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SPORT AND CHRISTIAN ETHICS: TOWARDS A THEOLOGICAL ETHIC
FOR SPORT

by

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DECLARATION

I have read and understand The University of Edinburgh guidelines on plagiarism, and I declare this written thesis is all my own work except where I indicate otherwise by proper use of quotes and references.

To Cynthia Ann (Nero) as one who properly loves sport unto God

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<i>AP</i>	<i>The Acting Person</i>
<i>DBWE</i>	<i>Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works (English)</i>
<i>Ethics</i>	<i>DBWE, Vol. 6</i>
<i>GS</i>	<i>Guadium et spes</i>
<i>TOB</i>	<i>Theology of the Body</i>

ABSTRACT

From the time of the early church to the present century, Christian assumptions about and theological responses to sport have been problematic. In the present century, evangelicals in North America lack a developed theological ethic about how Christians should regard modern sport--the practices, purposes, and values. What little theology there is, is an uninformed folk theology of muscular Christianity in which the primary means of evaluating sport is in terms of its instrumental utility with no recognition of goods that might be internal to sport. In this thesis, I formulate a modest Christian ethic for sport as a way toward reimagining sport in the Christian life as an embodied, penultimate good.

I have chosen Augustine, John Paul II, and Dietrich Bonhoeffer as the three primary interlocutors with whom to shape a theological discourse about and construct for modern sport. Together, they assist in exploring fundamental convictions of the Christian tradition and determining what bearing these should have on Christian moral reflection and deliberation on this cultural activity.

In chapter one, Augustine's ethic is organized around three integral motifs: God and happiness, ordered and disordered loves, and the use and enjoyment of goods. By beginning here, a Christian ethic addresses the charges against Augustine's idealism set in the historical context of ancient Rome where the Christian tradition first engaged sport extra-biblically. These motifs lay the groundwork for how a Christian might relate to sport.

In chapter two, I examine an exemplary modern attempt—by the American philosopher Paul Weiss—to give a moral and philosophical account of sport. Weiss develops a philosophy of sport around themes derived from classical Greek literature, including bodily excellence, anthropology, and teleology. Weiss’s Greek ideals and philosophical categories function as heuristic tools because many issues of modern sport are connected in a variety of ways to these ancient Greek ideals. Weiss forms a bridge historically and philosophically to thicken our description of modern sport, to refine this thesis’s analysis of some important categories native to modern sport, and to focus on what this phenomenon entails for a Christian ethic today.

In chapter three, I engage with John Paul II's complex and rich account of the internal moral and theological goods of sport. John Paul II's personalism provides a much stronger basis for analyzing the goods intrinsic to sport than does Weiss—one that is, moreover, consistent with (while building on) the Augustinian foundation laid in chapter one. I demonstrate that in John Paul II's theology of sport, sportive actions find a significant analogue in the Christian doctrine of creation in relation to the body of the athlete, in which perspective sport may be seen as sign and gift shared with other embodied sportspersons. I propose that sport is an ontic-embodied good and gift that is only properly conceptualized in a Christian ethic, an ethic in which the pursuit of excellence is an objective that fulfils the dignity and worth of the whole human person. By contrast, Paul Weiss' philosophy of sport instrumentalizes embodied pursuits, such as sport.

In chapter four, Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s Christological basis for Christian ethics serves to repair the persistent problem of dualism—two-sphere thinking—for modern muscular Christianity. Bonhoeffer’s comprehensive vision of reality places Christ at

the center of life and existence so that the question of the good becomes the realization of the reality of God in Christ. Therefore, a Christian ethic does not justify how the reality of God in Christ relates to sportive culture by appealing either to the sacred or secular, but justification is in Christ, since He has drawn and holds it all together.

In chapter five, I continue with the problem of modern muscular Christianity in order to constructively reimagine how to relate the reality of Christ as the ultimate to sportive reality, the penultimate. This eschatological paradigm further organizes the final chapter in two important ways. First, the logic of sport is often governed by alien ends and loves. Augustine's ethic refines this problem as a matter of how the practice of sport can educate our desires according to competing *teloi*. Second, I elucidate the importance of St. Paul's sport metaphor (1 Cor 9:24-27) as another angle for interpreting and ethically engaging the complex lived experience of sport itself. This sport metaphor functions eschatologically to integrate sport and the Christian life and to ennoble this activity as a practice for moral and spiritual formation.

INTRODUCTION

When I was a young man I used to go to sacrilegious shows and entertainments. I watched the antics of madmen; I listened to singing boys; I thoroughly enjoyed the most degrading spectacles [games] put on in honour of gods and goddesses . . .¹ (St. Augustine)

I had promised that it would be for God's honor and glory, whether we won or lost. Of course the glory was better for God and me since we won, because the victory gave me a greater platform from which to speak.² (Roger Staubach, NFL Player, 1972)

The Context and Problem

These two quotations represent the core of the research problem I will examine in this thesis. From the time of the early church to evangelicals in the twenty-first century in North America, Christian assumptions about and ensuing theological responses to sport have been problematic. There are clearly important differences existing between Roman sports and modern sports. However, it is my contention that theological and moral confusion among contemporary Christians concerns the moral significance of sport.

On the one hand, Augustine argued that popular sport in ancient Rome was a form of life that aroused immoral dispositions, led to vices, and was implicated in the idolatrous worship of the pagan gods. Augustine is concerned with God's glory and honor, which is not to be confused with the glory of the earthly city. On the other

¹ Augustine, *City of God*, 2.4.

² Shirl J. Hoffman, "The Sanctification of Sport: Can the Mind of Christ Coexist with the Killer Instinct?" *Christianity Today*, 4 April 1986, 20. Originally, quoted in Michael Roberts, *Fans! How We Go Crazy over Sports* (Washington: New Republic, 1976): 117-118.

hand, Roger Staubach, quarterback for the world champion Dallas Cowboys, assumes God's glory and honor are present in and through sport to the point that winning augments God's glory because it affords Christianity greater "gospel" relevance when associated with a value most esteemed by the earthly city. Staubach's view depicts an almost unquestioned alliance today between the Christian faith and sport. In the past, such an alliance would have been highly suspect. But Higgs claims that this alliance "has become symbiotic, with the church offering blessings on sports and sports bringing welcomed attention to the church."³ Sport is a venue supplied with cultural capital, vying for investors and space even from the church or organized religion. Although sociologists over the last thirty years have conducted valuable research with regard to the nature of this relationship between religion and sport, this thesis considers a different angle of the problem. There is no developed theological ethic about how a Christian should regard modern sport--the practices, purposes, and values.

This gap in knowledge occasioned Gregory Baum and John Coleman, in their edited socio-theological book, to claim that ". . . one looks almost in vain for any more serious spiritual and theological assessment of this important topic [sport]."⁴ Certainly, this does not mean that there is not any theoretical reflection on sport because sport ethics emerged in the 1970s as its own field of applied ethics (and is now a burgeoning discipline). However, the nature of this problem for this thesis turns on the lack of serious Christian reflection about the moral interests central to

³ Robert Higgs, *God in the Stadium: Sports and Religion in America* (Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 1995), 21. Higgs's analysis concerns the incompatibility between sport and religion. In his introduction, he offers a disclaimer that his book is not a theological or historical analysis of sport and religion. I return to Higgs's thesis with Shirl Hoffman in chapter four.

⁴ Gregory Baum and John Coleman, eds., *Sport* (Edinburgh, Scotland: T & T Clark, 1989), 4.

this social practice. For example, what norms and purposes shape Christian reflection and deliberation concerning the *ludic*, *agonistic*, and *aretaic* elements of modern sport? What difference should religious commitments make for how a Christian *sees* and *relates* to the officials, opponent, spectators, rules, physical body, and so on? How do we properly value and relate this penultimate good to the ultimate good? These kinds of questions help us to attend to and frame this research problem.

In *From Ritual to Record: The Nature of Modern Sports*, Allen Guttmann incisively comments about the practical significance of this problem for Christians today:

For most contemporary athletes, even for those who ask for divine assistance in the game, the contest is a secular event. The Sermon on the Mount does not interfere with hard blocking and determined tackling. Religion remains on the sidelines.⁵

If the problem begins with this lacuna in theological reflection, then it is instantiated with practitioners who dissociate the ethical direction of their faith from their sport involvement. This problem, which is not peculiar to sport, undermines genuine integration insofar as Christians fail to conform daily living to Christian doctrine and beliefs. In other words, the praxis side of this problem manifests a deep confusion on how Christian moral reflection should bear on sport. Let us examine the historical context that proves this confusion and heightens the need for this thesis.

Guttmann argues that, whereas ancient sport had a particular religious character and purpose, modern sport is characterized by secularization, egalitarianism,

⁵ Allen Guttmann, *From Ritual to Record* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978), 25. After almost thirty years, Guttmann's thesis stands; however, a few criticisms have refined his account. For example, his analysis scrutinizes the traditional sports versus the "post-modern" sports (i.e. snowboarding, surfing, etc.) and therefore some of his characteristics appear absent in these sports. In fact, what many of the contestants most enjoy are features that differentiate their sport from these traditional kinds of sports. Yet, even these X sports after a while get assimilated into the business of sport, resembling the traditional sports.

specialization, rationalization, bureaucratization, quantification, and the quest for records.⁶ Because the bond between the sacred and secular has been severed, “modern sports are activities partly pursued for their own sake, partly for other ends which are equally secular.”⁷ Guttmann contends that the secularization of sport is something that began in the late Roman Empire when the pagan association lost its grip under the influence of Christianization of the Empire. However, this dissolution resulted in a secularization of sport without any developed vision for how to think Christianly about sport. That is, how should Christians account for this sphere of interaction? This left the Christian tradition suspicious of this social practice, as was the case especially for Protestants from the seventeenth through the nineteenth century, precipitated by the Puritans. Most notably, the Puritans resisted the sporting activities that King James I published in *The King’s Book of Sports*.⁸ Where the Puritans were able to endorse certain activities that were recreational in scope, according to Leland Ryken, their endorsement was theoretical in nature. For in practice, the Puritans’ legalistic ethic—exacerbated by the immorality of certain sports and sport competition on Sundays—precluded them from valuing sport as a good for its own sake. Because all activities were valued by whether they could be put to use for God’s good purposes the Puritans contributed to a “utilitarian play

⁶ Guttmann, *From Ritual to Record*, 16.

⁷ Guttmann, *From Ritual to Record*, 26.

⁸ Jim Mathisen “Sport,” in *Handbook of Religion and Social Institutions*, ed. Helen R. Ebaugh (New York: Springer, 2006), 288; cf. Donald L. Deardorff II, *Sports: A Reference Guide and Critical Commentary, 1980-1999* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2000), 178-91; Joseph L. Price, ed., *From Season to Season: Sports as American Religion* (Macon, GA: 2001), 3-38; Jay Coakley, *Sports in Society: Issues and Controversies*, 8th ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2004), 526-563. William J. Baker, *Sports in the Western World* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988).

ethic.”⁹ For the Christian, non-work meant an opportunity for deepening his piety and leisure; it was a reward for and rest from hard work. So “usefulness and innocence” were the virtues extolled if participating, and vigilance was cultivated toward any activities that might profligate time well-spent.¹⁰ Furthermore, during this time, there was “the slow development of an empirical, experimental, mathematical Weltanschauung” that emerged from the “new science” of the Enlightenment and that fostered a rationalism that informed modern society.¹¹ When conjoined to the prevailing sport ethos, the dominant, accepted, Protestant use-value ethic toward sport was “transformed by a modern worldview and resulted in a highly rationalized approach to pursuing sport.”¹² In turn, this use-value ethic prepared the way for an achievement-oriented ethos toward modern sport characterized by such features as quantification, a quest for records, and specialization. What effect did this have on religion and sport for today? Mathisen concludes,

Herein lays a significant irony of the Puritans’ influence as it has played out in North American sport—indeed in much of capitalistic culture—over the past four centuries. Sport is valuable mainly if valuable for something, whether earning a scholarship, making a living, or simply staying in proper physical condition. So rather than leaving modern Americans with any sense of sport’s theological or religious significance, the Puritan legacy remains largely one of evaluating sport in terms of its pragmatic utility.¹³

⁹ Leland Ryken, *Worldly Saints: The Puritans As They Really Were* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 190-91; cited in Jim Mathisen, “Sport,” 288.

¹⁰ John A. Lucas and Ronald A. Smith, *Saga of American Sport* (Philadelphia: Lea & Febiger, 1978), 59.

¹¹ Guttmann, *From Ritual to Record*, 85.

¹² Mathisen, “Sport,” 289; Guttmann, *From Ritual to Record*, 85-89.

¹³ James Mathisen, “A Brief History of Christianity and Sport,” in *The Image of God in the Human Body: Essays on Christianity and Sports*, eds. Donald Deardorff II and John White (Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2008), 19; cf. Steven J. Overman, *The Influence of the Protestant Ethic on Sport and Recreation* (Aldershot: Avebury, 1997).

If any doubts remained about the relationship between Christianity and sport, the Muscular Christian movement challenged it in practice. Toward the latter half of the nineteenth century—originating in England with Thomas Arnold, Rugby School headmaster, who influenced novelists Thomas Hughes and Charles Kingsley—a kind of renaissance occurred with the revival of the classical ideal, *mens sana in corpore sano*. Juvenal first coined the phrase in his Tenth *Satires* (10.56) as part of his answer to what humans should pray for in regard to the good life.¹⁴ Higgs regards the adoption of this ideal as the Hellenistic phase of sport in the nineteenth century, “with the endless references to the Greeks, usually by educators or military apologists” toward the value of sport.¹⁵ This ideal was syncretized and formulated into a doctrine that became known as “muscular Christianity” and was eventually exported to America. Basic to this movement’s beliefs was the idea that sports strengthens and develops a Christian man’s character and body. As a precursor to today’s ideal that sports builds character, “muscular Christianity” proposed that godliness and manliness together were a solution to the “poison of effeminacy” that was weakening the Anglican Church.¹⁶ In America, this movement justified sport participation for a number of different groups, mitigating religion’s former aversion to sport:¹⁷ 1) schools adapted the ideals that sport builds character to encourage morale; 2) groups like the YMCA utilized this moral ethos as the backbone for their

¹⁴ Though Juvenal may be the first to coin the phrase, it was not formally adopted for sports until the 19th century. See David Young, “Mens Sana in Corpore Sano? Body and Mind in Ancient Greece,” *International Journal of the History of Sport* 22, no. 1 (January 2005): 22-41.

¹⁵ Higgs, *God in the Stadium*, 309.

¹⁶ David Newsome, *Godliness and Good Learning: Four Studies on a Victorian Ideal* (London: Cassell, 1961), 207; cf. Clifford Putney, *Muscular Christianity: Manhood and Sports in Protestant America 1880-1920* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003).

¹⁷ Mathisen, “Sport,” 289-95.

urban reform to young men, along with Fundamentalists (early 1940s) who engaged in sport in order to give cultural credence and win souls; and 3) later other organizations (i.e., FCA, YFC, AIA) and church sport ministries in the twentieth century were established with the presupposition that sports was a critical means for evangelizing the world because of this attraction to sport and its relationship to religion and good character. In the 1970s, Frank Deford, a popular sport columnist, christened this movement “Sportianity,” an off-spin of Muscular Christianity. What has unfolded from this historically complex progression of Christianity and sport is an institutional relationship between sport and religion, especially among North American evangelical Christians. However, what has been missing is an adequate theology;¹⁸ that is, there is relatively no theological rationale or redemptive critique of sport. What little theology there is, is an uninformed, folk-style amalgamation of sport, biblical metaphors, athletic anecdotes or quotes, and pop psychology like what is represented in the quote by Roger Staubach.¹⁹

Purpose of Thesis

Theological Ethic for Sport

The purpose of the thesis is to develop a theologico-ethical construct in the Christian tradition for sport. As the subtitle of my thesis indicates, I intend to offer a *theological ethic for sport*. The grammatical use of “for” as a coordinating conjunction means that I endeavor to join dogma belonging to theology, as described and understood by revelation and tradition, to sport. By joining the two together, I

¹⁸ Tony Ladd and James A. Mathisen, *Muscular Christianity: Evangelical Protestants and the Development of American Sport* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999), 224.

¹⁹ Ladd and Mathisen, *Muscular Christianity*, 219-223.

am deliberately focusing the material content of theological reflection on sport. Since this has been neglected by evangelicals in North America, then, the task of theology warrants this, and thus, it aims to establish important theological connections to sport in order to repair this theological lacuna on sport. This kind of theological reflection is what Miroslav Volf refers to as traditional reflection since it operates explicitly from the basic doctrines of the Christian faith for a particular secular reality which in Volf's case concerned the subject matter of work.²⁰ Volf insists that this mode of reflection is essential in order to arrive at the moral norms for a worker's actions. Following Oliver O'Donovan's measured analysis of the two kinds of thought pertaining to Christian moral reasoning,²¹ my theological reasoning is less about moral deliberation on the level of rules and particular moral judgments concerning sportive actions, and thus, more about reflection on the level of moral principles and basic theological convictions.²² Consequently, concerning the scope of the thesis, a theological ethic for sport means that my theoretical investigation about sport begins primarily with theoretical or propositional elements from Christian thought; theological reflection is grounded in God's purposes as disclosed by revelation.²³ As O'Donovan notes, reflection is "turning back" on the purposedness of reality.

²⁰ Miroslav Volf, *Work in the Spirit: Toward a Theology of Work* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 69-76. Cf. Darrell Cosden, *A Theology of Work: Work and the New Creation* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2004), 3-10. In Volf's work, he seeks to go beyond the traditional reflection by considering the broader theological framework in order to repair some of the shortcomings of the traditional approach.

²¹ See Oliver O'Donovan, "Christian Moral Reasoning," in *New Dictionary of Christian Ethics and Pastoral Theology*, eds. David J. Atkinson and others (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1995), 122-127.

²² See Glen H. Stassen and David P. Gushee, *Kingdom Ethics: Following Jesus in Contemporary Context* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 99-124; cf. James Gustafson, "Context vs. Principle: A Misplaced Debate in Christian Ethics," *Harvard Theological Review* 58 (1965): 171-202.

²³ Oliver O'Donovan, "Christian Moral Reasoning," 122-127. When I refer to revelation, this does not mean only from the scriptures but other sources which help in our understanding of God's purposes.

Reflection “attends to what is shown us of God’s purpose in creation and redemption, on the one hand, and to the order of the world, in the light of God’s purposes, on the other.”²⁴ Hence, my task is to consider the theological convictions and principles with regard or respect to sport; this is a theological ethic for sport. Although I do not offer any extended treatment of specific moral matters germane to sport or formulate any moral policies or rules specific to modern sport, I do follow at various points the theological trajectory of my theological bases and principles with respect to certain moral issues in sport.

In summary, my emphasis on a *theology for* sport is for the following reasons. First, the neglect in North America warrants special attention to this topic especially by Christian theologians. As intimated above, theology concerns itself with God and created reality, namely human reality in this case. Second, sport as a cultural activity is not only ubiquitous in the modern world, but as I argue in chapter three with John Paul II, sport remains as long as human persons remain;²⁵ sport as play is a basic good constitutive of our humanity. Third, my accent on “for” is as much for rhetorical reasons because of the lacuna, and yet, I also want to redress the fact that where muscular Christians attempt to do theology it is often guilty of accommodation. Or, as Mathisen argues, muscular Christianity’s commitment to evangelism by whatever means brought with it little interest “in conceptualizing an *a priori* theological basis for their [sport ministry] activity.”²⁶ This little interest alters the gospel essentially and loses contact with Christian revelation and tradition. I will

²⁴ Oliver O’Donovan, “Christian Moral Reasoning,” 122-123.

²⁵ For a similar point, though in relation to work as a function of who we are as human beings, see Volf, *Work in the Spirit*, 74-75.

²⁶ Ladd and Mathisen, *Muscular Christianity*, 224.

say more about this in chapters one and four. Therefore, this problem of accommodation requires that the thesis give epistemic priority to revelation so that a dogmatic perspective is fundamental to this method in order for theology to properly interpret and evaluate sport.

The scope and purpose of this thesis, however, does not commit my theological task to one direction, i.e., only from revelation to the culture of sport, especially since some of my conversation partners and insights lie outside of Christian theology, and since sport itself is a practice embedded in God's wider moral order that communicates and reveals moral truths, albeit fragmentary ones.²⁷ Consequently, although my theological method begins from the sources or authorities germane to Christian confession or wisdom, I recognize that theological reflection does not only speak and relate to contemporary situations. Since this is an integrative dialogue between belief and practice,²⁸ then the voice of wisdom disciplines the theological task to observe and listen to the situation or empirical reality itself because Christian theology is immersed in a created reality and history fraught with complexities, contingencies and ambiguities.²⁹ This integrative dialogue means that theological reflection does not simply apply norms to situations. Rather, the situation informs moral reflection about certain facts or state of affairs which are necessary for considering and appraising a moral event or experience. Furthermore, this implies

²⁷ Oliver O'Donovan, "Christian Moral Reasoning," 123-124; cf. Oliver O'Donovan, *Resurrection and Moral Order*, 2nd ed. (Leicester: Apollos, 1994), 16-21. In other words, I am not advocating an applicationist strategy which merely identifies key theological truths from my own tradition and sources and then sets out to apply these truths to the beliefs and values of sport culture (See Gordon Lynch, *Understanding Theology and Popular Culture* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), 100-110.). Furthermore, the commitment to contextuality requires an appropriate concern given to the relationship between theology and culture.

²⁸ See Robert J. Schreier, *Constructing Local Theologies* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1985).

²⁹ David F. Ford, *Christian Wisdom: Desiring God and Learning in Love* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 4.

that the theological task critically attends to the questions which emerge from the reality of sport culture while at the same time the task demands that Christian revelation interrogates and reframes the moral problems themselves.³⁰ In fact, this dialectic between revelation and culture only affirms, in general, that culture has a theological dimension, since it is grounded in God's created order—the penultimate context—and God's unremitting commitment to this world as the Creator and sustainer. The doctrines of creation, providence, and Christ as incarnate, judge and redeemer, to name a few, corroborate this theological dimension. And yet, because of the tension between the revelational and cultural pole, I equally regard, especially in chapters one, four and five, the relativizing authority of Christian revelation (the gospel) as the ultimate norm for interpreting such cultural activities as sport.

This final point of revelation and culture bears an important theological assumption, namely the relationship between faith and reason, when thinking about sources for doing theological ethics. For the thesis, I assume that religious faith is primary--a first principle of sorts--and thus, theological knowledge is what I intend to primarily work from for developing my argument. Hence, this is a *theology for sport*. More precisely, the primacy of faith operates in the Christian tradition as “faith seeking understanding.” In the classical Christian tradition, *Credo ut intelligam*,³¹ (“I believe in order to understand”) indicates a method for doing theology which trusts

³⁰ For an extended treatment of this relationship between revelation and culture and public theology, see Tim Gorringer, *Furthering Humanity: A Theology of Culture* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2004); Kathryn Tanner, *Theories of Culture: A New Agenda for Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997) and David Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism* (New York: Crossroad, 1981).

³¹ More precisely, this attitude toward faith and reason, which comes from Augustine and Anselm, begins with revelation as an authority which faith apprehends and reason dialectically serves in order to understand what we assent to and trust in (See Anselm, *Proslogion*). Cf. Karl Barth, *Evangelical Theology: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1963), 43-47, 96-105.

in the authority of divine revelation and then ventures to discover the theological implications of Christian dogma for such practical matters as sport. Therefore, Christian faith or belief raises questions specific to living on earth, and thus, for this thesis, Christian faith daringly inquires and wonders about sport as a cultural activity and the distinctive problems and possibilities associated with sportive goods in this world that God has made. For this reason concerning the primacy of faith, Christian theology and ethics shape the direction our thinking should take as we approach the moral field of sport. Moreover, this faith inquiry is a constructive task which means it goes beyond the mere replication of the faith of our forebears.³² I elaborate on this constructive aspect below since it follows in the wake of genitive theologies (a theology of some subject matter).

I will show in the thesis that theologians and practitioners have tended in much of Christian history to denigrate sport as a sphere of great moral ambiguity. The aim of the thesis is to offer a repair of this longstanding ethical problematization of sport—that can be seen in the early fathers and especially in Augustine right through to contemporary evangelicals in North America. My method of repair of this traditional denigration of sport entails thinking about sport by reflecting on and examining key theological themes (i.e., God, humanity, creation, Christ, disordered loves, gift, embodiment, and excellence). These themes provide the background beliefs or basic convictions and theological principles which function as norms and values for reflecting on sport. Therefore, the structure of my ethic works from certain theological and philosophical presuppositions as given in Christian thought because

³² Daniel L. Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding: An Introduction to Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 1-18. If this is a constructive task, then this entails that reason functions as an aid to conceptual clarity and to imagine the theological trajectory of my theological (basic) convictions for sport.

my task is to think toward a theological ethic for sport. In other words, theological reflection thinks after what God has revealed in order to think about and towards sportive action.³³

Theological Ethic of Sport

If my scope is a *theology for* sport, then how does this compare to the broader concept that Volf and other Catholic theologians refer to as a genitive theology or *theology of* some secular reality. A theology of “X” (e.g., theology of business, theology of medicine) has become a common designator in the theological literature today because former traditional reflection narrowly construed such empirical realities, and thus forgetting a broader horizon of theological reflection on work, economics, etc.³⁴ On the one hand, my own theological method assumes this more comprehensive exploration of the phenomenon of sport because of the theological neglect of muscular Christianity in North America. To give an example, in chapters one and two, I propose how a Christian theological framework situates sport in the wider context of God’s purposes with creation, and thus, this framework establishes an order to how we love or value sport, casting light on the ultimate meaning of sport. I argue more fully below in chapter one that sport is not a neutral horizon since the medium of sport has assumptions, categories and principles which can ultimately conflict with revelation. In chapter three, I discuss how a theology for sport is supplemented with a theological anthropology, namely John Paul II’s personalism,

³³ O’Donovan, “Christian Moral Reasoning, 122-127.

³⁴ Volf, *Work in the Spirit*, 74-75. I do not intend to cover the history of this theological methodology, i.e., genitive theology, though it is intimately connected to the convening of the Second Vatican Council and earlier approaches of French theologians after World War II (Lothar Roos, On a Theology and Ethics of Work, *Communio* 11 (1984), 102-106.). I do explicitly resume with this method in chapter three since John Paul II’s method is consonant with a genitive theology.

which construes sport according to human dignity, gift and excellence. Finally, in chapters four and five, I offer a Christological basis and eschatological understanding of sport in order to ground theological reflection on sport in the gospel itself and the new order which Christ-reality inaugurates and interpenetrates in such penultimate activities as sport. I explain the logic of my chapters in more detail below.

On the other hand, I am not attempting on the magnitude of Volf and others, who focus on work, to offer or develop a comprehensive theology of sport. Hence, as a theologian, my academic trek is in the direction of obtaining a theological ethic to assuage that grave defect in evangelical theology in North America. I limit myself to the specific theological themes above while recognizing that my effort invites other sojourners to attend to other theological themes in order to fill out and complete a theology of sport. What is my main claim and how does it organize the thesis as a whole?

Specific Thesis Proposal and Organization: Sport is an Embodied, Penultimate Good

Since my general purpose is to go beyond the folk theology and vague outlines present in much of the interaction between theology and sport, then my specific proposal is to formulate a modest theological account for sport as a way toward reimagining sport in the Christian life as an embodied, penultimate good. Therefore, my claim is that for Christian ethics, sport is an embodied, penultimate good. What do I mean by this claim? How do I address and expound broadly on this claim in each of my chapters? What is the rationale for my chapters?

I argue that embodiment focuses on the fact that we are physical sensual creatures. I argue with Augustine that the Christian account of the goodness of creation posits God's acceptance of embodied activities like sport. The doctrine of

creation equally affirms that our materiality as revealed in the doctrine of creation is not only good, but that sport itself as a mode of social life is tacitly and intimately associated with creaturely embodiment. Sport reminds us that whatever it means to be a human it is tied to materiality—biological characteristics such as strength, health, body composition, motor skills, and flexibility. As argued below, embodiment is significant for a variety of reasons. First, anti-body tendencies have been prevalent at different times in the church which means that sport involvement was suspect. If true, then an anti-materiality stance contests the central claim of this thesis, and thus, it requires theological justification and explanation of the basic convictions which ground my claim concerning embodiment. Second, the call of the Christian gospel exacts a premium on responsibly embodying the faith as Christ's disciples. So, it is not simply assenting to our physicality as mere human beings in sport, but Christ incarnate and resurrected reorients the church to consider Who is Christ for us in sport? I take up this specific inquiry in chapters four and five. Third, to witness the embodied powers and achievements associated with sportive contests is to acknowledge human greatness, on the one hand. On the other hand, as set forth in chapters one, two and three, Christian revelation construes these talents and powers as gifts. If gifts, this indicates that what is done or performed in sport is not wholly the athletes' doing or making, and thus, gifts witness to God—the maker and giver of materiality. This leads to sport as a penultimate good.

Fundamental to this thesis is an axiology which asserts that any created good such as embodiment is intelligible because of God's goodness and being, and in particular

as revealed in the Word made flesh in Jesus Christ.³⁵ In chapter one, I establish a teleological framework for understanding how a created good such as embodiment and a cultural good such as sport ought to be properly referred to their true end and pursued in the light of God as the ultimate good. This teleology, of course, presents a ranking which relativizes sport to a penultimate good, and yet, this ranking gives objective value to embodied practices such as sport because of the ordered reality given to this world by God in which sport participates and operates. That means the moral norms that a Christian ethic discerns concerning sport must be in agreement with the created order.

If Christian ethics begins moral reflection on key theological themes as the basis for how we think about God's purposes for sport, then my theological discourse retrieves three primary interlocutors from the Christian tradition for this thesis. Augustine, John Paul II, and Dietrich Bonhoeffer serve to establish my theological constructs for thinking about sport as an embodied, penultimate good. Together, they assist me as I explore fundamental convictions of the Christian tradition and what bearing these should have on how Christians think about and inhabit this cultural activity. They provide the vocabulary for reimagining how the Christian faith relates to sport as an embodied, penultimate good. All three work from a set of theological assumptions and an ethical imagination that opens the Christian tradition to think about a number of themes and aspects specific to sport itself, i.e., play, excellence, embodiment, gifts, human beings, loves, penultimate and ultimate. By enlisting the wisdom of the living Christian tradition, I believe it will help to offer an initial,

³⁵ I argue with Bonhoeffer in chapters four and five from the doctrine of Christ that Christ-reality is the interplay of Christ incarnate, crucified and resurrected.

certainly provisional, way forward on thinking theologically and ethically about this neglected area.

By starting with Augustine in chapter one, I am building upon his theological foundation as a constructive work for how to move forward in regard to sport as an embodied good, our loves or attraction to sport, and how to relate this human activity to God. Augustine's ethic is organized around three integral motifs: God and happiness, ordered and disordered loves, and the use and enjoyment of goods. By beginning here, a Christian ethic addresses the charges against Augustine's idealism set in the historical context of ancient Rome, where the Christian tradition first engaged sport extra-biblically. Furthermore, this starting point presents idealism and its corollary, the use-value problem of modern muscular Christianity, as an intramural issue; thus, in order to repair it, we must first begin "in house" to establish whether these charges identified with a Christian ethic are legitimate or not. Oddly enough, this use-value ethic was precipitated by Augustine's own Roman context. The Romans neglected the internal goods of sport, which the Greeks more clearly appreciated, thus severing it from both its internal justification and its sacred relationship. Therefore, Augustine comes first both to historically situate these two problems for the Christian tradition and to disentangle the theoretical problem from the more pragmatic concerns of modern muscular Christianity.

This main charge of idealism makes my main claim about sport as an embodied, penultimate good contestable for two reasons. First, the Christian tradition has struggled with embodied existence in general, so my main claim has not been a regulative or normative claim for how Christians have historically and theologically construed sport. Consequently, this misunderstanding toward sport has resulted in

methods of theological reasoning (i.e., idealism, dualism, and pragmatic utilitarianism) that undermine a Christian axiology and metaphysics. Augustine's moral vision, as I will argue, specifically overcomes this charge of idealism, for he organizes his ethic around an ultimate end or highest good, and thus he assesses and values the nature of such sportive goods or characteristics as penultimate means and goods. I will demonstrate that this ultimate and penultimate distinction properly values, rather than devalues, embodied goods such as sport because, if God is a good creator, then all created and cultural goods depend on God for being and goodness. Moreover, this distinction not only establishes a metaphysic about created goods that also serves as a foundation in this thesis to repair the use-value ethic that dominates modern muscular Christianity, but also it correctly orders how we ought to relate to sport; norms express or respond to values. If sport is properly valued and loved, it reflects aspects of God's goodness; if it is not loved correctly, it reflects a disordered love belonging to the earthly city. Therefore, this thesis retrieves Augustine's moral construct of the good life in order to lay the groundwork to establish a Christian valuation of goods of this earth, namely, sport as an embodied, penultimate good, and to correctly relate this cultural activity toward the highest good, God.

Second, because of Augustine's negative moral judgment concerning sport--which I address and repair--a space was created with no moral vision for how to theologially think about and inhabit sport. Augustine's strong censure virtually made it morally impermissible to participate in sport. This space was exacerbated over time both with a secular justification, predominant in ancient Rome, that shifted the rationale from a religious justification to such things as human achievement, records, and specialization, and with the Christian church's withdrawal and

disengagement, especially in the early twentieth century in North America. Hence, this calls for the constructive nature of my thesis to offer and build a theological ethic for sport.

This theological task equally entails a relationship with other disciplines and thinkers. Dialoguing with others helps the Christian tradition to consider more clearly its own convictions and assumptions; it brings to light matters and categories that might be ignored or assumed but that require deeper moral reflection and theological analysis. In saying this, I do not mean that this is an apologetic task that assumes uncritically other epistemic starting points and then requires the Christian tradition to meet the approved canons of reason and language of other commitments. On the contrary, I simply point out that, though there are important (if not radical) differences, Christian ethics “must relate itself in some fashion to the range of ethical discourse represented by the various philosophical and descriptive disciplines.”³⁶ It is not as if only Christians indwell the sport story since others bring their own reflection and deliberation to this empirical reality. Christian theologians historically worked out their positions in response to alternative basic convictions and visions of reality. In fact, this point concerning my thesis follows, in many ways, what Augustine, John Paul II, and Bonhoeffer did very well, even if differently, in their respective historical contexts.

In chapter 2, I will employ the rhetorical strategy of capturing an alternative explanation by entering Paul Weiss’s account of sport as an embodied pursuit of

³⁶ Edward L. Long, Jr., *A Survey of Christian Ethics* (New York: Oxford, 1967), 29. These remaining paragraphs are informed by Long’s careful analysis of the relationship between Christian ethics and other disciplines.

excellence.³⁷ Weiss, an American philosopher, serves both as a guide to this thesis and as a helpful transition from Augustine to modern sport. Weiss builds a bridge historically from ancient Greece, where the justification of sport was not dominated by its use-value, since sport was conceived as an opportunity for realizing excellence (*arete*) through embodied means, and where sport officially began as organized competition. How we understand sport today is related to ancient Greece. If my starting point with Augustine was to establish the initial lines of theological reasoning for sport as an embodied good, then my point of contact with Weiss is to send some very sport-specific questions into and from the past that Augustine simply did not entertain.³⁸ Thus, I will more concretely and philosophically consider other goods specific to sport. Weiss's Greek ideals and philosophical categories function as heuristic tools for evaluating important moral matters that a theological discourse about sports must consider. In order to go beyond Augustine and offer a theological ethic for sport, I must resist creating some kind of non-historical account of sport by dogmatically applying Augustine to sport. Weiss develops a philosophy of sport around a few important historical themes (i.e., bodily excellence, anthropology, and teleology) that have endured through the ages of sport. When compared to a

³⁷ See Curtis Chang, *Engaging Unbelief: A Captivating Strategy from Augustine and Aquinas* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 25-39. Curtis's method of engaging alternative stories is implicit in my own understanding of how to move from Augustine to contemporary issues such as sport. I also use this same strategy for addressing both modern muscular Christianity and Shirl Hoffman's account of how Christianity and sport relate. On a historical note, this recourse to the past (i.e., revelation and tradition) typifies the *ressourcement* movement and this positive opening toward the present realities and categories relative to sport as a created, cultural activity exemplifies the *aggiornamento* movement both of which Vatican II of the Roman Catholic Church help to spawn. In this thesis, I attempt—depending on the interlocutor—to keep this productive tension together as it relates to *theology for* and *theology of*, respectively.

³⁸ My method of inquiry as an exercise in correspondence between modern sports and ancient sports both with Augustine and Paul Weiss is an attempt to “carve a channel” from the past to today and back. This is not unlike Augustine's own return to the sources in order to scrutinize and inquire about his own theological and cultural matters (See R. A. Markus, *Saeculum: History and Society in the Theology of St. Augustine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970); Chang, *Engaging Unbelief*, 18-20.).

Christian ethic, for example, these themes lay bare Weiss's own judgments and claims for interpreting sport. Weiss becomes an important foil that enhances the contribution that a Christian ethic brings to sport. Therefore, Weiss comes second not only for historical reasons, but also to compare and contrast a Christian ethic with an actual philosopher of sport who inspects closely the nature of sport and some of its main ideals from ancient Greece to today. This contrast pays dividends, for it sets up some central moral matters specific to the claim that sport is an embodied, penultimate good, which I respond to with John Paul II.

John Paul II follows Paul Weiss because he answers for a Christian ethic a number of problems associated with an ethic of excellence. By comparing and contrasting John Paul II and Weiss in chapters two and three, I force a Christian ethic to clearly consider both its own core convictions about sport as an embodied pursuit of excellence and how other theological matters, namely, gift, human persons, and dignity, relate to ethical considerations. This contrast lays bare important aspects of a Christian theological framework that without a foil might lie unexpressed, unacknowledged, or indiscriminate. Therefore, I follow the trajectory of sport from Augustine as an ontic-embodied good and develop it specific to John Paul II's sport ethic. For a Christian ethic, sport as an ontic-embodied good is important in lieu of others like Paul Weiss, whose eschatology instrumentalizes embodied pursuits such as sport.

