, in a quirky twist of fate, aesthetics in the age of radical interpretation stabilizes art theory by focusing upon the *objective, addressed to the senses* features of works of art, by focusing on the *body* of the work. The bodily features of works of art are much harder to 'interpret away' at whim and fancy". Combining both body/meaning descriptions, the aesthetic and institutional or extra-aesthetic, I agree with Graves (2002:349) who says: "whereas tradition maintained that art is by definition aesthetic, for the institutional theory art is aesthetic as a normative conclusion of the conception. Moreover, the normative demand is a schematic one, with the felicitous result of having a universal aesthetic constraint, which is constantly applicable to an (in principle) unbounded plurality of art forms". In such terms, the institutional theory assists in explaining how objects assume significance as art with reference to certain cultural practices; at the same time this requires an assessment of the merit of a particular kind of art in terms of its aesthetic properties, namely whether it adequately expresses ideological content. For example: It is all very well locating the art of Japanese tea ceremony (an example that Graves (2002) also uses) in its proper context and seeing the tea, the pot and various movements as meaning "something else", yet at the same time the tea is fine and tasty – the tea is tea! (this example serves as a metaphor for "art tasting").

Insofar as aesthetics and extra-aesthetic (here the institutional) combine in our understanding and appreciation of art, one may point to art's capacity to embody meaning. By this I wish to express the idea that art is both manifest or present *and* hidden or abstract and the degree by which the latter can come to the fore via the former, in that respect we may say that the body/artefact embodies meaning (this also justifies my formulation of art as somewhat ideal and somewhat mimetic). Yet this meaning is determined by being part of a cultural practice or system of meaning. In other words, there is vast difference between seeing an abstract painting as but arbitrary physical paint as opposed to as a painting that *means* something. In the same way that a blob of matter may mean so much more to a physicist than someone unaware of the energy and power contained therein. Thus art may embody meaning to the extent that the onlooker sees in the artefact a glorious view from "within" (adapted from Graves 2002). From "without", a Rothko, for example is simply two rectangles, that is, minus the charged matter and the possible references to a mystical realm and/or other meanings.

To the extent that we can see from "within", so the embodiment of meaning is more potent or in other terms, so the will is actualised through form, its material substrate. In this sense I would like to equate "embodied meaning" with "will to form" and in so doing maintain that art can be understood as transforming matter into content or meaning through organised form at once a product of art's institutional relations both pertinent to art itself and with reference to other non-artistic practices, as well as the exhibited, aesthetic properties that give rise to both "present" and "absent" meanings. By equating "will to form" with "embodied meaning", I wish also to express what Hegel (1993:111) says of aesthetic beauty, namely "the pure appearance of idea to sense". In this sense, one is not equating idea with form which I suggest may even be dangerous or erroneous, but simply expressing that there is some kind of relationship that may or may not correspond depending on such factors as historic moment, ideological bent, social context, art knowledge and personal psychology. I shall now argue that Nietzsche's concept of the "will to power" may be further amplified as a kind of "will to form" which will thereafter assist in extending or interpreting sports aesthetics.

Nietzsche's concept of the "will to power"¹⁴⁶ is an all-encompassing, homogenisation of reality implying that all reality has the same, intrinsic quality or character (Rosenberg 1978, McNiel 2013). It is an axiom in which he wants to say that power is only power in relation to another power so that "a power quantum is characterised by its effect and its resistance" (in McNiel 2013:178). Things are what they are in virtue of their relations¹⁴⁷. It is dynamic and can only maintain itself against other powers and strives to predominate over them. This does not equate with self-preservation for Nietzsche denies a substantial self in the first place. Chaos and chance are as important as order and cosmos in the creative unfolding (and interpretation) of life. Aydin (2007:27-28) explains that "there are no two entities: will and power; rather will and power entail the same quality. Will to power is one word". It involves a kind of commanding and obeying depending on the relationship, though the former is more basic. There is also no difference between the organic and inorganic – both are active forces of the will to power. In this maelstrom, forms are produced, fade and recur so that "all unity is only organisation and interplay of unity" (in McNeil & Feldman 1998:88) kept together by the will to power. It is the kind of philosophy in which one can envisage ceaseless activity on all levels – the biological, cosmological, political, philosophical...and artistic. All things are connected as every interaction necessarily effects every other interaction so that "these internal and external interactions which are in their turn manifestations of an infinite complex of processes of subduing, lie at the basis of all change and development" (McNeil & Feldman 1998:88). Form is only the illusion of durability, unity and independence towards a kind of preservation of a certain kind of life. In this sense, will to power is not itself a substance. The one quality we can say it encompasses is that of struggle – Kampf or Streit – and struggle generates tension. Tension makes this will to power tend towards organisation, further strength, growth, as it so to speak, seeks rivals and strives amidst dividedness. This emphasis on struggle need not be brutal, bodily force, but rather dynamic growth that may lead to refinement and health. In fact, in my estimation, if there is a goal to this will, it is to be who one is and to somehow integrate struggle/dividedness with maximum relatedness and unity.

Furthermore, for Nietzsche there is no transcendent reality, above and beyond earthly existence as he writes:

¹⁴⁶ The association of Nietzsche's philosophy with Nazism is, in my opinion, a distortion of his views. Other interpretations such as Barnett Newman's application of his work, especially that of the mythic Dionysian force offers a different reading. C.f. Rushig (1988).

¹⁴⁷ To bolster his theory, Nietzsche would even maintain that to reject the claim that reality is will to power is an expression of will to power!

Reason is the cause of our falsification of the evidence of our senses. Insofar as the senses show evidence of our becoming, passing away, change, they do not lie...But Heraclitus will always be right in this, that being is an empty fiction. The “apparent” world is the only one: the “real” world has only been lying added (Nietzsche in McNiel & Feldman 1998:77).

He therefore opposes unity, duration, substance, cause, materiality, being and sees language as somewhat failing us as he writes:

...we set up a word at the point at which our ignorance begins, at which we can see no further e.g. the word “I”, the word “do”, the word “suffer” – these are perhaps the horizons of our knowledge, but not “truths”. How can a tool criticize itself when it can use only itself for the critique? It cannot even define itself” (in McNiel & Feldman 1998:88).

Yet Nietzsche does not then proclaim appearance as a fixed truth as with the denial of the “thing-in-itself”, the antithesis, namely appearance, also vanishes.