If sport is an ontic-embodied good, I argue that any account that singles out one particular good, such as bodily excellence or play, as the primary good neglects who we are as full human beings. John Paul II's personalism, a theology of the human person and action, has a Christian ethic reckon sportive action in terms of human

dignity and excellence. In this thesis, John Paul II's personalism causes a Christian ethic to attend throughout to the value of an athlete, a sportsperson, for this value then gives rise to the moral requirements and relates to the ends (excellences), habits, and actions that either affirm or retard this personalistic value. Moreover, if this value is true about human persons, then I argue that sport as an embodied, penultimate good must consider and defend the meaning of the body, not as a mere object of nature for human power and athletic achievement, but as a primordial wonder, which as a gift and sign must be received and respected as integral to human dignity. For a Christian ethic, the sportive contest is established and oriented equally, if not primarily, around gift and love, not around the self-mastery of the body as a task. Hence, our admiration and appreciation of sports does not stop with the athlete herself, but points beyond to God, since God makes and gives the very sportive talents and gifts embodied in this cultural activity.³⁹

In the fourth chapter, my intention is to continue the constructive nature of this thesis by considering the significance of Bonhoeffer's Christological basis for sport and, thus, how it contributes to a theological ethic for sport. A Christocentric focus was present in John Paul II's moral vision; however, Bonhoeffer's distinctive emphasis and theological method allow for nuance and tap another important interlocutor of the Christian tradition. For a Christian ethic, this distinction puts Christ front and center for moral reflection on sport in general. In particular, Bonhoeffer's ethical vision brings to light one, if not the primary, theological problem of dualism that underpins the failure of modern muscular Christianity and

³⁹ For a similar argument about religiously discerning the difference between gift and human powers or mastery, though not a theological justification, see Michael J. Sandel, *The Case against Perfection: Ethics in the Age of Genetic Engineering* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007).

that threatens the main claim of this thesis on how Christians should regard sport as an embodied, penultimate good. The problem of dualism for this thesis takes multiple forms: anthropological, metaphysical, religious, and eschatological. If and when dualism is held, it principally thins the goodness of material or embodied reality; thus, it devalues both the player and the sport experience as a practice itself. Each of these implications of dualism configures ways of being human that I argue are theologically inimical with respect to the gospel itself and to the form of Christ in the sportive world.

As with John Paul II in regards to Weiss's account of sport, I capture the tragic flaw of modern muscular Christianity by entering its story or account of sport, and I argue that a Christian ethic envisions sport as a penultimate good belonging to the natural life. With Bonhoeffer, I tell a specific vision of the gospel as the ultimate that takes other rival stories captive, which means that Bonhoeffer's Christ-reality overcomes the problem of dualism endemic to these other accounts. Instead of sport and the reality of God standing one next to the other, they are related to Christ; therefore, Bonhoeffer's ethical vision values and locates sport in the reality of Christ. Furthermore, Bonhoeffer's Christ-reality drives me to consider Shirl Hoffman's alternative account of how Christians should relate to sport since he himself also tries to reimagine sport—on account of the problems of modern muscular Christianity—by justifying sport's sacredness to put it back together; he appeals to its intrinsic religious or hierarchical spiritual value. I will argue that Bonhoeffer's Christological basis embeds the question of what is good for any matter in a wholly other reality, that is, the reality of Christ as incarnate, judge, and redeemer. This reality redescribes all of reality; therefore, Christians in sport are to participate in this concrete form

because it reveals that Christ is the center of life and existence. Thus, whether it is Shirl Hoffman's socio-theological account or modern muscular Christianity, both of them neglect Christ as the center, thus leaving sport as a divided reality, i.e., dualism, all over again. It is in Christ that a Christian ethic perceives and discovers the deeper realities of embodied, penultimate activities such as sport. If modern muscular Christianity lacks an integrated *a priori* theological basis for sport, I conclude that Bonhoeffer's Christ-reality is that unifying basis.

In chapter five, my theological discourse focuses on an eschatological and/or teleological paradigm for understanding how sport is an embodied, penultimate good. Chapter five brings all three of my interlocutors together to concentrate at length on the moral matter of how to relate Christianity and sport. Because this has been a problem in general that I address principally throughout my thesis, my final chapter extends the discussion to judge carefully three specific aspects entailed in the main claim of my thesis: sport is an embodied, penultimate good

To begin, I argue that not only does Bonhoeffer's event of justification as the ultimate require a Christian ethic to interpret sport as an embodied, penultimate practice, but justification also judges and pardons a sportsperson's theological or moral identity in the power of the cross. Sportspersons themselves who contest in this embodied, penultimate good are confronted by the gospel. Instead of sport functioning as a tribunal to determine the worth and value of sportspersons, which leads to numerous theological and moral pathologies, sportspersons are deemed accepted; thus, sport is not an activity that bears the burden of justification. Consequently, because of the power of the resurrection (another aspect of Christ-reality), justification frees a Christian athlete to freely and responsibly enjoy and

redirect this penultimate activity toward being human and being good for the sake of the ultimate. Thus, I repair this problem of integration with Bonhoeffer's ultimate and penultimate duality so a Christian sportsperson is free to enact the gospel in this cultural activity.

Next, I turn to Augustine to examine the context and narrative of sport and how it shapes our loves toward different ends. These alternative *teloi* threaten to cut or close off this penultimate good from realizing its true, intended end. With Augustine, I extend my moral reflection on perhaps the most debilitating moral matter in modern sport, i.e., the inordinate loves of politics and money, which subvert and damage sport as an embodied, penultimate good. In particular, I examine these inordinate loves in terms of the moral problem of idolatry. As I argue in chapter two with Weiss's proposal, people are attracted to and value sport, which, for the Christian tradition, is another way of saying that their loves move or pull them toward the plurality of goods that course in and through sport. Within the matrix of modern sport, we find desires that we should cultivate in regards to the ultimate, while at the same time, we should also be cultivating appropriate dissatisfactions toward misdirected longings since they forsake the value of sport itself and dehumanize sportspersons along the way. Thus, with Augustine's basic structure of love, I conclude that a Christian ethic should resist this idolatrous exchange so that sport as an embodied, penultimate good is lovingly related to and enjoyed in God.

Finally, I argue that John Paul II complements the above eschatological or teleological paradigm with his use of St. Paul's sport metaphor in 1 Corinthians 9:24-27 as a moral paradigm for how we integrate our faith in sport. I conclude that this is important for this thesis for two reasons. First, a proper interpretation of this sport

metaphor corrects the problem with how modern muscular Christianity is guilty of folk theologizing when they interpret St. Paul's sporting metaphors. Second, my use of this athletic image gives further warrant for how to think theologically about sport as a human value--an embodied, penultimate good--and to inhabit morally and spiritually the practice of sport itself.

I will now consider at length how Augustine's thought orders how a Christian ethic initially conceives of sport as an embodied, penultimate good. Thus, I will argue that Augustine's moral vision offers basic convictions with respect to who God and humans are which is essential to my purpose of constructing a theological ethic for sport.

CHAPTER 1
RE-ENVISIONING AUGUSTINE'S GOOD LIFE: A THEOLOGICAL
CONSTRUCT FOR SPORT

Augustine is chosen for reflecting on the kinds of moral problems pertaining to our humanity, our loves, and the goods (moral and non-moral) as dramatized in the narrative of sport. If we are to use Augustine's moral vision as an initial construct to help us identify the questions, beliefs, and values expressed in modern sport, we must first consider several concepts. First, I will create a brief working understanding of the concept of sport. Second, I will situate Augustine's view of play and games in its historical context, which will enable the reader to identify some of the problems Augustine had with sport. Third, I will show that Augustine's ethic is organized around three integral motifs: God and happiness, ordered and disordered loves, and the use and enjoyment of goods. These motifs establish a framework for how a Christian ethic relates to sport, and its trajectory directs this thesis with respect to John Paul II and Dietrich Bonhoeffer.

In order to understand the nature of the moral problems in modern sport, the Christian tradition must first revisit ancient Rome and witness the first recorded Christian engagement with sport. Ancient Rome probably has much in common with modern sport, because as Guttmann and Higgs contend, the religious cultic elements associated with Greek sports were next to absent, and the Romans utilized the games for multiple purposes that parallel many of our extrinsic purposes for sport today

(i.e., commerce, entertainment, and political).¹ Thus, we must understand the similarities to and unravel the interconnections between ancient Roman sport and modern sport. For example, one particular problem regards how the institutional goals for a contest often corrupt the intrinsic goods of sport. In ancient Rome, this problem was present in that the games were sponsored by the emperors (versus big business today), patrons with goals that were at variance with the sport's own internal goals. This particular example in modern sport is addressed in the final chapter of this thesis. Undoubtedly, there are differences between Roman sport and modern sport as well. Where such differences are apparent, these differences will qualify the argument.

Some critics (discussed below) hold the church fathers, namely Tertullian and Augustine, theologically responsible for the suspicion and the low regard that Christians have often held toward sport. For the critics, the use-value assessment of sport exhibited by the Puritans began with the church's engagement with Roman sport. From the existing attempts to relate Christianity and sport, modern muscular Christianity has predominantly chosen to appraise sport's moral worth according to its pragmatic utility. This use-value ethic as a moral problem is to be blamed not only on muscular Christian practitioners but also theoretically on Augustine and the church fathers. If some of Christians' attitudes toward sport evolved from this initial engagement, it behooves us to examine their origin—an origin, perhaps, that demonstrates some critical tools worthy for us to analyze today. Furthermore, as indicated in the introduction, commencing with Augustine both situates this enduring use-value problem for the Christian tradition in history and disentangles the

¹ Higgs, *God in the Stadium*, 309-33; cf. Guttmann, *From Ritual to Record*, 15-56.

theoretical problem from modern muscular Christianity.² The use-value problem relates both to modern muscular Christianity and to Augustine. This starting point presents this main problem as an intramural issue; therefore, to repair it, we must first begin “in house” to establish whether these charges toward a Christian ethic are legitimate.

Sport as a moral practice consists of a multitude of means and strategies in a variety of contexts performed in the light of different ends both internal and external to sport. To understand sport, we must understand what constitutes sport--what makes it different from other human endeavors or practices? Though I provide some particular markers which help to characterize something as a sport, I am well aware that a search for an exact definition or the essence of sport is difficult to come by.³ Thus, I intend to demarcate the general characteristics of sport so as to create a shared understanding. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to address all of the characteristics of sport; however, I do further define, interpret, and critique certain elements as they pertain to each of my interlocutors’ distinctive ethos.

Sport practices as an embodied human activity usually involve play (ludic element), physical prowess, physical activity, physical recreation, exercise, competition (agonistic element), aesthetics, structures (constitutive, proscriptive and sportsmanship rules), unpredictability, and orientation towards a goal (aretaic

² My emphasis here marks the importance of a “theology for sport” since a developed theoretical knowledge is necessary to provide the content for our rational decisions about how to live and act in sport. Again, evangelicals in North America neglect the kind of theoretical analysis which we should expect for a theological ethic.

³ Randolph Feezell, *Sport, Play and Ethical Reflection* (Champaign, IL: Illinois University, 2006), 9-15.

element).⁴ Kretchmar explains that this bodily activity is primarily concerned with two things: (1) a test that poses the perceived tension of whether the participant can solve the problem or test using the associated skill set (for example, swimmers use dives, flips, and strokes), and (2) a contest in which a contestant introduces a kind of opposition, a difference by degree, that enriches the test because of the inherent uncertainty and dramatic resolutions of the entire competition.⁵ Furthermore, the move from spontaneous play to sport consists of more training and exercise, greater employment of physical skills and exertion, more obstacles in pursuing a plurality of goals and objectives that are both internal and external to a particular sport, and the necessity of competition. If these characteristics are all relative to the formal logic of sport itself, it is also important to realize that sport is inextricably embedded in a wider network of beliefs and values that originate from its sociocultural and institutional context.⁶ I say more about this below.

Augustine's moral vision specifically fits,⁷ for he organizes his ethic around an ultimate end or highest good and thus assesses and values the nature of such sportive

⁴ Within the structure of play there are some important features which are foundational for games and sport: freely chosen, autotelic, serious and non-serious, play space and time, creates order, and eventuates in pleasure, joy, renewal and fun. See Roger Caillois, *Man, Play and Games*, trans. Meyer Barash (New York: Free Press of Glencoe, 1961); Johan Huizinga, *Homo Ludens* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1955); Robert K. Johnston, *The Christian at Play* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1983), 31-52; Mike Sleaf, *Social Issues in Sport* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), 1-15; Bernard Suits, "The Elements of Sport," in *Philosophic Inquiry in Sport*, eds. William J. Morgan and Klaus V. Meier (Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics, 1988), 39-48.

⁵ R. Scott Kretchmar, *Practical Philosophy of Sport and Physical Activity*, 2nd ed. (Champaign: Human Kinetics, 2005), 170-174; R. Scott Kretchmar, "From Test to Contest: An Analysis of Two Kinds of Counterpoint in Sport," in *Philosophic Inquiry in Sport*, eds. William J. Morgan and Klaus V. Meier (Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics, 1988), 223-229.

⁶ Johan Steenbergen and Jan Tamboer, "Ethics and the Double Character of Sport: An Attempt to Systematize Discussion of the Ethics of Sport," in *Ethics and Sport*, eds. M. J. McNamee and S. J. Parry (London: E & FN Spon, 1998), 35-53.

⁷ When I indicate that there is a fit between Augustine's moral vision and the general concept and practice of sport, what I mean is that whatever social practice we might examine it backs up into a wider order—overall shape of the good—which Augustine's ultimate end theologically addresses.

goods or characteristics as penultimate means and goods. That is, the Christian tradition, as represented by Augustine, uniquely configures all secular (temporal) activities in the light of God. Moreover, Augustine's moral vision attends to the breach initiated in ancient Rome that exists between sport and the sacred. If sport is properly valued and loved, it reflects aspects of God's goodness; if it is not loved correctly, it reflects a disordered love belonging to the earthly city. Hence, this is why Augustine opposed the pagan direction of sport. Augustine's moral theology sets up these kinds of dramatic contrasts as a grand story of two cities with two kinds of loves moving in two different directions. Sport as a sphere of this earthly life is an admixture of these two categories. These representative categories are durable qualities constituting humankind, sharing similarities with every time and in every context. For the Christian tradition, moral problems and human concerns plumb the recesses of the human heart in our various life situations. Therefore, this thesis retrieves Augustine's moral construct of the good life in order to critique the disordered loves and misuses of the "sporting" goods in this part of the earthly city and to correctly relate this cultural activity toward the highest good, God. I deal with the latter more specifically in chapter five. However, before I retrieve Augustine's moral framework as the basis for this thesis, we must address a major objection toward Augustine.

In his book *Gods and Games*, David Miller says that the idealism that Augustine and other church fathers, such as St. Ambrose and St. Chrysostom, inherited from early philosophers (i.e., Plato and Aristotle) is the "theological death-knell" because

the serious priorities of the Kingdom subordinate the goods of play.⁸ That is, the patristic ethical vision strangled such earthly joys as humor and play. Similarly, Robert K. Johnston, in *The Christian at Play*, focuses his criticism on this overbearing teleology that aborts intrinsic goods like play:

From the time of Augustine down to the present era, Christians have often been suspicious of play. For Augustine, conversion to Christianity meant a conversion from a life of play. To him, even eating was sinful if done in a spirit of pleasure [*Confessions* 10.31.]. The only enjoyment Augustine allowed for was the enjoyment of God. In varying degrees, such an assessment of play has plagued Christianity down to the present...It is safer to spend one's time in "serious" activity than to enter into "frivolity."⁹

In sum, idealism vitiates this human activity by separating the seriousness of play from the nonseriousness dimension (dialectic). This separation causes the weightier issues of seriousness to strip play of its freedom and spontaneity--the nonseriousness of play. In other words, the formal characteristics of sport are instrumentalized, thus making it more useful than useless (autotelic). Hannah Arendt describes this problem as the "superiority of contemplation over activity of any kind," which for medieval Christianity, adapted from Plato and Aristotle, meant "to be free from entanglement in worldly affairs."¹⁰ Consequently, bodily activity (specific to the realm of play and sport) is afforded a dignity that is restricted to how "it serves the needs and wants of contemplation in a living body."¹¹ This is a valid criticism for us to consider.

⁸ David Miller, *Gods and Games: Toward a Theology of Play* (New York: World Pub., 1970), 108-109.

⁹ Johnston, *The Christian at Play*, 4.

¹⁰ Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), 14-16.

¹¹ Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 14-16.

Play and Games for Augustine and in Ancient Rome

The main purpose of this section is not to offer an apologetic, but to understand what Augustine says and how his ideas might clarify some of the issues that a theologico-ethical perspective on sport should initially consider.

In *Confessions*, in Books I through IX in general, Augustine recounts his spiritual pilgrimage. In Book I in particular, Augustine references play in the context of his childhood as he criticizes his education. Augustine describes how his love of play kept him at times from his studies, which resulted in punishment from his instructors. He writes,

But we loved to play, and punishments were imposed on us by those who were engaged in adult games. For the ‘amusement of adults is called business’. But when boys play such games they are punished by adults, and no one feels sorry either for children or for the adults or indeed for both of them. Perhaps some refined arbiter of things might approve of my being beaten. As a boy I played ball-games, and that play slowed down the speed at which I learnt letters with which, as an adult, I might play a less creditable game. The schoolmaster who caned me was behaving no better than I when, after being refuted by a fellow-teacher in some pedantic question, he was more tormented by jealousy and envy than when my opponent overcame me in a ball-game.¹²

What does this tell us about his notion of play? Play is an activity in which we engage from childhood throughout adulthood. Both Augustine and his teachers play. It is a shared activity that is enjoyed in its own time and space. Augustine recognizes the hypocrisy of his punishment: as a child, he is disciplined for what the adults who punish him also enjoy. That is, the play that appears to be a natural (even spontaneous) disposition to both young and old is accepted rather euphemistically by adults as a game, a kind of “business.” What changes is not that we play, but rather how and what we play. A fair reading at least opens the possibility that, for

¹² Augustine, *Confessions*, 1.9.15.

Augustine, play is an enduring activity for humans, perhaps even an inherent social activity. Yet, the dilemma for us as readers is that Augustine's goal is complicated. On the one hand, he wants to demonstrate that sin as concupiscence epitomized his life from infancy to childhood and beyond.¹³ On the other hand, he recounts this story not to solicit more judgment, but to evoke sympathy.¹⁴ A charitable reading might even admit that he actually confirms play indirectly, but that he did not enjoy much of a chance to relish this activity. However, if we grant that Augustine writes to affirm play, why does he then classify play as a morally blameworthy form of disobedience?

Play is blameworthy not because Augustine censures it *in toto*, nor because play structurally is evil; both ideas are contrary to Augustine's ontology and ethics (see below). But if he chooses play as an act of willful disobedience in order to evade his studies, Augustine admits that his choice is sin. Augustine confesses his disobedience for not doing what he ought to do because he knows he should respect his elders and parents (1.10.16); however, to view play itself as the basis of his moral wrongdoing is to misinterpret this passage. The context warrants an interpretation that discerns that Augustine used this illustration in retrospect as a Christian to critique his educational system. He also points out the unhealthy moral effects of the racy literature he was taught in his language classes, but his criticism does not mean he condemned the reading of literature.

¹³ Markus, *Saeculum: History and Society in the Theology of St. Augustine*, 24; cf. Margaret R. Miles, "Infancy, Parenting, and Nourishment in Augustine's *Confessions*," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 50 (September 1983): 349-64; Martha Ellen Stortz, "Augustine on Childhood," in *The Child in Christian Thought*, ed. Marcia Bunge (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001), 86-102.

¹⁴ Stortz, "Augustine on Childhood," 86.

If it is true both that play in itself is not wrong and that Augustine's account is a form of social criticism, James O' Donnell's interpretation can provide further illumination. Instead of confining the wrong to play, O'Donnell broadens our perspective by drawing our attention to other aspects of this dysfunctional setting that relate to corporeal punishment. He observes that

The right of the teachers to punish this sin, on the other hand, is brought severely into question. The system in which young Augustine was being brought up was profoundly disordered and ungodly; it was not for his failure to participate in that system as such that he was worthy of punishment, but for other reasons.¹⁵

The severity of Augustine's punishments as a schoolboy is based on the strict standards of his teachers. For Augustine, this is an inhuman discipline based on the tradition of his education.¹⁶ When we understand the discipline thus, we also see that Augustine's teachers evaluated each activity to see whether it met the educational goal of learning. Play was a diversion from studying; therefore, they justified their discipline as necessary to turn their pupils from idleness to learning. Play appeared to be misplaced when juxtaposed with Augustine's school context. In his context, playing was not ethically defensible. Certainly, from our perspective, we see that play was a problem in this system of pedagogy because his teachers were spoilsports. They ignored the lusory attitude of games except when they themselves played, and they discounted the end or goal of play. Jürgen Moltmann penetratingly observes that today's driven labor market abuses and misuses play; similarly, Augustine's teachers tried to construe all play in relation to education.¹⁷ Yet we still see a marked

¹⁵ James J. O'Donnell, *Confessions/Augustine*, vol. 2 (Oxford: Oxford, 1992), 64.

¹⁶ John M. Quinn, *A Companion to the Confessions of St. Augustine* (New York: Peter Lang, 2002), 36-37.

¹⁷ Jürgen Moltmann, *Theology and Joy*. Trans. By Reinhard Ulrich (London: SCM Press, 1973), 29-38.

difference between the two: today, play is at worst a diversion, but then, it was at best an idle waste of time. John M. Quinn adds to our understanding of this passage and the concomitant educational philosophy accordingly:

Assiduous study leading to skill in the linguistic arts would ensure worldly success, consisting of “bubble reputation,” honor due to high social status and wealth, the prestige and riches that were false because temporal and fleeting.¹⁸

Augustine further demonstrates this predilection to play for both young and old when he raises questions (toward the end) regarding features of play that eventuate in the sentiments of jealousy and bitterness (Book 1.9.15). Without going into a full explanation, we can make some preliminary comments. A sentiment like jealousy reveals an attitude or way of seeing an activity “where the ‘view’ touches one or more of our concerns.”¹⁹ In this case, when I harbor jealousy in play, I view my playmate as gaining something like respect or victory, concerns that I wish to receive instead. In the *City of God*, Augustine interprets this attitude as a kind of disordered love that symbolically belongs to the earthly city. In Book XV, he poses Cain as the archetype of those who seek to gain earthly goods, such as respect, through earthly activities (for my analogy) like play.²⁰ Also, in *Confessions* (Book 1.10.16), Augustine refers to the pride of victory—a love of one’s own accomplishments, and elsewhere he indicates that this species of pride or lust means “loving our private interest more than you (God)”²¹—the grounds for his disobedience. That is, the pride of victory, as associated with a worldly ambition, became his concern when he played games.

¹⁸ Quinn, *A Companion to the Confessions of St. Augustine*, 36.

¹⁹ Robert C. Roberts, *The Strengths of a Christian* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1984), 23. Cf. Robert C. Roberts, *Spirituality and Human Emotion* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982).

²⁰ Augustine, *City of God*, 15.5

²¹ Augustine, *Confessions*, 3.8.16

Augustine further develops this theme while interpreting the Roman games at large in Books I-V of the *City of God*. Like Tertullian, Augustine sees all aspects of the Shows (games, circus, and theatre) as consecrated to the false Roman gods and thus originating in idolatry, which is antithetical to Christianity. In the *City of God* (5.13), Augustine addresses this love of praise as a vainglorious desire for glory-honor-power, which he uses repeatedly throughout his argument to identify denizens of the earthly city.²² As for the example (above) from *Confessions*, jealousy does not fit the love or delight of simply playing, which is the nature of this activity. That is, jealousy distorts the standard characteristic of enjoyment that should result from play. Suppose, for example, that I play with the primary goal of obtaining extrinsic goods, such as respect or reputation. If through loss or poor play I fail to obtain this distorted goal, I foster feelings of jealousy because I perceive that others have gained what I strongly desired but failed to obtain. Below, I will explore the nature of desire as it determinatively shapes the moral life for Augustine. In the Christian tradition, what is at stake in any activity is how it relates-- properly or improperly--to the highest good. As I will argue, sport as a form of play is such a good as to require the norming shape of the *ordo amoris*.

To further understand Augustine's thoughts regarding play and game, we must understand Augustine's historical context and his classical antecedents. Guttmann and Lindsay observe that, in general, the Romans strongly linked physical fitness to an ulterior end—for example, physical activities for the sake of such practical matters as labor and education or military matters of warfare. Such associations were

²² Gerard O'Daly, *Augustine's City of God: A Reader's Guide* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), 97-98.

especially common in the early Republic.²³ In fact, although Roman sports were multifaceted (which precludes oversimplification), Lindsay concludes that the Roman moralists do not esteem the Greek ideals: “The Greek principle of a harmonious development of the body, and a striving for bodily beauty and grace, was considered effeminate by the Romans.”²⁴ That is, “the early Romans did not enthusiastically embrace the most famous aspects of Greek *athletic*—the formal athletic competitions and the highly trained athletes.”²⁵ As mentioned before, this attitude originally came about because, for the Romans, usefulness was strictly tied to the ends of pragmatics and warfare. Thus, understanding how the Romans idealized their activities enables us to understand how similar ideals were used to assess the merit of any activity, especially play, for Augustine in his childhood context.

Augustine’s classical antecedents, Tacitus (55-117 A.D.), Plutarch (46-120 A.D.) and Cicero (106-43 B.C.) commented directly on sports. Tacitus warned that the Greek influence on sports would contribute to an inordinate amount of time spent in the gymnasia, thus leading to sloth and “dishonourable amours.”²⁶ Plutarch leveled an even harsher criticism against the Greek ideal in sport: “They [the Romans] are of

²³ Peter L. Lindsay, “Attitudes towards Physical Exercise Reflected in the Literature of Ancient Rome,” in *History of Sport and Physical Education to 1900*, ed. Earle F. Ziegler (Champaign, IL: Stipes, 1973), 178; Guttmann, *From Ritual to Record*, 24-26. Cf. E. Norman Gardiner, *Athletics of the Ancient World* (London: Oxford University Press, 1930).

²⁴ Peter L. Lindsay, “Attitudes towards Physical Exercise Reflected in the Literature of Ancient Rome,” 179.

²⁵ Don Kyle, “Directions in Ancient Sport History,” *Journal of Sport History* 10, no.1 (1983): 24; Donald G. Kyle, *Sport and Spectacle in the Ancient World* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2007). Even though the Greeks admired sport for its intrinsic goods, they also restricted their games to free males, excluding women and slaves and preferring the beauty of male physical perfection to women (Allen Guttmann, “Sports Spectators from Antiquity to the Renaissance,” *Journal of Sports History* 8, no.2 (Summer 1981): 8.).

²⁶ Tacitus, *Annals*, 14.21(139), as cited in Lindsay, “Attitudes towards Physical Exercise,” 179.

the opinion that the gymnasium and the *palaestra* are more to blame than anything else for the slavishness and effeminacy of the Greeks...and it was these which produced restless idleness in the cities, immorality and the ruin of young men's physique with naps, strolls, rhythmic exercises and exact diets."²⁷ Tacitus' and Plutarch's admonitions reflect the disdain for sport that was typical among elite authors because they equated sporting activities with a host of vices that enervate the skills for becoming excellent.

Perhaps the writer who influenced Augustine most profoundly—a writer who served as an incontrovertible source for Hellenistic philosophy and for those who received a Roman education—was Marcus Tullius Cicero. Augustine tells of awakening to a burning desire for wisdom after reading Cicero's *Hortensius* (Book 3.4). Cicero²⁸ interprets athletic activity according to his theoretical considerations concerning what it means to be human, what the good life is, and how sport functions as a form of physically active play. In his moral reflection, Cicero grants reason primacy as the moral organ we use to discern whether an action (like sport) is in accordance with the order or purpose of nature—that is, natural law. He writes, "It is therefore, at all events manifest that we are designed so by nature for activity."²⁹ Because this purposefulness is inherent, play (athletic activity) is a natural impulse for a child to use for developing and educating "the body, the mind and promoting

²⁷ Plutarch, *Roman Questions*, 40; as cited in Sean Freyne, "Early Christianity and the Greek Athletic Ideal," in *Sport*, eds. Gregory Baum and John Coleman (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1989), 95.

²⁸ Lawrence W. Fielding, "Marcus Tullius Cicero: A Social Critic of Sport," *Canadian Journal of History of Sport and Physical Education* 8, no.1 (May 1977): 17. My discussion follows Fielding's development of Cicero's moral reasoning applied to sport.

²⁹ Cicero, *De Finibus Bonorum et Malorum*, trans. H. Rackam, The Loeb Classical Library (London: William Heineman, 1931), 5.21.58 (459); cf. Fielding, "Cicero," 21.

health and fitness.”³⁰ Cicero valued sport instrumentally as a physical activity that was a healthy means—a wholesome effect—for acquiring knowledge. Cicero’s explanation is not too dissimilar to that in Plato’s *Republic* (410 B-C, 521, D-E, 535 D), he adumbrates for educators the preliminary value of music and gymnastics, noting that these twin activities develop the soul and body, respectively.³¹ Thus we see that Cicero judges sport as good or bad depending on whether it is done in accordance with nature and that he views sport contests in ancient Rome (when corrupt) as symptoms of actions done contrary to nature.

It is worth noting that, under influence from the Greeks, ancient Rome transitioned from a negative analysis to a more positive analysis. This paradigm shift occurred as philosophers gained a greater interest in sport “as Roman minds began to appreciate the more liberal forms of exercise”.³² Eberhard Mähl’s influential work, *Gymnastik und Athletik im Denken der Römer, Heuremata 2*, recognizes both the criticisms and the later commendations, for the Romans did come to appreciate physical activity for different reasons.³³ Cicero declares,

Children of a somewhat more advanced age delight in games involving considerable exertion, from which not even fear of punishment can restrain them. And this passion for activity grows as they grow older.³⁴

³⁰ Fielding, “Cicero,” 21. However, Cicero, in *De Officiis*, would deny that Nature created us for play which demonstrates his ambiguity and limits the good of play primarily to children; adults must temper sport or play with self-control for it can easily become excessive.

³¹ Daniel A. Dombrowski, “Plato and Athletics,” *Journal of the Philosophy of Sport* 6, no.1 (1979): 30. Plato held a number of other wide-ranging beliefs about sport, i.e., sport for military training, etc. Dombrowski contends that Plato saw the interpenetration of physical training, art, and military; bodily development covered a range of purposes (Dombrowski, “Plato and Athletics,” 36).

³² Lindsay, “Attitudes towards Physical Exercise,” 180.

³³ Fielding, “Cicero,” 24; cf. Eberhard Mähl, *Gymnastik und Athletik im Denken der Römer, Heuremata 2* (Amsterdam: Grüner, 1974).

³⁴ Cicero, *De Finibus*, 5.20.55 (457).

In *Confessions*, Augustine's comments about his childhood experience with play reflect Cicero's insight—an insight that Plato also shares as he discerns play to be part of the active nature of young boys.³⁵ This understanding minimally reinforces the possibility that Augustine would not have rejected play so long as it was done in accordance with how God made us. Hence, Fielding concludes that, in Cicero's mind, this given (natural) desire was good for children because of its purpose in bettering and developing the child.³⁶

When reflecting further on sport for adults, Cicero weakens his recommendation for play—what was natural for children in their development—because the pleasures that abound as a person matures hinder the morally superior virtues. According to Cicero, the power of pleasure—a sensual power that apparently exerts greater force when a person reaches maturity—dulls natural desires such as that for physical exercise; thus, pleasure moves a person away from what is morally desirable.³⁷ Pleasure for pleasure's sake is forbidden because it usurps priority over what Cicero deemed as constituting our natural order for fulfillment as humans. In other words, like Plato's moral psychology, Cicero's moral reasoning sees reason as necessary to govern the appetitive desire for pleasure in order for human beings to act in a way consistent with the dictates of nature. Cicero writes,

That moral goodness which we look for in a lofty, high-minded spirit is secured, of course, by moral, not by physical strength. And yet the body must be trained and so disciplined that it can obey the dictates of judgment and reason in attending to business and in enduring toil.³⁸

³⁵ Plato comments in the *Laws* (653D, 672C, 673D) that young boys cannot even contain themselves from playing (Dombrowski, "Plato and Athletics," 30).

³⁶ Cicero, *De Finibus*, 5.15.42-43 (441-43).

³⁷ Fielding, "Cicero," 23.

³⁸ Cicero, *De Officiis*, 1.23 (79).

With this moral framework as a guide, Cicero's criticism of the Roman games becomes clearer. Cicero witnesses the Roman games as a form of entertainment in which pleasure overrides the dictates of reason. Spectators derive no significant benefit from such an experience when they lose other, more important values associated with sport (i.e., developing and maintaining the body). That loss is a waste of time, oil, and effort (for the contestants).³⁹ Cicero incisively condemns the debauched state of the gladiatorial contests, which glorify pleasure and appeal to morally deprived men.⁴⁰

Similarly, Seneca protests about troubling moral effects after witnessing these spectacles, for he finds himself "more greedy, more ambitious, more voluptuous, even more cruel and inhuman."⁴¹ This degradation of character is what happens to a society with individuals who possess low moral character "when this pursuit of pleasure becomes divorced from the desire for the good and results in a view that pleasure is the sole object of existence."⁴² That is, an activity that is oriented merely toward pleasing the mobs is an indictment on all of Roman society, for the games were instituted by the emperor, and people from all levels of society attended these games.⁴³ Cicero laments to a friend,

But what pleasure can it possibly be to a man of culture when either a puny human being is mangled by a most powerful beast, or a splendid beast is transfixed with a hunting-spear?⁴⁴

³⁹ Cicero along with Vitruvius and Seneca follow "a topos in philosophical writing which privileges the intellectual arts over the physical ones...traced back to Plato and Aristotle" (Zahra Newby, *Greek Athletics in the Roman World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 38.).

⁴⁰ Fielding, "Cicero," 26.

⁴¹ Seneca, *Letters*, 7.3. Cf. Zahra Newby, *Greek Athletics in the Roman World*, 38-44.

⁴² Fielding, "Cicero," 27.

⁴³ Fielding, "Cicero," 26.

⁴⁴ Marcus Tullius Cicero, *The Letters to His Friends*, vol. II. Trans. W. Glynn Williams, The Loeb Classical Library (London: William Heinemann, 1928), 7.1.3; Fielding, "Cicero," 26.

Furthermore, Cicero sees this symptom—the misuse of leisure and sport—as one of the fruits of “the loss of ethical virtues by the society of Rome...and for this reason Roman sport serves as a paradigm of the decline, from his [Cicero’s] viewpoint, of Roman values.”⁴⁵ Cicero’s attack of the games was not uncommon, for other writers in antiquity (i.e., Juvenal, Seneca, etc.) satirically attacked the shows.⁴⁶ In fact, according to Guttman, the Roman games (other than relatively minor references to physical exercise, boxing, wrestling, and the *pankration*) are most remembered for their races and gladiatorial games, both spectator sports.⁴⁷ This Rome, with all its opulence and degradation, became the setting for the early Christian church. As a new religion, Christianity spread and interacted in an empire that often blamed it for its own problems and subjected them to torture and death in the arenas where sport was the spectacle. Let us now turn briefly to consider the context of the early church.

By the time of the church fathers, we witness early Christians practicing their faith in an explicitly pagan context in which Christian writers reflected on how they should live in this world. One in particular, Tertullian, was a church father with whose arguments Augustine was familiar as a part of the tradition. Addressing both baptismal candidates and the baptized, Tertullian in *De Spectaculis (The Shows)*⁴⁸ surveys and confronts the propriety of certain activities in public life—the

⁴⁵ Fielding, “Cicero,” 17.

⁴⁶ Gerard O’Daly, *Augustine’s City of God*, 42-52.

⁴⁷ Guttman, “Sports Spectators from Antiquity to the Renaissance,” 9.

⁴⁸ Robert D. Sider, “Tertullian, On the Shows: An Analysis,” *Journal of Theological Studies* 29 (October 1978): 339.

spectacles—namely, theatre, circus, games, and stadium.⁴⁹ The thrust of this polemic is more broadly tackled in his thesis, from *On Idolatry*, where he opens,

The principal crime of the human race, the highest guilt charged upon the world, the whole procuring cause of judgment, is idolatry. For, although each single fault retains its own proper feature, although it is destined to judgment under its own proper name also, yet it is marked off under the general account of idolatry.⁵⁰

The Shows, which was written prior to *On Idolatry* as an ethical-disciplinary treatise, assumes that idolatry is the chief culprit for the moral degradation that the games manifest. Tertullian determines “that these things are not consistent with true religion and true obedience to the true God.”⁵¹ Tertullian was not alone in his religious aversion to the games; Jewish monotheism had also resisted athletic festivals because the festivals’ religious roots honored the Greek gods, and in Roman times, they bestowed worship upon the emperor. This threat of pagan worship occasioned resistance to the Tyre games in the second century (BC), and a violent reaction disturbed the games at Jerusalem where Herod the Great was the principal patron.⁵²

Scholars today argue that the more organized, mass activities of sport (such as the gladiatorial games) served a number of other purposes, many of which did symbolize both the power of the emperor and of Rome. According to Auguet and others, even the cruelty and violence of the games were aimed at serving a number of socio-cultural ends: political, penal (i.e., a deterrent to crime or wrongdoing since the

⁴⁹ Timothy D. Barnes, *Tertullian: A Historical and Literary Study*, rev. ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), 85-114; David Wright, “Tertullian,” in *The Early Christian World*, ed. P. F. Esler (New York: Routledge, 2000), 2:1027-1047; Robert D. Sider, ed., *Christian and Pagan in the Roman Empire: The Witness of Tertullian* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2001).

⁵⁰ Tertullian, *On Idolatry*, 1.1.

⁵¹ Tertullian, *The Shows*, 1.4.