He further characterises this will as both Dionysian and Apollonian. The former can be associated with ecstasy and the latter with order. It is a kind of marriage of the formless and form or the outer world of ordered sensory stimuli and the inner world of psychological chaos. For example: one listens to one’s favourite piece of music, because it stirs in one a certain clarity of thought and feeling. Form has reached not-form, giving “stability to ideas”. In other words: the will to power rests, so to speak as form. At the same time form agitates, potentially at least, a striving for “something else”, a content that is not quite that form.

Recall in chapter 1 where I coined the term “idolinisation” (page 71), wherein the desire for form is both an ideal and the veneration of that ideal in the form it so assumes. In this sense the will to power is precisely a will to form, that is, the drive to make and fashion things so as to conform with will, idea, concept. Yet this seeming stability may be thought of as an impossibility for form carries a meaning that is contextual, shifting and not durable both literally and figuratively. In this sense, form and power play a kind of catch-up game, wherein power is both never exhausted while form is never ultimate. It begets constant change that inspires never-ending form and meaning (including meaninglessness).

We can apply the conception that Nietzsche’s “will to power” is co-extensive with “will to form” or embodied meaning to sport by explaining struggle and competitiveness in such terms. Nietzsche (in McNiel & Feldman, 1998:76) asks: “What water is there for us to clean ourselves? What festivals of atonement, what sacred games shall we have to invent?” My

reading here is that sport, at least to some extent, may be the answer to that perhaps rhetorical question. Sport offers a clear example of opposition, reconciliation and structured games (forms) through which people can communicate and improve themselves. The consequence may be one of struggle, in a complicated discord to find a reconciliation to bring about new meaning. I maintain sport can actually *show* this through agon. Competitiveness in the Nietzschean sense may be good as it brings out the best among competitors in general. At the very least, the philosophical tension between the logical “description” of things, for example the quantitative, scientific analysis of sport and the poetic imagination, the humanistic if you will are different ways of understanding. Sport maintains that tension: one can view a sport through the eyes of the statistician, but there is also place for romance and emotion. Many respond to sport precisely because it seems to harbour these polarities of human existence and often promises a reconciliation to bring about new meaning. This happens, for example when opposing players express kinship, defying pure logic, and a cessation to struggle. Perhaps, it is for this reason that Nietzsche (1995:247) said: “philosophy is defined by Kant as the science of the limitations of reason!” In other words: the intransitive, non-propositional kind of knowledge that sport brings about – its “play” – offers something that is in some sense philosophical and culturally symbolic, and yet transcends that in its ineffable significance as part of cultural practice. It offers a momentary reprieve from the narrative of the struggle of life through – ironically - struggle itself. This is similar to the way in which art offers images that resonate not only in terms of reason, but strikes an accord with a kind of bodily, gut feel. In this sense, perhaps on a certain level art and sport transcend belief-systems and rigidity. On the other hand, this thesis has also been concerned with art and sport as constructed and merely a by-product of the prevailing aesthetic (and extra-aesthetic) forms and will to and of power, which may or may not be positive.

In light of the above, we might still claim that indeed Nietzsche’s assessment of Kant may be right, that insofar as reason is limited, sport plays a useful role in carving some kind of intersubjective space, whereas “reason” sets up rigid polarities. One might dub this a sharing of space, which, I believe is probably a good recipe for interpersonal communication. In this light, sport, like art is not just about formal coherence, the beauty of the language expressed, the beauty of that which is manifest, but about a space between people and a language over and above the very form that that language assumes. The contested space (and time) is therefore a parody of the more serious (and problematic) political struggle over land for example, only in the context of sport, of culture, this is rather more “playful” and brotherly in

the context of mere make-believe. It would be most welcome then that this cultural “fight” be taken as a lesson in humans working together, even where – paradoxically - opposition is necessary. Thus competition in sport and the difficulty in overcoming may be seen as a positive metaphor both for individual development and for social leverage, for sport does not happen in a vacuum but requires community. Like art it is cultural and can be understood in rather oxymoronic terms as a peaceful, make-believe war.

Moreover, just as I described the meaning of art as only possible from “within”, so sport (such as soccer) within the contextual set-up is more than, for example, just a number of people kicking a round ball into a vacant net. Only with the rules and social practice of say, soccer, does that play assume meaning. One understands from “within”. One may call this kind of meaning, embodied meaning. A game of culture that, like art, may be praised as aesthetic in the context of that cultural game. In the same way that one cannot put one’s hand through a brick, even though it is mainly empty space, which the physicists explain by virtue of Pauli’s “exclusion principle”, so we play our games the way we do, because of rules or principles or laws¹⁴⁸. In this respect, sport is not only pleasurable, owing to its kinaesthetic joy in movement, but also because it generates an accord between people who choose to play the game according to its rules. This does not preclude individuality, dissent, progress and evolution. It merely sets the parameters for – hopefully – healthy communication and everyday living. Ironically, this also entails a measure of struggle and competition and multifarious forms.

6.8. Conclusion

One might think that art is purely theoretical and cerebral and thus not in need of a tangible formal expression. If so, art is ostensibly the opposite of sporting bodily activity, and even a formalist appraisal. This question contains the implicit assumption of dualism, that of the disjunction between idea and form. However, because there is, it would seem, always some tangibility to art, and because sport certainly also has a mental component, such as willpower, focus, intent, tactics and aesthetic intuitions, it would appear, a purely aesthetic-formalist or a purely extra-aesthetic and hermeneutic approach is one-sided. Therefore, Zangwill’s

¹⁴⁸ For example in a sport such as baseball there can only be one pitcher at a time, or first base and so on so that the rules and principles of the game preclude certain kinds of occupation of space.

“moderate formalism” appears to refute the criticism levelled at traditional theories of formalism and develops an account that can also be useful for interpreting sport.

To the extent that art and sport are amenable to the senses, the seeming refutation in late-modern and postmodern work, conceptual art, for example, of formalism, is limited to that aspect of art that is concerned with intentions. However, intentions and actions are not so clearly separate (Powell 1998); thus mind and matter form a continuum just as art and sport does. Or in other words, we may say of art that it allows us to see the world from another perspective, that its form offers us symbols for something that is inarticulate, a visual analogue of struggle depicted or ceased, and that the form of a sports-play offers us a metaphor for our desire to overcome obstacles, of the goodness of teamwork, of fair play and an arena in which to “shine”, to exude confidence, to inspire and to be inspired. That which makes meaning is sensibly exemplified, rather than understood in logical terms alone. Art as with sport may reveal an action encoded with a picture of the sublime, the ineffable. That said, what is argued here is not the invocation of idea or form or “act” as referring to “reality” – such notions have been problematic in this thesis. Rather what is expressed here is simply the beauty of aesthetic and formal “play” in the oscillation between differing harmonies and forms. This does not preclude (extra-aesthetic) content, a kind of representation, though not one grounded in metaphysical and epistemological certainty. The upshot is that aesthetic “play” is ubiquitous.