⁵² Sean Freyne, “Early Christianity and the Greek Athletic Ideal,” 95-96. Cf. Robin Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1986), 578-82.

games were the fate of those who disobeyed the law), social (heroic and noble examples of Roman virtue), and entertaining entertainment (a way to appease the masses, especially in the absence of war).⁵³ Despite the fact that these socio-cultural ends provide a rationale for the cruelty and violence, we must not overlook that violence used as a form of entertainment, “spectator sports,” clearly differentiated Roman sports from Greek sports. Undoubtedly, this element was found toward the decline of Greece, but it is the calculated use and allure of violence that characterizes Roman sports. Guttman explains that, “More typical for Roman tastes than races or the discus [Greek aspects of sport] were the gladiatorial combats...It is common knowledge that gladiatorial spectacles reached bestiality enormity by imperial times.”⁵⁴ Moreover, Don Kyle corroborates, “The major focus of Roman sport was the truly Roman type of diversion found in the circus and arena, a legacy from the Etruscans with their preoccupation with death.”⁵⁵

With the skill and artistry of a trained rhetorician, Tertullian caustically refutes the games because for believers to attend these spectacles inescapably subjects them to created goods perverted by the Devil and corrupt men;⁵⁶ to an unrighteous assembly which Scripture forbids (Ps.1.1);⁵⁷ to games having their origin in pagan

⁵³ Roland Auguet, *Cruelty and Civilization: The Roman Games* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1972), 113; Thomas Wiedemann, *Emperors and Gladiators* (London: Routledge, 1992), 70-72; M. Cary and H.H. Scullard, *A History of Rome down to the Reign of Constantine*, 3rd ed. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1975), 384. This list of ends is not meant to be exhaustive for it simply proves that there were multiple purposes.

⁵⁴ Guttman, *From Ritual to Record*, 24.

⁵⁵ Don Kyle, “Directions in Ancient Sport History,” 21.

⁵⁶ Tertullian, *The Shows*, 2.1ff; I have followed Barnes, *Tertullian*, 94-7, for a succinct organization of Tertullian's evidence against the games.

⁵⁷ Tertullian, *The Shows*, 3.1ff

rulers, superstition and false deities;⁵⁸ to worldly lusts;⁵⁹ to excited passions that spiritually are contrary to the fruit of the Holy Spirit;⁶⁰ to hearing and seeing shameful, profane, blasphemous, and violent deeds and words judged by God;⁶¹ to temptations and experiences of demon possession;⁶² and to witnessing Christians persecuted, thrown to the lions.⁶³ In short, Tertullian argues that the games are intrinsically idolatrous and antithetical to the Christian “way” (*disciplina*).

In the *Confessions* (6.8), Augustine vividly describes how, while in Rome, his friend Alypius was carried away by the powerful effects—the sounds and sights aroused his curiosity—of the same games that Tertullian had condemned 150 years prior.⁶⁴ Augustine shares and replicates many of Tertullian’s objections,⁶⁵ but his primary aversion fits his overall conception of the good life and the self’s loves. That is, “The desire for the spectacle was fueled by a deeper, idolatrous *curiositas* which sought sensible things as ends to be enjoyed in themselves rather than used as a means of knowing the Creator (Conf. 10.35.55).”⁶⁶ These spectacles’ immoral

⁵⁸ Tertullian, *The Shows*, 4.1-13.5.

⁵⁹ Tertullian, *The Shows*, 14.1-3.

⁶⁰ Tertullian, *The Shows*, 15.1-8.

⁶¹ Tertullian, *The Shows*, 16.1-23.8

⁶² Tertullian, *The Shows*, 26.1-4

⁶³ Tertullian, *The Shows*, 27.1-5.

⁶⁴ Lawrence Rothfield, “Autobiography and Perspective in the *Confessions* of St. Augustine,” *Comparative Literature*, 33, no. 3 (Summer 1981), 209-23.

⁶⁵ For a sweeping summary of Tertullian and Augustine’s method for engaging culture, see Kelton Cobb, *The Blackwell Guide to Theology and Popular Culture* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 75-90. O’Daly contends that, though Augustine and Tertullian shared some of the same arguments belonging to the Christian tradition, Augustine had a distinctive apologetic method (O’Daly, *Augustine’s City of God*, 40.).

⁶⁶ James K. A. Smith, “Staging the Incarnation: Revisioning Augustine’s Critique of Theatre,” *Literature & Theology*, 15, no.2 (June 2001), 124. See also, Victor Power, “Tertullian: Father of Clerical Animosity toward the Theatre,” *Educational Theatre Journal* 23, no. 1 (March 1971): 36-50.

effects, when coupled with human *cupiditas*, forge a moral experience that is self-referential and that fails to point to the highest good, God.

In the *City of God* (I-V),⁶⁷ Augustine echoes Cicero's point about the link between the moral decline of Rome and the popularity and pleasures of games. He cites the games as evidence of Rome's moral bankruptcy, and he attacks their idolatrous origin and purpose.⁶⁸ Despite the church's objection to the games, Christian emperors did tolerate contests. Christians attended the games, and wealthy Christians even sponsored some of the events. However, partially under the influence of Constantine, the games were already declining by the time of Augustine. The Olympic Games ended during the reign of Theodosius the Great (392-5), and Theodosius' son Honorius terminated the gladiatorial contests in 399 A.D. Fox remarks that, "Not until the Christian empire did athletic games lose their pagan religious accompaniment."⁶⁹ Guttmann links this development to the secularism that eventuated from Roman sports as one of the chief characteristics that modern sport has maintained: "Modern sports are activities pursued for their own sake, partly for other ends which are equally secular."⁷⁰

In summary, a few points emerge from this overview. First, we need to determine the nature of play as it relates to sport. Play theorists and sport philosophers assume that play is a ground principle of the social practice of sport. If this assumption is accepted, how then do we move forward with a theological reflection that interprets play as a fundamental good of our humanity and that preserves the integrity of its

⁶⁷ See Augustine, *City of God*, 1.32, 2.4, 2.8, 2.17, 2.21, 2.22, 2.28, 3.18, 4.5ff.

⁶⁸ O'Daly, *Augustine's City of God*, 79-81.

⁶⁹ Robin Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians*, 580.

⁷⁰ Guttmann, *From Ritual to Record*, 26.

structure for sport? Even if we hold that Augustine failed to do so in practice, I argue below that his theological construct actually positions Christian moral reflection to deeply value this good. Second, for Augustine and for contemporary sport, how we construe sport is largely determined by the socio-cultural context of sport. For example, Augustine's view was shaped by his boyhood experiences and by the strong association that sport had with idolatry and the imperial cult. Two contemporary sport ethicists, Steenbergen and Tamboer, argue that socio-cultural consideration is important when evaluating sport. They advocate that, because sport is a complex phenomenon, we should accept the double character of sport as a framework for understanding the relationship of the values and norms—internal and external—to sports. By honoring the “relative autonomy” of sport, i.e., by understanding that sport is not completely identical to other practices (some real differences), Steenbergen's dialectic model endorses what is intrinsically good to sport (like play), but at the same time challenges any “pure” notions of sport because all sport is embedded in institutions and socio-cultural contexts.⁷¹ This “double-character” model serves us well because it causes us to live with the tension of both the internal and external logic of sport. The significance of this tension is revisited later in this thesis. Furthermore, this tension relativizes Miller and Johnston's charge because their attempts to understand play lack critical reflection on what the logic of play means for modern sport. They correctly preserve the integrity of play, but the logic of play and sport are not equal. If these two concepts are conflated, then all play is equal to sport. However, although play is a part of sport, sport is not only play. We need to say more about this later because, for most sport-play theorists,

⁷¹ Steenbergen and Tamboer, “Ethics and the Double Character of Sport,” 35-53.

such an assertion readily play to be at the service of some other end, which in their estimation violates the non-purposefulness—the autotelic nature—of play. Moreover, according to MacIntyre, these twin elements—the “double-character” model—make it necessary to examine any account of sport from the larger, moral context of human life; that is “an overriding conception of the *telos* of a whole human life.”⁷² Based on the tenets of the Apostle’s creed, O’Donovan asserts that, in the Christian tradition, because there is a Creator of this world, all of creation is ordered so that by “its very existence it points to God.”⁷³ The Christian tradition construes the shape of the moral life, indeed of all existence, according to God. Thus, even though play may be described as free and separate from ordinary time and life, it still is defined by our relationship to God because we are created in His image.

At this juncture, I want to organize briefly several important themes of Augustine’s moral philosophy—God, goods, love, and happiness—that serve as an initial framework for a Christian exploration of sport.

St. Augustine’s Concept of the Good Life

God and Happiness

In his correspondence with Dioscorus,⁷⁴ Augustine embarks on his quest to understand what will make us happy by way of the same starting point as other pagan schools of philosophy.

All philosophers in common in their studies, their questionings, their arguments, their lives, have sought to apprehend the happy life. This was the one cause of philosophising; but in this matter, I think, we Christians are at one with the

⁷² Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 2nd ed. (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame, 1984), 202.

⁷³ O’Donovan, *Resurrection and Moral Order*, 31.

⁷⁴ John Burnaby, *Amor Dei: A Study of the Religion of St. Augustine* (Norwich, Norfolk: The Canterbury Press Norwich, 1991), 45-46.

philosophers. If I were to ask you why you have believed in Christ, why you have become Christians, every man will answer truly, “For the sake of happiness.”⁷⁵

Similar to his classical antecedents, i.e., Aristotle’s ethic (Eudaemonism),⁷⁶

Augustine understands our actions as arising from this universal desire for happiness (*beatitudo*) in that,⁷⁷ “All persons want to be happy; and no persons are happy who do not have what they want.”⁷⁸ But the predicament of this desire centers on the subject “to know what one should desire in order to be happy, and to know how to obtain it.”⁷⁹ In other words, the “wanting” is ever-present, but it is the having or holding of the right thing that brings real happiness. Babcock regards this distinction between wanting and having as critical for obtaining true happiness: to have and want what will legitimately provide happiness.⁸⁰ Augustine, in *The Morals of the Catholic Church*, asserts, “For he who desires what he cannot obtain is tormented, and he who has attained what he should not have desired is deceived, while he who does not desire what he should seek to attain is diseased.”⁸¹

⁷⁵ Augustine, *Sermon 150*, 4; *The Happy Life*, 1.10; Cited in Burnaby, *Amor Dei*, 45-46; cf. Donald X. Burt, *Friendship and Society: An Introduction to Augustine’s Practical Philosophy* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 30-54.

⁷⁶ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1.7.10. By no means am I limiting Augustine to a teleological ethic for Frederick S. Carney (“The Structure of Augustine’s Ethic,” in *The Ethics of St. Augustine*, ed. William S. Babcock (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1991), 11-37) argues for a complex mixed theory combining moral features from a deontological, teleological and relational ethic situated in a Trinitarian ethic.

⁷⁷ Oliver O’Donovan, “Augustinian Ethics,” in *The Westminster Dictionary of Christian Ethics*, ed. James F. Childress and John Macquarrie (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1986), 46-49. See David Jones, “The Supreme Good,” *Presbyterian*, 11 (1985): 124-41.

⁷⁸ Augustine, *The Happy Life*, 2.10; See William S. Babcock, “*Cupiditas* and *Caritas*: The Early Augustine on Love and Human Fulfillment,” in *The Ethics of St. Augustine*, ed. William S. Babcock (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1991), 39-65.

⁷⁹ Etienne Gilson, *The Christian Philosophy of Saint Augustine*. trans. L. E. M. Lynch. (New York: Octagon Books, 1983), 4.

⁸⁰ Babcock, “*Cupiditas* and *Caritas*,” 39.

⁸¹ Augustine, *The Morals of the Catholic Church*, 1.3.4.

Though other philosophers have correctly identified this human yearning, Augustine's answer is strikingly different because he identifies this human quest as "the gift of God."⁸² Only God as our supreme good can satisfy the intensity of this desire; thus, "happy is he who has God."⁸³ Hence, Augustine's most famous line from the *Confessions* praises God for both stimulating and satisfying this human longing, the defining *telos* for all of humanity: "Nevertheless, to praise you is the desire of man, a little piece of your creation. You stir man to take pleasure in praising you, because you have made us for yourself, and our heart is restless until it rests in you."⁸⁴ Nygren argues that in such a claim Augustine reduces God "to the level of a means for the satisfaction of human desire;"⁸⁵ that is, Augustine uses God to meet the need for human happiness. But John Burnaby cautions that this is a linguistic confusion that blatantly misrepresents Augustine by limiting his use of *amor* to always mean "a means to an end."⁸⁶ Burnaby corrects this misunderstanding by pointing out that the focus is on the union we have with God through love. Augustine declared that, since this union was our created purpose—a purpose that resulted in joy and happiness—it is worthy of praise. In Burnaby's words, "To 'enjoy' is to cleave to something *in* the love which is enjoyment, not by means of the love which is desire."⁸⁷ I introduce this point because Augustine's moral life was painstakingly theocentric, particularly as his own theology developed. This theology begs the question, why God?

⁸² Augustine, *Sermon 150*, 8; Cited in Burnaby, *Amor Dei*, 45-46.

⁸³ Augustine, *City of God*, 8.8.

⁸⁴ Augustine, *Confessions*, 1.1.1.

⁸⁵ Anders Nygren, *Agape and Eros* (London: SPCK, 1953), 500.

⁸⁶ Burnaby, *Amor Dei*, 109.

⁸⁷ Burnaby, *Amor Dei*, 109.

Because life is fragile and our earthly existence is enveloped in fallen conditions and fortuitous circumstances, we are unable to completely manage all the things that are imperfectly available to fulfill our wants. Thus, the impermanence of those things leaves us forever threatened by their eventual loss.⁸⁸ Since these temporal things (whether equal to or less than ourselves) fail to deliver happiness, the only sure option—and the one superior to all others—that remains is God himself.⁸⁹ This option leaves us to have the best object, God, whose permanence brings a happiness or fulfillment that is perfect.⁹⁰ Hence, Augustine envisages God as the true object of our happiness, which the redeemed experience as members of the city of God.

The reward of virtue will be God himself, Who gives virtue, and Who has promised Himself to us, than Whom nothing is better or greater. . . . God will be the end of our desires. He will be seen without end, loved without stint, praised without weariness. And this duty, this affection, this employment, will, like eternal life itself, be common to all.⁹¹

Why do not all people realize the happiness for which they are created? The problem originates with us. For Augustine, sin, as pride, characterizes our restless condition as human beings—mankind turned in on itself (*homo curvatus in se*)—which Augustine’s own odyssey dramatizes as a self misdirected in regard to this world.⁹² Elsewhere, he casts our estrangement from God and our moral problem as being due to a “perversity of will twisted away from the highest substance, you O God, towards inferior things”⁹³ Burnaby makes clear that sin was both a “failure

⁸⁸ Babcock, “*Cupiditas* and *Caritas*,” 41. It should not be deduced from this that God is left as some kind of “Pascal wager”; the best bet after analyzing all other options.

⁸⁹ Augustine, *The Moral of the Catholic Church*, 1.6.10; Augustine, *Confessions*, 10.22.32.

⁹⁰ Burt, *Friendship and Society*, 38. Cf. Augustine, *The Morals of the Catholic Church*, 1.3.4.

⁹¹ Augustine, *City of God*, 22.30.

⁹² Augustine, *Confessions*, 1.18.28; 2.10.18; 10.33.50.

⁹³ Augustine, *Confessions*, 7.16.22.

to love God” and “the inevitable transference of love to objects which, though good because God’s creatures, are goods less than the highest.”⁹⁴ That is, sin as a violation of God’s moral design separates us from the highest good. Since our wills are corrupted, humans require a physician to heal this brokenness and God is the only one who can remedy this brokenness with his own gift of love.⁹⁵ By faith through Christ Jesus, the true Mediator,⁹⁶ Augustine was born from above and freed from his “burden of misery,” and hence, he was able to walk the road to happiness ordered now by God’s love. Let us examine his basic structure of love.

Love: Ordered and Disordered

Augustine’s theory of love assumes a complex Greek metaphysic. That is, there is a hierarchical cosmic ordering for all the beings of this world, with each being’s fulfillment found in its proper end, *telos*.⁹⁷ God rules by imposing his order on nature.⁹⁸ Because this dynamic is rooted in the nature of things, the “motion” or “weight” of our human love, according to Augustine, carries our quest for happiness to objects that we believe will bear the load.⁹⁹ Augustine draws an analogy between the pull or direction of human love and material bodies:

For the weight of bodies is, as it were, their love, whether they are carried downwards by gravity or upwards by their lightness. For the body is carried by its weight wherever it is carried, just as the soul is carried by its love.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁴ Burnaby, *Amor Dei*, 185.

⁹⁵ John Rist, *Augustine: Ancient Thought Baptized* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 180.

⁹⁶ Augustine, *Confessions*, 9.4.11; 10.42.67-10.43.68.

⁹⁷ O’Donovan, *The Westminster Dictionary*, 47; R. A. Markus, “Augustine,” in *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, vol.1, ed. Paul Edwards (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1967), 198-207; John Rist, *Augustine*, 148-202.

⁹⁸ Etienne Gilson, *The Christian Philosophy of Saint Augustine*, 132.

⁹⁹ Augustine, *Confessions*, 13.9.10; Burt, *Friendship and Society*, 36, 47.

¹⁰⁰ Augustine, *City of God*, 11.28.

Therefore, as referenced above, the motion of our love should be properly related to or oriented toward mankind's ultimate end, union with the eternal God.¹⁰¹ But because of the reality of Genesis 3, we principally exchange God's love and delight for creaturely loves which leaves us alienated. Augustine makes his classic distinction between these two loves, which qualify the inhabitants of the two cities, in the *City of God*. *Caritas* is the rightly ordered love with the accompanying actions that are deemed moral (true virtue), whereas *cupiditas* connotes idolatry as disordered love or immoral actions (vice).¹⁰² Augustine contrasts sharply the qualitative marks of these loves which radically divide all of humanity in the following way:

What I mean by charity or love is any urge of the spirit to find joy in God for his own sake, and in oneself and one's neighbor for God's sake; by cupidity or greed any impulse of the spirit to find joy in oneself and one's neighbor, and in any kind of bodily thing at all, not for God's sake.¹⁰³

Therefore, Augustine grounds love in God and points it toward him, who is the ultimate reference for meaning. So our human predicament lies not so much in what we love (for creation is affirmed as good by virtue of its good Creator) but in what manner or direction we love something.¹⁰⁴ Again, Augustine deftly writes that "the two cities have been formed by two loves: the earthly by the love of self, even to the contempt of God; the heavenly by the love of God, even to the contempt of self."¹⁰⁵

¹⁰¹ Babcock, "Cupiditas and Caritas," 46-47; Burt, *Friendship and Society*, 47.

¹⁰² Babcock, "Cupiditas and Caritas," 45-49; Burt, *Friendship and Society*, 47, 62; Augustine, *City of God*, 15.22.

¹⁰³ Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine*, 3.10.16.

¹⁰⁴ Augustine follows the biblical plot-line in his theological reflection concerning mankind's goodness which depends on God as "the Supreme Good." (*City of God*, 14.5; 14.26); cf. Burt, *Friendship and Society*, 40-41.

¹⁰⁵ Augustine, *City of God*, 14.28.

Thus, a good action is ordered by the right love because its aim is God, respecting the integrity of his ordered reality.¹⁰⁶

Goods: Proper “Use” and “Enjoyment”

Augustine’s hierarchical (top-down) ordering of values provides him with a method of sorts to know “what objects or states of affairs are to be considered good (or evil), and to [know] how various goods (or evils) are to be ranked in relation to each other.”¹⁰⁷ In other words, Augustine’s theocentric vision of the good life permits him to grade the diversity of goods that regularly present themselves to a moral agent in an ethically complex world--a world that for him was being shaken both intellectually and socially as the Roman Empire was attacked by barbarians. At least on a macro-level, William Schweiker argues that this kind of value theory (in terms of this feature of higher and lower levels) for a Christian ethic is significant “because it understands questions of faith to be basic to human existence. Faith is about what one trusts in and is loyal to in all actions and relations.”¹⁰⁸ Augustine’s moral vision in general specifies which goods a person ought to promote because his commitment to God (the higher level) gives meaning and coherence as a framework for how to integrate earthly goods (the lower level) with the other goods.

How should a Christian regard his relationship with the world? Augustine addresses this relationship, a specific distinction and pairing of words (*uti* and *frui*), in numerous places in his writings. In the text cited below, Augustine defends this justification--that is, how to distinguish between the created goods and the uncreated

¹⁰⁶ Burt, *Friendship and Society*, 40.

¹⁰⁷ Frederick S. Carney, *The Ethics of Augustine*, 34.

¹⁰⁸ William Schweiker, *Responsibility and Christian Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge Press, 1995), 115. Schweiker does not reference Augustine per se; however, this general classification resonates with Augustine’s moral philosophy.

good--based on valuing all goods for the sake of the highest good. The ultimate good is meant to be enjoyed because it is an end itself. In *Christian Doctrine*, Augustine writes from the context of theologically and philosophically defending his method of exegesis, hermeneutical theory. He differentiates between signs and things (1.3.3) as a prelude to the ethical significance (1.22.20-1.34.38) of how Christians ought to relate in this world.

There are some things, then, which are to be enjoyed, others which are to be used, others still which enjoy and use. Those things which are objects of enjoyment make us happy. Those things which are objects of use assist, and (so to speak) support us in our efforts after happiness, so that we can attain the things that make us happy and rest in them. We ourselves, again, who enjoy and use these things, being placed among both kinds of objects, if we set ourselves to enjoy those which we ought to use, are hindered in our course, and sometimes even led away from it; so that, getting entangled in the love of lower gratifications, we lag behind in, or even altogether turn back from, the pursuit of the real and proper objects of enjoyment.¹⁰⁹

For Augustine, everything falls into two classes: those (goods) we are meant to enjoy, which make us happy, and those (goods) we are meant to use, which “assist” our path to happiness.¹¹⁰ Since God is the only good we value for its own sake, all other goods “must hold a subordinate position.”¹¹¹ Enjoyment (*frui*) is the “attitude we entertain towards things we value for themselves, and ‘use’ (*uti*), the attitude we entertain towards things we value for the sake of something else.”¹¹² As discussed above, the aim of our desires dynamically drives what we love and how we love, thus

¹⁰⁹ Augustine, *Christian Doctrine*, 1.3.3.

¹¹⁰ My understanding of this feature of Augustine’s thought and later exploration of how signs and things apply to bodily performances like sport has been aided by James K. A. Smith, *Speech and Theology* (London: Routledge, 2002), 120-50; cf. Burt, *Friendship and Society*, 45.

¹¹¹ Burt, *Friendship and Society*, 45.

¹¹² R. A. Markus, *Saeculum*, 67; cf. *De div. qu. LXXXIII*, 30. According to Canning, Augustine’s use of this double concept is extensively discussed first in *Eighty-Three Different Questions*, prior to *Christian Doctrine*.

manifesting whether we are enjoying God and properly referring¹¹³ all other loves to him. Does this mean that if everything else is subordinate, then in reality we simply “use” it for God’s sake?

At first glance, this hierarchy of loves contradicts what Immanuel Kant spells out in his second formulation of the categorical imperative. Kant articulates this aspect of the categorical imperative as thus: “Act in such a way that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of another, always at the same time as an end and never simply as a means.”¹¹⁴ Because human beings are “ends in themselves,” they possess intrinsic worth and value, which prohibits us from using them simply as means for our good or predetermined end.

What if a sportsperson is an object of *uti*? An arguably crude reading of Augustine potentially justifies a number of harmful actions for the sake of one’s own good. Let us assume for the sake of argument that another contestant is a means to my good. What is at stake for the Christian tradition?

First, this use-value tears asunder the love commandment because how a Christian relates to the opponent is no longer based on what is good for the opponents’ sake. If this becomes the starting point, then what prevents a category of actions that are contrary to Christian *agape*? I am only a few steps away from justifying acts of violence and aggression, even hating the opponent, because their value is subject to my good. The “Thou” impedes the forward progress of the “I,” so why not reduce them to a status of less than a person? The warlike rhetoric of annihilation that we are sometimes inclined to use acts as a form or arousal or motivation—it allows us to

¹¹³ Augustine, *Christian Doctrine*, 1.4.4.

¹¹⁴ Immanuel Kant, *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. James W. Ellington, 3rd ed. (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing, [1785] 1993), 36.

objectify the opponent as the enemy. What we as soldier-athletes value is more of a military-style victory (might makes right) rather than a mutual moral quest for fair play and respect for human relationships.

Second, a corollary to the first, is the value of teammates within this perspective. When I hold this perspective, instead of valuing the good of my teammate, I base our relationship on usefulness. According to Aristotle, this species of friendship is built on what good or gain each person will obtain from each other. “Thus, friends who have been brought together by a feeling that they will profit by their association do not love one another for personal qualities, but only so far as they are useful to one another.”¹¹⁵ For example, the proliferation of trades and free agency make it easy for some people to leave teammates behind because they are not useful as other people could be.

Third, I am left with a competitive ethic that stresses survival at all costs, not only at the expense of my opponent and teammate, but also at my own body’s use-value. Taking performance-enhancing drugs, playing through pain and injury (and assuming serious risks to body and mind), creating unhealthy eating habits (as seen in some female gymnasts), following extreme training regimens (such as those used by “endurathon” athletes), and drastically reducing body weight (as practiced by some wrestlers), exemplify this use-value ethic.

Fourth, how do I account for the use of words and gestures that display intent to harm? The practice and ritual of “trash” talking, along with other purposeful intimidation (e.g., psychological antics like showboating/ strutting, or trying to take an opponent out), would appear alien and inane without this use-value because these

¹¹⁵Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 8.3 (1157a15-16).

practices are unnecessary for sport/games to exist or flourish. Moreover, the losers are belittled and booed (praise is withheld), given (at times) extreme workouts as punishment for their failure to win, and inflicted with negative reinforcement, thus ritualizing the failure to meet this use-value ethic.

This sport-ethic dissolves both fair play and the friendships belonging to competition. However, it also inverts Augustine's ethic by giving too much "weight" to these earthly goods. It implies that, by doing such acts, a person puts his "rest" or reference in some earthly good to satisfy his desire for happiness (winning) instead of in God. I address some important aspects of this pathology in my final chapter. But this explanation still does not straightforwardly answer whether Augustine's ethic validates "use" because God is at the top of the ladder of being, properly ordering all "uses" toward Him. Because this concept of use performs a significant role in the development of Augustine's ethic, let us clarify Augustine's meaning of *uti* and *frui*.¹¹⁶

First, Augustine indicates that our love of God does not preclude our love of created goods. God's love is the source and means for how we lovingly relate to each other.

This word is conceived in love of either the creature or the creator, that is of changeable nature or unchangeable truth; which means either in covetousness or in charity. Not that the creature is not to be loved, but if that love is related to the creator it will no longer be covetousness but charity. It is only covetousness when the creature is loved on its own account. In this case, it does not help you in your use of it, but corrupts you in your enjoyment of it. Now a creature can either be on a par with us or lower than us; the lower creature should be used to bring us to God, the creature on a par should be enjoyed, but in God. Just as you ought to enjoy yourself not in yourself but in him who made you, so too with the one whom you love as yourself. Let us then enjoy both ourselves and our

¹¹⁶ See Johannes Van Oort, *Jerusalem and Babylon* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1991), 142-45.

brothers in the Lord, and from that level let us not dare to lower ourselves down even to our own, and so slacken off in a downward direction.¹¹⁷

Burnaby charitably grants maturation to Augustine's theological development, not least to this word pairing. The key to the above passage is to see the value of the means (*uti*) in reference or relation to the Creator, for "the distinction of *uti* and *frui* is merged in the 'order of love'."¹¹⁸

Second, the whole range of temporal, sportive goods is good based on their created goodness, which closes any chance of anything (other than God himself) possessing value independent of God.¹¹⁹ Subsequently, when talking about the love of another person, this love too depends on God's value. However, this does not mean that we love and value sensible objects in the same way that we do the love of neighbor. Hence, as noted by others,¹²⁰ Augustine seeks to describe how we should properly relate to our neighbor, loving her. In *True Religion* (47.91), *uti* was used in common parlance for how to treat others: "a standard Latin locution—found also in earlier English, e.g., 'He used him well'—indicating how people are to be treated; the notion of 'exploitation' is not to be read into it."¹²¹

Third, in *Christian Doctrine* (Book 1), Augustine clearly states that we should love our neighbor, "For we are commanded to love one another."¹²² Yet, the dilemma is in what way to love: for use or for enjoyment. When compared to God

¹¹⁷ Augustine, *On the Trinity*, 9.13; Smith, *Speech and Theology*, 122-23.

¹¹⁸ Burnaby, *Amor Dei*, 106. Cf. Raymond Canning, "Uti/Frui in Relation to Love for Neighbour and Love for God," in *The Unity of Love for God and Neighbour in Saint Augustine* (Heverlee-Leuven: Augustinian Historical Institute, 1993), 79-115; Oliver O' Donovan, "Usus and Fruitio in Augustine, De Doctrina Christiana I," *Journal of Theological Studies* 33, no. 2 (1982): 361-97; John Rist, *Augustine*, 159-68.

¹¹⁹ Burnaby, *Amor Dei*, 107; Augustine, *On Holy Trinity*, 9.4.

¹²⁰ O' Donovan, "Usus and Fruitio in Augustine," 376-83; cf. Rist, *Augustine*, 163-64.

¹²¹ Rist, *Augustine*, 163.

¹²² Augustine, *Christian Doctrine*, 1.22.20; cf. Rist, *Augustine*, 164.

(hierarchical ordering in nature), the neighbor is treated below God according to the value conferred on this person by God. That is, the love of neighbor is because of God's sake which means, "If that 'because of God' were not there, we should be treating people as material objects, and if God himself were not there, we should be justified in so doing, for the man would not be made in his image."¹²³ Thus, we should love them for their intrinsic worth; this is a worth conferred on them because they belong to God.¹²⁴

Fourth, in writings after *Christian Doctrine*, Augustine departs from this pronouncement concerning the use of human beings by teaching "that we should enjoy them [people] as related to God."¹²⁵ In the *City of God* (19.13.1-2), Augustine reconciles the neighbor-love with the enjoyment that awaits our appointed end with others who believe in God.¹²⁶ In summary, Vernon Bourke, who utilizes these same texts both to defend and exegete Augustine's thought on this critical topic, says

that all temporal things are provided by divine providence to be used lovingly by us but not with any permanent or exclusive affection. They are not goods-in-themselves, nor are they final ends. They are to be loved because they enable us to find ultimate joy in their divine Source.¹²⁷

¹²³ Rist, *Augustine*, 165.

¹²⁴ Bonnie Kent, "Augustine's Ethics," in *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine*, eds. Eleonore Stump and Norman Kretzmann (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 214.

¹²⁵ Kent, "Augustine's Ethics," 214.

¹²⁶ Rist, *Augustine*, 165; Raymond Canning, "Uti/Frui," in *Augustine through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Allan D. Fitzgerald (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 859-61.

¹²⁷ Vernon J. Bourke, *Joy in Augustine's Ethics* (Villanova, PA: Villanova University Press, 1979), 35.

Reconceptualizing Sport: Toward Christian Moral Reflection on Sport

What are the initial implications that Augustine's moral construct holds for Christian moral reflection on sport? Below are some initial brushstrokes that provide direction for the development of the remaining chapters of this thesis.

All goods derive their value from God as the good Creator. Metaphysical goodness of materiality counters all forms of dualism, whether attributed to Gnosticism or Manichaeism, which historically has crept into Christian investigations of cultural activities through the tendency to devalue or reject bodily activities like sport. Whether in dance, theatre, or the arts in general, dualism has at various times plagued an authentic engagement for evangelical Christians in North America. If Christians analyze sport primarily as a fallen, idolatrous activity, they restrict the scope of the Bible's complete narrative—creation-fall-redemption—and the depth of God's kingdom purposes.¹²⁸ Instead of beginning with an affirmation of humanity and this world from the doctrine of creation, incarnation, and the resurrection, dualism identifies the problem as an inherent feature of our earthly embodied existence. In turn, the religious or spiritual realm is privileged over the profane, earthly realm. Though Augustine might appear ambivalent about accepting the sensible or material world, his more mature reflection undeniably promotes the idea that God as the chief good has created all these things to be good (*Confessions* 7.5). So for the Puritans to reject or waver in their acceptance of sport is fundamentally unsound because there is nothing in principle about sport that is immoral. Equally, when Muscular Christianity and sport parachurch ministries turn toward sport for what it can produce (use-value), i.e., good character or converts,

¹²⁸ See Al Wolters, *Creation Regained* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1985), for this same argument.

they fail to provide a theological rationale that the goodness of creation posits God's acceptance of embodied activities like sport. This use-value rationale also perpetuates and contributes to the existing problem of instrumentalism in our consumer culture; capitalistic market forces often ride on this extrinsic value. I return to dualism and its problems for modern muscular Christianity in chapter four. I work with Bonhoeffer's ethical vision to critique and repair this problem of dualism.

If sport were intrinsically idolatrous, the Christian tradition would be forced to avoid this cultural activity. As implied above, sport is not intrinsically evil; therefore, sport is not evil in principle. However, as Tertullian and Augustine have described, moral problems have abounded in sport, so where does the problem lie? Augustine's construct examines the rightness and wrongness of action according to the intention of the will or the direction of the love. In the *Confessions*, Augustine states that iniquity is due to the "perversion of the will, turned aside from Thee, O God, the Supreme...."¹²⁹ In the Augustinian tradition, the direction of love helps to differentiate between the ontology or structure of something and the ethical direction, or how we relate to external goods or other people. A good will is evident in its service of God. Moreover, Allen Guttmann insightfully invokes this structure and direction construct in his own assessment of modern sport when he muses that "the crux of the matter for us is whether the abuses represent the distortion of modern sports or the very essence of the phenomenon. Are sports a modern curse?"¹³⁰

For the Christian tradition, sport essentially is not bad. However, as with any other action, sport can be misused. Thus, if we value sport in such a way that we love

¹²⁹ Augustine, *Confessions*, 7.16.22.

¹³⁰ Guttmann, *From Ritual to Record*, 75.

others and the goods of the game toward God, it is morally praiseworthy. But if we love sport as an ultimate end, it is morally blameworthy—it is idolatry. Therefore, Tertullian and Augustine correctly identified the immoral effects (ethical direction) of the spectacles, but problems arise with Tertullian’s conflation of ontology with ethics. That is, Tertullian’s absolute prohibition traces the problem to the nature of sport, which is an ontological distinction. To make this error commits Tertullian to wrongfully reject certain spheres of cultural activity. For Tertullian to do this is wrong because the substance of something is good by virtue of its metaphysical goodness, but the ethical direction of the structure (i.e. sport as an activity) determines if an action is good and right.

Augustine’s view that our bodies are structurally good opens a way to more completely realize other goods that are intimately connected to this particular aspect of human activity. That is, if sport operates in the Christian tradition as a form of play and human excellence (basic goods) among other goods specific to this practice, then it is a determinative feature of our humanity, since we are embodied selves who play and excel. Basic goods are important because the value of sports inheres in the activity itself as a capability and function of our humanity that is created by God. As a basic good then, sport is not valued primarily as a means to an end—education, evangelism, health, etc.—but because it constitutes what it means to be a human being. To clarify, as a basic value, I mean that sport (as play and a human excellence) is an intrinsic good: it “is considered to be desirable for its own sake...” not for some extrinsic value (instrumental worth) that playing produces or results in, such as fame, wealth and power.¹³¹ Furthermore, the Christian tradition proscribes sport institutions

¹³¹ John Finnis, *Natural Law and Natural Rights* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 62.

and sponsors who diminish the quality and violate the integrity of play by exploiting and manipulating others for the sake of their own ends and economic interests.

Though Augustine did not use the same kind of language as basic good theorists, it is not reaching too far to see sport as a form of play and excellence as a good his moral philosophy could defend—even if his education disparaged it—particularly on his best anti-Manichean days.

My construal of sport as a basic good is an important concept that I borrow from the natural law tradition—particularly, John Finnis and Germain Grisez, who argue for such basic goods as work, family, life, marriage, friendship, beauty, knowledge and play.¹³² Sport activities fulfill significant substantive goods of our humanity. These goods are attractive because who we are as human beings reaches toward them, recognizing that they are marks of a flourishing human being.¹³³ In chapter three, I follow the trajectory of sport as an ontic-embodied good and develop it specific to John Paul II's sport ethic. For a Christian ethic, sport as an ontic-embodied good is important in lieu of others like Paul Weiss, whose eschatology instrumentalizes embodied pursuits such as sport.

Not only does this basic good concept serve to repair the use-value ethic precipitated by the Puritans and morphed toward different ends by the YMCA and sport ministries, but it also critiques and corrects the androcentrism of sport that is associated with the Greek ideal and adopted by Muscular Christianity. For Christians, this ideal was developed for the sake of manly strengths and virtue,

¹³² See Germain Grisez, *The Way of the Lord: Christian Moral Principles*, vol.1 (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1983); Germain Grisez, *The Way of the Lord: Living a Christian Life*, vol.2 (Quincy, IL: Franciscan Herald Press, 1993); Martha C. Nussbaum, *Women and Human Development: The Capabilities Approach* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), also refers to play as one of the defining capabilities and functions of a truly, human life.

¹³³ Grisez, *Christian Moral Principles*, 115-40.

blending both piety and manhood. However, sport as a form of play and human excellence is intrinsic to women also, so as co-equals they share in these goods for their own personal and meaningful fulfillment. Consequently, if sport is a good that all people share as an aspect of their humanity, then its development and realization includes all people, all races, and all socio-economic strata. That means sport as a basic good does not exclude the “lower-class” associations, fitting only for the British gentleman.¹³⁴

Augustine’s moral vision has believers share and pursue the goods common to sport with everyone else because sport is an admixture of the two cities and loves, even though the full human good awaits eschatological fulfillment in the future rule and reign of God.¹³⁵ Sport as a “network of human interaction” embodies such goods as play, excellence, friendship, discipline, mastery of skills, health, and cooperation. A Christian ethic upholds these as temporal common goods that manifest imperfectly the ultimate good. In the fifth and final chapter, we see that Bonhoeffer’s ultimate and penultimate paradigm elucidates how these goods of the natural life participate right now, even if not completely, in Christ incarnate, crucified and resurrected—Christ-reality. Furthermore, Augustine’s moral vision entails that the spoiling of these common goods, according to the Christian tradition, is the result of both personal actions—disordered loves privately possessing goods for one’s own sake (i.e., love of glory, honor, and power)—and system injustices (e.g, institutional corruption and domination of the common good), which produce alienation and

¹³⁴ Eric Dunning and K. Sheard, *Barbarians, Gentlemen and Players: A Sociological Study of the Development of Rugby Football* (Oxford: Martin Robertson, 1979), 86.