A theory of formal beauty applied to disparate objects of culture aims to include a refreshing perception and conception of “everyday” life, and Gumbrecht’s appraisal of sport is thus a positive mechanism whereby this goal can be realized. This thesis takes that project further in (re-)evaluating art aesthetics, such as formalism, in order to understand sport better, specifically in developing the thesis that analysis of the significance of the beauty of form may yet be one important aspect of aesthetic experience generally in art and thence in the everyday itself, sport been one instance.

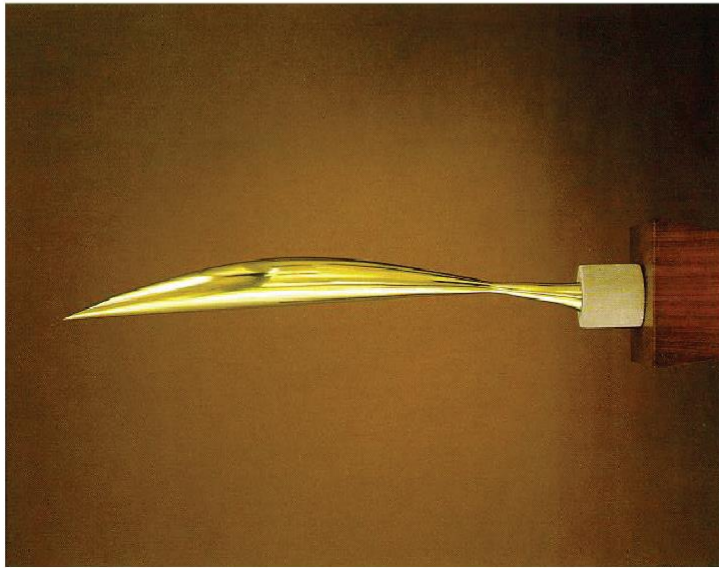


Figure 7: Bird in space (Brancusi - 1923)



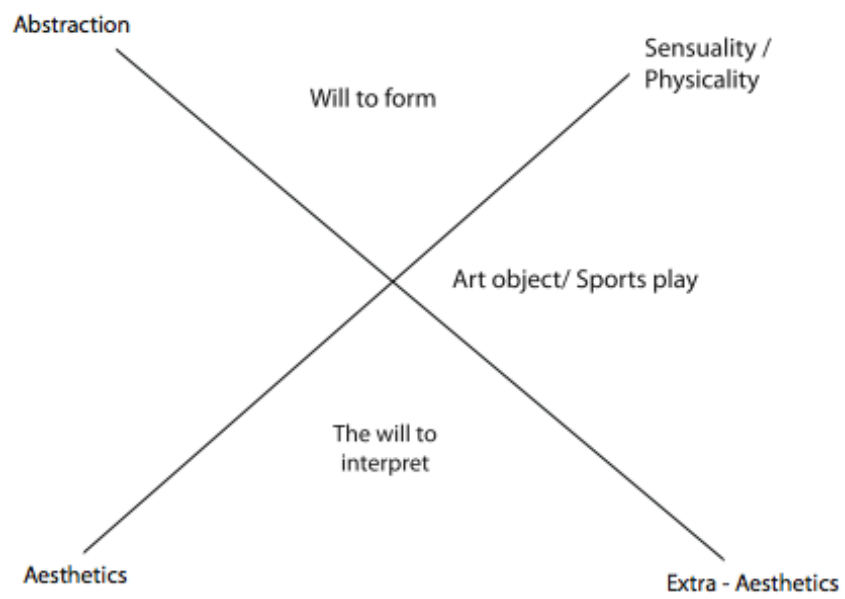
Figure 8: Yamashita's judo throw (Olympic games 1988)



Figure 9: Yves Klein – Leap into the void (1960)

Figure 10: Will to Form

Process of making and interpretation both related to form and non-exhibited properties:



Conclusion

The chapters taken together can be consolidated in the following manner: On the one hand, the deconstruction of radical aesthetic differentiation leads to the idea that art is not to be understood in purely formal(ist), timeless terms. Rather art is a social text, a historical text, enmeshed in “other” texts. On the other hand, aesthetic formal beauty is an important way in which to appreciate and talk about art as an ideal, as a kind of mimesis, expression and “disinterested” for example. It was argued that one can interpret sport similarly. Simplifying one may describe art and sport as partially aesthetic or in Zangwill’s terms as “moderately aesthetic” where content, representation and form all coalesce.

There are many reasons for the deconstruction of radical aesthetic differentiation in the first place: Nietzsche’s philosophy that art is for life; Kant’s emphasis that form and content inform one another; Hegel’s contention that art is midway between sensuality and reason; Derrida’s postulate of an “other” beyond text/art object and Dickie’s and Danto’s institutional account that point beyond the “retinal flutter”, that is autonomous aesthetics (form[ilism]). At the same time, content cannot be without form (bodyliness) in the first place. This bodily conception is bolstered by Shusterman’s somaesthetics and the field of everyday aesthetics lends further credence to the acknowledgement that art as with sport are embodied activities through which meaning may be generated in order to enhance and actualize the self and society at large. My contribution is precisely the interpretation of sport from an art’s perspective, whereas sport literature has focused on aesthetics from a more general, philosophical standpoint or as part of history or within the social sciences, as part of sports science, management and even psychology.

In terms of Shusterman’s somaesthetics, I do not think he is focusing on the body simply as a site for pleasure (or pain for that matter), adornment or superficial societal norms of the body-beautiful. What he is arguing for in my estimation (and which furthers my thesis) is the cultivation of somatic awareness that may enhance or lead to better performance, that is in terms of aesthetic and ethical sensitivity. How so? In Shusterman’s words (2008:15):

Since we live, think and act through our bodies, their study, care and improvement should be at the core of philosophy, especially when philosophy is conceived (as it used to be) as a distinctive way of life, a critical, disciplined care of the

self that involves self-knowledge and self-cultivation.

Art is an arena where perceptual awareness, empathetic connection is required for aesthetic experience would be one way to cultivate this shift (or reformulation) in philosophical thinking and since I have argued for the presence of artistic value in the theory and practice of sport, it follows that sport too is concerned with a somatic awareness or mindfulness – a semblance of body-consciousness.

What are the outcomes of this study? One is that the features associated with art, such as form, harmony, order, coherence, fast/slow, power, creativity, flamboyance, gracefulness, empathy – in short: aesthetic beauty and aesthetic “play” and perceptual awareness (aesthesis) – and so on can be associated with sport. This is the external “shallow” sign of the aesthetic. It is what can be sensed and perceived. At the same time this corresponds arguably to a number of interpretations or “depth” analysis, that is the non-exhibited properties. Given the postmodern “language turn” and the recognition that art and sport are institutional, social practices, this apparent “shallow”/“depth” correspondence may or may not be ideal; may or may not mimetically reflect on the lifeworld; may or may not reveal or express the Author/Artist/Sportsperson and may be seen as simply moderately formally structured. One possible consequence of such tension is in deriving an understanding of sport in the light of art-related aesthetics. Another possible consequence is the *value* that the thesis that art and sport share an aesthetic dimension can bring about in sports-related disciplines, studies and practices. For if this interpretation (as an example of *sports art*) has some practical application, one can envisage teaching art and aesthetic theory within the sports sciences and other sports-related institutions, which shall bring about not only knowledge of the field of art by many perhaps not “touched” by it and this, I believe, may in many cases lead to enhanced performance on the sports field through broader perceptions on life itself.

I have extended sports theory and potentially sports practice by applying art-historical and aesthetic concepts, pointing out that sport, like art, negotiates an “area” between the imaginative and the moral in seeking ideals through striving for perfection. I have argued that sport, like art, is both autonomous and content-rich, based on its dramatic “play” without ultimate mimetic truth. Furthermore, that when considering the postmodern “language turn”, sport can be considered as art-like and as offering aesthetic transformations in decision-making within everyday life. Following from this, one can treat sport as institutional in the same way that art is institutional since both are cultural games and neither are a propositional

sort of knowledge, but speak more to our values, attitudes and practices, a pragmatic, tacit or intransitive form of knowing. Counteracting this rather social or external account, expressive theories of art extend sports aesthetics insofar as sport can be described as an expression of aesthetic ideas as well as individual will, an empathetic reaching out to the other. This “will” in turn strives for formal harmony not only through art, but also in other domains such as sport which may be considered beautiful. Taken together, I think it is fair to say that art aesthetics can illuminate the aesthetics of sport both on a “shallow” and “deep” level. Consequently, one might forge an interdisciplinary approach between art and sport.

While this thesis for the most part has separated pre-modern, modern and postmodernism, there is also a continuity between modernism and postmodernism, where the seeds of the latter can be found in the former, particularly in the manipulation and considerations of the body. We may have even entered post postmodernism, where a new “orthodoxy” (a “conscious” pre-modernism in a sense), a consciousness whereby art enters the stream of life, dissolved into a way of life. In this regard, we may say that art and sport exist on a continuum.

Admittedly, an analysis of this kind may not necessarily always yield a positive affirmation of life, or rather of culture, its qualitative merits. Art can be deconstructed from a Marxist perspective, as can sport. Art can be deconstructed from a psychoanalytical perspective, as can sport. Art can be deconstructed from a feminist perspective, as can sport. Art can be deconstructed from a postmodern perspective, as can sport. What is left when art is expunged of its presumed “depth”, its metaphysical, ontological “origins” and sport perceived merely as a non-aesthetic, brute contest of wills and bodies? In short: what is left when the concept of the aesthetic is discarded (as non-existent or not politically neutral)? It is for this reason, that notwithstanding the potential devaluing of art and in fact, sport, that I had recourse to asserting that both are in fact partially or moderately aesthetic practices in the positive sense of the word. Yet this is said with circumspect as there is also a real sense in which aesthetics is a kind of a-moral redundancy, a delusion, a game obscuring an already doubtful semblance of what one might call reality.

Focusing on the more positive ramifications of widening the arc of aesthetic value and experience, one consequence of this outlook is that both art and sport can be seen as a celebration of the pre-discursive, the bodily (of the “sign” and of “shallowness”) in as much

as the postmodern, as a response to the Enlightenment and modernism, offers, via art and sport a vehicle to reassess the imbalances of the past. This reassessment of values is said to be as a result of the postmodern “language turn”. In terms of this shift, art and sport can both be considered potentially meaningful and ineffable. In other words: By valuing the “sign”, “shallowness” or the “body” – the aesthetic surface - one harmonises the relationship between mind and body or sensuality and abstraction. This then may have positive spin offs for healthier living – the good struggle/”play”. Another way of saying this is a partial rather than an ultimate aesthetic form or value or even experience is maintained.

To say that art and sport share an aesthetic dimension is not to imply that this is necessarily good as aesthetics is embroiled in “other” texts (social, ideological and so on). Granted that art requires the presentation of some object to the senses (the body as in dance is included herein) at whatever subtle level immediately brings the aesthetic description to bear. Yet it’s meaning may require reference to extra-aesthetic, cognitive meaning as well (which itself does not negate the possibility of aesthetic elegance, simplicity, subtlety...). This acknowledgement opens up the possibility that art is well appointed to understanding *other* domains that share an aesthetic dimension, such as sport. In the process, sport will be understood as engendering both aesthetic (form) and extra-aesthetic (content) meanings/interpretations. In such terms, a moderate view is held, namely that aesthetics both is and is not confined to art or in simpler terms: art is partially or moderately aesthetic – and sport, it has been argued, can be considered in the same light. My understanding is that this accords with Ranciere’s (2013) project of not privileging aesthetic or cognitive dimensions and Gumbrecht’s (2004) distinction between presence-effects and meaning-effects.