¹³⁵ See David Hollenbach, *The Common Good and Christian Ethics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 124-25.

exploitation. Both personal actions and system injustices impede us from properly sharing the common goods intrinsic to sport. Practically speaking, a Christian ethic seeks to create regulations to support equal access and opportunity for contestants and to challenge inequalities that arise from technological and economic inequities between teams and nations. Each of these is an example of justice and harmony, which are necessary to order sport toward God. In summary, Augustine's order of love prescribes that Christians take this domain of civic life seriously by contributing to the betterment of the common good of sport so neighborly love can properly relate it to God.

Since Christians experience ultimate happiness and meaning by enjoying God (*frui Deo*), the desires and pleasures that traverse the experience of sport can assist us on our way to happiness. The multiple benefits associated with sport, such as personal renewal, joy, release, and pleasure, are not ends in themselves; we must remind ourselves lest we again confuse the *frui* and *uti* distinction. Augustine implies two further points for sport in this distinction. First, (as implied above), if I as a contestant find my motivation primarily from attaining extrinsic goods, then my motivation disrupts the fidelity to sports by plundering the intrinsic goods. This motivation or preference is instrumental in nature. Extrinsic goods like rewards or money prostitute sport and constrict the excellences of the activity itself. Second, not only is the integrity of the activity at stake, but also the integrity of a person's moral identity. That is, instead of functioning as a pointer to God, sport reverses the direction by referring to itself, which is idolatry. Idolatry constricts the fullness of God's image because contestants seek happiness in something less than God. Hence, the degradation is two-fold: (1) It affects the state of affairs for all those involved in

the social practice of sport, and (2) The identity of the moral agent is affected through and beyond the sport experience. I follow this degradation more closely in the final chapter.

Since Augustine's theological construct properly values physicality and embodiment, sport is a mode of being in the world that participates in the good "gifts" that Creator God gives for cultural making activities like sport. Our participation in sport is an appropriate use of the gift of our hands and bodies, which is meant to be developed as part of the God-given mandate in Genesis 1-2. God's directive to "fill the earth" involves the making of culture. Though the original context was given to Adam and Eve in a garden environment, a Christian ethic interprets this mandate as containing in seminal form all future human *poiesis* and cultural patterns, such as art, athletics, technology, and so on.¹³⁶ Furthermore, if this mandate is granted, then sport receives its meaning as an aspect of the good created order that depends on God. Sport is not an autonomous zone disconnected from God's rule, nor does it have meaning in and of itself. Sport as a cultural activity derives its value from its position as a creation of man the player and maker. What does this imply?

First, a Christian ethic engages sport as an activity under God's authority and control. If not, then sport takes on the meaning and value of whoever is using it. I have addressed this idea above in a number of points, and I return to it in detail in chapters three to five, specifically concerning how the gospel reconfigures sport.

¹³⁶ Richard Mouw, "Foreword," in *The Calvinistic Concept of Culture*, Henry R. Van Til (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001), xiii.

Second, these gifts are not simply basic goods that constitute our humanity but “in principle it means God reveals himself in the sensible or material.”¹³⁷ For a Christian ethic, our participation in sport as a sensible mode is an embodied form of worship.¹³⁸ Sport then must be appreciated as a part of the “all” when Paul doxologically declares, “For from him and through him and to him are all things.”¹³⁹ In the third chapter, John Paul II becomes an important interlocutor on this point of embodiment as a sign and gift and on what difference it makes for a Christian ethic and sport.

Third, if sport possesses a doxological character, this character subverts the ancient Greek ideal of *mens sana in corpore sano*. Contrary to the Greeks and the “muscular Christian” version, the chief aim is not “a sound mind in a sound body,” for that cultural aspiration deifies the perfecting of man (literally, the male gender) as the end to be obtained from sport. However, even in its fallen misdirection the envisioned end attests to a perspective that attempts to reach beyond our finitude and toward the divine. So, to apply Augustine’s distinction between a “sign” and a “thing”,¹⁴⁰ sport as a thing or part of the world should function as a sign that points to God as the source and meaning rather than referring to itself as an idol.¹⁴¹ In other words, a Christian sportsperson’s bodily performances should spiritually and ethically direct sport in service and praise to God, which is an alternative end. Thus,

¹³⁷ James K. A. Smith, *Introducing Radical Orthodoxy: Mapping a Post-Secular Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004), 77.

¹³⁸ Smith, *Introducing Radical Orthodoxy*, 77. Smith elucidates the main themes of the Radical Orthodoxy movement which illustrate generally how embodied forms like sport become “iconic indicators”.

¹³⁹ Romans 11:36 (RSV).

¹⁴⁰ Augustine, *Christian Doctrine*, 1.2.2; 1.4.4.

¹⁴¹ Smith, *Speech and Theology*, 121-24.

instead of taking the “idol” direction that Tertullian credited to ancient Roman sports, we now restore this being-in-the-world as an icon for worship. Smith corroborates that Augustine’s creational ontology attests to “the integrity of creation as the theatre of the Creator’s glory” so that “this zone of immanence is where transcendence plays itself out, unfolding itself in a way that is staged by the Creator.”¹⁴² Therefore, since sport is sacramentally valued because of creation and re-affirmed in the incarnation,¹⁴³ it consecrates this earthly penultimate existence for Christian believers. So instead of harboring the cupidity that inclined Alypius to watch the games (denigrating what is structurally good about sport) in the *Confessions*, a Christian player redeems her passion for sport and games with *ordo amoris* so her play might arouse other players’ and spectators’ desires and purposes toward God. Augustine iterates,

... we have to use this world, not enjoy it, so that we may behold the invisible things of God, brought to our knowledge through the things that have been made (Rom 1:20); that is, so that we may proceed from temporal and bodily things to grasp those that are eternal and spiritual.¹⁴⁴

Fourth, this reconnection with God heals what the secularization of sport tore asunder from ancient Roman. As mentioned earlier, Guttmann contends that, from its conception in ancient Greece, sport had a religious character and purpose, but beginning with imperial Rome, the religious purpose was gradually replaced by multiple secular purposes. Contrary to these instrumental purposes in ancient Rome (and for that matter even the false religious purposes in ancient Greece), a Christian ethic grounds sport in and points it back to God. If all life receives meaning based on

¹⁴² Smith, *Introducing Radical Orthodoxy*, 222-23; Smith, *Speech and Theology*, 122-24.

¹⁴³ Smith, *Introducing Radical Orthodoxy*, 223.

¹⁴⁴ Augustine, *Christian Doctrine*, 1.4.4.

where it stands metaphysically with God as His creation, then everything is sacred or religious. This final point takes this thesis in a direction that not only contests modern muscular Christianity in North America, but that also challenges and clarifies the most recent thesis and renewal efforts by Shirl Hoffman.

Does this mean that religion conscripts sport instrumentally for its end? If so, we return to where we started either with idealism vitiating this sphere of life (attributed to Augustine) or with some institution like religion only valuing this activity because of its use-value. For this thesis, in the Augustinian tradition, all human beings have a sense of the Divine, a seed of religion, that constitutes their humanity.¹⁴⁵ This religious structure is not confined to any one sphere of life, nor is it limited to religious rituals or creeds, for it cuts through all of our creaturely existence. For Augustine, true religion—properly ordered love--designates the worshiper or Christian.¹⁴⁶ Therefore, those who play sport, as those who participate in all cultural activities, are religiously oriented; however, the importance of the matter again consists of whether this activity is directed toward or away from God. So God is “in” sport, and the religious structure of our humanity ineradicably pervades all of sport. Hence, God is not like some human institution, externally valuing sport for whatever end He deems praiseworthy. Rather, because he gifts and creates the very people who play sport, then ontologically He has already determined that sport should be directed toward Him for its true value.

Finally, Augustine’s teleology raises important issues related to the actual goods, such as sportive excellence, in regard to the practice of sport. If Augustine’s axiology

¹⁴⁵ John Calvin, *Institutes*, 1.3; cf. Smith, *Introducing Radical Orthodoxy*, 108-116.

¹⁴⁶ Augustine, *On True Religion*, 10.18-11.21; Smith, *Introducing Radical Orthodoxy*, 114-15.

is not idealistic, then how should the different characteristics of modern sport be construed within a Christian ethic? Because Augustine's ethic on these specific elements of modern sport is speculative and relatively thin in regards to addressing and describing the thickness—nature and goals—of this sport practice, I turn to Paul Weiss an important proponent of bodily excellence in modern sport.

In a manner similar to a Christian ethic, Paul Weiss appreciates that sport teems with attractions or desires, such as the basic good of excellence, that, if properly appraised, can lead to personal fulfillment in and through sport. In the Christian tradition, this quest or pursuit of excellence finds its true end in the divine. This quest is undeniably true of all cultural activities. Human aspirations or loves, even in sport, are the creative impulse in personal and social life, as well as the deep roots of human conflict.¹⁴⁷ What would it look like to think about sport in terms of human aspiration and the objective satisfaction or fulfillment of this quest in and through sport? Augustine can provide some direction, but he was not responding to modern sport. How are we to construe sport today in relation to this important element that Paul Weiss singles out as the primary good of sport?

Paul Weiss's inquiry aims to relate his philosophical outlook to sportive life. In the next chapter, Paul Weiss is my primary interlocutor and foil. He constructs a philosophy of sport that applies ideals from ancient Greece to today. Weiss's Greek ideals and philosophical categories function as heuristic tools because many issues of modern sport are connected in certain ways to the ancient Greek ideals. Augustine simply did not know modern sport, nor was he responding even to Greek sports, so

¹⁴⁷ William Schweiker, *Responsibility and Christian Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 48-49.

Weiss functions as a historical and philosophical bridge to thicken our description of modern sport, to refine this thesis's analysis of some important categories inherent to modern sport, and to focus on what this phenomenon entails for a Christian ethic today. Weiss's retrieval of these classical ideals for understanding contemporary sport realities in some ways mirrors MacIntyre's method for addressing contemporary moral theories, although Weiss wrote fifteen years earlier. Like MacIntyre in general, Weiss is a helpful connection between Greek virtue and modern sport. In short, Weiss adumbrates important categories that a theologico-ethical outlook needs to address.¹⁴⁸ His project has formed a foundation for many in the field of sport ethics, representing one of the major ethical theories in sport today. Just as other philosophers of sport got their start with Weiss, I will cut my teeth on some of the issues Weiss raises that I directly respond to in chapter three with John Paul II.

¹⁴⁸ Daniel A. Dombrowski, *Contemporary Athletics and Ancient Greek Ideals* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2009).

CHAPTER TWO
PURSUIT OF EXCELLENCE: PAUL WEISS'S PHILOSOPHICAL INQUIRY
OF SPORT

In this chapter, I consider one of the first serious philosophical works by a trained philosopher on modern sport in America. In 1969, Paul Weiss wrote *Sport: A Philosophical Inquiry*. This work is a philosophical examination of sport, the human activity that had received little to no examination up to that point. Paul Weiss recognized sport as a universal occupation of men, but one that lacks a philosophical treatise devoted to it in the Western world of philosophy. For example, he notes the lack of attention to sport from the Greek philosophers. After reviewing some of the reasons for their neglect, he asserts that “sports have not been taken seriously enough as a source or instance of large truths or first principles.”¹ If this was true for philosophy almost forty years ago, it is equally true, as I contend in my introduction, for evangelical theologians today in North America.

Like Socrates, Weiss sets out to examine the unexamined.² As far as his method, he makes it clear that his task begins with stock concepts or principles from the discipline of philosophy (e.g., metaphysics, epistemology, axiology, ethics, etc.) that

¹ Paul Weiss, *Sport: A Philosophic Inquiry* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University, 1969), 8.

² Weiss states that sport is a subject for which humans are serious about and for which philosophical reflection is worthy. His purpose is to illuminate “instances of general principle” which may have been hidden or neglected (Paul Weiss, “Reply to Daniel A. Dombrowski” in *The Philosophy of Paul Weiss*, ed. Lewis Edwin Hahn (Chicago: Open Court, 1995), 656; Daniel A. Dombrowski, *Contemporary Athletics and Ancient Greek Ideals* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2009), 37-39.).

function as heuristic tools for analyzing and speculating about sport. Weiss is a philosopher looking at sport as his subject matter. He believes that any inquiry of a particular activity shares a family of concepts that are “pertinent to other fields—indeed, to the whole of things and knowledge.”³ Thus, the result of this work is not a philosophy of sport. He is not trying to generate a philosophy belonging exclusively to sport as his object of scrutiny, although he respects sport as a unique phenomenon. Rather, it is “a work in philosophy, and not in sport. It is a work in philosophy just as a philosophy of history or a philosophy of art is a work in philosophy and not in history or in art.”⁴ Dombrowski adds that, in particular, Weiss makes philosophical sense of sport by drawing primarily from ancient Greek philosophers and their ideals, such as *arête*, *sophrosyne*, *paidia*, *kalakogathia*, *askesis*, *eudaemonia*, *telos* and *dynamis*.⁵ That being said, Weiss’s philosophy of sport was a forerunner for many in sports ethics who claim that “sport can be counted as one among many elements in human flourishing and in a good life.”⁶ This teleological ethic judges the morality of an action based on whether it fulfills or realizes certain ideals—both general and sport-specific values and norms⁷—that fit the moral development of the sport performer.⁸

³ Paul Weiss, *Sport*, viii.

⁴ Weiss, *Sport*, viii. See also, Randolph Feezell, “Sport, Pursuit of Bodily Excellence or Play? An Examination of Paul Weiss’s Account of Sport,” *The Modern Schoolman* 58 (May 1981): 257-270.

⁵ Dombrowski, *Contemporary Athletics and Ancient Greek Ideals*, 38-39. Cf. Daniel A. Dombrowski, “Weiss, Sport and the Greek Ideal,” in *The Philosophy of Paul Weiss*, ed. Lewis Edwin Hahn (Chicago: Open Court, 1995), 637-654.

⁶ Sigmund Loland, “Normative Theories of Sport: A Critical Review,” *Journal of the Philosophy of Sport* 3, no. 2 (2004): 116.

⁷ Loland, “Normative Theories of Sport,” 116; Robert L. Simon, *Fair Play: The Ethics of Sport* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2004). Another approach to this theory adds that games in general possess certain interests like playing for the good of the game; therefore, acts like cheating run counter to what is in the best interest of the game itself which as an athlete you adopt when you choose to

My primary objective in this chapter is to expound on Weiss's argument for sport as the pursuit of excellence (*arete*). I believe his philosophical outlook and themes serve my thesis well because they provide me with a respected, influential philosopher and interlocutor whom I can argue both with and against as he adumbrates important categories that a theologico-ethical outlook needs to address. His outlook, which stresses dimensions of reality, helps us understand the phenomenon of sport. I largely reserve my critique, other than making some general criticisms and raising some important issues that must be addressed, until the next chapter. I am using Weiss's thoughts to delineate many of the important issues that a Christian ethic must address, but I do not intend to address all of them. In the next chapter, I deal primarily with John Paul II's personalist ethic to broadly critique Weiss's ethic and to examine what a Christian ethic adds to this moral discourse.

Paul Weiss: An Ethic for Excellence

Teleological Foundation for Sport: Aristotelian and Platonic Expressions

In his inquiry, the phenomenon of sport is almost a universal interest on the level of fact, Weiss asks, "Why are so many so deeply involved, so caught up emotionally in athletic events?"⁹ Weiss contends that, as an individual, the "athlete in action" (chapter 8) meaningfully carries out his role and tests his attributes of speed, endurance, strength, coordination, and accuracy with and against others because he is

contest with others (Robert Butcher and Angela Schneider, "Fair Play as Respect for the Game," *Journal of the Philosophy of Sport* 25, no. 1 (1998): 1-22.).

⁸ Because many share this method of moral reasoning, it should be noted that for some it really is a mixed theory that includes norms for actions (deontological), the respective duties that contestants have to one another.

⁹ Paul Weiss, *Sport*, 4.

fundamentally concerned with or attracted to excellence.¹⁰ Because others generally seek and appreciate this ideal, Weiss claims this pursuit of excellence “is a truth that will surely hold as long as men compete with one another.”¹¹ A good athlete is a man who fulfills excellently his function per his role in a particular sport at a particular time. If we want to know what an athlete is, according to Weiss, we must understand this concept in relation to a good athlete—“to become excellent in and through the use of a body.”¹² Furthermore, as he pursues excellence, the athlete learns “how he meets various tests, what it is that perfection demands, and what man can bodily do and be.”¹³ For Weiss, we humans appreciate the ideal of excellence as an end value because, “It is what ought to be.”¹⁴ He summarizes this appeal accordingly:

Excellence excites and awes. It pleases and it challenges. We are often delighted by splendid specimens whether they be flowers, beasts or men. A superb performance interests even more because it reveals to us the magnitude of what then can be done. Illustrating perfection, it gives us a measure for whatever else we do.¹⁵

Thus, we see that Weiss’s philosophical starting point is an ethic of excellence.

Weiss discerns, according to his Aristotelian teleology, that there is a certain ordering among a diversity of things, such as flowers, beasts, and men.¹⁶ He observes

¹⁰ Paul Weiss, *Sport*, 14, 17. See Randolph Feezell, *Sport, Play and Ethical Reflection* (Champaign, IL: Illinois University, 2006); cf. Feezell, “Sport, Pursuit of Bodily Excellence or Play? An Examination of Paul Weiss’s Account of Sport,” 257-270. Feezell examines Weiss’s account of sport and insists that a more plausible explanation for why men (and women) seek the good of sport is “based on the classic accounts of play offered by Huizinga and Caillois” (Feezell, *Sport, Play and Ethical Reflection*, 5).

¹¹ Weiss, *Sport*, 14.

¹² Weiss, *Sport*, 36.

¹³ Weiss, *Sport*, 142.

¹⁴ Weiss, *Sport*, 3.

¹⁵ Weiss, *Sport*, 3.

¹⁶ Paul Kuntz identifies in Weiss a cosmos that is law-abiding; there is an ordered-realism detected in the cosmos which gives directional structure to actualities (Paul Kuntz, “Cosmos and Chaos: Weiss’s Systematic Categorization of the Universe,” in *The Philosophy of Paul Weiss*, ed. Lewis Edwin Hahn (Chicago: Open Court, 1995), 117-132.).

these indications of order as instances of excellence that we as rational creatures are able to appreciate.¹⁷ This ordering is natural, for there is a point to their movement; it is in this world that we observe this ordering-to-flourish.¹⁸ I interpret this common ordering as something Weiss believes to be inherent in the very nature of things. Weiss's approach implicitly draws from Aristotle's final cause, and when Aristotle's final cause is applied to sport, a young man as an athlete competes for the sake of bodily excellence, to excel athletically. Since they undertake sport for the sake of this end, bodily excellence—a mastery of the body—is what young men are striving for. Bodily excellence justifies sport, and it is a necessary condition for self-completion. This is Aristotle's telic principle for this cultural activity.¹⁹ It is important to note that this end is given metaphysical priority or value. Sport, like other things, has purpose, and this purpose is not arbitrarily set up, for it appears that Weiss's metaphysic (the nature of a thing) directs this end. Weiss gives due consideration to the object that young men desire in sport (bodily excellence) and that he deems as good because it functions as a referent for other and future performances. Equally, excellence is the end because it is the terminus of a sportive performance. Here Weiss treats ethics as a correlate of metaphysics, which means that purpose (*telos*) is a basis for values, or how we ought to act.

A Christian ethic, in particular that of John Paul II, affirms this discernible order as a natural law that addresses us, and because it exists (for this is the way things

¹⁷ Weiss, *Sport*, 3. Weiss appears to give dignity to mankind and that some kind of hierarchy exists because men possess abilities, like appreciating excellence, which other beings do not. I investigate his metaphysical basis for this dignity more in chapter three.

¹⁸ O'Donovan, *Resurrection and Moral Order*, 31-52. It is quite apparent that I am indebted to Oliver O'Donovan for my theoretical understanding of teleological foundations for sport and how this builds a bridge to my interpretation and application of John Paul II's ethic for sport.

¹⁹ Aristotle, *Physics* II.3 (194b 24ff).

are), it shapes how we ought to act. Moreover, this teleological pattern, as given in and thus, as it confronts humans in the created order, is the proper end that comes from God and returns to God (*exitus et reditus*).²⁰ Each thing's existence is ordered by some larger, further purpose. Not to be directed toward this purpose results in moral disorder, both personally and socially. I made this concept explicit in the last chapter with Augustine. I will build on this idea when I argue for John Paul II's philosophical and theological concerns for sport. However, Weiss does anticipate the axiological significance of a larger purpose in his own exposition.

For Weiss, this ordering is not merely a horizontal ordering. Rather, he argues for some aspect of vertical ordering, presumably to depict a fuller teleology. That is, excellence is ordered to some higher value. I interpret this teleology as Platonic because sportive excellence is ordered to an eternal value. With an Aristotelian teleology, we focus purely on natural ordering; therefore, questions about transcendence lie outside his immanent teleology.²¹ However, Weiss includes a Platonic cosmology to complete his axiology of sport. He asserts that "all men illustrate cosmic truths," and it is when we identify with such ideals as truth, beauty, and goodness that we participate in and become acquainted with the eternal.²² Weiss believes it is through an athlete's body via excellent kinds of performances that she

²⁰ Following the lead of Thomas Aquinas, John Paul II accepts this thesis that the normative order is ultimately based on the metaphysical measure of being (Karol Wojtyła, "On the Metaphysical and Phenomenological Basis of the Moral Norm," in *Person and Community*, trans. Theresa Sandok (New York: Peter Lang, 1993), 75-78.). God is the source and goal of all creation. Aquinas in the *Summa theologiae* adopts the Neoplatonic structure for his major work with all created beings "going forth" (*exitus*) from God the Creator (First Part), returning (*reditus*) to God the Redeemer (Second Part) and it concludes with Christ as the mediator, teacher and example for mankind's return to God (Third Part) (See M.-D. Chenu, *Toward Understanding Saint Thomas*, trans. A. M. Landry and D. Hughes (Chicago: Regnery Co., 1964); Stephen Pope, ed., *The Ethics of Aquinas* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2002)).

²¹ O'Donovan, *Resurrection and Moral Order*, 34.

²² Weiss, *Sport*, 247.

incarnates or instantiates the eternality of the laws that govern the operation of her body.²³ Here Weiss grounds values in a transcendent reality on which the meaning of mankind and excellence depend; these ideals obligate us to pursue excellence.²⁴ It is when an athlete excels, just as it is for the artist, thinker, or religious man, that he epitomizes and articulates for all a true representation of mankind.²⁵ Weiss's Platonism has him describe the athlete in action as one who should exemplify the corresponding form of excellence even if it is partial and distorted. Sport has value in so far as it resembles or participates in the form of excellence.

This vertical ordering proves important for a Christian ethic. This vertical ordering, according to O'Donovan, steps onto theological ground, which John Paul II organizes as the supernatural end that is inseparably related to the natural ordering for such cultural activities as sport. What does this standard of excellence mean in regards to God rather than to Weiss's Platonic form, an abstract impersonal entity?²⁶ As Augustine argued, a personal God is the ultimate reality for a Christian ethic. Therefore, the basis of our obligation comes from God rather than from a metaphysical concept. What does this do to Weiss's claim that bodily excellence is the final cause? How do we relate sport to this ultimate end? Further, is the athlete

²³ Weiss, *Sport*, 247.

²⁴ Weiss, *Sport*, 247-248.

²⁵ Weiss, *Sport*, 16.

²⁶ In fairness, see Weiss's metaphysics below, Weiss makes a vague reference to God which in many of his other works "is a direct or indirect condition for the activity in question" (Robert Cummings Neville, "Paul Weiss's Theology," in *The Philosophy of Paul Weiss*, ed. Lewis Edwin Hahn (Chicago: Open Court, 1995), 390. That said, Weiss's modes of being, of which God is one among the many modes, are complex and have undergone significant changes. Because it is beyond the scope of this thesis to analyze Weiss's entire philosophy and theology, I simply comment that it is understated and underdeveloped with reference to sport and even where it is explicated his god lacks the personal qualities and certainly the incarnation of God in Christ. I am not merely faulting him for this latter failure but drawing attention to the fact that Christ, very God, very God, is essential to a Christian ethic for sport. Both John Paul II and Bonhoeffer's ethic make this explicit and for which I discuss below.

alone the true representation of man? If so, what does this claim imply for Christian doctrine concerning Christ as the true representation of mankind? Does it annul the goods relative to this creational good? Or might the seriousness of this ultimate end properly free an athlete to realize the goods in this non-serious mode of being-in-the-world? John Paul II's transcendental teleology offers us a way forward to answer many of these questions.

Anthropological Foundations: Human Nature and Sport

In his philosophical reflection, Weiss admits that his inquiry is “what is close to the core of man, what he seeks, and what he does.”²⁷ Here Weiss, like Aristotle, includes in his teleology an understanding of the human person, or basic philosophical anthropology. As he examines the different theories that try to account for what is the fundamental attraction to sport, Weiss indicates that we must probe beyond the apparent by getting “to an essential human disposition which achieves a distinctive expression in those who devote themselves to an athletic career.”²⁸ Keith Algozin interprets Weiss's inquiry as plausible because sport does indeed attract people universally, which is a clue that it is a basic tendency reflective of human nature.²⁹ For Weiss, this ordering-to-flourish is intrinsic to the nature of mankind in

²⁷ Weiss, *Sport*, 4. Feezell objects that this “fascination” of the athlete's participation and the spectator's are of the same kind. He thinks these two orders of experience are different like that of an artist who creates an artwork and the viewer “who completes the object by viewing it” (Feezell, “Sport,” 260.).

²⁸ Weiss, *Sport*, 34. Feezell concurs that Weiss's method relates sport to ontology or the nature of man (Feezell, “Sport,” 260.).

²⁹ Keith Algozin, “Man and Sport,” in *Philosophic Inquiry in Sport*, eds., William Morgan and Klaus V. Meier, (Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics, 1988), 184.

an Aristotelian sense.³⁰ Built into mankind is an inherent striving to make ourselves complete, and it is this self-completion that athletics provides: an amiable, ready opportunity for young men to experience their true end.³¹

Weiss's "first principle" affirms that this attraction or desire for excellence uniquely pervades all human activities and that we are moved and inclined toward this good. Athletes aim at the good by nature, so for Weiss, the good life has to do with the athlete's *telos* and its actualization. Excellence demonstrated in sport depicts the virtuous life of an athlete who is pursuing and realizing the good of this art.³² Aristotle writes: "Every art and every inquiry, and similarly every action and human pursuit, is thought to aim at some good; and for this reason the good has rightly been declared to be that to which all things aim."³³ This attraction is recognized not only by the most immediate participants—which for Weiss is primarily young men—but also as an ideal that "interests almost everyone." This very attraction is what Weiss sees as territory for philosophical speculation, for this quest to know and experience excellence has chiefly occupied philosophers in the kinds of matters they interrogate.³⁴ Thus, human nature grounds his value of sport.

³⁰ For a thorough overview of a teleological ethic, assumed throughout this chapter, which draws from some of the best primary sources, see Joseph J. Kotva, Jr., *The Christian Case for Virtue Ethics* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1996).

³¹ Weiss, *Sport*, 35.

³² Elsewhere Weiss claims that "The athlete and craftsman [performing artist] are quite similar" (Cited in Paul Kuntz, "Paul Weiss: What is a Philosophy of Sports?" *Philosophy Today* 20, no.3 (Fall 1976): 172.). Kuntz's essay is very helpful for a synthesis of Weiss's other works that have a direct bearing on his overall philosophy of sport. My organization is much different but with some overlap on a few aspects. In general, I would agree with Kuntz; however, I feel at times his goal of harmony or synthesis failed to let Weiss's own argument in *Sport* to stand where it might not fit neatly with his other philosophical works. In essence, he flattened some important points; especially the role dedication has as a virtue versus discipline in his other works.

³³ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1094a1-3.

³⁴ Weiss, *Sport*, 4. Weiss notes that though philosophy has focused on excellence (*arête*) it oddly neglected the study of sport, for example, Aristotle, along with most ancient philosophers, "kept away from common discourse, common argument, and common practices", less in favour of the popular for

I believe Weiss's elevated view of humankind has him envisage sport as a school or practice for reaching those excellences that complete the athlete. The issue becomes how this school or practice comports with his teleology once it is more critically interpreted. MacIntyre argues that within this "teleological scheme there is a fundamental contrast between man-as-he-happens-to-be and man-as-he-could-be-if-he-realized-his-essential nature."³⁵ Similarly, Weiss interprets the point of sport as an athlete carrying

out to completion one of the types of effort everyone occasionally makes to be or to become an excellent man The excellence that the athlete wants to attain is an excellence greater than that attained before. He wants to do better than he had; he would like to do better than anyone ever did. What he once achieved and what he might now achieve is an excellence relative to some particular period of time and circumstance. At another time and on another occasion, a superior state or performance will perhaps be produced, thereby making clear that man's final limits had not been reached before. This is a truth that will surely hold as long as men compete with one another."³⁶

This perfectionist kind of ethic, i.e., constant improvement to become better, places the emphasis on what we can and should become as human beings in this athletic role; the athlete expresses to all of us "what one might be were one also to operate at the limit of bodily capacity."³⁷ Again, Weiss' anthropology presupposes that men possess this nature that aims toward perfection and excellence, "a state where they feel fulfilled, somehow completed."³⁸ What prevents superiority and dominance from overtaking Weiss's view of competitive athletics? Weiss unabashedly promulgates that a necessary feature of competition is an athlete who

more pure, noble truths of the contemplative life (Weiss, *Sport*, 6). However, this was not completely true for Plato did recognize the educative value of sport (Daniel A. Dombrowski, "Plato and Athletics," 29-38.).

³⁵ MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 52.

³⁶ Weiss, *Sport*, 13, 14.

³⁷ Weiss, *Sport*, 14.

³⁸ Weiss, *Sport*, 13.

desires and attempts to win or to defeat his opponent; strategy and means are to assume sport-specific forms that “will enable him to outdistance all.”³⁹ Thus, it is clear that, for Weiss, *striving* for excellence is only half of the picture because *achieving* excellence in a comparative sense is what identifies the athlete with what is lasting or eternal.⁴⁰ Though the spectator may recognize the eternal possibilities in the striving, only the athlete who participates in sport can achieve sportive excellence and thus can epitomize the well-embodied, ideal portrait of mankind.⁴¹

For a Christian ethic, I grant that a Christian mode of response often does overlap with a secular ethic because of our shared humanity and common perceptions about certain aspects of the world we inhabit together. Weiss recognizes the importance of an overriding conception of the *telos* for sportspersons, without which his account of sport virtues appears fragmentary.⁴² John Paul II also regards sport as a pursuit of excellence, for our human constitution is such that we will or intend the kind of goods and values that satisfy and fulfill our persons. We are attracted to these kinds of goods. However, if a Christian ethic arises from a definite worldview, then it is imperative that we think Christianly about the reality of sport and its basic moral questions, which means there will be substantive, if not radical, differences between a Christian ethic and a secular ethic.

In the next chapter, we take up John Paul II’s own outlook as shaped by his Christian perception of reality. John Paul II’s outlook is an occasion for a fresh study

³⁹ Weiss, *Sport*, 176.

⁴⁰ See Carolyn Thomas, *Sport in a Philosophic Context* (Philadelphia: Lea & Febiger, 1983), 110-111.

⁴¹ Weiss, *Sport*, 14-17.

⁴² This point links Weiss with MacIntyre for both envision a practice’s integrity in light of mankind’s nature and proper function. However, as this section argues, both assume this nature without any development or explication of it. A Christian ethic operates from human nature made in God’s image which radically effects how a Christian ethic construes activities such as sport.

because of the traditional/historical neglect in Christian ethics and sport. John Paul II departs from Weiss in that he filters all his moral teachings through his personalistic norm. Thus, the dignity of personhood organizes what he says about sport and the concomitant goods internal and external to this cultural activity. Personalism considers ethical questions “from within,” which John Paul II turns to phenomenology in order to understand the subject’s experiences. This means that, for sport, a subject does not merely act or relate as an objective being or to other persons (a Thomistic given), but the subject experiences his play as his own.⁴³ So what? John Paul II believes it is the primacy of persons revealed through their actions that obligates us to compete fairly and to strive toward excellence. In *Love and Responsibility*, one of his first major philosophical works to assume the philosophical anthropology set forth in *The Acting Person*,⁴⁴ John Paul II lays the principles for a personalistic norm that warrants all of what he said about the human person.⁴⁵ In particular, it lays the groundwork for chapter three of this thesis. That is, “...whenever a person is the object of your activity, remember that you must not treat that person as only the means to an end, as an instrument, but must allow for the fact that he or she, too, has, or at least should have, distinct personal ends.”⁴⁶ Our duties arise in relation to who we are as persons.

⁴³ Karol Wojtyla, *The Acting Person*, trans. Andrzej Potocki (Dordrecht: D. Reidel Publishing Co., 1979), 42. Wojtyla offers a new interpretation of the moral self by synthesizing ontology and phenomenology. See Rocco Buttiglione, *Karol Wojtyla: The Thought of the Man Who Became Pope John Paul II*, trans. Paolo Guietti and Francesca Murphy (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 83-84.

⁴⁴ See Buttiglione, *Karol Wojtyla*, 83-116; Peter Simpson, *On Karol Wojtyla* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2001), 46-63.

⁴⁵ Rocco Buttiglione, *Karol Wojtyla*, 90.

⁴⁶ Karol Wojtyla, *Love and Responsibility*, trans. H.T. Willetts (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1982), 28.

Like MacIntyre in *After Virtue*, Weiss fails to offer us a metaphysic concerning the human person, so what obligates us is some ideal of excellence that he assumes attracts us as human beings. Excellence is tied to our humanity, but we are not told much about who we are other than how function, what an athlete does, is intimately connected to an athlete's essential human nature. Perhaps Weiss foresaw what (early) MacIntyre did, in that they both wish to propose a secular teleology that avoids Aristotle's metaphysical biology. Not so for John Paul II; his personalist anthropology derives our treatment of others in sport and life directly from our human worth and dignity. Yet, this worth is not to be detached from its religious roots, for this worth signifies the transcendent character of human nature as the work of God himself. John Paul II avoids anthropomorphism because he does not begin with man as the chief value; the *humanum* makes sense by virtue of the *divinum*, God as the ultimate source of all values. In particular, sportive actions proceed from human persons who possess a God-given value prior to acting. Before a human being becomes an athlete or assumes any other specific role, he is a human.⁴⁷ For John Paul II,⁴⁸ this means that the athlete as the author of his sportive actions has a metaphysical priority over what he does. Sport praxis presupposes a human being who already exists and who happens to be playing sport. Furthermore, as a human, the athlete has unique ends specific to sport, but these ends are subordinate to the

⁴⁷ See Vernon Bourke, *Ethics: A Textbook in Moral Philosophy* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1951), 30-35. O'Donovan refers to this feature of ethics in relation to human nature as a main characteristic of classical Christian moral thought (O'Donovan, *Resurrection*, 17). I believe this is important in order for a Christian ethic to consistently situate itself within the broader tradition, and so that, even though modernity may reject the relationship between metaphysic and ethics, Christian ethics rehabilitates this inherent relationship between what something is and how we ought to behave. For John Paul II, this correlation is never divorced from his ethic.

⁴⁸ Karol Wojtyła, "The Problem of the Constitution of Culture Through Human Praxis," in *Person and Community* (New York: Peter Lang, 1993), 263-275.

ultimate, human end. Therefore, a sportsperson's value envisages excellence in relation to who we are as God's image bearers and how excellence as an aspect of persons is a good that fulfills us as human beings. This Christian understanding of excellence is not less than Weiss's claim concerning the athlete in his pursuit of bodily excellence, but it surpasses Weiss's basis. Again, the issue of goodness in relation to God and the metaphysical priority of the human, no matter the cultural role, lie at the heart of the next chapter concerning John Paul II's personalistic ethic and sport.

Platonic Participation and Ascent

Certainly, Weiss's theory of sport commends a holistic understanding of excellence in that he incorporates bodily goods into his structure of excellence. Because of Weiss's indebtedness to ancient Greece, for humans, excellence (*arete*) is not only an intellectual and moral matter, but also an ideal that can be applied to all of life.⁴⁹ Excellence applies to things that actualize their potency. Yet, at the end of chapter two when Weiss concludes that athletes strive to complete themselves, he expounds on his doctrine of being, claiming that each person is imperfect and incomplete.⁵⁰ What does he mean? What is the importance of this doctrine of being in relation to his theory of sport? Is he separating goodness (excellence) from existence itself? If so, is existence something that must be proven or achieved in order to identify a thing with the fullness of being?

⁴⁹ MacIntyre points this out when addressing *arête* in heroic societies (MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 122.).

⁵⁰ See Andrew J. Reck, "The Five Ontologies of Paul Weiss," in *The Philosophy of Paul Weiss*, ed. Lewis Edwin Hahn (Chicago: Open Court, 1995), 139-152, for he draws similar conclusions in regard to Weiss four modes of being for each mode is imperfect and in need of the other modes, one of which is God. In an odd sort of way, these different modes appear to resemble what some theologians more recently refer to when discussing how the Trinity functions as a social ontology for togetherness is central to how each of Weiss's modes interpenetrate and relate to each other.

Weiss infers from metaphysical and anthropological reflection that each reality has an internal horizontal relationship to other particular realities and that mankind is not to confuse its reality with other realities.⁵¹ In their ordering alongside each other, some realities are alien, congenial, useful, and injurious.⁵² I understand him to mean that mankind as a reality relates and is ordered to other realities in a variety of ways, whether they be generic, teleological, or contingent.⁵³ In his estimation, man is conscious of these other beings, and his ability to transcend time, space, and individuality enables him to identify the roles and differences that each reality has with the others. Further, this ordering among the particulars causes him to conclude that, because mankind is distinct and independent, humanity is only part of the whole of reality.⁵⁴ Weiss's actualities share a common, ordered universe based on an order of kind and end. His cosmos "is an interrelated dynamic whole...that is intelligible."⁵⁵ However, following the above Platonic distinction, if man as a part of the whole is incomplete, then to be fully real, Weiss claims that man "must lack nothing; he and they must therefore be one." Though imprecise, Weiss's language bears ontological implications.

If I interpret him correctly, then being itself, according to the nature of a thing, is insufficient; therefore, the thing is incomplete in its existence. So for Weiss, in order to alter this condition of our existence, we must strive toward unity with other

⁵¹ For a more detailed metaphysic on how actualities relate to other actualities and to final reality, *Actuality, an ultimate of Being*, see Paul Weiss, *Philosophy in Process*, vol. 5 (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University, 1971), 678-679. This inner teleology is another Aristotelian commitment on the part of Weiss.

⁵² Weiss, *Sport*, 34.

⁵³ O'Donovan, *Resurrection and Moral Order*, 31-38.

⁵⁴ Weiss, *Sport*, 34-35.

⁵⁵ Kuntz, "Cosmos and Chaos," 117, 129.

beings. By virtue of its incompleteness, existence is not good. Therefore, because of his causal efficacy, the athlete must perform acts that complete him—that make him good in the sense of his existence. Let us examine my understanding of Weiss in more detail on what I believe is critical to his notion of excellence.

Weiss' metaphysical reflection states that, when we observe our world, we see that it is impure and corrupt.⁵⁶ For him, this is the way things are. Corruption inheres in an actuality. In my interpretation, Weiss never accounts for why this corruption exists. What is wrong with this world? Corruption or evil is a given. It is located in actualities themselves indicated by the reality that they lack something in their being. This lack (in their being) is only overcome as they participate in finalities *en route* to self-completion. Weiss's universe depends on limited defective goods.⁵⁷ Wherever there is finitude, there is evil or corruption. Though Weiss apparently contradicts

⁵⁶ Weiss, *Sport*, 6. Weiss makes this point in reaction to Aristotle. According to Aristotle, since God preoccupies himself with the most pure and noble thoughts, then our philosophical investigations should not be wasted on such common and popular activities like sport for it could not contain significant truths. However, Weiss believes this is ridiculous for our speculations begin with an ordinary world that is imperfect, impure and corrupt. It might appear that these predications are similar to what a theist means when she claims the world is fallen. But I do not believe he does as my reasons bear out in the main text above. Weiss holds that actualities in their existence in one sense are not structurally good. A Christian theist maintains that mankind is created in the image of God and is completely good, substantively good in essence. Weiss holds we are impure and corrupt. He confuses the goodness of our finitude and the order of corruption. For a theist, the first is good structurally and sin or evil is not inherent for it is an alien invasion of God's good creation. Though sin and evil are inevitable they are not necessary for us as human beings. So when Weiss talks about actualities realizing their potential he is talking not about being considered structurally but being in an ethical or desirability sense. When potencies for an actuality are realized there is in some sense an increase of being. An athlete that performs excellently perfects his being. As argued, Weiss believes in this latter sense all things seek excellence or goodness. I do not contest this sense only the former sense. Because of my limitations, for a deeper discussion on being and goodness, see Eleonore Stump and Norman Kretzmann, "Being and Goodness," in *Being and Goodness: The Concept of the Good in Metaphysics and Philosophical Theology*, ed. Scott MacDonald (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), 98-128.

⁵⁷ Paul Weiss, *Man's Freedom* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1967), 243-248.

himself at places,⁵⁸ he unyieldingly concludes that, “Evil is ontologically necessary...”⁵⁹

In *Sport*, it is the existence of ideals like excellence that constitutes a higher degree of reality. The same ideals necessitate a corrective to cure the problem and the fact that particular things live in and under the “remorseless flux of time.”⁶⁰ As humans, because we are situated in a world of restless change, we must be awakened to this hierarchy by living virtuously in sport and life in order to enhance such permanent values. These values lift us out to what is objective, permanent, and true.⁶¹ This dualism is redolent of Plato’s cosmos in which the Forms are real, and sensible things are only semi-real. Dualism implies that our finitude is itself a lack of good. Because Weiss’s philosophical narrative rejects an original creation, *ex nihilo*,⁶² and a human fall from grace, I believe that Weiss assumes the Greek conception that corruption and disorder are intrinsic to the material world rather than the Augustinian conception that evil is the result of human rebellion, a disordered exercise of free will. If this world is impure and corrupt, then my interpretation of Weiss seems plausible both to account for what he explicitly declares and to make sense of his own gaps. This lack of good is a corruption and therefore “to be” is it to be

⁵⁸ Weiss purports that evil is not ontologically necessary but then later subscribes to the belief that in this world evil is metaphysically necessary in order for this world to be. Again, I sense a dualistic hypothesis especially in *Man’s Freedom* where evil will always be in existence, our cosmos “always had and always will” have evil, for he claims that it is the essence of things to urge, impress and impose their goodness on others without limit (Weiss, *Man’s Freedom*, 244.).

⁵⁹ Weiss, *Man’s Freedom*, 247.

⁶⁰ Weiss, *Sport*, 248.

⁶¹ Weiss, *Sport*, 248.

⁶² Kuntz, “Cosmos and Chaos,” 118.

incomplete.⁶³ According to Weiss, “to be” is convertible with an incomplete actuality.⁶⁴ Furthermore, he elsewhere insists that, when we compare ourselves to God in the scale of being, we stand guilty and unable to measure up in the presence of the Good.⁶⁵ Human beings are guilty by virtue of existing. Our finitude is a fault that positions humans as guilty before God. Because we are finite, guilt is required by the nature of our being.

According to Christian ethics, creation is fundamentally good, but according to Weiss, embodiment and finitude lack in an important sense. Based on the Creator-creature distinction, a creature will never possess the same fullness of being that its source has. For Christian theology, created realities cannot equal their Creator in plenitude of being. Thus, Weiss appears to seek a solution to a problem that does not metaphysically exist for Christian theology and that, when ignored, results in violence to the existence of an actuality. It also erases an ontological boundary that exists between God and his creation now and forevermore. When this ontological

⁶³ Weissian scholars may object because Weiss himself saw the defect of his earlier pre-modal ontology. However, Reck asserts that this formula of incompleteness pervades all his later thinking, and beside the fact Weiss, in *Sport*, operates from this ontology (Reck, “The Five Ontologies of Paul Weiss,” 141).

⁶⁴ Reck, “The Five Ontologies of Paul Weiss,” 141-142.

⁶⁵ Reck, “The Five Ontologies of Paul Weiss,” 144-145. Reck identifies Weiss’s connection of morality to ontology which means creatures from their beginning live in this dynamic state between nothingness and being. Perhaps, Weiss diagnoses our radical contingency which has him recoil both at the shock of nonbeing and our inability to comply perfectly with God’s obligations. Becoming is under the duress of guilt simply because we are finite creatures. Granted our existence is fragile; however, Weiss contends our guilt is substantive because when human beings stand in the presence of God, they inescapably are ontologically guilty. This guilt is a state identified with our existence. Even if human beings cannot meet all of their moral obligations as creatures, Weiss places them in a cosmos where each actuality strives to atone for this condition through their achievements. In fact, in *Man’s Freedom*, Weiss, he states that man “reduces his guilt to the degree he perfects others and himself” (Weiss, *Man’s Freedom*, 262.). These achievements when identified with excellence hook them up to a God who eventually realizes the “ought” that mankind falls short of. In sum, human beings are guilty as substantial entities because their being when put beside finality like God lacks the fullness of his being. I am not sure how hope ever figures in because this appears to be a never-ending struggle unless pantheism is accepted so that our being is absorbed into the Ultimate itself, where are all such good and evil distinctions are irrelevant. Weiss dogmatically avers that even God cannot atone for the absolute guilt native to our human constitution for this obligation can never be fulfilled (Weiss, *Man’s Freedom*, 262.).

boundary is forsaken, we find created realities idolatrously attempting to bridge an impossible gulf; they fail to remember that they are utterly dependent thanks to their created reality. I argue that, when suspended from his Platonic metaphysic, Weiss's notion of excellence commits his athlete in action to seek escape from this transient world through bodily performances. These bodily performances, as they participate in excellence, are a ladder-like ascent to the ideal. If Plato's ideal man, the philosopher-king, sought philosophical salvation, then Weiss's ideal athlete seeks athletic salvation. The nature of my argument pieces together a number of reasons that I believe my hypothesis best explains.

Turn from and Turn to the Sportive Ideal

Weiss claims that, like others, athletes “*turn* from the world of common sense and its practical demands to try to come to grips with distinct finalities.”⁶⁶ Initially, this metaphor seems to advocate one of the chief characteristics of sport as play or games. That is, play is a free activity that stands outside ordinary life and yet is permeated with both seriousness and non-seriousness. Johann Huizinga refers to play as an “an absolute and peculiar order.”⁶⁷ Thus, an athlete “turns” in the sense of stepping out of real life. Every sport or game has its own distinctive order, time, space, and dynamics that are unique to its function.⁶⁸ The sport world is separate from the ordinary world. However, even if Weiss intends to respect the structure of

⁶⁶ Weiss, *Sport*, 244. The italics are mine for the purpose of noting the metaphor. Weiss in an early publication, *Man's Freedom*, divides men's modes of life into practical and theoretical. The former concentrates on the real and the latter on the ideal. I believe these divisions relate to the athlete and the scholar modes that Weiss invokes broadly throughout *Sport* but with some variations.

⁶⁷ Huizinga, *Homo Ludens*, 29.

⁶⁸ Weiss, *Sport*, 156. Weiss develops the separateness of games from ordinary time in chapter 10. Weiss revisited the concept of games year later with views which are comparable to MacIntyre's notion of practice. See Paul Weiss, “Games: A Solution to the Problem of the One and the Many,” *Journal of the Philosophy of Sport* 7, no. 1 (Fall 1980): 7-14.

play, which is odd in light of his overall stance toward play, he includes other men (e.g., ethicist, artist, scholar, religious believer) in the “turn” from this world to the ultimate and everlasting.⁶⁹ He includes these other roles as examples because they, like his athlete, seek to break free from the ordinary world in order to contemplate and attain the eternal possibilities of truth, beauty, and goodness.⁷⁰ Weiss makes the point that this metaphor communicates something about the structure of reality. The practical demands originate in this material world, and Weiss aims for the world beyond, over this world, because the material world depends on the everlasting. Even if sport at its very best functions as a Platonic microcosm of the ideal realm, it is still embedded in a transient, material world. Since the goal is to ascend to a higher reality, these other roles like Weiss’s athlete are part of a vital struggle to produce a result and obtain an ideal that links them to the ultimate.⁷¹ Weiss states, “The more a man cuts himself off from the world around him, in order to identify himself with what is ultimately real, the more he opens himself up to the presence of Actuality.”⁷² When this identification occurs, the athlete identifies himself with what is ultimately real, facing and opening himself to Actuality (see below). He is “caught up and almost swallowed in the role of ideal athlete.”⁷³ Plato’s ideal man becomes the ideal athlete. For Weiss, this identification becomes the common referent that excellence in this world corresponds to in the Platonic supra-sensible realm. And it is in this

⁶⁹ Weiss, *Sport*, 244.

⁷⁰ Weiss, *Sport*, 247.

⁷¹ Weiss, *PIP 5*, 268. Weiss recognizes the artificiality of sport for it is detached from everyday drama but it is this vital struggle toward excellence which characterizes ordinary life for all men, including sportspersons.

⁷² Weiss, *Sport*, 244.

⁷³ Weiss, *Sport*, 247.

realm where ideals and truths of logic are true forever “outside the corrosive grip of time”.⁷⁴

Like Plato,⁷⁵ Weiss conceives the doctrine of participation as a means of making sense of the one and many; it unifies particular things because they have reality by virtue of something they presently share with Actuality. Actuality is that finality as an ultimate being that everything is oriented to and that “related particulars equally participate in.”⁷⁶ For an athlete, this oneness culminates when he has learned properly to deal with other realities so he can accept and become one with his body.⁷⁷ If the athlete must become one with everything so that he lacks nothing, then he becomes excellent or good when informed by Actuality, a transcendent reality. In *Philosophy in Process*, Weiss prepared the way for his metaphysics in Sport: “The excellence of Actuality is mediated by the athlete in his dedication or self-sacrifice. He in effect is saying to all men “we are”.”⁷⁸ This transcendent reality means, furthermore, that an athlete participates in “that which is in fact and forever the case” as he becomes one with his body, a habit of dedication, because he refers or points to Actuality.⁷⁹ It is the mode of being that sustains such contingent resemblances of excellence. In summary, Actuality functions as a Platonic Form in which athletes and others participate as they strive to exhibit excellence.

Some might object that this read of Weiss forces some kind of religious philosophy of sport. However, Weiss regularly argues by using religious analogies to

⁷⁴ Weiss, *Sport*, 247.

⁷⁵ *Protagoras* 322a; *Symposium* 208b; *Republic* VI 486a; *Phaedo* 100c.

⁷⁶ Weiss, *Sport*, 244.

⁷⁷ Weiss, *Sport*, 36, 244-245.

⁷⁸ Weiss, *PIP* 5, 308.

⁷⁹ Weiss, *Sport*, 244.

illuminate the world of the athlete. He witnesses similarities and dissimilarities between these two modes of being-in-this-world. In fact, I argue below that Weiss employs an ascent metaphor, which is commonplace in certain religious traditions that assume an objective, transcendent referent that embodied activities serve. In chapter ten, Weiss even invokes the language of ceremony to depict the almost sacred space of games, for games, like religious ceremonies, are bounded events framed in formality and solemnity. Moreover, Weiss reclaims this religious import for his own metaphysic: “An athlete once was, and still can be, treated as a sacred being who embodies something of the divine in him. He is credited with the dignity of embodying a supreme value.”⁸⁰ He goes on to say that this value, as expressed in bodily excellence, qualifies a more remote reality. Of course, Weiss admits that today these ceremonies are secular even though the athletes themselves carry this divine value. Moreover, Kuntz, drawing from Weiss’s other works, claims that Weiss’s metaphysic is religious because his athlete opens himself up and relates to “superior being.”⁸¹ He concludes that Weiss’s religious philosophy of sport is consistent with French Catholicism in the nineteenth and twenty century.

Virtues toward the Ideal: An Aretaic Scheme

After establishing this obligatory turn to the Platonic Ideal, Weiss compares the struggle in the pursuit for wisdom with the struggle inherent in an athletic contest. For Weiss, both struggles aspire to participate in and contemplate higher truths. Once again, excellence or *arete* is the chief end for Weiss. Heather Reid argues that this link between the struggle for wisdom and the struggle demanded by athletic *agon*

⁸⁰ Weiss, *Sport*, 153.

⁸¹ Paul Kuntz, “Paul Weiss: What is a Philosophy of Sport?” 172; Paul Weiss, *Philosophy in Process*, vol. 1 (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University, 1955-1960), 709.

resonates with Plato's moral education in the *Republic*.⁸² Activities such as physical training and competition were parts of *gymnastikê* for the sake of cultivating excellence.⁸³ In the *Republic* Book VII, after explaining the allegory of the Cave, Socrates delineates the goal of education by using the turn metaphor (518b-519b). The turn metaphor says that the human psyche must transcend earthly matters by turning away from the world of the shadows in order to come to grips with the enduring reality of the Forms. For Weiss, this turning away disassociates an athlete from the fruits of his labors (e.g., fame, fortune, and money) and pushes aside the practical demands located in this world so that the sportive domain can mirror the characteristic particulars of the ideal Good.⁸⁴

Kuntz identifies this classical theme of education (*paideia*) in Weiss under Kuntz's discussion of discipline.⁸⁵ Though this theme is more developed in *Philosophy in Process* than in *Sport*, discipline is a form of training or craft, and it is the means for attaining sportive excellence and drawing out gifts to be actualized in sport. Kuntz references how discipline functions metaphysically for Weiss under the Ideal:

When we try to see what such an activity as sport is trying to do we can use . . . a kind of chart. Like every enterprise concerned with the realm of *paideia* it is concerned with improving men, of helping them attain excellence. It must make him healthy (Actuality), self disciplined, restrained (Ideal), adjusted (Existence) and organize, a man of power (Divine).⁸⁶

In *Sport*, Weiss develops discipline more along the lines of dedication. Sport is an opportunity for the dedicated (virtuous) athlete to accept, identify, continue, unite,

⁸² Heather L. Reid, "Sport and Moral Education in Plato's *Republic*," *Journal of the Philosophy of Sport* 34, no. 2 (2007): 160-175. I follow Reid on many points in her analysis.

⁸³ *Republic* 410bc, 411e.

⁸⁴ Weiss, *Sport*, 84, 244-245.

⁸⁵ Kuntz, "Paul Weiss," 178-180.

⁸⁶ Paul Weiss, *Philosophy in Process*, vol. 1, 466-467.

coordinate, and extend himself—as a body—freely through and with other objects or items (like equipment) beyond his body.⁸⁷ Sport is where desire brings forth “acts which are relevant to the realization of a prospect focused on.”⁸⁸ If the athlete effectively dedicates his body because the body has been conditioned and trained, then the athlete has fulfilled his role with excellence. If the purpose of sport is excellent performances, then this last point gives attention to how the acts, skills, and traits (dedication) allow an athlete to pursue his practice successfully, thus actualizing his potential. More precisely, Weiss envisages the good athlete as well-coordinated, which involves the dynamic combination of three things:⁸⁹ 1) Accuracy is “a willed arrival at a selected target. It is an achievement,” 2) “Skill is the acquired ability to accomplish an act with minimal waste and delay,” and 3) “Gracefulness is a quality adorning smooth, harmonious movement. It pleases.” All three things help form the human good in sport. Again, this conception of good is consistent with an aretaic ethic, for the good life is not static: it requires acts consistent with virtues that comprise and lead to a sportive good.

Weiss painstakingly describes the lived experience of the complex, decisive acts or bodily moves in sport. The disaccord—perhaps read defects and vices, which Weiss argues is more true for men than women—between the body and mind is corrected as moves are modified, mastered, habituated, and perfected from instruction and through practices so that men are made to do something well.⁹⁰

⁸⁷ Weiss, *Sport*, 73-74. Weiss describes the telic structure in sport most vividly in chapter 4. His choice of terms (attention, desire, intention, commitment, dedication) shape and contribute what constitutes the human telos as identified and textured by the athlete’s role.

⁸⁸ Paul Weiss, *Sport*, 59.

⁸⁹ Weiss, *Sport*, 127. Cf. Kuntz, “Paul Weiss,” 176.

⁹⁰ Weiss, *Sport*, 42-47.

MacIntyre's concept of a practice illumines Weiss's descriptive account of the "moves" and "acts," which I interpret more as the distinct techniques or skills exercised by the sport practitioner.⁹¹ These parts constitute the practice itself with an internal good, such as excellence, that is realized through attention, commitment, endurance, and dedication. Thus, the skills, traits, or virtues point us to the *telos*, pivotally serving as a means to the attended and future prospect of excellence. Weiss's explication of sport practices encapsulates one of the many brilliant insights his vision of sports tenders in conjunction with a teleological structure. I might add that this application of practices, as described phenomenologically, was developed well before the steady stream of philosophers who saw the cash value of this concept mined more from MacIntyre's *After Virtue*, which was written fifteen years later.

So, what preeminently constitutes the athletes' *telos*? Weiss concentrates on dedication as the primary evaluative criteria for what "marks" an athlete for excellence.⁹² According to Weiss, dedication coordinates an athlete's intentions, desires, and inclinations in light of the sport's *telos*, "the obligating end".⁹³ This dedication determines which actions are virtuous, enabling the achievement of this prospect or preferred sportive end, and which actions are undesirable, preventing his self-completion.⁹⁴ This self-completion is imperative, for Weiss thinks that dedication as an active character trait must be regularly rekindled through obvious

⁹¹ MacIntyre's practice paradigm refers to "any coherent and complex form of socially established cooperative human activity through which goods internal to that form of activity are realized in the course of trying to achieve those standards of excellence which are appropriate to and partly definitive of, that form of activity, with the result that human powers to achieve excellence, and human conceptions of the ends and goods involved are systematically extended" (MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 187.).

⁹² Weiss, *Sport*, 66-72.

⁹³ Weiss, *Sport*, 66, 69.

⁹⁴ Weiss, *Sport*, 69.

rewards, extrinsic motivation, and “tales of glory” so that the athlete senses the great value that sport merits from giving oneself to it completely.⁹⁵

Dombrowski adds to this discussion, if not remedying Weiss’s neglect to explicitly develop this Platonic distinction more, concerning Weiss’s method since he recognizes within this athletic striving a Platonic distinction that proves important for achieving excellence. That is, pursue excellence with moderation (*sophrosyne*). The athlete must respectfully learn when and how to master his own body and the bodies of others while at the same time remaining himself by accepting his own bodily limitations.⁹⁶ This balance or moderation is the means to self-completion. Dombrowski notes that Weiss draws directly from Plato (Sophist 247E), for the dynamic power (*dynamis*) is what affects others and is affected by others in the give-and-take interchange of seeking harmony while pursuing sportive excellence.

If a good athlete fulfils his function specifically by striving “to have a fine body and to use it well,”⁹⁷ then Weiss appears to align himself (rather nostalgically) with the Roman ideal of a sound mind in a sound body (*mens sana in corpore sano*):

An interest in a splendid body does not of course preclude thought. He who improves his body and uses it well must use his mind; he needs *sound knowledge* of fundamentals, *good judgment* of what a situation involves, and an *understanding* of what he, his teammates, and his opponents can and most likely will do.⁹⁸

Weiss is conscious of an ideal of perfection. The body realizes excellent performances when the mind supervises and serves the body. The mind itself “has learned a good deal about ideals, abstract categories and logical consequences,”

⁹⁵ Weiss, *Sport*, 67.

⁹⁶ Dombrowski, *Contemporary Athletics*, 42-43; Weiss, *Sport*, 34-35.

⁹⁷ Weiss, *Sport*, 13.

⁹⁸ Weiss, *Sport*, 12-13. Italics are mine for emphasis.

which Weiss believes informs and dictates what the body ought to do.⁹⁹ Perhaps it would be best to classify his anthropology as a form of dualism, an interplay which he admits is more mystery than solid fact.¹⁰⁰ He states,

The body is, of course, a precondition for the exercise of some, and perhaps even all, mental functions. This fact is sufficient to make it desirable to cultivate the body, and to consider the body seriously in any attempt at understanding the nature of man, without requiring us to suppose a man is only a body.¹⁰¹

I take up this dualism and its problems more in the next chapter.

On a more technical side, Weiss speaks about this mind-body relationship in terms of a “vector”, a mathematical metaphor, to describe phenomenologically how the mind provides direction (i.e., purpose and intent) and service for the body so that the real goods of the body will be realized and produced. In effect, sport offers an opportunity for unified existence through this harmony of mind and body.¹⁰² Implied throughout this ordering of the body to the mind is a struggle, for the body makes demands; therefore, the athlete must get the body to conform to the mind’s understanding of the true ideals. The athlete must correct the vectoral thrust; he must alter the body by self-mastery.¹⁰³ This sense of an ordered direction is in keeping with his transcendent structure or ascent. Weiss situates his analysis in a metaphysic that recognizes both the realism of ideals,¹⁰⁴ and a hierarchy or scale of living beings

⁹⁹ Weiss, *Sport*, 41-43.

¹⁰⁰ Weiss, *Sport*, 39. My point here is not to enter into a discussion about mind and body but to point how the emphasis on bodily goods is part and parcel of what Weiss deems as the end attraction, bodily excellence. See Paul Weiss, *Modes of Being* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1958), for his more comprehensive analysis of such topics like mind and body, good, the self, meaning, etc.

¹⁰¹ Weiss, *Sport*, 38.

¹⁰² Weiss, *Sport*, 39.

¹⁰³ Weiss, *Sport*, 38-43.

¹⁰⁴ Weiss, *Sport*, 247. I interpret Weiss as a metaphysical and moral idealist for time and time again he assumes such transcendentals as truth, beauty and goodness. He goes on to say that because these are ideals we are meant to realize (even if ever so partially or distortedly) then they “obligate us all”

with higher organisms embodying thought or intelligence to “dictate what the body is to do.”¹⁰⁵ Because of his teleological ethic,¹⁰⁶ I think it is a fair reading of Weiss, in the same way I read MacIntyre, to see that he deliberately avoids divorcing the essence of human nature (what something is) from its function and purpose in any way. Against antirealism, Weiss relates this purpose or ordering to the laws or structures (“cosmic truths”) that all humans carry or embody.¹⁰⁷

If we see that Augustine struggled at times with the sensuous life, then it is from John Paul II that we gain the meaning and theology of the body according to his theological anthropology.¹⁰⁸ The meaning of the body is another major theme for the next chapter, so I postpone any substantive interaction with this theme and sport until then, save for a few preliminary points. In an address to athletes, John Paul II makes it clear that his understanding of the body is central to his view of the person in sport.¹⁰⁹ His anthropology denies any form of dualism, for he recalls from church fathers that “neither the soul, nor the body, on their own, is a man, but rather, he who we call by this name that which is born from the union of these.”¹¹⁰ Because of this

(Weiss, *Sport*, 247). Peculiar to his view are other aspects consistent with Plato’s metaphysic (Forms). Though he affirms a theory of truth much like Aristotle, he oddly adds that “to attend to any truth we remove ourselves from the transient world, becoming one with eternity.” So, this world represents a pale image of the truth and it is only when we identify with truth that we “escape the remorseless flux of time” (248). In general, truth for Weiss consists of a relation or correspondence to a reality that remains true independent of other beliefs, opinions, or the flux of time.

¹⁰⁵ Weiss, *Sport*, 40-41.

¹⁰⁶ Paul Kuntz in his examination of Weiss’s philosophy of sport acknowledges that Weiss addresses the metaphysics of sport and man along with how sport contributes to the development of an athlete (Kuntz, “Paul Weiss,” 170-189.).

¹⁰⁷ Weiss, *Sport*, 247.

¹⁰⁸ From September 1979 to November 1984, Pope John Paul II delivered 129 addresses to Wednesday audiences entitled the *Theology of the Body*.

¹⁰⁹ John Paul II, “Address to Members of the Italian and Argentine National Soccer Teams,” Rome, 25 May 1979.

¹¹⁰ John Paul II, “Address to Members of the Italian and Argentine National Soccer Teams,” Rome, 25 May 1979.

unity, the body shares in the dignity that God confers in and through us as image bearers. In the sportive world, the athlete's body manifests how he acts. The body then is a sign that not only signifies the transcendent reality, but that also simultaneously gives the spiritual reality to us. For sport, this means that, if the body is a sacrament, then Christian athletes are called to act as God's representatives. When Christian sportspersons act as God acts, they physically image God. At the core of this self-communication for a Christian sportsperson is the virtue of love. If he truly loves the contestant, he must self-donate in and through a physical body. When the athlete fails to do this, John Paul II argues that he maligns himself and others because he has put himself at the service of sport instead of sport at the service of the human person. The paradigm of this self-giving love is grounded in the person and incarnation of Christ. For John Paul II, who cites regularly from *Gaudium et spes* of Vatican II, Christ is the source of truth about the human person. Since this paradigm is true, this paradigm raises an important question: Is sport about excellent performances or maximal achievements, or is it about sacrificially giving to others in a manner that furthers their own good? Are these two purposes mutually exclusive? If Christ is the center of history, and if Weiss's aim is for immortality, how does this aim displace Christ by placing the athlete's actions at the centre? I will explore these questions in relation to Weiss's main thesis in the next chapter.

Reid points out another example from Plato in the *Phaedrus*, namely, that this struggle for *arete* is described with an athletic analogy "as an upward climb toward truth and divinity."¹¹¹ Plato and Weiss both depict the struggle with a spatial metaphor that requires the athlete to look up and ascend to the eternal. How do they

¹¹¹ Reid, "Sport and Moral Education in Plato," 163. *Phaedrus* 246ab; 247b.

ascend? The bodily goods of sport are construed as ascending toward the eternal realm via participation in the eternal realm. The athlete makes himself effective by identifying with the “persistent laws which cover the operation of that body.”¹¹² Because sport is situated in Weiss’s ordered cosmos, Weiss follows Plato in saying that there are laws that give the body’s proportion, measure, and harmony. When an athlete identifies himself with this reality through his excellent acts, he meaningfully makes sense of what is, and he represents “something bigger than himself”,¹¹³ thus epitomizing man,¹¹⁴ referencing immortality,¹¹⁵ and evidencing the eternal. That is, excellent performances correspond to what is eternally true (*sub specie aeternitatis*).¹¹⁶ Weiss’s actualities must lack something for they, and the athlete in particular, only benefit from such reality as they participate in this higher metaphysical realm. Athletes illustrate cosmic truths insofar as they embody realities--both as local matter and the meaning of mankind--that last forever.¹¹⁷

Weiss summarizes accordingly:

The athlete unites his local matter with the meaning of mankind, enriched and mediated by the meaning of excellence which he seeks to embody. When he understands himself to encompass these two abiding components and to provide a unique mode of union for them, he is in principle one who is in the copresence of two eternities.¹¹⁸

¹¹² Weiss, *Sport*, 246.

¹¹³ Weiss, *Sport*, 131, 17.

¹¹⁴ Weiss, *Sport*, 14.

¹¹⁵ Weiss, *Sport*, 247.

¹¹⁶ See Jan Broekhoff, “Cues to Reading,” review of *Sport: A Philosophic Inquiry*, *Quest* 14 (1970): 76-79.

¹¹⁷ Weiss, *Sport*, 247.

¹¹⁸ Weiss, *Sport*, 248. This quote supports my claim concerning how excellent performances embody and correspond to the Eternal Forms; however, I find this quote ambiguous on one important point. Weiss adds that an individual man consists of two eternities because mankind is comprised as a unity of “local matter” (eternal) and the meaning of mankind (eternal), and although this unity is only true now on earth, the two Forms exist forever regardless of the fact that they separate at death or at the

Eternal over the Temporal

Weiss equates the mathematician with the athlete because they both “are acquainted with the eternal in many ways.”¹¹⁹ Toward the end of his “Metaphysical Excursus,” his final chapter in *Sport*, Weiss references mathematics as part of the intelligible realm that the mathematician accesses through contemplation. This reality abides forever because it is above the world that decays and passes away. In the *Republic* book VII (525-527c), Plato emphasizes mathematics’ educational value because it turns “the soul around, away from becoming and towards truth and being” (525c). Math is an exemplar of the world of the Forms. If math allows us to acknowledge Forms, then in a like manner, so does the athlete when he acts.¹²⁰ Why this equation? I believe the most plausible explanation comes from Weiss’s stance that only those who identify themselves with eternity receive benefits. As theoretical man, the mathematician attains the eternity of the laws that govern math when he contemplates, and as practical man, the athlete attains this same eternity when he seeks to achieve excellence with maximum effect by making his body his servant in his sport.¹²¹ According to Plato, genuine knowledge occurs when we focus on the Forms because they are unchanging and eternal. Similarly, Weiss’s athlete sees his acts become eternalized when he bodily attends to and unites himself with ideals such as excellence. Excellence removes the athlete from the world of becoming and lifts him to the realm of Being that always is and never becomes.

dissolution of the individual. On this point, I am not sure if “local matter” is a Platonized version of Aristotle’s substance (form or essence) or if matter is eternal itself.

¹¹⁹ Weiss, *Sport*, 247.

¹²⁰ Weiss, *Sport*, 247.

¹²¹ Weiss, *Sport*, 243, 247.

Weiss states that this eternalizing applies to those individuals who get taken up and almost absorbed in the role of ideal athlete.¹²² This state of affairs, like the truth value of a proposition, remains true, according to Weiss, even if others differ or lack the realization to agree with this truth.

If I am correctly discerning how Weiss, similar to Plato, privileges the invisible and eternal over the visible and temporal, then his ascent aims at an ontological union that overcomes the vicissitudes of life and escapes the flux of the sensible world--a strange world indeed for Weiss. Weiss himself corroborates this idea:

When we attend to any truth we remove ourselves from the transient world, becoming one with eternity. The athlete, in his commitment, vivifies this fact. He not only represents all mankind—as we all do—when he judges and knows; he represents it in his effort to achieve a maximal result in his sport. The world of sport intensifies the meanings which any man in the course of his life inevitably expresses in his judgments and decisions. The athlete is sport incarnated, sport instantiated, sport located for the moment, and by that fact is man himself, incarnated, instantiated, and located.¹²³

Immortality and Records: Participation in the Eternal

Because of his Platonic participation thesis, Weiss explicitly contends that participating in what is eternal eventuates in immortality. Without rehearsing Plato's arguments for immortality from the *Phaedo* (which is unnecessary because he simply assumes immortality), Weiss references immortality as an index for what bodily excellence attains even if modernity distrusts such notions. Indeed, many athletes fail to illustrate the kinds of performances that illustrate eternity.¹²⁴ Furthermore, Weiss admits that, although athletic bodies decay and eventually cease to exist, there is something that survives death. According to Weiss, when the athlete incarnates those

¹²² Weiss, *Sport*, 247-248.

¹²³ Weiss, *Sport*, 248.

¹²⁴ Weiss, *Sport*, 247.

enduring laws pertaining to the body (though as an individual he passes away), “he has made himself into a place where those laws for the moment are.”¹²⁵ At the moment the athlete embodies an ideal of truth, goodness, and beauty, he abides forever (in the loosest sense pertaining to personal identity)--or more precisely, his performance as it participates in the realm of ideas continues in the eternal hall of fame. The latter point is important because Weiss says that individuality is irrelevant that personal identity in fact passes away, but that the bodily performance is identified with the role of the ideal athlete.

Watson advances the thesis that Weiss’s discussion of immortality is consistent with his logic and conception of excellence.¹²⁶ That is, because of mankind’s essential human disposition, the value of excellence attracts men like a magnet, and this attraction moves the athlete to strive for maximal performances that resemble the good and “achieve some form of immortality in a more permanent, ultimate, or ideal reality.”¹²⁷ Furthermore, Watson infers from Weiss that what follows from this concern for excellence is the quest for records.¹²⁸ The quest for records completely expresses the concern for excellence in that records offer the possibility for transcendence and immortality. In his trenchant analysis of modern sport, Guttmann distinguishes records as a major characteristic that differentiates Greek athletics from modern sport.¹²⁹ That being said, Guttmann concludes that, in spite of these differences, the very setting of records has become “a uniquely modern form of

¹²⁵ Weiss, *Sport*, 247.

¹²⁶ Scott B. Watson, “The Legitimation of Sport: Pindar and Weiss,” *Quest* 35 (1983): 37-45.

¹²⁷ Watson, “Pindar and Weiss,” 41.

¹²⁸ Watson, “Pindar and Weiss,” 41.

¹²⁹ Allen Guttmann, *From Ritual to Record*, 54-55.

immortality.”¹³⁰ Though records themselves are imperfect indicators of achievement for a variety of reasons that Weiss puts forth,¹³¹ nonetheless, Weiss asserts that, “the ultimate object of all athletic records is to set down the best results that men have brought about, severally and together, in public matches under well-established conditions, governed by rules and competent judges.”¹³² Thanks to Watson, I believe that Weiss emphasizes the quest for records because he is committed to the Platonic prime value of excellence. If excellence underlies the reach for immortality, then the dynamism of these two together grounds the quest for records in Weiss’s inquiry of sport. Spencer Wertz avows that Weiss, Novak, and Keating all depend on this quest for superiority and eminence because it was and is still a goal that has dominated Western man, beginning with the Greek ideal in sport.¹³³ He quotes Keating, who says that maximal effort is the chief value of sport, which this quest abides in its power to communicate and employ the athlete’s true potential. For Wertz, this plainly speaks of transcendence. Though records may not have been a distinguishing characteristic of sport in ancient Greece, ancient and modern sports both find significant continuity in Weiss with his dual emphasis on excellence and immortality.

Heroic Ideals: Attracted to Self-Completeness

Weiss’s aretaic scheme suggests an implicit, if not direct, relationship between excellence and the heroic, with the heroic hypothesis being mainly concerned with

¹³⁰ Guttman, *From Ritual to Record*, 55.

¹³¹ Weiss, *Sport*, 14-15; cf. Paul Weiss, “Records and the Man,” *The Philosophy of Sport: A Collection of Original Essays*, ed. Robert G. Osterhoudt (Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas Publisher, 1973), 11-23.

¹³² Weiss, “Records,” 12-13.

¹³³ Spencer K. Wertz, *Talking a Good Game: Inquiries into the Principles of Sport* (Dallas, TX: Southern Methodist Press, 1991), 88-89.

young men. Weiss focuses on young men who are attracted to athletics “because it offers them the most promising means for becoming excellent.”¹³⁴ That is, these young men are poised at this time in their lives to succeed more at sport rather than in other, more profound, ways.¹³⁵ Young men readily occupy themselves with this pursuit of excellence because it is easier to “master their bodies,” distinguish, and fulfill themselves by pursuing sport at this stage of their development than by pursuing other means of achieving excellence. In other words, this practice commends itself to the nature of young men—striving is warranted by their own emotional make-up, capacities, and abilities—better than other practices (i.e., piety, wisdom, success in business, etc.), which demand more maturity than they are yet capable of in their pursuit and performance of excellence. Without contesting his thesis about young men (with which I fundamentally disagree), I want to focus on this link with the hero.¹³⁶

Once again, Weiss plainly believes that the pursuit of excellence is the attraction of athletics, and though not everyone experiences it, sport exhibits “what man at his best can do.”¹³⁷ The focus is on those bodily acts and performances that indicate excellence. What is admired is that this feat visibly communicates a mastery or

¹³⁴ Weiss, *Sport*, 17.