One can of course critique this project by noting insurmountable differences between art and sport. One crucial difference is that sport is predicated on a set of rules, a rulebook that defines what can and cannot be done and so on within the confines of the playing arena. Now, art too can be described as a kind of game, a view of what one ought to do if one chooses to be a “painter” or a “dramatist” or “cellist” for example and the dramatic arts and music usually require a pre-existent text, that is the script or score. Moreover, one could argue that there are rules to painting and the other arts. Viewers and participants play at the make-believe that is the “art game”. However, the necessity of rules in sport seems to have a somewhat different nature and with a firmer grip and emphasis than that of the arts. Consider a game such as cricket whose very form is determined by what can and cannot be done,

whereas in the arts, form is often largely determined by personal discretion whereby, in fact, the artist himself or herself may even be the innovator of his or her own rules. Nevertheless, the one basic rule as recognised by Dickie is that art requires the presentation of some artefact (the body in dance is a kind of “object”). This one rule makes an interconnection with sport compelling.

Secondly, sport seems necessarily to be competitive in nature, which overrides the aesthetic dimension (though in the Kantian sense as argued this may not be the prime motivation of sport). Its unpredictability and entertainment value are based on its competitiveness. Art too could be construed as competitive as the “art world” is about commodifying artworks and indeed, artists, so that money, prestige and culture are in turn “made”. However, one intuitively feels that art is not just about that; that there is an aesthetic, intellectual and emotional meaning to the arts, and that even if we were to endorse the same for sports, the latter’s competitive nature may not reveal those qualities as readily. To articulate this intuitive hiatus, one could say art “represents”, even if only metaphorically, whereas sport merely instantiates. This reading would cohere with Best, (1974) who argued that sport is not *about* something whereas art could be. I disagreed with that argument on the basis that a sports movement could speak beyond itself towards a metaphysical notion such as perfection or as a political statement. However, in general I would still argue that art is nevertheless *more likely* to exhibit a metaphorical, meta-discourse, that is, a capacity to be symbolic and symbolic about what matters, that is, the philosophical, for example. In a very real sense, though, both sport and art are a kind of performance, an instantiation of a particular skill and not ostensibly about anything. It appears then that there are many similarities between art and sport.

Thirdly, while it is a useful project to research the converging trajectories of art and sport on a theoretical level, one should bear in mind the specific structures that define each. That is, both are peculiar traditions with their own heroes and villains. Thus, the criss-cross between the two may not be a significant factor. I have merely presented one possible account when the two operate in tandem and in the process a fractal of sorts ensues that appears to disintegrate what in the first place keeps them apart. Thus even the emphasis on form and the “body”, on “play” are all theoretical levers that appear to merge art and sport. Nevertheless the function of each of these concepts is still distinct as applied to art or sport. For example, “play” is clearly a function of both art and sport but the *way* a painter may “play” compared to that of a soccer player differs and that difference, while not cancelling “play” as integral to

both, does little in the way of explicating the one in terms of the other. Furthermore, equating the two would presuppose that art and sport in themselves “behave” like a point, a “particle”, but it often is more “wave-like”. There is a vast difference between painting and performance art though we label both “art”, or between soccer and chess though we label both “sport”. Thus further research into this area may focus less *generally* and more on particulars, such as the role of “the body” in performance art and a particular sport or even dance, where much contemporary dance practice does not make use of choreography, and is thus as unpredictable as the unknown outcome of a sports contest. Having said that, the confluences that result when using art aesthetics to extend sport aesthetics, even considering these differences, can yet be described as parallels, that is, as modes of behaving that co-exist and “mirror” one another as aesthetic, imaginative constructions with both individual and social benefit derived from their *playful, bodily content*. Art aesthetics becomes one way to see in sport artistic form and thence see in art a kind of sporting “play”. If there was an essence to sport or art, their meanings would be tautological which amounts to not saying anything, hence they can be perceived in relationship; they interplay.

Lamenting the *possible* loss of the aesthetically beautiful (or truth for that matter) in art given the lack of certain correspondence between signs and referents, between the “surface” and the “depth”, Joe Winston (2008:74) points out that it has never stopped being used “in the conversation of ordinary experience”. Here he is referring to things such as a sweet sounding popular melody, a breathtaking moment in sport and a striking sunset. In such instances and in everyday examples the word “beautiful” is used by people “both effortlessly and correctly” (Joe Winston 2008:74). Winston continues that aesthetic beauty is not simply disinterested in the sense that the Enlightenment tradition drove a wedge between the experience of beauty in art and in everyday life, but is also “intimate” and loving in the sense of one being attracted to something, facilitating a desire to know it more fully. In such terms, the project I have set for myself, namely an extension of sports theory, a new interpretation thereof, by applying art theory may be valid; as if extending sport aesthetics via art aesthetics is a loving embrace of the everyday. Future research may even show that applying sports theory may illuminate art aesthetics. This potential avenue of research reflects the “fact” that art aesthetics and everyday aesthetics, of which sport has been my concern, may not always be easily distinguished and mutually exclusive. I have thus merely “scratched the surface”.

I would like to then suggest that it is wrong if sport were not considered as moderately aesthetic and as bearing similarities to art. An evaluation of the aesthetic itself is beyond the scope of this thesis, if indeed it is possible given the fact that aesthetics may only exist as a function of a particular time and place, a cultural construction with all its bias. This aesthetic itself was derived from Western art and philosophy and then used to analyse sport as aesthetic, sport as a function of art and even vice versa. A third term is produced in this relationship between art and sport – sometimes. When this happens, regardless of whether it is art per se or sport per se, we creatively evolve. It remains to be seen whether a “third term” and evolutionary dialectic will resolve the divisiveness that is a precondition for knowledge.

Perhaps if we approach the question of knowledge with peace, peace will result. That may sound rather political, however and I do not mean to be. My intention has been to remind the reader about a few ways to look at art and use those understandings to apply to sport with a view to develop the field of sports aesthetics as well as art discourse. In that oscillation (and sometimes dialectic) that may produce a “third term” (a *sports art*) which is perhaps what Hegel had in mind whereby a synthesis includes apparent differences (even opposites) only to then itself become a thesis. This may further articulate a relationship, a vacillation between aesthetic and conceptual (or extra-aesthetic) dimensions.