¹³⁵ Weiss, *Sport*, 11. Cf. Feezell, “Sport: Pursuit of Bodily Excellence or Play?” 261. Perhaps, it need not be mentioned but Weiss’s focus on young men alone is sexist and difficult to uphold for Ellen Gerber persuasively argues that women just as much as men live in their bodies and women can enhance themselves by having good bodily experiences. Weiss claims women are naturally one with their bodies while young men must learn to subordinate their bodies (Ellen Gerber, “My Body, My Self,” in *Sport and Body: A Philosophical Symposium*, eds., Ellen W. Gerber and William J. Morgan, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: Lea & Febiger, 1979), 186.

¹³⁶ Feezell points out that Weiss’s emphasis on young men is counterintuitive in that excellence is not age-specific for many older people (and women!) equally participate to experience bodily excellence among other goods native to sport; and further, this betrays Weiss’s own lack of sport-specific experience as an “outsider” to this phenomenon. See Feezell, “Sport: Pursuit of Bodily Excellence or Play?”: 257-270; Feezell, *Sport, Play, and Ethical Reflection*, 3-18.

¹³⁷ Weiss, *Sport*, 21.

oneness with the body--a bodily good. However, Weiss unapologetically holds that when these ideals are realized in sport, they put the athlete “over and against the rest of men. Mankind looks on him [the athlete] somewhat the way it looks on glamorous women, the worldly successful, and the hero.”¹³⁸

Why does Weiss conceptually connect excellence with hero? Because athletes experience this kind of flourishing, self-completeness, their “set apartness” becomes a true representation of the ideal man in harmony with his body. Their excellence exhibits a power that we recognize and confer on others at the far end of human promise; the promise are the noble ideals realized through an effective use of the body.¹³⁹ Weiss focuses on heroism as greatness. He considers greatness to be most about young men and their individual achievements, which link them to transcendent ideals. However, contrary to Weiss’s opinion, greatness is not merely a bodily good, nor is it the concept of a hero separate from the moral category. To be sure, Weiss would not disagree about moral excellence, but as Dombrowski perceptively recognizes, Weiss borders on “resigning the young athlete merely to the *kalos* half of the more complete Greek ideal of *kalokagathia*, to physical excellence without the intellectual, to *kalos* without *agathos*.”¹⁴⁰ I believe Weiss’s presentation of the hero supports this primary focus on physical excellence, especially since he includes the athlete in a category with other occupations where bodily goods and actions are inordinately prized as the qualities favored and honored by the public. What about the athlete who stops to help a fallen opponent even if it might prevent him from achieving bodily excellence? If Weiss keeps moral and intellectual excellences in the

¹³⁸ Weiss, *Sport*, 85.

¹³⁹ Weiss, *Sport*, 85.

¹⁴⁰ Dombrowski, *Contemporary Athletics and Ancient Greek Ideals*, 50.

shadows, then he undervalues these other traits, because they equally contribute to the qualities that make heroes. Fireman, teachers, and police officers might not receive the adulation that an athlete does, not because they are any less of heroes, but because we lack a full understanding of what qualifies as a hero. Weiss so believes in excellence embodied in athletics that when he later contrasts the hero in war to the hero in sports, he reiterates that the desire in sport is for the hero—something athletes strive for—because the nature of the game arouses, promotes, and sustains those very virtues that contribute to the making of a hero.¹⁴¹ How does the contest itself promote the hero?

Though Weiss clearly suspends any strong association between sport and warfare (which in ancient Greece instrumentalized sport), it nevertheless makes sense for Weiss to ally *arête* with honor as was done for the classical hero because sport is a medium of self-fulfillment. Jernej Pisk highlights that contests gave classical heroes an opportunity to demonstrate *arete*, which strengthened their role in society.¹⁴² In that culture, the goal was to gain public honor and to avoid shame. The love of victory spurred these athletes on because successful achievement offered them the glory of immortality, to be forever remembered. Victory proved who was better than the other and therefore deserving of praise. At first, this quest for immortality may seem to be something limited to Homer's symbolic world since Homer fashioned this ethic of glory with the legendary and heroic tales of Achilles; however, Plato has Socrates relate this same ethic in his *Symposium* (208c-208e):

¹⁴¹ Weiss, *Sport: A Philosophic Inquiry*, 182.

¹⁴² Jernej Pisk, "What is Good Sport: Plato's View," *Acta Universitatis Palackianae Olomuscensis Gymnica* 36, no. 2 (2006): 67-72.

Of that, Socrates, you may be assured;—think only of the ambition of men, and you will wonder at the senselessness of their ways, unless you consider how they are stirred by the passionate love of fame. They are ready to run all risks, even greater than they would run for their children, and to pour out money and undergo any sort of toil, and even to die, “if so they leave an everlasting name.” Do you imagine that Alcestis would have died to save Admetus, or Achilles to avenge Patroclus, or your own Codrus in order to preserve the kingdom for his sons, if they had not imagined that the memory of their virtues, which still survives among us, would be immortal? Nay, she said, I am persuaded that all men do all things, and the better they are the more they do them, in hope of the glorious fame of immortal virtue; for they desire the immortal.

If competition was the test and vehicle for *arete*, or what Spivey refers to as the agonistic ideal of life,¹⁴³ then it was the drive for manly excellence that victory illustrated and immortality glorified. Certainly, I am not naive enough to confuse the Greek orientation to the value of *agon* and heroism with ours today. For that matter, Miller makes a compelling argument that the standards for what a hero was then are different from the standards in the twenty-first century.¹⁴⁴ Yet, even if Weiss’s distinctions are determined more by values of Western civilization, it stands that Weiss operates from the assumption that young men accept such values because to do so is central to their motivation, and therefore it is part of his aretaic program. He maintains that what the Greeks practiced in their zealous desire to win because of the disgrace of losing and the rewards for winning, we perform in a muted form.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴³ Nigel Spivey, *The Ancient Olympics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 11-16. See Donald Kyle, *Sport and Spectacle in the Ancient World*, 198-216, for a thorough overview of the motives, myths and mobility of Greek Athletes.

¹⁴⁴ Dombrowski drew my attention, from his consultation of Miller, to the fact that “hero” was a technical term in ancient Greece, and what makes a hero depends on certain criteria (i.e., a person who achieved a semidivine status) of which might not be related to their athletic accomplishments (Dombrowski, *Contemporary Athletics*, 13-28). See also, Stephen G. Miller, *Ancient Greek Athletics* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004), 160-165.). However, Kyle points out that our data about ancient athletics is incomplete, unreliable and some of the so-called heroes (e.g., Theagenes of Thasos) of ancient Greece might not meet Miller’s supposed criteria (Kyle, *Sport and Spectacle in the Ancient World*, 198-216.).

¹⁴⁵ Weiss, *Sport*, 175-176.

Weiss organizes the role and place of goods such as honor according to the logic of dedication, his chief mark of athletic excellence. He states,

As a rule, we take it for granted that young men will accept the prospects of honor, power, self-esteem, good opinion, and the like. We, therefore, offer these prospects to them at times when there are no competing attractions, in the hope that they will make those prospects the focused objects of their desires. And we try to redesign the young men, to habituate them, and to train them so that when they are faced with those objects of desire they will produce only those relevant acts we think they should engage in.¹⁴⁶

He goes on to say that, if his thesis is correct regarding why men engage in sport—which is because it offers a means by which they can realize excellence in and through the body—then

one must appeal to more obvious rewards if one is to keep their minds fixed on sport. The dedication must be kept alive, or be regularly renewed, by making men aware, in the guise of models and tales of glory, of the nobility of the enterprise they have embraced. Otherwise they will risk being tempted by crasser goods.¹⁴⁷

Compared to the heroic society of classical Greece, Weiss's athletes at least are more socially mobile to realize such excellent ends. Therefore, many receive the opportunity to obtain benefits from external rewards, which, according to Weiss, the coach utilizes to help tutor the athlete. For Weiss, the practice of sport is attracted to excellence, while at the same time this pursuit of excellence is animated by the rewards and outcomes of winning. He claims that the true athlete must give himself to obtaining maximum results, constantly trying, striving, and wanting to win. I commend Weiss for his focus on excellence. However, as philosopher Raymond Belliotti argues with respect to this kind of philosophy applied to sport, I believe that Weiss's overexposure to the image of the great transcender causes him to miss the

¹⁴⁶ Weiss, *Sport*, 59.

¹⁴⁷ Weiss, *Sport*, 67.

entire deep truth concerning the nature of being human and the practice of sport.¹⁴⁸ His idealism makes him push for better and better, constantly striving, without experiencing a sense of contentedness with one's efforts because there is always another opportunity to improve. Excellence beckons the athlete to realize better performances. Because excellence is for young men, these athletes have an even shorter span to achieve sportive excellence, so the pressure exacerbates this anxiety and negates goods like peace and respite in sport. Weiss admittedly hones in on the individual athlete because the goal is to realize mankind's excellence in the abstract. Contesting with others, however, is bound to a social context, which according to Belliotti means that athletes should "relish their interdependence with others and appreciate how self-identity is linked to social contexts."¹⁴⁹ In short, as Fezell and Dombrowski claim, goods such as enjoyment of play itself are overlooked, if not lost, by Weiss's idealism. In the next chapter, we see that John Paul II synthesizes the transcendent with the immanent, so that our embodied humanity relishes this social activity as a gift (prior to a bodily task) directed toward God.

Detachment: Mystical Ascent

Paul Kuntz correctly estimates that Weiss assumes some kind of chain of beings with mankind at the apex of all that is finite, not because the Lord made him a little lower than the heavenly beings, but because he possesses certain powers.¹⁵⁰ Man's rational and moral powers enable him "to aspire to a higher state of being... [to]

¹⁴⁸ Raymond Angello Belliotti, "Vince Lombardi and the Philosophy of Winning," in *Football and Philosophy: Going Deep*, ed. Michael W. Austin (Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 2008), 5-17. Belliotti never mentions Weiss but his analysis of Lombardi draws out the value of winning and excellence which in many ways parallels Weiss, yet more concretely with Lombardi as a football coach.

¹⁴⁹ Belliotti, *Football and Philosophy*, 16.

¹⁵⁰ Kuntz, "Cosmos and Chaos," 125. See Weiss, *Sport*, 40.

move upward...a movement into those finalities.”¹⁵¹ This helps to elucidate the background beliefs that organize Weiss’s metaphysic and ethic. Moreover, Weiss compares this ascent to what the yogi seeks, as articulated in the Bhagavad-Gita. Similar to the yogi, the athlete as a man of action detaches himself from the mundane.

If the yogi’s path to union with ultimate reality serves as an example for how an athlete comes to experience distinct finalities, then the athlete’s path must be accompanied by a detachment from the fruits of his sportive action, an indifference to any action.¹⁵² The yogi turns away from contingencies in order to dwell on the everlasting, while the athlete pushes past the dynamics of sport “to create another domain with its own beginning, ending, process and laws.”¹⁵³ Within this account, I see Weiss describing transcendence in two senses. The first is a harbinger to how sport psychologists today conceptualize athletes’ peak experiences, or “being in the zone”. Consistent with this sense, Weiss claims that “what he [the athlete] is and what he does is for the moment thereby severed from the rest of the world.”¹⁵⁴ During a game, boundaries like time appear to be manipulated and transcended with a contest’s peculiar time outs, stops, and finishes. It is in these moments that athletes often describe experiences where they transcend the conventions of this world, losing a sense of time, self, others, etc. Whether these psychological states are identical to religious and mystical experiences is beyond the scope of my thesis. Nevertheless,

¹⁵¹ Kuntz, “Cosmos and Chaos,” 125.

¹⁵² Weiss, *Sport*, 245.

¹⁵³ Weiss, *Sport*, 244-245; Weiss, *PIP* 5, 398-399.

¹⁵⁴ Weiss, *Sport*, 245.

the nature of transcendence in the second sense concerns the structures of reality.

This is what is most important for Weiss and his Platonic metaphysic.

The key both for Weiss's yogi example and Platonic ascent is to transcend the world of experience, which in some way lacks the fullness of reality. Furthermore, according to Weiss, we transcend our finitude because there is something inherently wrong with it. I do not think Weiss goes so far as to say with Vedantic Hinduism that the transitory does not possess genuine reality; however, the fact stands that for Weiss, humans are intrinsically incomplete. With his mystic tendencies and Platonic striving, Weiss clearly moves the athlete toward liberation through the body. That is why Weiss seeks a separation from this world, for separation repairs this lack or privation in actuality.¹⁵⁵ Weiss explicates this striving as an effort that secures, even if short-lived, a public result that facilitates self-sufficiency.¹⁵⁶ Weiss's eudaimonism shines forth here. The athlete in her sportive actions produces a good (excellence) that brings about happiness, even if temporary. Excellence as a result of athletic action is a limited version of an ultimate finality. Weiss declares that the athlete can live for a while with this production because it identifies her with what lasts forever. Weiss adds that this sportive performance as a production brings forth a condition in the athlete herself, namely, self-sufficiency.

Self-Sufficiency: A Condition of Bodily Excellence

Julia Annas insightfully observes that in ancient ethics, especially in Aristotle, self-sufficiency (*autarkeia*) was a main concern.¹⁵⁷ She recounts *autoarkeia* in

¹⁵⁵ Weiss, *Sport*, 245. I say more about this below.

¹⁵⁶ Weiss, *Sport*, 245

¹⁵⁷ Julia Annas, *Morality of Happiness* (New York: Oxford Press, 1993), 34-46.

Aristotle as a condition of a final end. According to Martha Nussbaum, it can be said that self-sufficiency coupled with the ascent motif was a dominant theme in the Platonist tradition. Nussbaum reviews Platonism as a background belief for Augustine, stressing how the self-sufficient person moves through different stages toward the top of the Platonic ladder, where in contemplating the good, the self is free from neediness.¹⁵⁸ In the Platonist tradition, the progression is to wean the person from earthly loves and temporal attachments so that his affections are transferred to the eternal, where he finds complete fulfillment and satisfaction. I believe that Weiss with his Platonic metaphysic includes self-sufficiency as a condition of the athlete's *telos*. I interpret self-sufficiency in Weiss as an aspect of human freedom, in that the athlete masters himself to a full participation in a contest.¹⁵⁹ The athlete holds himself independent from ordinary life so he can invest completely in the game and nothing else.¹⁶⁰ For Weiss, it is when the athlete is completely absorbed in the game while pursuing bodily excellence that he removes himself from the temporal and identifies with and inhabits eternity.¹⁶¹

In *Philosophy in Process*, Weiss even conceptualizes this progression as having at least four stages. Each stage emphasizes perfection because it involves an effort “which is an end itself and which also functions as a means or consequence in the realization of some further end.”¹⁶² Athletes, for Weiss, have before them “always the ideal of becoming complete men who have reached the limits of physical

¹⁵⁸ Martha Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 531-535.

¹⁵⁹ Weiss, *PIP* 5, 514-519.

¹⁶⁰ Weiss, *Sport*, 245.

¹⁶¹ Weiss, *Sport*, 248.

¹⁶² Weiss, *PIP* 5, 514.

achievement.”¹⁶³ To be clear, Weiss believes this ascent involves the body in a more robust manner than traditional Platonism does, especially since it focuses on mere philosophical ascent. Thus, this ascent toward excellence is a union of body and mind with the authority of the mind disciplining and controlling the body. Weiss construes the perfect athlete as “Plato’s state writ small, and thus, in Aristotle’s terms, the embodiment of justice and temperance, the virtues where each part does its proper task, and the body is willed to be and is willingly subordinate to the mind...”¹⁶⁴ When this harmony occurs, the athlete is said to be so identified with his body that he surpasses others because he is eternalized.

What about the Platonic view of love for Weiss? In *Man’s Freedom*, Weiss espouses different aspects of the four views of love, one of which is Plato’s metaphysics of love. Plato’s love connects dependent, imperfect beings with the perfection they long for.¹⁶⁵ I believe that, for Weiss, the beloved in sport is the good or excellence that the athlete is ultimately at the mercy of because it is the ideal that exists independent of him and that he strives sacrificially to embody and resemble in his maximal results. The athlete needs this ideal because the good permits him to self-complete. In fact, it is the athlete’s union with the beloved through his excellent bodily performances that sustains his existence even after he has been separated from his body.¹⁶⁶ In the last paragraph of his final chapter in *Sport*, Weiss declares that the athlete “dedicates himself to a superb performance, *to make himself one who loves*

¹⁶³ Weiss, *Sport*, 141.

¹⁶⁴ Weiss, *PIP 5*, 157.

¹⁶⁵ Weiss, *Man’s Freedom*, 296. Weiss characterizes love in this early work as consisting of *eros*, *agape*, *caritas* and *cupiditas*. None of these should be neglected for all of them offer strengths; love is more than the sum of its four parts.

¹⁶⁶ This brings together my point above about personal identity and death.

too coldly, perhaps, but persistently and well. In his play he exhibits in a steady, *impersonal form* that love which some men on occasion extend toward a few.”¹⁶⁷

Clearly, Weiss views this kind of love as dispassionate. Moreover, according to Nussbaum, the Platonic lover “has gotten beyond the tension of erotic longing, since he has found an object that satisfies his longing to “be with” the beloved always.”¹⁶⁸

Assuming my connection between self-sufficiency and ancient ethics,¹⁶⁹ Weiss’s selection of this concept is important because it carries forward this metaphor of ascent. Self-sufficiency describes what bodily excellence and the athletic life is altogether directed toward. Like Plato’s just individual, the self-sufficient athlete has dedicated and disciplined himself so that his self-mastery, a cardinal virtue, directly relates him to the immutable, which alone is ultimately real. Thus, the self-sufficient athlete is the self-complete athlete. For Weiss, then, the two are interchangeable, and the athlete attains *eudaimonia* by his own efforts.

I should probably qualify this idea of self-sufficiency, for Paul Kuntz raises an important point as to whether Weiss even believed that excellence in sport enables a man to be complete and integral.¹⁷⁰ Weiss believed that in different periods, different categories of people were viewed as complete.¹⁷¹ For example, in ancient Greece, the wise man was complete, whereas in Rome, the political man was complete. Kuntz believes that Weiss denies that the athlete can ever become a complete man. I agree with Kuntz in part, because Weiss does qualify that the athlete is complete in that he

¹⁶⁷ Weiss, *Sport*, 249. The italics are mine for emphasis.

¹⁶⁸ Nussbaum, *Upheavals*, 532.

¹⁶⁹ For a helpful exposition of Platonic self-sufficiency, though I do not agree in total with her account of Augustine, see Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought*, 531-535.

¹⁷⁰ Kuntz, “Paul Weiss,” 182.

¹⁷¹ Weiss, *PIP* 5, 166.

reaches the limits of physical achievement. Furthermore, Weiss explains that the athlete (particularly Weiss's young athlete) lives only a partial life because he accepts this role for a limited time in an artificial world and, like other societal roles, keeps the rest of himself suspended. That is, a larger life awaits the young person both in the future and outside the actual game since he will adopt many other roles during the course of his life. Keith Algozin explains that, for Weiss, the athlete does not represent the full nobility of what it means to be human, but that he can realize a facet of the perfection that attracts men in order to be complete.¹⁷² So it is not necessary to play sport in order to achieve excellence, but at the same time, the athlete represents the bodily support of the higher ideals.

In *Philosophy in Process*, volume 5, Weiss admits that he has not properly defined the term "complete" life, nor has he justified that the complete man in a particular period was nothing more than an outstanding man.¹⁷³ Perhaps the athlete cannot be complete in an absolute sense. Yet Weiss's athlete strives for self-completion and his best performances gesture the kind of excellence that represents and epitomizes mankind: "the athlete instantiates man in a splendid form... [showing us] what we ideally are as bodies."¹⁷⁴ Even if the athlete only carries this excellence momentarily, he presents and participates in an ideal that the best of men in different epochs must at least incite.

¹⁷² Keith Algozin, "Man and Sport," in *Philosophic Inquiry in Sport*, eds., William J. Morgan and Klaus V. Meier, (Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics, 1988), 183-187; Keith Algozin, "Man and Sport," *Philosophy Today*, (Fall 1976): 190-195.

¹⁷³ Weiss, *PIP* 5, 168.

¹⁷⁴ Weiss, *Sport*, 16.

Because of this self-completion objective, the athlete puts himself “in a fine position to heal the breach that daily separates him and the world beyond.”¹⁷⁵ When Weiss admits that some kind of gap exists between this temporal world and the world beyond, I believe he invokes Platonic categories once again. For example, in the *Phaedo* (100c), Plato states that what makes something beautiful is the presence and participation of beauty. Beauty is a Form that exists independently and beyond this world, and anything on this earth that resembles beauty can be said to participate in it. Like Plato, Weiss’s participation thesis is an attempt to bridge the gap between ideas and things. Weiss explains the presence of ideals by virtue of the fact that they are present in things and partake of the ideals. In fact, all particulars have being because they participate in a finality, such as beauty or excellence. This break assumes that some gulf exists between these two worlds. If I am correct that something is wrong with this world, then the world needs a cure. And this problem with the world implies that, if there is a separation, then regardless of the cause, the result is alienation. Weiss never tells us what the cause is, only that this is the way things are. Conflict and alienation exist between these two worlds, or there would not be a split. Moreover, this conflict exposes an insufficiency, which for Weiss is inherent to our existence.

Since this alienation is what is wrong, then Weiss proposes that the athlete, like other men who choose to identify themselves with what is ultimately real, has it within his powers to atone for the transgression that separates this world from the world beyond. Weiss holds that, after he attains this ascent, the athlete returns to the sensible world enlightened: he is “more able than most to return to his daily tasks

¹⁷⁵ Weiss, *Sport*, 245.

with some sense of what is stable and fundamental there, and what is not.”¹⁷⁶ The athlete enters back into this world informed by higher realities. Weiss takes for granted another Platonic distinction because he assumes that the athlete accesses the intelligible structures of reality after his ascent. He can look past appearances to see things for what they are.

Before I move on to the third chapter, I want to summarize a couple of important theological points that clearly distinguish a Christian ethic from Paul Weiss’s ethic. These points help segue to my study of John Paul II and his personalistic ethic and sport.

First, the goodness of creation as described in chapter one (Genesis 1-2) means that all actualities, all finite things, participate in the gift of existence given by God.¹⁷⁷ Sport as a human performance derives its meaning from the fact that this embodied and physical activity is upheld by God through his creational laws. Athletes as human beings are created by God, who gives them a reality of their own with powers specific to human reality. Since these delegated powers are from God himself, it reasonable to infer that they are ordered and structured for good ends.

If these powers are from God, this means that this strenuous and sensuous mode of being-in-the-world receives its meaning and structure from a personal God rather than from the impersonal cosmic forces that Weiss’s Platonic participation assumes, and therefore its direction is valued and ordered in the material to the transcendent.

Weiss attempts a secular version of the latter point; however, Christian theology

¹⁷⁶ Weiss, *Sport*, 245. Though I keep the antecedent beliefs at an introductory level, Weiss’s Platonic assumptions on a more technical level intersect Middle Platonism and Plotinus who develops this ascent motif even more than Plato himself.

¹⁷⁷ This general outline continues my Augustinian model from chapter 1. See Smith, *Introducing Radical Orthodoxy*, 185-230, for I draw inferences from his interaction with Radical Orthodoxy and what this implies for a theological engagement with modern sport.

grows out of an anthropology that acknowledges the supernatural end and the goodness of embodied life. Thus, we encounter the goodness in sport by actually experiencing excellence and other goods in this human reality, and though we can look beyond sport to its ultimate sustaining source, we do not do the latter at the expense of full celebration of the former. I underscore how important this human, earthly reality is when I develop Bonhoeffer's ethic as a critique of modern muscular Christianity's failure to properly value sport as a bodily good.

Second, in keeping with *Guadium et Spes*, John Paul II's ethic recognizes the goodness of every aspect of human culture. This recognition opens the Church toward the modern world for dialogue with sportive culture. He identifies a direct relationship between who we are as humans and how earthly activities bring fulfillment. Because of Vatican II in particular, this broadened perspective functions as a corrective to the scholastic natural law theories that instrumentalized earthly life as primarily a bridge to heaven. This instrumentalizing of earthly life was French Catholicism in the nineteenth century, and hence Kuntz labels Weiss's theory of sport accordingly. By affirming such worldly activities, John Paul II heals a breach that occurred between sacred and secular life. John Paul II's ethic re-envisioned the Church as an "expert in humanity" so that sportive goods are not neglected. Against the legalism of the scholastic natural law theory, John Paul II promotes the dignity of the sportsperson so that right actions direct her toward realizing her well-being. John Paul II's anthropology specifies our human fulfillment and dignity in Christ. Our sportive actions donate the gift of self to another in such a way that contest is oriented primarily around gift and love, not the self-mastery of the body as a task.

CHAPTER THREE

THE HUMAN PERSON AT THE CENTRE OF SPORT DRAMA:

JOHN PAUL II'S PERSONALISM AND SPORT

Introduction

Paul Weiss contends in *Sport: A Philosophic Inquiry* that sport is a pursuit of bodily excellence. Bodily excellence is a bodily good that can be realized in the practice of sport. Weiss's teleology provides the content and context for his philosophy of sport.

Weiss's teleological foundation for sport and the athlete offers a point of entry from which a Christian ethic can think theologically about sport.¹ John Paul II follows from Paul Weiss because he answers a number of the problems a Christian ethic has with an ethic of excellence. Comparing and contrasting John Paul II and Weiss forces a Christian ethic to clearly consider both its own core convictions about sport as a pursuit of excellence and also how other theological matters, namely, embodiment, gift and persons, relate to ethical considerations; it lays bare important aspects of a Christian theological framework that, without a foil, might lie

¹ I do not mean by this that a Christian ethic then builds upon the conceptual foundations or categories that Weiss insightfully constructs as philosophical tools for analyzing sport. I simply mean that as my main interlocutor and foil he helps to identify important values and truths which a Christian ethic must consider. Therefore, I concur with O'Donovan that a Christian ethic evaluates any phenomena from the authority of the gospel. In this chapter that is assumed and made more explicit from John Paul II's own theological presupposition that Christ fully discloses man to himself (*Guadium et Spes*, 22). Even more, I carry this forward explicitly in the fourth and fifth chapter with Bonhoeffer. This is important because this knowledge is acquired by faith in Christ which in turn brings a new revelation of human dignity which is simply absent in Weiss.

unexpressed, unacknowledged, or indiscriminate. Furthermore, this method of comparing and contrasting redresses the problem concretely for modern sport with the aid of another interlocutor.

Weiss understands bodily excellence as a virtue because of his underlying conception of good and anthropology. Bodily excellence assumes a common *telos* grounded in the good life for human beings. Weiss is correct that bodily excellence is a worthwhile objective; however, he claims that bodily excellence is the primary good and, herein lies the main problem.

In this chapter, I will argue that, by selecting bodily excellence as the primary good, Weiss neglects goods that are equal to (if not more important) than bodily excellence because of who we are as full human beings. I emphasize not so much the other goods (non-moral and moral), but who we are as human beings and the source of those goods. Hence, we see that the good of sport for Weiss's athlete forfeits an integral human fulfillment and human dignity. Weiss's impoverished anthropology leads him to limit what it means to be a human being. He commits his athlete to a way of being in this world that is not fully human. If becoming physically excellent is specific to what it means to be human, and if there is more to being human than bodily excellence, then surely there is more to who we are when performing in and through sport. We are persons who bear a host of goods; therefore, we value and are attracted to a plurality of goods in sport because, as Augustine argues, our loves ready us for such goods. Weiss' single focus on bodily excellence is a "Promethean" anthropology because it glorifies the athlete who heroically performs in a way that exhibits self-sufficiency.

I contend that Karol Wojtyla/John Paul II fixes this problem by grounding both sportive action and this entire discourse about sport in personalism. His personalism organizes why and what he John Paul II says about goods in competitive sport.² According to Wojtyla, personalism is important for a theological ethic because “at the basis of morality is found the human being as a person. Morality is properly and fundamentally a correlate of personality: ‘the human being as a human being’ means ‘the human being as a person’.”³ The human being as person resides at the core of morality, and any other thing put in a person’s place is inadequate. Further, Wojtyla’s axiology, following Thomas, directs all goods (i.e., bodily, spiritual, or moral) toward what fulfils and perfects a being.⁴ For this thesis, personalism means that a Christian ethic considers excellence as it relates to what it means to be human. First, I begin with John Paul II’s personalism and what it means in general for human dignity and excellence. Second, in the latter part of the chapter, I continue with his personalism, but more specifically, with his theology of the body and what embodiment means for excellence. Throughout the chapter, I move between his sport homilies and his other works in order to demonstrate the direct relationship between them.

John Paul II’s Personalism: Human Dignity and Sportive Excellence

For John Paul II, sport is a proper object of theological reflection because at the heart of sportive action is the human person. The athlete as a person is the proper object of sport. Man himself is the central problem that Wojtyla sought to defend

² John Paul II wrote approximately 120 discourses on sport rooted in his more philosophical and theological works.

³ Karol Wojtyla, “The Problem of the Theory of Morality,” in *Person and Community: Selected Essays* (New York: Peter Lang, 1993), 154.

⁴ Wojtyla, “In Search of the Basis of Perfectionism in Ethics,” in *Person and Community*, 46-48.

throughout his academic and papal works. From his earliest homilies on sport,⁵ John Paul II asserts that it was the Catholic Church's view of the human person that grounds the Magisterium's evaluation, which it gives to the discipline of sport.⁶ He states repeatedly that the person is the goal and criterion of all sporting activity.⁷ If personalism is his starting point, then it is necessary to explain what John Paul II means by personalism as it pertains to the human person. First, I will describe some of the key characteristics of his personalism and show how his account of sport emerges from his personalism. Second, I will return to Weiss and explain how personalism relates to his concept of excellence.

Wojtyla's personalism, as explained in pre-papal writings such as *Love and Responsibility*, *Person and Community*, and *The Acting Person*, underlies all his teachings. Personalism is the anthropological basis of his teachings.⁸ In general, personalism operates from a philosophical and theological anthropology that emphasizes the nature and value of the human person with a particular focus and interest on the dynamics of personal, concrete existence and action. Brian Johnstone

⁵ Unless noted, my collection of John Paul II's sport homilies and speeches comes from my own search from the Vatican website (i.e., http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/speeches/index.htm; http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/homilies/index.htm), my personal correspondence throughout this thesis and meetings with Fr. Kevin Lixey in May 2008 in Rome, and the files forwarded to me from his office at the Vatican. Fr. Kevin Lixey directs the *Church and Sport Section* in Rome which was commissioned in 2004 by John Paul II under the Pontifical Council of the Laity. Carlo Mazza in, "Sport as Viewed from the Church's Magisterium," in *The World of Sport Today: A Field of Christian Mission*, ed. Pontifical Council of Laity (Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vatican, 2006), 57, reports that in the 20th century the pontiffs delivered over 200 sport discourses, ranging from terse greetings before diverse audiences to more developed messages for specific events for the Church or for society in general. John Paul II gave over 120 speeches on sport as his main subject matter.

⁶ John Paul II, "Address to Members of the Italian and Argentine National Soccer Teams," Rome, 25 May 1979.

⁷ John Paul II, "The Most Authentic Dimension of Sport: To Create a New 'Civilization of Love'," in *L' Osservatore Romano* English ed. n. 17, 12 April 1984, sec. 2.

⁸ John F. Crosby, *Personalist Papers* (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2004), 244-245.

indicates that this emphasis on the person was a noteworthy shift (from “human nature” to the “human person”), a shift that occurred in the wake of post-Vatican II methods of moral reasoning. According to Johnstone, this shift was “a transition from a methodology based on a particular interpretation of human reality or ‘anthropology’ and a particular account of moral reasoning, to another methodology, also including an account of human reality and an account of moral reasoning.”⁹ Thus, this shift was a shift to personalism.¹⁰

Wojtyla declares that personalism’s “meaning is largely practical and ethical: it is concerned with the person as a subject and object of activity, as a subject of rights, etc.”¹¹ According to John Paul II, what we think it means to be human is foundational to ethics and axiology.¹² As a young man, John Paul II witnessed the abominable acts that the Nazi and Communist regimes inflicted in Poland. This experience deeply affected him and this experience became for him the foremost crisis for humanity today because these kinds of tyrannies center on false

⁹ Brian V. Johnstone, “From Physicalism to Personalism,” *Studia Moralia* 30 (1992), 71; cf. Paulinus I. Odozor C.S. Sp., *Moral Theology in an Age of Renewal* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 2003), 271-303.

¹⁰ To be more precise, Vatican II experienced the affects of the personalism movement (comprised broadly of European existentialists and phenomenologists) that had taken root in France, Germany and Poland. In France, it was Blondel, Maritain, Mounier and Marcel. In Germany, it was Scheler and Buber. In Poland, it was the Lublin School which was directly influenced by Scheler, Mounier, and other members of the *Esprit* group. Roman Ingarden and Karol Wojtyla carried forward the seminal ideas of personalism with their focus on philosophical anthropology and human subjectivity in particular, in order to defend the dignity of the human person which was under attack by Marxist ideology due to Communist rule in Poland.

¹¹ Karol Wojtyla, “Thomistic Personalism,” in *Person and Community*, 165.

¹² Kenneth L. Schmitz, *At the Center of the Human Drama: The Philosophical Anthropology of Karol Wojtyla* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1993), 34. Schmitz notes, that *The Acting Person*, investigates philosophical anthropology with an eye toward axiology and ethics. Williams claims that though personalism is not primarily a theory of the person it does assume an underlying anthropology and focuses more on practical, human action and how action discloses the person as subject and object (Thomas D. Williams, *Who is My Neighbor?: Personalism and the Foundations of Human Rights* (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2005), 125.

conceptions about what it means to be a person.¹³ For John Paul II, when any sportive practice or activity is not an occasion to exalt the dignity of the human person,¹⁴ then the fundamental value of the human person, “as the end and measure of every sporting activity,” is violated. This neglect of the fundamental value of the human person lies at the heart of Weiss’s sport ethics, and it equally confronts and plagues sportive life today. Karol Wojtyla resisted these ideologies because they failed to delineate a marked difference between human persons and the rest of nature.

Personalism: What is it?

Human Beings are Persons

A key tenet of personalism is that humans are persons.¹⁵ Wojtyla believes that the human being is a person. Despite the differences between different worldviews, “everyone in some way agrees with this assertion,” which is a conviction of experience according to Wojtyla.¹⁶ Wojtyla continues, saying that this reality of personhood properly identifies the position of being human in the world; it marks out human beings’ natural greatness because humans are distinct and superior to all other created realities. Wojtyla utilizes the term person “to signify that a man cannot be wholly contained within the concept ‘individual member of the species’, but that

¹³ In 1976, Wojtyla wrote about this controversy concerning the human being when he reflected on what had happened “...After nearly twenty years of ideological debate in Poland, it has become clear that the center of this debate is not cosmology or philosophy of nature but philosophical anthropology and ethics: the great and fundamental controversy about the human being” (Karol Wojtyla, “The Person: Subject and Community,” in *Person and Community*, 220.).

¹⁴ John Paul II, “Sports Can Help Spread Fraternity and Peace,” Address to FICEP Assembly, Rome, 3 April 1986, Sec. 3.

¹⁵ See André Ong, *John Paul II’s Philosophy of the Acting Person: A Personalistic Approach to Life* (Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2008); Peter Simpson, *On Karol Wojtyla* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2001); George Weigel, *Witness to Hope: The Biography of Pope John Paul II* (New York: Cliff Street Books, 1999); George Hunston Williams, *The Mind of John Paul II* (New York: Seabury Press, 1981). I do not intend to adumbrate all the characteristics of personalism for this is beyond the scope of this thesis.

¹⁶ Karol Wojtyla, “The Dignity of the Human Person,” in *Person and Community*, 177-180.

there is something more to him, a particular richness and perfection in the manner of his being, which can only be brought out by the use of the word ‘person’.”¹⁷

In *Love and Responsibility*, Wojtyla explicates this essential distinction of personalism in relation to sexual ethics, namely, that the person is both subject and object of action. He states “that every subject also exists as an object, an objective ‘something’ or ‘somebody’.”¹⁸ When talking about persons, he means that, regardless of what we may feel or believe about persons, the human person exists as a real entity that other subjects, who are also objects, meet and greet. His realism implies that each person is then set apart from every other object or entity in the visible world that he belongs to,¹⁹ for the distance between a person and a thing is a great gulf.²⁰ Persons are in a different metaphysical category from other kind because their reality is different in kind from the reality of the rest of nature. Thus, we deal with persons according to their personhood. Ethics relates to ontology. The special stress that Wojtyla lays on the value of the person makes all the difference on how athletes act toward other athletes versus toward another non-person reality. He explains that,

The value of the person is, in turn, the basis of the norm that should govern actions that have a person as their object. This norm may be called personalistic to distinguish it from other norms, which are based on the various natures of beings lower than the human being—nonpersonal natures...All norms, including

¹⁷ Wojtyla, *Love and Responsibility*, 22. For a detailed account, taking into consideration the history of the concept of “person”, see Wojtyla, “Thomistic Personalism,” *Person and Community* (New York: Peter Lang, 1993), 166-175. See also, O’Donovan, *Resurrection and Moral Order*, 238.

¹⁸ Wojtyla, *Love and Responsibility*, 21.

¹⁹ See Robert Spaemann, *Persons: The Difference Between ‘Someone’ and ‘Something’*, trans. Oliver O’Donovan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006) for an important treatment on how persons are different from things.

²⁰ Wojtyla, *Love and Responsibility*, 21.

the personalistic norm, as based on essences, or natures, of beings, are expressions of the order that governs the world.²¹

Similarly, in *Love and Responsibility*, Wojtyla accentuates the fact that the personalistic value of the person mutually conditions the personalistic norm. How we relate to and treat sportspersons is not arbitrary because it is rooted in the ontological status or value of the human person.²² In this thesis, a Christian ethic attends throughout to the value of an athlete, a sportsperson, for this value then gives rise to the moral requirements and relates to the ends (excellences), habits, and actions that either affirm or retard this personalistic value.