Having argued that there is neither an absolute sign (aesthetic) nor an absolute referent (extra-aesthetic), both art and sport are contingent cultural games and “forms of life”. The nature of such games is one of struggle. A struggle of wills. Of power. It can be further characterised as playful struggle, agonistic and aggressive, perhaps even beautiful. Or perhaps not. Struggle – an oscillation, oft times a dialectic, resolving contradictions while maintaining them. Struggle in becoming/being, moving/stasis, evolving/changing, though it may be said without a clear teleological purpose or metaphysical grounding. The struggle ceases in the game as it reaches its end. And as we move closer to death – analogously - so we recognise we cannot know as such, and yet we understand that life too ceases like a game. In this sense, the struggle is both real and not real, for a game is partially real. The struggle is thus between life and death and yet not so as it is partially real, but a game. In this sense, dual opposites do not necessarily lead to a (re)solution as that between life and death. Philosophically, we may understand dual opposites rather as complementary pairings of verbal language (abstraction) and the pre-discursive body (physicality) which itself bends in on language (that is, language begins to break down at certain limits of experience). A synthesis occurs in heightened aesthetic

experiences. It begets a Derridian Other, that which is beyond the text. It refuses to be only a particle and behaves also as a wave. It is chaos, indeterminism, plurality, uncertainty and the freedom of will/action. Dionysus. It is also none of these things as the “present” (moment) is forever deferred.

In the defined “moments” of art – seeing a work or learning about it or making one – and in the defined “moments” of sport – watching, learning and performing – the now is both ever present and mediated. Therefore, it is both finite – an aesthetic phenomenon with sensory qualities (even a thought is graspable as in art language conceptual art) - and infinite, offering ever-nuanced hermeneutic possibilities. At the same time these “moments” carry ideological power and are therefore not “present” but act as a construction and are mediated by other powerful bodies (institutions). In this sense, art and sport may or may not serve positive ends. That depends on whether the struggle and the rules that define that struggle lead to or are instances of the good game and ultimately the good life, an ideal that is highly contentious and debatable. It is not clear whether sport as with art can offer resistance; can promulgate and communicate personal realization; instantiate a philosophical insight; are carriers of aesthetic beauty *and* political statements, religious beliefs... or simply about itself as (part) of a game. My project has been to acknowledge multiple levels of meaning around sport derived from art-related aesthetics or an art theoretical lens.

Theoretical contexts, environments and experimental set ups are constructed and contrived and mediate knowledge and so a mirage of sorts is conjured. This “mirage” gives one hope that water is yet to be found. What is water? A necessary creation and a necessary evolution for human survival over generations. To what end? That question begets struggle – playful, noble, beautiful, agonistic – and even potentially, fun. And yet how I cringe at associations of “fun” when art and sport are considered as “mirages” screening ideological insanity and power-mongering by one over another – our very historical records – so that existentially I am not sure whether to praise art and sport, or not. What this thesis has argued for is that uncertainty ought to be “upheld” so that a kind of moderate aesthetic formalism, one which recognises the subtle intersections and parallels between aesthetic and non-aesthetic properties obtain “in” sport in a way similar to art and that should make us both excited by the prospect that art aesthetics covers a range wider than art per se, and that at the same time ideological concerns embrace culture and the everyday as a whole, which may or may not be desirable. Deconstructing ideology or our games does not in itself imply transcending such

structures for one is always historicised and part of a particular frame of reference. The aesthetic in sport, like art itself, both conceals and reveals that ideology or our games. Or the other way around: ideology or our games both reveals and conceals the aesthetic in sport (art).

The relationship between art and sport is both simple and complex and encompasses the way material, sensual life is coordinated from the influence of economics, politics, religion...to art and sport in themselves...(our) culture, so that our signs (languages), games, aesthetic sensibility and symbology are all intertwined. A potential pattern that may be considered beautiful. The wrestlers struggle in combat, the sculpturer wrestles with material defying words and yet whatever the medium communication is possible, aesthetic beauty may be realized. Yet I am uncertain if this goal is attainable. For the wrestlers and the artists are part of a system, a game, in which aesthetic beauty is both a construction, even a fashion, and a diversion, a style that can be bought and sold. Like Sisyphes I simply endorse the struggle of lifting the rock up and down the mountain even when one may be at pains to specify the larger ultimate goal. Life itself overruns our culture; there is an existential angst¹⁴⁹. Simultaneously, it would seem, there is also sensory and perceptual awareness (aesthesis), the foundation of aesthetic, playful and empathetic (Einfühlung) experience. By which I mean the “given”, self-evident embeddedness in world, like smelling a beautiful rose. This tension or struggle for meaning is perhaps expressed in playing sport and/or the making of art and the “consumption” thereof.

Culture may enhance life for the good. My project of understanding the cultural form of sport via art-related aesthetics may be one way to motivate that possibility, notwithstanding the nebulous status of art and indeed, of sport. Again, culture is overrun by life. Trying to pin down life philosophically, that is trying to define it, for example as a site for struggle, a certain Existential angst by definition thwarts that philosophical goal itself. Trying to solve this dilemma by breaking down the art-life schism in an art context reinforces the first term in this apparent duality rendering the task unresolvable. Laocoon serves as an image for this tension; as an image prone to duplication and also existing in the mind, though no less an object, but another mirage. The same goes for certain sporting perennial moments. What then is real? If we say the aesthetic is but a game, then the beauty of Laocoon or even the beauty

¹⁴⁹ By which I mean that since there is no essence or ontological being(ness), there is a terrible, absurd “freedom” given to persons.

of a certain classic moment in sport, is not real as such. Or is the real the “content” (or absent) it is said to refer to? But it is also none of these things: realist art or muscular sports may serve antithetical powers such as fascist or communist agendas alike (or contemporary commodity market systems...). It is thus not art and sport – the forms, the material signs of our culture – that are moral benchmarks, but the context in which they are played out and the motivations behind their use. Perhaps one ought to conclude that on the whole art and sport, properly played, are healthy and thus may enhance our lives, especially at the level where it is just fun and playful and not official culture as such (it may be called a centred-periphery). Art may enhance our understanding of sport is one way to realize that goal.

The sense of not knowing what is real or what reality is, is often obfuscated by art and sport. We are presented with objects of the senses, an aesthetic presence (aesthesis) or body. In order to maintain some semblance of meaning, we play/struggle with the “stuff” of the world or sensory input/the “given”, in the process forming games (for example heuristic ways of knowing) with rules, for example art, science, sport... These then appear to be autonomous realms of human interaction/communication. Yet, in a sense it is non-conceptual with no reference to anything beyond the game (text or language; even prosaic language is simply an invention, an effective tool). However, as much as these “games” appear apart from life, they are always also an integral part of life. Nevertheless, we cannot fully understand the relationship between it (language, “games”, the “given”, text...) and life (for example the same text gives rise to conflicting theories). This results in existential angst (a struggle).