This natural greatness and superiority of the personalistic value—which radically differentiates us from non-persons—is verified by what humans do and what effects their actions have: human persons freely make, produce, and create culture and technology.²³ In Genesis, the Christian tradition recognizes that function is inherent to this natural greatness. Adam and Eve were commanded to care and tend to the garden because they and only they bore God’s image. Function testifies to this natural greatness because humans act in ways that non-persons cannot or do not.²⁴ Human persons are given the cultural mandate or dominion, not non-persons.²⁵ Sports is a prime example, for, although non-persons might be able to play on some level, humans can transform nature by imaginatively creating and perfecting both a sportive contest and themselves, all of which testifies to this dignity. Wojtyla adds

²¹ Wojtyla, “Catholic Sexual Ethics,” *Person and Community*, 287.

²² Williams, *Who is My Neighbor?*, 119-120.

²³ Wojtyla, “The Dignity of the Human Person,” in *Person and Community*, 178.

²⁴ Wojtyla, “The Dignity of the Human Person,” in *Person and Community*, 178.

²⁵ Sadly, this reality often has been misunderstood with respect to nature, but the fault does not lie with human dignity but with humans who misuse their responsibility.

that “a being that continually transforms nature, raising it in some sense to that being’s own level, must feel higher than nature—and must *be* higher than it.”²⁶

At this point, it is important to explain that Wojtyla’s metaphysic is an objectivist metaphysic. He works from the premise that man is a part of objective reality. This metaphysic interprets man in light of the whole of the cosmos. It is in effect a cosmological anthropology.²⁷ Specifically, the person is a substantial being, *suppositum*, an “objective being with its own proper subsistence.”²⁸ A person possesses his own existence and action. Wojtyla upholds the ancient concept of *suppositum*, for the human person is an individual substance.²⁹ When developing his sexual ethics, Wojtyla adds that, since human nature exists in a concrete *suppositum* that is a person, all aspects, functions, and urges are always attributes of a person.³⁰ The same can be said of sports. The mode of existence in sport is a mode of cultural activity unique to the level of a person because the person plays sports.

This objective foundation is important for Christian ethics and for sport. First, it assures that a Christian ethic begins with the objective truth of a human person as a

²⁶ Wojtyla, “The Dignity of the Human Person,” in *Person and Community*, 178.

²⁷ His philosophical analysis of being then commences from his own Catholic tradition as shaped by Thomas and what he learned at the Angelicum. Wojtyla clarifies that in Thomas’ system the notion of person serves more of a theological function because his analysis of created reality is from Divine Persons which is based on revelation (Wojtyla, “Thomistic Personalism,” in *Person and Community* (New York: Peter Lang, 1993), 166-167.). For a close inspection of how the concept and terms related to “person” were theologically and philosophically established for Thomistic Personalism, see Williams, *The Mind of John Paul II*, 148-151. Though Wojtyla later considered this metaphysic as inadequate by itself, his Thomism, when writing his first dissertation on John of the Cross, was presented according to the categories of traditional Thomism, and for the most part, McCool argues remains the same (Gerald A. McCool, S.J., “The Theology of John Paul II,” in *The Thought of Pope John Paul II: A Collection of Essays and Studies*, ed. John M. McDermott, S.J., (Rome: E.P.U.G., 1993), 36.).

²⁸ Karol Wojtyla, “Thomistic Personalism,” in *Person and Community*, 170.

²⁹ Karol Wojtyla, “Thomistic Personalism,” in *Person and Community*, 167. Wojtyla favors insights from both which is why the phenomenological method proved helpful for Wojtyla to uncover manifestations of the person as a subject that a pure cosmological account did not furnish.

³⁰ Wojtyla, “Catholic Sexual Ethics,” in *Person and Community*, 284.

metaphysical fact. This reality is independent of us; thus, it serves as an objective measure. Therefore, athletes play and compete in a sportive reality that is not fictional or absolutely separate from ordinary time because they meet other athletes, who are also substantial beings. Though the conventions and way of relating may be unique and sport-specific (e.g., stealing a base), they still involve and proceed from human persons, thus affecting real human persons. For example, when I slide into a home base with a catcher defending it, each role is known or experienced in the given acts from real people.

Second, in sport, we meet other persons who share the same personalistic value, regardless of their age, race, role, or position on a team. Athletes compete or contest with human persons who must be seen as they are really are; the choices an athlete makes are in a field of experience where contestants are somebodies. What is primary is the value of a person. The corollary then is how a particular sport practice affirms and develops the objective value of a person. For example, we do not begin with the sportive practice itself with regard to a moral problem in sport, but with what it means to be human. The human person exists before, during, and after a sportive practice. It is certainly conceivable that some sport practices allow for human excellence but can be found to violate human dignity when evaluated in light of what it means to be a human. Persons precede and act as the base for all human activities. John Paul II's personalism concurs that bodily excellence is an indication of the purpose intended by God in this human action sphere, but this good is not the only value that should be realized with respect to who we are as persons. In the latter half of this chapter, I argue that excellence as a human act must be expanded to include both transitive and intransitive action lest we be left with a form of

excellence that, like Weiss's, ultimately neglects who we fully are as persons.

Because of Wojtyla's personalism, I reject Weiss's inversion, for Weiss subordinates dignity to excellence. This subordination of dignity fails to give the fullest account of what it means to be a person in sport. Instead of making the person primary, Weiss apotheosizes the ideal of bodily excellence.

Third, this truth about a person conforms to the value that subsists in the person. This truth is the personalistic value grounded in the nature of personhood. In other words, John Paul II's understanding of the human person arises from a general theory of things as they are, which means that persons as well as values and norms are linked with a realist objectivity.³¹ Ong concurs that John Paul II's metaphysical realism is important "because it provides an objective foundation for his conception of the dynamic unity of a person as well as his personalistic ethics."³² No matter how you analyze or describe the human person, Wojtyla's Thomistic doctrine of being is given priority as the ultimate ontological foundation because "it is in the subject as a being that every dynamic structure is rooted, every acting and happening."³³

Fourth, as implied above, this personalistic value carries with it responsibilities for a Christian ethic. Human responsibility is derived from personalistic value. Williams notes that Wojtyla's personalism "allows the Christian ethicist to regain for the human person, by analogy like the divine Person in whose image he was created, a place for reasonableness and moral responsibility for his acts."³⁴ Athletes are

³¹ Weigel, *Witness to Hope*, 129.

³² André Ong, *John Paul II's Philosophy of the Acting Person*, 59.

³³ Karol Wojtyla, *The Acting Person*, 72. See also, Andrew N. Woznicki, *A Christian Humanism: Karol Wojtyla's Existential Personalism* (New Britain, CT: Mariel Publications, 1980), 9-11.

³⁴ Williams, *The Mind of John Paul II*, 150. Theologically, Thomistic Personalism demonstrates that just as the God-Man, Christ, was a person, "so is every human being, for man is created in the image

responsible to other sportspersons because sportspersons are persons with objective value. Thus, this attraction to and striving for excellence must be coordinated with who we are as persons. Excellence as an exercise of power should respect and enhance the integrity of sportspersons. John Paul II does not hold excellence as an ideal independent of who or what a person is. It is precisely who a person is that enables us to understand how a person acts. But this responsibility to other sportsperson also extends to an athlete herself because she presents her own being to herself through her actions. This self-respect becomes an important matter when discussing a theology of the body below.

If this objective foundation is important for Christian ethics and sport, how we talk (language) about sportspersons is another moral responsibility that follows from the value that subsists in the person. In Elshtain's account of language and how it relates to anthropological presuppositions, she argues that our language is important because how we name things either draws us closer to or farther away from that which our language describes.³⁵ Elshtain sees that language has descriptive power, which enables us to describe and pierce reality as best or close as we can.³⁶ Wojtyla names the human being a "person," a name that carries important meaning regarding dignity and respect.³⁷ In the context of sport, athletes are regularly named with language (e.g., enemy, foe, sissy, idiot, loser, etc.) that fails to address the depth of

of God and in the New Man Christ, renewed, became revelatory specific, for Christ revealed not what God is but also what man is" (Williams, *The Mind of John Paul II*, 148.). This reasoning is the basis for the truth that Christ alone fully reveals man to himself (*Gaudium et Spes* 22).

³⁵ Jean Bethke Elshtain, *Who are We? Critical Reflections and Hopeful Possibilities* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), xii, 127-142.

³⁶ Elshtain correctly qualifies that this does not mean that this naming commits her to a designativist account of language or a correspondence theory of truth (Elshtain, *Who are We*, 132.).

³⁷ For a short account of the historical significance of this term, see O'Donovan, *Resurrection and Moral Order*, 237-242.

what it means to be a human person. Our speech directly relates to whether we see the natural greatness of this kind of being, a human person. Thus, speech should be ordered or conformed to the truth about the personalistic value of human persons.

Fifth, Wojtyła's metaphysical realism, especially when he exercises the tools of phenomenology, prevents a Christian ethic from sliding into manifold forms of empiricism, solipsism, or subjectivism, which reduce humanity to either phenomena, consciousness, or measurable functions.³⁸ A human, though equally a distinctive subject of her actions, is an objective, enduring reality regardless of what she does or what happens to her. Therefore, a human person has absolute dignity, which cannot be relativized.

Before moving on to another important characteristic of John Paul II's personalism, I want to address what is at stake thus far in regards to Weiss's philosophy of sport where his metaphysic neglects this personalistic value.

Weiss recognizes that all actualities are directed toward some comprehensive good. This presupposition assumes a deficient metaphysic, for he asserts that some inherent wrong plagues human existence—not a wrong in a merely ethical sense, which a Christian metaphysic attributes to an evil fall, but a wrong in an ontological sense. His metaphysic appears to resemble Gnostic dualism. According to O'Donovan, a Christian ethic must challenge this metaphysic, for it confuses the goodness of natural structures with sin and disorder. This means for Weiss that, if human nature has no integrity or natural dignity within itself, "then actual good and evil alike stand together under the judgment of historical fulfillment, as

³⁸ See Wojtyła, "Subjectivity and the Irreducible in the Human Being," in *Person and Community*, 209-217; cf. Simpson, *On Karol Wojtyła*, 7-22.

‘imperfect’.’³⁹ As I presented in my last chapter, Weiss does not account for what it means to be human from a created order where purposes are given. He assumes that these purposes, like excellence, are indications of this order. However, his order or structure lacks on the most fundamental level.

If Weiss’s metaphysic makes no recourse to the way things were originally intended, and if all he knows is evil and an incomplete world, then how can he principally evaluate what is good from what is evil? A Christian ethic begins with a narrative that describes both this world and human beings as good, thus establishing evil as a transgression of this original goodness or purpose and as a fact of this universe. Weiss’s world only knows a metaphysic of incompleteness and fallenness. What criterion does Weiss use to judge the incompleteness or ontological lack in human nature? He appears to be trapped in a world that is incomplete without a metaphysic that positively characterizes the way things should or should not be. Both good and evil lack definite characterization and normative standards from which he can morally discern these important differences. Thus, Weiss’s perfectionism strives to realize a future prospect like excellence, yet this end, which attracts or calls his athlete forward, is bound by an incomplete metaphysic.⁴⁰

Did not Weiss claim, as described in the last chapter, that this striving toward excellence was in-built? Weiss does hold that human beings, like other things, are directed toward specific ends because metaphysically, all things tend toward this ordered end or excellence. However, his metaphysic does not warrant this claim, for it is incapable of making such evaluative or structural distinctions. Again, he presents

³⁹ O’Donovan, *Resurrection and Moral Order*, 63. See also, Albert Wolters, *Creation Regained*, 47-56.

⁴⁰ This whole paragraph draws heavily from O’Donovan, *Resurrection and Moral Order*, 63.

human nature as a natural structure that fundamentally lacks ontological goodness. Instead of creating a strict relation between the good and being,⁴¹ Weiss' doctrine of being admits imperfection in being; therefore, bodily sportive goods perfect something that by nature or structure is not good in being. His perfectionistic ethic is problematic because, as Wojtyla argues, the good that is supposed to perfect or enhance a being's existence is in keeping with its nature.⁴² Weiss' human being is incomplete, so actions build from a state of being that is structurally evil or bad. If human nature is the basis of an athlete's activity, then all her activities operate from an essence that is ontologically incomplete for Weiss.⁴³ How do future performances help this problem? Weiss's self-completion is deferred to the future, but it is a future that appears to fare no better than did its beginnings. That is, sportive activities express or externalize objectively an athlete's incomplete human nature. Existence is fundamentally flawed in that finitude lacks the fullness of being; athletes are guilty by virtue of their existence. What is Weiss's solution to this problem?

It is in and through excellent athletic performances that the ontological problem concerning our finitude is repaired. Weiss's theory of sport rightly recognizes how necessary some outside (beyond the temporal) help is for transforming what for his metaphysic is immanently not present. He opts for a Platonic divine ordering to complete what I estimate is lacking in his Aristotelian natural teleology for sport. That is, sportive performances become a means to participate in and then produce excellence. Excellence, as iterated, functions as a Platonic Form. This excellence invests in natural structures—human nature—what they lack on a fundamental level.

⁴¹ Wojtyla, "In Search of the Basis of Perfectionism in Ethics," in *Person and Community*, 45-49.

⁴² Wojtyla, "In Search of the Basis of Perfectionism in Ethics," in *Person and Community*, 45-49.

⁴³ Wojtyla, "Human Nature as the Basis of Ethical Formation," in *Person and Community*, 96-97.

Thus, dignity, which Weiss's natural structures lack metaphysically, is a function of the athlete's productivity or power. Self-realization is a way to climb up the ontological ladder by participating in Platonic ideals that survive this temporal problem located in human nature. This implies that Weiss' athlete attempts to outgrow her own human nature; it is as much a metaphysical adjustment as it is a self-completion.

What is so confusing is that Weiss pictures humans as special in one sense because they possess certain qualities that non-persons do not; however, he views personal dignity as more of a function of intelligence, abilities, healthiness, and accomplishments and less of a value that is inherent in human nature.⁴⁴ Since natural dignity is not something inherent in all human beings (for his metaphysic does not permit this integrity of structure), excellent performances confer dignity, albeit an extrinsic one. The athlete that performs strives for and achieves excellence represents the perfect ideal of mankind, Plato's Form. Weiss avers that it is because of this participation that athletes recognize and accord respect—what I take to be dignity achieved—to other athletes.⁴⁵ Weiss's view of excellence and participation entails that human worth or dignity is alien because it resides in those who pursue and realize sportive excellence. It is not an immanent, universal value of human persons who have been created in the image of God. On the contrary, it is bestowed on those who obtain excellence; it is an elitist achievement that connects them with what is truly good, beautiful, and true, an everlasting Form. Williams explains that,

⁴⁴ Williams, *Who is My Neighbor*, 153. Keep in mind that Williams is not engaging Weiss per se but similar accounts of human personhood that lead to certain kinds of moral problems which I find true for Weiss.

⁴⁵ Weiss, *Sport*, 248.

according to Wojtyla's realist metaphysics of the human person, worth is an ontological dignity intrinsic to a person.⁴⁶ Ontological dignity is different from moral dignity. In the Christian tradition, moral dignity was lost through sin, but ontological dignity remains. Weiss appears to conflate the two. If I am correct, then human nature, according to Weiss, begins with a loss of ontological dignity because we stand guilty before God.⁴⁷ This standing leads to an irresolvable problem because it posits human dignity as something humans have forfeited by virtue of their finite existence, and sport becomes a means to acquire both kinds of dignity. In the end, Weiss instrumentalizes sport.

If Weiss's understanding of what it means to be human misconstrues human dignity, then how does a Christian ethic understand human dignity? The answer to this question leads me to the second major characteristic of personalism, the characteristic that examines the human person as subject.

Human Dignity: The Person as Subject

For Wojtyla, a Christian ethic bases dignity on a natural, God-given, greatness. Personalism affirms the dignity of the person.⁴⁸ Wojtyla argues that, in order to get beyond the threshold difference between what persons can do and what non-persons cannot do, we must ground dignity within the human being.⁴⁹ For him, this grounding entails more than *what* makes us persons when compared with all of nature, or, for that matter, when thinking universally about all persons, for our ontic

⁴⁶ Williams, *Who is My Neighbor*, 153-158.

⁴⁷ Guilty for Weiss is both ontological and moral. Human nature by virtue of existence is less than God on the ontological ladder so we are guilty. Moral formation then becomes striving for the excellence (an everlasting Form) which affects being and goodness in human nature.

⁴⁸ For a similar taxonomy of personalism, see Williams, *Who is My Neighbor*, 117-120.

⁴⁹ Wojtyla, "The Dignity of the Human Person," in *Person and Community*, 178.

realities (e.g., rationality, freedom, conscience, etc.) and their employment can vary for whatever reason as far as their use.⁵⁰ But being human is essentially about *who* we are as persons. Who human beings are comes from within the human person. That means that it is the person who is the cause and origin of her actions. Thus, all objective acts—externalizations—are works, efforts, products, and achievements that have the human person as their unique origin and cause.⁵¹ Consequently, human beings not only experience cultural works such as these as objects from without, but because of their human interiority, they also experience these objects as subjects from within.⁵²

Wojtyla picks up the conceptual tools that phenomenological analysis avails to mine the subjective structure of the lived experience. He determines to interpret the total human person by complementing his Thomistic metaphysic with his personalism through a phenomenological method that allows access to the personal lived experience. Wojtyla was not satisfied to conclude with a Thomistic metaphysic--a more objectivist account of human persons. Weigel points out that, for Wojtyla, phenomenology was simply giving due consideration to human subjectivity so as to

⁵⁰ Other applied ethical matters demonstrate the importance of this matter. John Crosby discusses the neglected sources of human dignity one of which is a common human nature that all persons share. However, this is incomplete. The test case he presents concerns Peter Singer's defense of infanticide. If we only think of human dignity as grounded in a common rational human nature (which this appears to be where Weiss stops), then in principle Singer can hold to infanticide for what is lost with the killing of a defective child is equally gained by giving birth to a healthy child who shares the same rational nature from the same source. So, if it is only a common human nature then this is replaceable. Principally, human dignity obligates us to terminate the defective child so that the healthy child can maximally flourish now in a family that prior to the demands of the defective child had to balance. However, if we ground dignity in who we are as persons, persons who are uniquely and incommunicably their own, then we give a more complete account of who persons are and therefore, this is unrepeatable and irreplaceable (Crosby, *Personalist Papers*, 3-32.).

⁵¹ Wojtyla, "The Dignity of the Human Person," in *Person and Community*, 178.

⁵² Williams, *Who is My Neighbor*, 133-135. See also, Ong, *John Paul II's Philosophy of the Acting Person*, 178-186.

more fully explore and appreciate all dimensions of human experience.⁵³ Wojtyla himself admits that St. Thomas stops short of this emphasis on experience because his philosophy of being lacks the necessary focus on interiority, experience, and subjectivity.⁵⁴

“Lived experience,” therefore, refers to John Paul II’s phenomenological method of interpretation. Wojtyla asserts that this category was alien to Aristotle’s metaphysic, although this former metaphysic was sufficient for differentiating between what happens in the human being and what the human being does. This turn to the subject evades objectification because the subject herself experiences her own acts and inner happenings. Wojtyla develops his personalism by shifting his attention from the objective side to different subjective dimensions of the human person as viewed from a person’s own inner experience.⁵⁵ Wojtyla claims that who humans are “cannot be derived by way of cosmological reduction; we must pause at the irreducible, at that which is unique and unrepeatable in each human being, by virtue of which he or she is not just *a particular human being*—an individual of a certain species—but *a personal subject*.”⁵⁶ As a personal subject, a person uniquely possesses attributes that Wojtyla says are “in the inner self of a person.”⁵⁷ That is, what a person thinks, imagines, or wills are all constitutive elements of her own personhood that are equally regarded as sources of personalistic value. The inner self

⁵³ Weigel, *Witness to Hope*, 128-129.

⁵⁴ Schmitz, *At the Center of the Human Drama*, 140; Wojtyla, “Thomistic Personalism,” in *Person and Community*, 170-171.

⁵⁵ Simpson, *On Karol Wojtyla*, 14.

⁵⁶ Wojtyla, “Subjectivity and the Irreducible in the Human Being,” in *Person and Community*, 214. Italics in original.

⁵⁷ Wojtyla, *Love and Responsibility*, 26-27

refers to those dimensions of the rational and therefore spiritual nature that a person acts from and experiences from the inside.⁵⁸

As an example of this irreducibility, John Paul II addresses this source of dignity when giving a sport homily to blind athletes. He draws on their attraction to sport, which is no less than the attraction experienced by anyone else who might have all her sight capacities intact. He begins his address by citing the sport advertisement for these games: “Not seeing does not mean not loving; not seeing does not mean closing in upon oneself; not seeing does not mean failure to enjoy the beautiful things of life; not seeing does not mean the inability to participate in sports.”⁵⁹ His personalism interprets this experience as true because of the irreducible dignity that radiates through these athletes. He argues that these words gain our attention

because they appeal to everyone who has the gift of health, of sight, of efficiency, to understand that within every man or woman suffering from some sort of physical defect, there is always a human person; the [sic] is a human heart, with all the riches of an individuality which must not only be respected, but helped to develop itself according to its own gifts and inclinations, for the person’s own good and to the advantage of the entire community.⁶⁰

In this message, John Paul II gives particular attention to the fact that there is something more to a human person than sight. Because of the riches of individuality, each person is a unique and unrepeatable entity that is native to a person’s inner self.⁶¹ These athletes uniquely experience themselves from within. John Paul II reminds his audience that, thanks to this fact, we encounter the incommunicable

⁵⁸ Wojtyla describes this further as the incommunicable or the inalienable for this power of the subjective “I” to act accordingly is not something anybody else can will for somebody else (Wojtyla, *Love and Responsibility*, 24.).

⁵⁹ John Paul II, “Address to the Participants in the European Blind Championship,” Castel Gandolfo, 14 September 1985, Sec. 2.

⁶⁰ John Paul II, “Address to the Participants in the European Blind Championship,” Castel Gandolfo, 14 September 1985, Sec. 2.

⁶¹ Wojtyla, *Love and Responsibility*, 24.

person because each person is her “own” as a subject who must be respected. He surmises that all encounters and relationships are posited on this reality: “All true conceptions about education and culture begin and return to this point.”⁶² As John Paul II’s emphasizes, this source of personal dignity excludes no one. Though blind athletes might appear externally to lack the outstanding traits or functions of an excellent athlete, they are unrepeatably because they as subjects experience the richness of their own personhood.

To summarize this idea of human dignity, both the human person as subject and object are sources of human dignity. The athlete imitates a social role that human beings can play, but it is still the human person with an absolute dignity inherent in a person who is the cause that precedes this role (or any other cultural role, for that matter). Wojtyla acknowledges that this principle and dignity of the person, prior to a person’s acts, grounds all cultural discourse.⁶³ He states that it is not man who works (*homo faber*) or man who thinks (*homo sapiens*) that functions as the basis of a form of life, but rather the incontrovertible call and demand concerning human dignity. This call is the purpose of any cultural activity: “Human beings do not live for the sake of technology, civilization, or even culture; they live by means of these things, always preserving their own purpose.”⁶⁴ When applied to sport, this means that it is not man who plays (*homo ludens*) or man who sports (*homo sportivus*) that serves as the basis of sport, but rather the inherent worth and uniqueness of the sportsperson.

Since the human person as the subject is the cause, then to focus on excellent performances is to recognize excellent effects or beautiful expressions of who a

⁶² Wojtyla, *Love and Responsibility*, 24.

⁶³ Wojtyla, “The Dignity of the Human Person,” in *Person and Community*, 178-179.

⁶⁴ Wojtyla, “The Dignity of the Human Person,” in *Person and Community*, 179.

human being is. Excellence is valued in regard to human persons. On one hand, our common human nature, which causes us to appreciate and value sportive excellences for these cultural activities, proceeds from other human beings, whom we are like. On the other hand, it is not enough to ground human dignity in some universal nature, for the excellence of Michael Jordan is not the same as the excellence of Cristiano Ronaldo. Therefore, if we want to understand and even succeed in our pursuit of excellence—human fulfillment—we must carefully consider who we really are. The human person is the unique subject of her own intellect, freedom, or desire for excellence. This uniqueness of the human subject leads to another point of contention with Weiss.

Weiss short-changes the meaning of being human in sport by reducing it to the ideal of bodily excellence, or becoming excellent physically. Neither bodily excellence itself nor play, for that matter, is the answer to what it means to be human. Randolph Feezell argues that what attracts people to sport is something they find with which they uniquely identify.⁶⁵ They identify with it because of who they are as human beings. I concur with Feezell and Weiss about the goods they argue for, but why does it have to be either play or excellence when it is not merely the good which we affirm, but also the origin and cause of the good--the human being who experiences the good? Feezell argues that sport includes many goods, but primary for him is the enjoyment of play. Feezell examines Weiss's account of sport and insists that a more plausible explanation for why men (and women) seek the good of sport is "based on the classic accounts of play offered by Huizinga and Caillois."⁶⁶ This

⁶⁵ Feezell, "Sport, Pursuit of Bodily Excellence or Play?," 264.

⁶⁶ Feezell, *Sport, Play and Ethical Reflection*, 5.

explanation is more basic and, in fact, probably universal since Weiss' bodily excellence is certainly not true for nominal athletes, who because of bodily limitations are attracted more to play, friendship, community building, and sheer delight. Yet, if we understand Wojtyla's argument, a Christian anthropology does not have to decide between play and bodily excellence.

Both Weiss and Feezell equally neglect a more full and rich account of human persons, namely, human beings who cannot be reduced to play or skillful mastery. Being human is the key to sport and to appreciating the multiplicity of goods in which athletes revel as they contest with one another. Therefore, I do not find it helpful to search for "The *Holy Grail*" among a list of what is most basic. Instead, I ground the discussion in the richness and perfection of our humanity.

In a sport homily during the Jubilee of Sport 1984, John Paul II states,

The dignity of the human person is the goal and criterion of all sporting activity Sport is sincere and generous confrontation, a meeting place, a bond of solidarity and friendship...Sport can be genuine culture when the setting in which it is practiced and the experience it brings are open and sensitive to human and universal values for the balanced development of man in all his dimensions.⁶⁷

As Christians, John Paul II draws our attention to the idea that, whatever goods we demarcate in the practice of sport, their value is directly related to our dignity and fulfillment as persons. As humans then, we appreciate certain values as connected with and accentuated by sporting activity.⁶⁸ For example, John Paul indexes such goods as sensible, moral, relational, intelligible, and spiritual goods.⁶⁹ I might add that there sport tests and develops a plethora of moral and non-moral goods based on

⁶⁷ John Paul II, "The Most Authentic Dimension of Sport," sec. 2.

⁶⁸ John Paul II, "Sport as Training Ground for Virtue and Instrument of Union among People," Address to the Presidents of the Italian Sports Federations, Rome, 20 December 1979.

⁶⁹ For other goods, see John Paul II, "The Most Authentic Dimension of Sport," sec. 2.

the richness and uniqueness of our humanity, i.e., self- discovery, play, magnanimity, honesty, health, reasoning, creativity, efficiency, etc.

There is no need to single out one among the many goods that attract athletes as the kind of goods they can realize in this sphere of life. In fact, John Paul II argues that to do so is an axiological reduction because it restricts sportive value to the body; it fails to respect the integrity or wonderful structure of the human person as created by God.⁷⁰ A proper understanding of our humanity implies that there are other goods—in addition to bodily goods, such as sportive excellence—that are integral to persons. Though John Paul II would grant to Weiss that bodily excellence is an important value, I believe he would have grave doubts as to whether it is the essential element that describes our attraction to sport because he understands that sport actions flow from human beings who are irreducibly unique and wonderful. Human dignity is a fact worked out and performed by human beings. Moreover, Weiss misdirects us when he isolates the value of excellence, for his account neither explains nor represents the many other values that attract sportspersons to the practice of sport.⁷¹ Thus, Weiss lacks a richer account of persons.

Human Embodiment and Excellence

John Paul II provides a richer account of persons than Weiss because, for him, the human person as an embodied being is the bearer of excellence or virtue. The bearer of excellence and dignity is the whole person; thus, sport is an activity of the whole man. In some ways,⁷² Wojtyła's anthropology should not come as a surprise, for his

⁷⁰ John Paul II, "The Most Authentic Dimension of Sport," sec. 2.

⁷¹ Feezell, *Sport*, 263.

⁷² Prior to Vatican II, there were some significant historical developments that served as conceptual forerunners to thinking Christianly about such realities like sport. First, as cited by Darrell Cosden, A

synthesis was well underway by others; for example, Söll finds this phenomenological shift at the heart of Catholic theology and sport post-WW II and through Vatican II.⁷³ Wojtyla makes his contribution primarily via his anthropology, which maintains a unified view of man when facing such realities as sport. In this section, I address the body-soul dualism inherent in Weiss so a fuller account of our humanity, and thus our dignity, can sustain a Christian ethic and sport.

Wojtyla's affirmation of the goodness of the body is central to his commitment to human dignity. Shortly after he was elected as Bishop of Rome, he delivered a series of teachings on the theology of the body in St. Peter's Square between September 5, 1979 and November 28, 1984.⁷⁴ John Paul II determined to apply his theological personalism to the sexual aspects of bodiliness. In *Theology of the Body*, he carries forward modernity's belief that we must start with the human subject; however, he insists that this "turn to the subject" involves an embodied subject whose embodiment is equally important for her self-knowledge and for how she relates in and to this world.⁷⁵ John Paul II's pastoral concerns are evident throughout, for he desires to serve spouses by exploring the complexity of our bodily and sexual

Theology of Work, 4-5: "French [Catholic] theologians after World War II were the first to ask whether there was a 'theology of secular realities,'" a genitive method intended to offer a complete theological elucidation of something (Lothar Roos, *On a Theology and Ethics of Work*, *Communio* 11 (1984), 102.). Second, prior to this post war era, Cosden adds that this turn toward social awareness began in the nineteenth century (see A. R. Vidler, *A Century of Social Catholicism 1820-1920* (London: SPCK, 1964)) culminating with Pope Leo XIII's encyclical *Rerum Novarum* (Cosden, *A Theology of Work*, 19-20.). This encyclical inaugurated an outward looking stance for Catholic social thought. However, a fuller more clearly articulated view of the world as a good, created reality would not blossom or better yet be recovered until Vatican II.

⁷³ Georg Söll, "Sport in Catholic Theology in the 20th Century," in *The Scientific View of Sport*, eds. Ommo Grupe, Dietrich Kurz, and Johannes Marcus Teipel (New York: Springer-Verlag, 1972), 61-80.

⁷⁴ See John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them: A Theology of the Body*, trans. Michael Waldstein (Boston: Pauline Books and Media, 2006). Waldstein's introduction helps to organize themes and socio-cultural contexts for a complete interpretation of John Paul II's argument.

⁷⁵ Weigel, *Witness to Hope*, 343.

natures. In a systematic catechesis on this subject, he asserts that an adequate anthropology must consider and defend the meaning of the body not as a mere object of nature for human power, but as a primordial wonder, a gift that is to be received and respected because it is integral to human dignity. Wojtyla faced a modern challenge concerning matter as value-free in a Cartesian universe.⁷⁶ Instead of the kindred relationship with all of nature because nature as creation shares a common origin and is ordered toward the same ultimate good, the mechanistic account of nature inherited from Descartes and Bacon severed this kinship between human beings and other natural beings. Nature and bodies are viewed externally as an extended object, detached from the principles and final causes that constitute their being.⁷⁷ Thus, nature and bodies are stripped of their ontological interiority and meaning, making bodies morally neutral. With this void in or indifference toward nature, it did not take much for the Cartesian subject (consciousness) to now exert meaning and purpose on such material reality. Human freedom becomes the authority because it is inflated as the greatest good, thus allowing freedom to master nature or bodies.⁷⁸ Bodies are ruled by the mind, which determines what is good, the project for nature and human bodies. John Paul II counters such thinking in *Theology of the Body* by rescuing the body from this Cartesian split and denigration, and he

⁷⁶ Michael Waldstein, "Introduction," in *Man and Woman He Created Them: A Theology of the Body*, John Paul II, trans. Michael Waldstein (Boston: Pauline Books and Media, 2006), 34-44, 94-105.

⁷⁷ Schmitz, *At the Center of the Human Drama*, 130-131. Schmitz provides a fascinating account of how the modern world subverted the scholastic world especially its metaphysics.

⁷⁸ For a nuanced account of voluntarism, see O'Donovan, *Resurrection and Moral Order*, 34-52, 121-139.

affirms the goodness of the body, especially in the spousal union.⁷⁹ This same personalist concern and thesis is found in his sport homilies.

The Significance of the Body-Soul Unity and Dignity

Wojtyla maintains Thomas' hylomorphic view of the human (*compositum humanum*). As an individual substance, the person is a composition of matter (*hylē*) and form (*morphē*), body and soul.⁸⁰ The soul is a spiritual substance, which as the substantial form of the body is "the principle of life and activity of the human being."⁸¹ Because the human person is a substantial whole, a union of soul and body, then this is a fact peculiar to the human person, a unique component of what it means to be human.⁸² Cullen claims that "the hylomorphic view that man is a form-matter composite is present as the unstated premise of this theology of the body..."⁸³ John Paul II does not confuse these categories ontologically, for each of them has a unique, positively valued, order of existence, dynamism, and activity.⁸⁴ This philosophical presupposition means that, since the human person is a unified whole, the *compositum humanum* stands under and within all cultural activities; human dignity applies to the person in total.

⁷⁹ Descartes along with Kant and Scheler become John Paul II's main interlocutors.

⁸⁰ Wojtyla, *AP*, 203.

⁸¹ Karol Wojtyla, "Thomistic Personalism," in *Person and Community*, 168.

⁸² Karol Wojtyla, "Thomistic Personalism," in *Person and Community*, 168-169.

⁸³ Christopher M. Cullen, S.J., "Between God and Nothingness: Matter in John Paul II's *Theology of the Body*," in *Pope John Paul II on the Body: Human, Eucharistic, Ecclesial: Festschrift Avery Cardinal Dulles, S.J.*, eds. John M. McDermott and John Gavin (Philadelphia: Saint Joseph's University Press, 2007), 70.

⁸⁴ Zbigniew Dziubiński, "Sport in the Teachings of John Paul II: Unity of Reason, Soul and Action," *Physical Education and Sport* 49 (2005): 58. Wojtyla respects that form and matter are intrinsically related however because he does not reduce one to the other he maintains that each has an autonomy based on the laws of being unique to form and matter. See Karol Wojtyla, *Sources of Renewal: The Implementation of the Second Vatican Council*, trans. P.S. Falla (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1980), 47-49.

John Paul II's hylomorphic view explicitly governs his sport homilies. In one of his earliest sport addresses, shortly before his Wednesday Audience addresses on the body, John Paul II makes this point:

I am glad to perceive with what clarity and precision you, Mr. President, have received this teaching of the Church's Magisterium in this matter. It is certainly an important teaching as it reflects one of the fundamental points of the Christian vision of the person. Regarding this, it is good to recall that already in the first centuries, Christian thinkers, with little biblical data, affirmed the unity of the human person, and vigorously opposed a certain ideology, then in vogue, that was characterized by a clear devaluation of the body, and misguided by an erroneous over exaltation of the spirit. 'What is man- asked an author of the end of the 2nd century or beginning of the 3rd – what is man, is not a rational animal composed of a soul and of a body? The soul, then, taken by itself, is not then, a man? No, this is the soul of a man. Then is the body a man? No, but it must be said that this is the body of a man. Because of this, neither the soul, nor the body, on their own, is a man, but rather, he who we call by this name is that which is born from the union of these' (*De Resurrectione*, VIII: Rouet de Journal, *Enchiridion Patristicum*, n. 147, p. 59). Thus, when the Christian thinker of this century, Emanuel Mounier says that man is 'a body in the same way that he is spirit: entirely body and entirely spirit' (cf. E. Mounier, *Il Personalismo*, Roma 1971, p. 29), he is not saying anything new, but simply restating the traditional thought of the Church.⁸⁵

John Paul II's hylomorphic view means that the body's relationship to the human person is absolutely necessary.⁸⁶ The human body gives concreteness to an individual person, for this physical body is this man's body. The union of these two is what we call a human person. This means, further, that the sportsperson is his or her body.⁸⁷ John Paul II makes this claim precisely because his personalism takes embodiment seriously; the human body has an intrinsic and substantial connection to

⁸⁵ John Paul II, Address to the Italian and Argentine National Soccer Teams, Rome, 25 May 1979

⁸⁶ Wojtyła, *AP*, 203.

⁸⁷ This claim in the quote bears the decisive influence that Emmanuel Mounier had, as a representative of French Personalism, on Wojtyła/John Paul II. See Patricia Donohue-White, Stephen J. Grabill, Christopher Westley, and Gloria Zúñiga, *Human Nature and the Discipline of Economics: Personalist Anthropology and Economic Methodology* (New York: Lexington Books, 2002), 11-45.

the human soul.⁸⁸ Or to say it in reverse, the soul as the form and its particular powers are intrinsically dependent on matter. There is an indispensable relationship between the soul and the body.

In *The Acting Person*, Wojtyła's phenomenological reflection links man's visible outwardness with his invisible inwardness. "It is generally recognized that the human body is in its visible dynamism the territory where, or in a way even the medium whereby, the person expresses himself."⁸⁹ This visible expression is important because a person's body physically locates him in this world. The body in action manifests those rich constitutive elements (e.g., transcendence, self-possession, self-governance, and self-determination) that comprise the different dimensions of personal experience. Wojtyła explains that, because this experience is a bodily manifestation, this dynamic personal structure both manifests itself in action and is realized through action. He states that, because of its value, this complex dynamism "leads to integration in both the somatic and the psychological sphere of man."⁹⁰

Wojtyła expounds that, since bodily performance is an action performed by the person or appropriate to the person, that performance is itself a fundamental value.⁹¹ Once again this value refers to the personalistic value of the action. Wojtyła further defines this good as the value (pre-moral) that "is a special and probably the most fundamental manifestation of the worth of the person himself . . . [it] is therefore a special source, and the basis of knowledge about the value of the person (as well as

⁸⁸ Wojtyła, "Thomistic Personalism," in *Person and Community*, 168.

⁸⁹ Wojtyła, *AP*, 204.