Yet this thesis is not about the philosophical question as to what constitutes “reality”, but an attempt to understand the relationship between art and sport. We may introduce concepts such as imagination, “play” and empathy (Einfühlung). The stream of life (and aesthetic experience) thus gives way to a cognitive dimension which then reinvigorates sensory perception, placates Existential angst and “struggle”, setting in motion the movement from aesthesis to “play”, games, life itself and the cognitive dimension. This “system” does not entail that aesthesis and the cognitive do not inform one another, for the process is one of oscillation between these dimensions, so that they interpenetrate. Seeing (or rather sensing) and thinking may accordingly enrich one another or at least inform one another. Through the “lived body” (or *soma*), the potential for an integrated awareness, a kind of conceptual non-conceptual may be reached, an ineffable quality named as such.

Rancierre theorised a way to combine the conceptual and non-conceptual or conceptual non-conceptual. I agree with McQuillan (2012:14) who says reflecting on Rancierre:

The equality and even, perhaps the lack of the distinction of the sensible and the intellectual that is to be found in Rancierre's aesthetics holds open the possibility of a more sensible intelligence and a more intelligent sensibility. I contend that philosophers of art should do everything in their power to realize that possibility instead of indulging in the anti-intellectual fantasy of a purely sensible aesthetics becoming pervasive today.

What this means in practice is that when one watches sport, say on television, one passes between a purely aesthetic experience, then an interest in the game and perhaps meaning beyond the game, perhaps as separate modes of "perceiving" but all active nonetheless. The way we perceive art is an exemplar of how we do just that, oscillating between "presence" and meaning dimensions. In terms of this reading, the project of somaesthetics, a kind of Zen-like awareness is partially sound as the emphasis on sensuality, the body, a meditative awareness ought not to be pushed to the extreme of its "purity" as a counterbalance to the Western overemphasis on mind and spirit. Ideally, a balance may be found and this is where associating art together with sport may be beneficial. And it is precisely the kind of contemporary art that emphasises the multi-sensory, haptic and precognitive ways of knowing and perceiving that finds a certain resonance with the physicality of sport.

In a real sense both art and sport as principally imaginative "acts" can also be seen as a shared delusion, the pretence of theatre or make-believe, in as much as they are mimetic, merely reflecting that which is or rather producing something else. Or expressive, in which case it is one of release of emotions and ideas, ways of placating Existential angst or expressing an individual opinion or even a shared one. It may also be an ideal, by which is meant a fantasy at a remove from reality, mere pawns in a larger "game"/"play"/struggle...Whether or not sport and art are effective agents for transformations in actual life is debatable: neither acknowledgement of the constructed institution of art and sport nor the postmodern debunking of grand theories or grand narratives assist us in knowing what art and sport ontologically are (not wholly ideal, expressive, mimetic...) and therefore we cannot be certain of where the "borders" are both theoretically and practically. Equally, then we are not even sure in what sense they can be described as beautiful, though one should concede that neither ought not to be described as beautiful, at least formally.

To sum up: Art both is and is not ideal, that is, it is moderately ideal. Art is moderately mimetic, albeit as a mimesis of a surface, a potential “play” and struggle with signs in the formation of form, a “bodily” aesthetic that to some extent expresses the will of the artist. Idealism, mimesis, expressionism and formalism are descriptive art theories that locate the meaning of art as tending to the aesthetic. In conjunction with this are contingent, institutional and current postmodern revisionist conceptions of art whereby explanations and understandings of art tend towards seeming non-aesthetic considerations. This “narrative” was applied to a reading of sport. We are now in a position to say that there is no clear-cut dividing line between art/sport and life, and between art aesthetics and everyday aesthetics. The conclusion must be – at least in the context of this thesis/text – that art may be useful in order to interpret sport. This in turn may lead to an enhancement of our everyday life-praxis and world-bettering, because it indicates that conceptual and practical linkages are possible. At the same time this seems possible only where art and sport are appreciated as separate categories. This sense of unity and divergence is the price for knowledge.

Nevertheless, it may be that what is not known always exceeds what is known. Which ratifies Socrates’ teaching that one should be aware of the limitations of what one can know. He may have spoken playfully or ironically. But neither the Socratic definition of beauty as something suited to its purpose, its harmony nor the eighteenth century invention of aesthetics and art as the exemplar case has yielded clear-cut answers. Such views, to a large extent situated man as transcendent, his logic above the stream of ordinary life. Gradually, today, it is conceivable that since we do not have clear-cut answers, that we are embedded in nature as bodily, so aesthetics may be all-pervasive, serving to unify and link disparate disciplines/languages, investigations into understanding life. Insofar as this may be the case, linking art and sport may be timely.

I have offered a perspective whereby sport is interpreted in a new way derived from art-related aesthetics, gesturing to the pervasiveness of the aesthetic. The aesthetic or rather the great sum and variety of aesthetic experience, whether in art or not is alive, breathing, a pattern for those who participate in that given aesthetic. This is the outward, empirical, spatial

pattern – the aesthetic. Within a given aesthetic we can also impute an inner consciousness and will, individually and collectively. This is the meaning, idea, ideal or “absent”. Considered thus, this thesis hopefully leads one to then ask the following: how can one define the invention that is aesthetics or aesthetic experience? Is it a certain kind of subtlety and sensitivity? What some might call “beauty” in art as in other aspects of life? Yet perhaps there was a beauty in for example the art of Ancient Egypt, the Ancient Greeks and even Nazi Germany, exemplified in art as hieratic, the classic and perhaps the neoclassical style. But surely one would not necessarily call such art as exemplifying a beautiful society at least not the last mentioned cultural form (or conflate beauty with goodness or truth – the latter two notions as maligned as is the term “beauty”). Thus it is unclear how aesthetics may be life-enhancing.

Post beauty, post history, post grand narratives¹⁵⁰ if indeed such is possible, we no longer can easily conceptualise what the concept of aesthetic beauty is; there is no metaphysical grounding. Two boxers pummelling each other and even abject art (perhaps begun already in early modernism) can be considered beautiful, but they are hardly purely subtle. Neither are they anaesthetic. For they are both at a remove from “reality” proper; they are cultural or rather games that we play requiring imagination, physical and cognitive ability. Significantly, it is via the forms of art that we can appreciate the forms of sport and therefore the ease with which huge populations are drawn to particularly the latter, though perhaps not aware of the relevance of art in that aesthetic enjoyment (and in fact the other way around too). I have argued that art being the exemplar case of the aesthetic and the deconstructive critique within art itself in theory and practice opens up the possibility that art-related aesthetics can widen the scope of aesthetic experience. That means one can derive a new interpretation of sport though the lens of art-related aesthetics. However, such outward manifestations – the aesthetic – may be variously interpreted. We fight/struggle/play for ideals, for ideas that manifest as an aesthetic that is mercurial.

¹⁵⁰ The assertion that there are no “grand narratives” is a “grand narrative” statement in itself. Perhaps we need to get even beyond post modernism. The deconstruction in art theory and practice suggests a further reconstruction, particularly in the direction of suggesting an aestheticization of life that is all-encompassing, but not necessarily in an aesthetically redundant a-moral sense.

To say that aesthetics is pervasive – in art, in sport, in medicine, in law...in everyday life, is not to deny the distinctiveness of aesthetics in art, but to (re)construct it as a newly formed awareness of the games we play. This newly formed awareness can be understood as a way to develop aesthetics through connecting the paradigm case, namely art with other games, which in this thesis has been an investigation of the link between art and sport and in the process a new interpretation of sport ensues.

This thesis is the theoretical conceivability of the interrelation between art and sport from an arts perspective. This is based on a common aesthetic and conceptual confluence; a conceptualisation of the non-conceptual and pre-cognitive, kinaesthetic and bodily. It lays the foundation for what I shall call *sports art*. *Sports art* is the interdisciplinary study of the relationship between art and sport (see model, pg 45). One application may be in order to improve sports performance towards an enhancement of life-praxis. In this particular application, *sports art* draws its sense from the discipline known as sports science insofar as because sports performance is to be measured, this practical end is achieved via scientific method, through which art can be used to enhance such performance. This would further suggest a confluence between the sciences (natural and social) and the humanities and between theory and practice, derived from a common aesthetic – bodily and perceptual and conceptual – thread. A unity amidst diversity, like a certain colour that attracts a bee. Or perhaps more importantly, connecting people in what ought to be a “playful”- ethical spirit that one may apply in other contexts, all as alternatives to war. To the question: can not war be “playful” and therefore aesthetic the answer is “yes”. The solution is to sublimate that energy and substitute it for culture. But is culture (in this case art and sport) not already enveloped in war, in power struggle – a contest of ideas and ideals? Or are each of them simply marked by a particular style or formal sensibility – an aesthetic – self-referential games, that do not actually say anything?

To reiterate, the connection on a theoretical level established between art and sport leads to the coining of the discipline of *sports art*. *Sports art* suggests that in the interplay between art and sport – and the connectivity between people this affords - the polarity between idea and form becomes non-sensical. Thinking, speaking and acting happen mediated by a text, a language, a body, games in life as in art. By somewhat merging art and sport, perhaps the obvious consequence is that art-related aesthetics becomes more widespread. This is so as sport is interpreted in a new and different light. More precisely as the aesthetic “play” of the

sensual, the bodily and the conceptual, the abstract - the latter of which is itself physically embodied.

Appendix 1: *The relationship between abstraction and sensuality (a further elucidation on chapter 2 on mimesis)*

The impossibility of accurate resemblance can be described as the limiting device of the form/vessel (for example, a painting), but the partial success of the aesthetic function explains the way “light” (by which I mean, an idea, an object, the senses, language – though in relation to one another they can be “vessels”) takes on structure or is contained and is manifested. Ways in which the “light” is articulated necessitates forms/“vessels”, though in relation to one another the designation “light or “vessel” may interchange. For example, a sunset may be described as “light” and the recording of that scene by way of a painting can be described as a “vessel”, though the latter is “light” in relation to a text written about that painting and so on¹⁵¹. The following are some example of “lights” or “vessels”¹⁵²:

- 1) Number (the basis of abstraction): the nine digits plus the cipher, zero refer to quantity and allow the material world to be packaged in various ways through which we seek a certain control. Numbers “contain” objects and in being assigned a number the objects can be said to mirror one another (for example, “there are billions of galaxies” means “galaxies” in view of resemblance can be accounted for and indeed, counted).
- 2) The faculty of sight: this determines a pre-cognitive relationship between the observer and the observed. Art stems from this faculty primarily and script is a later invention. A world labelled and dissected dims the faculty of vision. On the other hand, verbal language in a sense assists one to see.
- 3) The faculty of hearing: this determines a pre-cognitive relationship between the hearer and the sound of something and is more ephemeral and less expansive than sight. Music stems from a consciousness of this faculty and speech is the unique wonder that makes use of sound and the evolved mechanism of breath, larynx, tongue, teeth and lips¹⁵³. I would imagine that an analysis of music and speech could further assist one to hear more nuances in sound, whether it is music or speech.

¹⁵¹ This distinction between “lights” and “vessels” renders the mimetic function not so much a copying of reality through another, but the incommensurate nature of one language in relation to another, that is, the limitations inherent in the very notion of transcribing one order of experience into the language of another. At the same time, this these is concerned with the possible interconnection between the language, discipline and “from of life” between two different kinds of expression, namely art and sport.

¹⁵² C.f. Hey, T and Walters, T in *The New Quantum Universe* (2003) for an explication of the fundamental inaccuracy of experimental and sensory measurements.

¹⁵³ Evolutionary biology can be seen as a precondition to cultural expression.

- 4) Smell, taste and touch form separate categories and in various ways impinge on our language development, both artistic and linguistic.
- 5) Body movement: this determines both a language of relating to the world guided by the senses and could also be codified as dance, sport and the like. The body-mind is free within certain constraints, that is within the limits of the human body and the environment in which it finds itself.
- 6) Language: this determines both a pre-cognitive awareness of Other and a conscious learning that names Other (and self). It is somewhat removed from the “given” for, like number and abstraction, language is a symbolic system. Meaning via language is also cultural, contextual and changes over time. The above 5) aspects of filtering feed into various languages, each of which are only partially translatable one into the other, which is not to preclude their interconnection.

Given these six mediation devices, each of which is interrelated, there is a “presence” – an aesthetic sign – and an “absence” – extra-aesthetic meanings (which themselves are aesthetic). The relationship between sign (sensuality) and referent (abstraction) has been problematized in this thesis. Art functions to create meaning in the oscillation between “presence” and “absence” and it can be argued that sport as a highly cultural, developed body language, may also be interpreted and perceived to do just that.

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