⁹⁰ Wojtyła, *AP*, 264.

⁹¹ Wojtyła, *AP*, 264-265.

about the values inherent in the person). . . .”⁹² What follows is that any devaluing or misrepresenting of the body brings contempt on its fundamental value and its revelation of mankind’s unique human dignity. John Paul II begins with the human being who before or prior to action is intrinsically valuable, and bodily action specially discloses this value. Weiss presents the body as a morally neutral object or instrument that does not have any essential connection to anything other than itself. Weiss’s teleology becomes so important because, if the body is used by the mind (what is essential) to pursue the ideal of excellence, the body appears to hold value that is not intrinsic to the body.

For a Christian ethic, the body-soul connection is an intimate relationship. It follows that bodies speak a special language, for they reveal both to ourselves and to others who we are--they reveal our human dignity. If I am my body, then in some important sense “there is no distance between us and our bodies.”⁹³ Therefore, the soul and body function as one, not two different substances, as Weiss insists. The body then becomes the foundation to possess anything in sport or to receive other co-contestant’s embodied actions because it establishes the very possibility of using sport equipment and contesting with others.⁹⁴ An athlete picks up a racket or lines up a putt only because she has hands and eyes to perform these basic sport skills. In sum, the body is the concrete space where such sportive performances are acted with others; consequently, the body contributes to the fulfillment of the person. What our

⁹² Wojtyla, *AP*, 264-265.

⁹³ Carl Anderson and José Granados, *Called to Love: Approaching John Paul II’s Theology of the Body* (New York: Doubleday, 2009), 29.

⁹⁴ Anderson and Granados, *Called to Love*, 29-38.

bodies are is relevant to what we do and are. This link is significant because humanity is tied to materiality--our bodies.

This phenomenological link, further portrays the body as subject; the body is not felt and experienced only as an object, but the athlete as body does the sensing and reacting.⁹⁵ The body as a person's body (my body) bears the kind of values—sensible and organic—unique to the body's own somatic dynamism. Thus, the vitality of the body goes wherever the person goes because it is crucial to the identity of the whole person.

When the body is split from the mind, it is perceived totally as an instrument or object. According to Meier, splitting the body thus drains it of its humanity.⁹⁶ Therefore, reductive accounts, which Weiss favors, must be resisted because this orientation construes athletic endeavors as drilling, trimming, strengthening, and training the body as an objective to be mastered and directed.⁹⁷ If this is the case, the body becomes primarily an instrument for completing the sportive task in order to obtain excellence. John Paul II's phenomenology is a middle path, for as the quote on page 150 attests, we are never merely a body or a soul.

According to John Paul II's middle path, sport that is construed subjectively is a lived experience. If sport is re-envisioned as a "lived experience," sportive actions, when understood phenomenologically, dynamically reveal the sportsperson.⁹⁸ The standard Thomistic account always assumed that an action presupposes a person.

Wojtyla still maintains this assumption, but he reverses the exploration in *The Acting*

⁹⁵ Wojtyla, *AP*, 206-219.

⁹⁶ Klaus V. Meier, "Embodiment, Sport and Meaning," in *Philosophic Inquiry in Sport*, eds. William J. Morgan and Klaus V. Meier (Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics, 1988), 99.

⁹⁷ Meier, "Embodiment, Sport and Meaning," 98-99.

⁹⁸ Wojtyla, *AP*, 11.

Person, shifting the focus to instead look within the act since it mirrors or reflects the subject. He says that “we look at the person through his action”,⁹⁹ and the subject is given or presented to us in these lived experiences. In particular, these sportive actions express themselves through an athlete’s body in physical contests with other embodied sportspersons. An athlete’s body is the very dwelling where she hospitably receives other embodied sportspersons. Thus, it is through these kinds of bodily actions in sport that a person dynamically reveals herself.

Theology of the Body

In *TOB*, John Paul II turns to “the beginning” of man’s original experience, especially as it relates to human embodiment, in Genesis 2-3. He turns to the first chapters of Genesis with the goal of reconstructing the main elements of mankind’s original experience. He intends this prehistory to illumine who humans are meant to be. He focuses on three primordial experiences whose extraordinary character we at times forget because they are intertwined with ordinary life: original solitude, original unity, and original nakedness.¹⁰⁰ For John Paul II, this original experience is foundational because it is “always at the root of every human experience.”¹⁰¹ Humans live this experience whether in marriage or in other forms of life.¹⁰² John Paul II asserts that this experience echoes in fallen man himself because it is rooted or revealed in historical man’s theological prehistory. It is imprinted so as to speak of

⁹⁹ Wojtyla, *AP*, 11; Buttiglione, *Karol Wojtyla*, 126-127.

¹⁰⁰ *TOB*, 5-11.

¹⁰¹ *TOB*, 11.1.

¹⁰² I make this point strongly for it is easy to read *TOB* as a theological manual for marriage but John Paul II extends this particular focus to people and relationships in general. For this relationship was paradigmatic for who humans are and how we should relate. John Paul II makes this point evident when he claims his theology of the body is pedagogy of the body. It is to instruct Christians on how bodily manifestations conform to the moral order, in the end, the dignity of persons which furthers reflections about the sacramentality of life, and in particular marriage (*TOB*, 59.7).

the image of God, for “sin signifies a state of lost grace;” sinfulness must be explained with reference to original experience.¹⁰³ Just as Jesus turned to Genesis in order for his first-century audience to understand God’s intention or purpose for marriage, so too does John Paul II when explicating who we are as bodies for the practice of marriage. I believe, as does Weigel in general,¹⁰⁴ that if we listen, John Paul II invites us to take up Christ’s approach by reflecting on God’s plan “in the beginning,” not merely for marriage but also for other cultural activities, such as sport as an embodied practice.¹⁰⁵

This return to “the beginning” is important for this thesis, because what it means to be human requires that a Christian ethic attend to what God originally intended for humans. God’s intention, evident by how he made us as body-persons, is for us to function holistically rather than for us to be inherently troubled with this body-mind relationship. The latter is true for Weiss.

Because Weiss does not account for this body-mind problem historically, his problem is ontological at heart. He accepts the dualistic nature as a fact of life, and his objective, cosmological (from without) analysis places the body and mind in competition or disaccord by nature.¹⁰⁶ As an adaptation from the sciences, Weiss’s vectoral metaphor depends heavily on a quantitative analysis that distances the body from the mind because the body is a thing, a part of the external world. Through sportive training, the mind perceives and imposes this vectoral direction on the body

¹⁰³ *TOB*, 4.2.

¹⁰⁴ Weigel, *Witness to Hope*, 343.

¹⁰⁵ Of course, returning to creation is only part of the biblical narrative, because of Christ our true embodied identity has been revealed and it is in and through Christ that we experience redeemed bodies.

¹⁰⁶ Weiss, *Sport*, 40-41. John Paul II conjoins this cosmological, because of his Thomistic metaphysic, with his examination from within the human subject, so that sport is a lived experience.

so that the disequilibrium between mind and body is altered, corrected, and adjusted.¹⁰⁷ I find that Weiss's experience of the body favors if not reductionist, then common material structures—mathematical and quantitative—which neglects an internal qualitative analysis where the body is not only object but also subject. This problem brings my critique full circle with respect to human dignity.

Physical exercise and sportive performances are bodily actions. If we are going to decide whether these actions are good, John Paul II sees it as imperative that we treat the body as integral to who humans are. Spaemann adds that “what is important is that we treat things, plants, animals, human beings and, finally, ourselves, according to the values or sets of values appropriate to them, in other words that we should deal fairly with reality.”¹⁰⁸ This description fits with John Paul II's because metaphysics affects and relates to moral deliberation. Weiss himself assumes this correlate; however, his conception of man is problematic. Weiss's portrait of the athlete does not deal with reality in its entirety. He paints the body as a thing that needs to be subdued and controlled in order for it to be accepted; hence, he titles his third chapter, “The Challenge of the Body.” This objective analysis stops short of another aspect of bodily reality that John Paul II's view of “body as subject” gets at in a way that fits human physicality. Again, Wojtyla's indebtedness to the method of phenomenology brings back into reflection things such as athletes as concrete wholes, the way athletes basically experience sportive life as it presents itself to them.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ Weiss, *Sport*, 38-41.

¹⁰⁸ Robert Spaemann, *Basic Moral Concepts*, trans. T. J. Armstrong (London: Routledge, 1989), 72.

¹⁰⁹ See Weigel, *Witness to Hope*, 126-129.

Weiss's young male athlete commences with a separated mind and body, and it is only through the amiable practice of sport that a dedicated athlete is able to accept and overcome the discord of the body and, therefore, to become unified.¹¹⁰ Dombrowski believes that Weiss's view is hylmorphism,¹¹¹ but he qualifies that it is aspirational, not metaphysical. For this thesis, I interpret Weiss's mind-body relationship as dualistic because of his metaphysic; therefore, it is not hylmorphic. To say that it is hylomorphic is odd. Even though Weiss practically aims for this mind-body unity (with some kind of substance dualism interaction) as part of what it means to accomplish the intended end of bodily excellence,¹¹² his metaphysic precludes this unity, especially considering that his eschatology dissolves any intrinsic relationship between mind and body. He lacks integration because he limits the body to manipulation.

Because Weiss reduces the body to a tool of the mind, he ignores the reality and value unique to the lived body both now and in the eschaton. As stated in the last chapter, Weiss's athletic body does not survive death because it decays and eventually ceases to exist.¹¹³ Any kind of personal identity as a bearer of excellence—whether soul and/or body—is dissolved because the only things that

¹¹⁰ Weiss, *Sport*, 37-57. See also, Meier, "Embodiment, Sport and Meaning," 93-102.

¹¹¹ Dombrowski, *Contemporary Athletics and Ancient Greek Ideals*, 49.

¹¹² See Colin McGinn, *Sport* (Stockfield: Acumen, 2008), 20-21. McGinn is helpful on this note. He appears to track with the practical problem that Weiss himself notes concerning how the mind and body work in converting intentions into movements, thinking into bodily actions. Both are trying to account for how this interaction occurs unique to sport. He believes like Weiss when the body is overcome due to its rebellion and refusal to obey the mind then no such duality exists because the person operates as a coordinated unit. Like Weiss, acquiring bodily competence in the practice of sport brings unification of the mind and body. Yet, he recognizes if Cartesian assumptions are at work then in reality the mind does the knowing and therefore the body is merely an instrument. He maintains that instead of a radical separation of mind and body the simpler explanation is to see mental and bodily attributes as functions of a person. The person bears knowledge and excellence. This functional holism is the import for this thesis and what John Paul II argues for, though McGinn and others might not accept his metaphysic itself.

¹¹³ Weiss, *Sport*, 247-248.

survive are athletic performances. Those actions that participated in and were manifested in the temporal order the ideal of excellence. Thus, according to Weiss, who we are can ultimately be reduced to performances or actions that intersect—in the best case scenario—with this Platonic Form. Looking from the viewpoint of Weiss’s theory, I pity the many athletes who never identify with this form of excellence because they never contest in a manner that meets his justification, this universal essence or ideal. I might add that older athletes are also vulnerable because the ideal of bodily excellence becomes more and more difficult to obtain; however, Weiss’s category conveniently limits this endeavor for excellence to the young.

I believe this ideal is what causes Weiss to regularly refer to members of sport as a set or defined class (“the athlete”). Like Plato, he believes that all the particular members in the temporal world have an archetype or exemplar existing in the immutable, eternal, and immaterial world of the Forms.¹¹⁴ However, his category is quite restrictive. Even if, for the sake of argument, I grant his premise concerning young people and excellence, some sports (e.g., cycling, golf) require age and maturity of thought in order to achieve bodily excellence; thus, the young are not the best candidates to achieve a good like bodily excellence.¹¹⁵ Furthermore, Weiss’s ideality construes redemption as an escape from the body because excellent performances identify the self with a Platonic Form, which is what survives, not the body itself. Yet, this self ultimately passes away, for the self’s individuality is irrelevant.¹¹⁶ Indeed, it is precisely Weiss’s Platonism that neglects the particular

¹¹⁴ Plato, *Republic* Book X. Weiss states, “Athletes are excellence in the guise of men” (Weiss, *Sport*, 17.).

¹¹⁵ Weiss never tells us the age of the young only that it is before they are full adults.

¹¹⁶ Weiss, *Sport*, 247.

individual, for Weiss's athlete has no significance in comparison with the ideal.¹¹⁷

The athlete's single importance is a function of her bodily participation in the form of excellence. Thus, whatever identity the athlete had is now lost in eternity.

I assume that, because John Paul II's hylmorphism works from a particular metaphysic grounded objectively in creation, humans ought to function holistically. This manner of functioning is how we were made, and furthermore, for a Christian ethic, our redemption eschatologically includes our bodies. In other words, since we are human persons, the body is indispensable both to who we are and to what we should do both now and forevermore.

Thanks to the influence of Descartes,¹¹⁸ Weiss holds that that the "body is voluminous, spread out in space Through it we express tendencies, appetites, impulses, reactions and responses."¹¹⁹ Because it has no size, the mind is non-corporeal, immaterial. Following his dualism to its full course, Weiss makes sense of the interaction between the body and the mind by emphasizing the authoritative role that the mind plays in supervising the body in order to achieve bodily excellence. I agree with Meier:¹²⁰ his precise and pointed terminology demonstrates that the body is an instrument or object to be utilized and possessed so that it can follow its vectoral thrust. If I am correct, his view of the body helps us understand why Weiss spends more time arguing for bodily excellence than other goods. Bodily excellence

¹¹⁷ See O'Donovan, *Resurrection and Moral Order*, 32-35. Also, I benefitted from Spaemann, *Persons: The Difference Between 'Someone' and 'Something'*, 18-19.

¹¹⁸ Weiss admits that he is summarizing a vast literature concerning the mind-body problem so I interpret his indebtedness to Descartes follows from his terms, explanations and definitions.

¹¹⁹ Weiss, *Sport*, 38.

¹²⁰ Meier, "Embodiment, Sport, and Meaning," 98.

is a good his athlete seeks or wants, and in order to complete himself, he must as an athlete achieve this excellence.

For a Christian ethic, in particular for John Paul II, this objective approach is an inadequate and an inappropriate conception of human persons. It does not mean that everything Weiss says is wrong; John Paul II himself works from similar premises concerning an objectivist account of human nature, but his phenomenology completes Weiss's cosmological read because it turns to a subjective, experiential reading of the sportsperson. John Paul II's *Theology of the Body*, and more largely his personalism, repairs this problem by valuing the human subject as an embodied person. For this thesis, I will develop a few important qualities of the human body that serve to correct this problem.

The Sportive Body: Theological Value

For John Paul II, the human body as a creation of God is invested with natural dignity. His sport homilies echo his deeper analysis of the body in *TOB*. He states that

The body, according to Christian concept, deserves due interest, real respect, loving and wise care, invested as it is with natural dignity, capable of a mysterious sacrality and destined to ultimate victory over death itself, as our faith teaches us. I like to repeat with St. Paul: "Glorify God in your body" (cf 1 Cor 6:20).¹²¹

Human Embodiment an Ontological Good

This natural dignity of the human body is understood with respect to the creation narrative in Genesis. In the first (Elohistic) account of creation, the text informs the

¹²¹ John Paul II, "Sport as Training Ground for Virtue and Instrument of Union among People," Rome, 20 December 1979.

reader of the objective fact that man and woman are made in the image and likeness of God (Gen.1:26-27).¹²² If made in God's image, then mankind cannot be reduced to the elements of the created world. John Paul II is clear that humans are bodily creatures, which ties them to the visible world, but that they are the same time "in the image of God," which affirms their inability to be reduced to the world. He clarifies this tension of humanity's unified existence in a later address as "the divine image impressed in the body 'from the beginning'."¹²³ This unified understanding of humans defines who humans are. John Paul II points out that the theological character of this first account defines man primarily in the dimensions of being and existing. He then continues with the story of creation, which he interprets as reaching its apex when mankind is created: God declares that this fact of human existence is very good (Gen.1.31). He comments that "one must understand the entity of the good, that is, the aspect of value."¹²⁴ That is, the human being, body and soul, is an ontological good that forms "an incontrovertible point of reference and solid basis of a metaphysics and also for an anthropology and an ethics to which '*ens et bonum convertuntur*' [being and good are convertible]."¹²⁵ Human existence, body and soul, is good in itself.

In the second (Yahwist) creation account, John Paul II references mankind's original solitude (Gen. 2:18) to demonstrate that Adam, upon reflection, discovered that he was unique among all that God created.¹²⁶ Again, this unique difference is

¹²² TOB, 2.

¹²³ TOB, 5.2

¹²⁴ TOB. 2.5

¹²⁵ TOB, 2.5

¹²⁶ TOB, 5.4

true because of “the basic irreducibility of the human being to the natural world.”¹²⁷

Adam experiences solitude because he uniquely among all that is visible is a human person. John Paul II states that this experience of solitude is derived from mankind’s very nature, his humanity.¹²⁸ The knowledge that Adam is a body “belongs deeply to the structure of the personal subject.”¹²⁹ The other kinds of beings belong to a different bodily kind than Adam and Eve, who are made in God’s image. As image bearers, Adam and Eve are in a special relationship to, with, and before God that these others are not, which expresses a special dignity and identity.

This special dignity and relationship are an embodied relationship. Adam tends to and cultivates the garden, and God gives him a task, which serves as a test, to name these other bodies. As a test, it links this task as an experience with the awareness of his body. Adam becomes conscious of his own body, and his knowledge and freedom both here and in Genesis 2:16-17 express that he is a body-person.¹³⁰ Because he can think and do things that animals cannot, Adam discovers not only that he is different, but also that the basis for this difference is his personhood. Thus, John Paul II concludes that the human person is subject not only of his interiority (i.e., self-consciousness and self-determination) but also of his own body.¹³¹ This test

¹²⁷ Wojtyła, “Subjectivity and the Irreducible in the Human Being,” in *Person and Community*, 211.

¹²⁸ *TOB*, 5.2. To be precise, John Paul II develops two meanings for this original solitude. The second one is derived from the somatic relationship between male and female. He argues that the first meaning is more fundamental because it is about the fact that by nature Adam and Eve (mankind) are persons.

¹²⁹ *TOB*, 8.1.

¹³⁰ *TOB*, 6.

¹³¹ *TOB*, 6-7.

demonstrates that Adam is aware of the meaning of his own body, the very structure of which “permits him to be the author of genuinely human activity.”¹³²

John Paul II sees this awareness of bodies as an “echo” in sport itself because he considers the human body the masterpiece of the whole of creation for its proportion, vigor, and beauty and because the sportive body witnesses to the soul—the breath of life—and the invisible qualities of our person.¹³³ Because it holds an intrinsic relationship to the soul, the body participates fully in the dignity that God gives to humans made in His image.

John Paul II observes this lived-body experience as an expression of multiple goods. In sport, we can realize and discover who we are as acting, embodied persons; we can develop or form ourselves through the habits specific to sport. In a message delivered to an international group of athletes, he comments:

Athletic competition draws out of the human person some of his noblest qualities and talents. He must learn the secrets of his own body, its strengths and weaknesses, its stamina and its breaking point. He must develop, through long hours of exercise and effort, the power of concentration and the habit of discipline, learning how to hold his strength in reserve and to conserve his energy for that final moment when the victory depends on a great burst of speed or one last surge of strength.¹³⁴

Note that John Paul II regards this lived experience as disclosing and unfolding new insights because it elicits values and limitations that belong to embodied persons.

These values are specific to the body as subject rather than merely the body as object. Therefore, this stance toward the human person values the worth of an

¹³² *TOB*, 7.2.

¹³³ John Paul II, “Let the Practice of Sports Always Promote Peace,” Address to the Athletes of the Italian “Youth Games”, Rome, 11 October 1981. Sec. 2.

¹³⁴ John Paul II, “Message to Members of the International Athletic Group about Athletic Competition,” *L’Osservatore Romano* English Edition, no. 14-15 (20 March 1982). Cited in Michael P. Kerrigan, “Sports and the Christian Life: Reflections on Pope John Paul II’s Theology of Sports,” in *Sport and Religion*, ed. Shirl J. Hoffman (Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics, 1992), 254.

individual—human dignity—from inside-out and outside-in. Both dimensions are integral to who we are as human beings and thus are also integral to personal development and fulfillment.

Because of his Cartesian dualism, Paul Weiss values the body as a means to achieve bodily excellence. This value, however, does not agree with the value appropriate to the body as created by God. The body does not have natural dignity in Weiss's view. His body is emptied of its humanity, "a dead body devoid of its vivifying, expressive and intentional abilities and qualities."¹³⁵ Instead of being a body indispensable to a person, Weiss's body is the "mind's" body directed toward ideals that ultimately eventuate in its own dissolution. The eternal swallows this temporal sportive body, giving it utility value at best. The body as task, not gift, directs Weiss's athlete.¹³⁶

The visible and invisible are intrinsically related; therefore, if the body is instrumentalized, the person's dignity is violated. Spaemann helps make this important connection for a Christian ethic. "If body and language are not respected as the means by which the person is represented, but are used as means to other ends, then the person is used only as a means."¹³⁷ This intrinsic relationship presses some immediate ethical inquiry. Are there any actions that Weiss's ideal of excellence would justifiably deem as inherently wrong? What precludes him from justifying actions that harm the body and that, therefore, also harm the dignity of the person?

¹³⁵ Meier, "Embodiment, Sport, and Meaning," 99.

¹³⁶ For a practical outworking of how to honor the body as gift rather than task, see Stephanie Paulsell, *Honoring the Body: Meditations on a Christian Practice* (San Francisco, Jossey-Bass, 2002), 113-138.

¹³⁷ Spaemann, *Basic Moral Concepts*, 75.

Moral justification of these kinds of moral matters, i.e., harm, is where Weiss is quite ambivalent. Feezell raises these same kinds of questions as he criticizes Weiss's impersonal stance. As an outsider to sport, Weiss fails to consider sport in the first-person, a lived experience.¹³⁸ I believe that this impersonal perspective results not only because Weiss is an outsider, but also, as I have argued, because his athlete's body witnesses to an impersonal self and ultimately to an ideal of excellence where the self dissolves. Feezell recognizes that the ideal of excellence has difficulty making sense of the frivolity and non-usefulness that runs through the practice of sport. Sport is a form of play. Because he never played sport, Weiss considers sport alongside other realities and cultural activities where excellence is a basic good. In the case of sport, people try to realize the good of excellence in order to attain self-completion. Weiss's abstract stance, or what I call a cosmological read of sport, isolates this good not only over other goods that constitute sport, but also (perhaps even more) over the subjects who exist prior to sport. Feezell estimates that Weiss's idealism vitiates, if not eradicates, other important goods that, from an insider's perspective, equally justify and attract a person to sport. That much is true, and I equally point this same criticism to Weiss and even to Feezell. However, because Weiss's teleology overwhelms his own metaphysic and anthropology, I cannot see how he objects to actions that a Christian ethic, because of the natural dignity of the body, would deem morally blameworthy. Feezell acknowledges the same point concerning Weiss's ideality and even interprets Weiss as a consequentialist or utilitarian. He recognizes that Weiss's sporting experience "must

¹³⁸ Feezell, "Sport," 268-269.

be undergone because of a goal or an ideal; a “that-for-the-sake-of-which.”¹³⁹ This use-value ethic is problematic for this thesis, not only because Weiss underappreciates other goods, but also because he devalues the person as a whole. Weiss’s value of excellence does not correspond to reality, and when excellence is divorced from human dignity, it can lead to actions that harm the body and the person.

Weiss admits at the beginning of his own inquiry about sport that it is for the sake of excellence that athletes submit themselves to bodily risk, punishment, injury, and even death in some cases.¹⁴⁰ In all fairness, he quickly asserts that, because of the purpose and rules of a game, any attempt to destroy or cripple others is morally objectionable.¹⁴¹ Is it morally objectionable because of the reality of human dignity presented to us in and through the body, or is it objectionable because of the purpose of the game itself? These are, of course, two different reasons for ethical justification. If a game can be identified with examples where the purpose and rules permit violence to the body, then what keeps Weiss from theoretically objecting to violence? Because of their traditions, boxing, Ultimate Fighting, ancient Greek *pankration*, hockey, and other sports morally permit and even accept some forms of violence that at face value harm the body. To defeat Weiss’s moral grounds only requires an example where the purpose and rules permit harm to the body. It appears that some games or sport, both historically and presently, do just that. In these sports, the aim is not merely to be assertive and aggressive—neither of which necessarily

¹³⁹ Feezell, “Sport,” 269.

¹⁴⁰ Weiss, *Sport*, 17, 18-19, 21; Feezell, “Sport,” 268-269.

¹⁴¹ Weiss, *Sport*, 79-82, 178.

entail violence—but to intentionally inflict hurt or injury. Because they are contact sports, this aim involves the body in ways that other non-contact sports do not.¹⁴²

Weiss might cry foul on the inferences I have drawn. He strongly asserts that, “Athletics puts primary emphasis, not on the effort to subjugate others, as a theory of aggression maintains, but on the opposite effort *to deal properly with other realities*, in order to enable one to become excellent in and through the *use* of a body.”¹⁴³ This key text opens Weiss more fully to my criticism, for here his metaphysic assesses how an athlete must relate to others. Yet, when discussing the body as a reality that we must properly deal with, Weiss divests it of any natural dignity.

Because he views the body as lacking this ontic goodness and because he objectively conceptualizes the body as something external, his language of use has ethical implications. The body is an instrument that the athlete uses to become excellent. If sport is about achieving excellence, then Weiss’s athlete not only uses his own body but also the bodies of others because the whole contest in general makes use of others’ bodies for the sake of excellence. Weiss’s metaphysical dualism deprives his athletes of the opportunity to deal fairly with bodily reality because he reduces this order of existence to instrumental worth. He prevents his athletes from properly valuing their bodies because his theory of sport abstracts them from the very reality that he claims must be properly dealt with. Because bodies manifest the dignity of humans, Weiss’s athlete as a person disappears.¹⁴⁴ However, if the body is

¹⁴² I do not intend to address violence as an ethical issue. My point is to raise an objection which clearly mistreats the dignity of the body. For a helpful distinction between aggression and violence in competitive sports, see Jim Parry, “Violence and Aggression in Contemporary Sport,” in *Ethics and Sport*, eds., M. J. McNamee and S. J. Parry, (London: E & FN Spon., 1998), 205-224.

¹⁴³ Weiss, *Sport*, 36. Italics are mine for emphasis.

¹⁴⁴ Spaemann, *Basic Moral Concepts*, 75-76.

indispensable to what it means to be a human person and if the body participates in human dignity as an image bearer of God, then this reality demands a loving respect, for bodily reality is a gift of God.

Body as Sign and Gift: A Call to Self-Donation

John Paul II claims that the body is a sign and gift. Since the second account of creation witnesses to man's consciousness or awareness of his own bodiliness, then as a subject of his own body, "it permits him to be the author of genuinely human activity. In this activity, the body expresses the person."¹⁴⁵ This line summarizes the thesis of John Paul II's entire theology of the body messages. It means that, according to its order of existence, the body as a sign or primordial sacrament is designed in such a way as to manifest the invisible in the material, visible world. John Paul II declares that only the human body "is capable of making visible what is invisible: the spiritual and the divine."¹⁴⁶ He emphasizes that invisibility includes the spiritual, which for him is the soul as the form of the body. Because we are images of God, the human body also manifests something of who God is. Thus, for a sports person, not only is the body a sacrament of her own person, but also her bodily action is an outward sign of God. Therefore, imaging God in sport is not limited to the interior structure of the soul, but this imaging includes human corporeality as an expression of the person.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁵ *TOB*, 7.2.

¹⁴⁶ *TOB*, 19.4.

¹⁴⁷ Richard Hogan and John M. Levoir, *Covenant of Love: Pope John Paul II on Sexuality, Marriage, and Family in the Modern World* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1985), 44.

John Paul II identifies the semiotic character of human corporeality.¹⁴⁸ As a sign, the body refers to a reality beyond itself while simultaneously presenting this spiritual and divine reality to us in a physical fashion. To say that the body as a sign expresses the invisible means that the body is more than just matter. It is more than just matter because, "...in the mystery of creation, the human body carried within itself an unquestionable sign of the "image of God". ..."¹⁴⁹ The human body bears the invisible. If it carries within itself an unquestionable sign, the body as sign is natural. This purpose is inscribed in the (natural) laws of the body, and it is intentional, for this is what God intended in how He made the human body. Jamros critically identifies that, if the human body was merely an intentional sign of God, it would not have any intrinsic meaning because its meaning would be derived solely from God's intention, which is arbitrary.¹⁵⁰ He elucidates that, if the intrinsic relationship between the invisible and visible is to be maintained, then the soul as the image of God "is the indispensable middle term between God and the body."¹⁵¹ It is a sign because of its relationship to the form, the soul. The soul-body connection is inseparable. Jamros concludes that the first meaning of the body as a sign—and how the body best functions as a sign—must be understood in relation to the soul, even if John Paul II does not make this connection explicitly clear.¹⁵²

¹⁴⁸ See Daniel Jamros, S.J., "Sign, Subject, and Style: A Response to Fr. Cullen," in *Pope John Paul II on the Body: Human, Eucharistic, Ecclesial: Festschrift Avery Cardinal Dulles, S.J., eds. John M. McDermott and John Gavin* (Philadelphia: Saint Joseph's University Press, 2007), 77-85; Christopher West, *Theology of the Body Explained* (Boston: Pauline Books and Media, 2003), 4-12.

¹⁴⁹ *TOB*, 27.3

¹⁵⁰ Jamros, S.J., "Sign, Subject, and Style: A Response to Fr. Cullen," 82.

¹⁵¹ Jamros, S.J., "Sign, Subject, and Style: A Response to Fr. Cullen," 78.

¹⁵² Jamros, S.J., "Sign, Subject, and Style: A Response to Fr. Cullen," 79-80.

Jamros, perceptively sees another point that is underdeveloped by John Paul II but that is necessary to strengthen a Christian theology of the body. Jamros recognizes some problems with John Paul II's imprecise language and conceptual clarity concerning the body as a sign. It is possible for something to be a sign and still be extrinsic to the person. Thus, Jamros argues that the idea of sign is not robust enough to explicate the indispensable and substantial connection between the soul and body.¹⁵³ John Paul II does in places go beyond the idea of sign when he refers to the nuptial meaning of the body, where the body shows or expresses the richness of self-donation,¹⁵⁴ and when he refers to the fact that the body is as an immediate expression of the soul.¹⁵⁵ If the body is a sign and an immediate expression, then this double affirmation of body as sign and an immediate expression does not expose John Paul II to the charge that his semiotic language instrumentalizes the value of the body. In sum, because the body is endowed with natural dignity and because its role as a sign is an essential aspect of its structure and relation to the soul as an embodied person, it is positively or intrinsically valued.

Since the human body expresses the person, there is a kinship between the body and the soul. The unity of the two as a composite is fundamental to this kinship. This kinship for John Paul II is most clearly evidenced by the fact that the body is created to meaningfully and directly communicate or express personal love. This communication of love is true because God's love was the divine motive for creation: "only love, in fact, gives rise to the good and is well pleased with the

¹⁵³ Jamros, S.J., "Sign, Subject, and Style: A Response to Fr. Cullen," 80-81.

¹⁵⁴ *TOB*, 19.1; Jamros, S.J., "Sign, Subject, and Style: A Response to Fr. Cullen," 80-81.

¹⁵⁵ *TOB*, 27.3; Jamros, S.J., "Sign, Subject, and Style: A Response to Fr. Cullen," 80-81.

good.”¹⁵⁶ God’s love is the source that willed the good of the world’s existence and human existence.¹⁵⁷ This action of God in the first account of creation signifies “a fundamental and ‘radical’ gift, that is an act of giving in which the gift comes into being precisely from nothing.”¹⁵⁸ As embodied beings, humans are loved into being out of nothing. If this act of love is true of the original gift of existence that all people share, then this gift is acknowledged when our own bodies communicate love toward God and others, even in sport. However, before I get ahead of myself, I must define more thoroughly the concept of gift.

John Paul II calls for a “hermeneutics of the gift” in order to decisively interpret the essential truth concerning who we are as embodied beings. What he means by this hermeneutic is that, if everything that is brought into existence is a gift, then this reality serves as the interpretive lens for understanding all of life. For John Paul II, the language of gift means that God as the donor has lovingly given the gift of creation, and this giving establishes a relationship between the giver and the receiver.¹⁵⁹ He makes it clear that what he means by gift involves a donor, a recipient, and the new relationship that is forged by the gift. This relation first appears when God creates man in his image (Gen.1:27). As the image of God, man is able to understand God’s loving call into existence as a gift and to receive the world as a gift. This call of love establishes the original covenant relationship or partnership between God and man.¹⁶⁰ Because of who he is, Adam is capable of

¹⁵⁶ *TOB*, 13.3.

¹⁵⁷ *TOB*, 13.3.

¹⁵⁸ *TOB*, 13.3.

¹⁵⁹ *TOB*, 13.3-4; 14.1-2. For this paragraph, see West, *Theology of the Body Explained*, 93-97.

¹⁶⁰ *TOB*. 6-7.

acknowledging and reciprocating this gift. This gift from God to us is predicated on His own love. It is his gift of love that makes all subsequent gifts possible. Adam can love because he first was loved.

John Paul II considers this gift aspect in sport when he writes,

With this celebration the world of sport is joining in a great chorus, as it were, to express through prayer, song, play and movement a hymn of praise and thanksgiving to the Lord. It is a fitting occasion to *give thanks to God for the gift of sport*, in which the human person exercises his body, intellect and will, recognizing these abilities as so many gifts of his Creator.¹⁶¹

According to John Paul II's hermeneutic of gift, athletes witness to this reality of gift both as a fundamental gift that constitutes their body-person in and through sport and as God's own self-donation for bringing these gifts into existence from nothing.¹⁶²

God's love in particular is expressed through athletic talents because their very potential, though certainly needing to be developed, comes from the fact that God brought them into existence. God's love in the mystery of creation declared and approved that existence is good.¹⁶³ God's repeated, primal declaration that "it was very good" fits the reality of gift. Since these created realities exist, God's delight in them expresses his love for what is good. In the same way, John Paul II sees that it is fit for athletes to give thanks because thanks is a form of love that recognizes sportive talents as good. Giving thanks reciprocates this gift of existence because giving thanks is appropriate or fitting.¹⁶⁴ Just as Adam recognized his own body as

¹⁶¹ John Paul II, "Homily at the Jubilee for the World of Sports," *L'Osservatore Romano* Weekly English Edition, n. 44, 1 November 2000, sec. 2. See also, Pontifical Council of Laity, ed., *Sport: An Educational and Pastoral Challenge: Seminar of Study on the Theme of Sport Chaplains*, (Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vatican, 2008), 164.

¹⁶² This is not to infer that God directly created sport, only that he created body-persons who have creatively affirmed this original gift with the making and developing of such realities like sport.

¹⁶³ *TOB*, 13-14.

¹⁶⁴ For a remarkable analysis of the concept of gift, see Kenneth L. Schmitz, *The Gift: Creation, The Aquinas Lecture*, 1982 (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1982).

gift, when athletes receive their sportive endowments as gift, they should respond in gratitude, an echo of God's love. However, as this quote implies, this reality of gift was never meant to be something that a person or athlete experiences alone. John Paul II argues that this love aims at mutuality, a community of persons, because mutuality perfectly expresses God's love.

We can find two meanings of this original experience in the second creation account. First, when he receives creation as a gift of God's love, Adam, unlike the rest of the created bodies, is conscious that this reality comes from God. Furthermore, the original solitude discloses that none of the other beings meet the basic conditions of a helpmate, so Adam needs a helper. This meaning of the original experience is a review of the above. Second, when Adam acknowledges and receives Eve, his helper, as a gift, he realizes that she is someone with whom he can "exist in a relation of reciprocal gift."¹⁶⁵ This latter is the original unity that demonstrates that Adam and Eve (and humans in general) were made for relationship and that the only way to fulfill themselves was to sincerely give or lovingly donate themselves to each other. John Paul II explains that this sincere giving, whether spousal or non-spousal, constitutes the communion of persons. Adam's solitude is not good (Gen. 2.18), which, according to John Paul II, means that Adam is not completely realizing his essence.¹⁶⁶ Schmitz explains that, for Adam, "something more is still needed to round out and to the complete origin and nature of man."¹⁶⁷ Humans are meant to exist in relationship. John Paul II asserts that Adam does not realize himself fully

¹⁶⁵ *TOB*, 14.1.

¹⁶⁶ *TOB*, 14.2.

¹⁶⁷ Schmitz, *At the Center of the Human Drama*, 100.

unless he exists “with someone” or “for someone.” He concludes that, “communion of persons means living in a reciprocal ‘for,’ in a relationship of reciprocal gift.”¹⁶⁸

Though the nuptial meaning of the body for Adam and Eve eminently incarnates this gift of mutual surrender for conjugal love, John Paul II finds that the nuptial meaning of the body stands in service of non-spousal or non-betrothed love as well, which is the primary implication for this thesis.¹⁶⁹ In many ways, this point is a recapitulation of this whole chapter concerning the personalistic norm and human dignity. John Paul II states that it is necessary to penetrate this mysterious structure of the human body because, as a gift, the body-person was created both to love and to be loved. This fact of receiving and reciprocating love, a mutual surrender or donation, “constitutes the fundamental component of human existence in the world.”¹⁷⁰ How we are supposed to relate to others, regardless of the form of life, is conditioned by this law of gift because it is inscribed in our humanity. Furthermore, this law of gift is in accordance with the reality that, as God’s image bearers, people have dignity and value. Since humans are created with this value, it is this personalistic norm that has John Paul II boldly claim that love is the only proper way to treat this reality. In *Love and Responsibility*, John Paul II states that “the person is

¹⁶⁸ *TOB*, 14.2. As a reminder, it is important to note that John Paul II primarily develops this point concerning the revelation of the human body in terms of spousal bodies, the nuptial meaning of the body. Adam’s cry for joy at the sight of the woman (Gen. 2:18-24) was not only affirming Eve’s human identity in that he recognized that her body expresses her person (*TOB*, 14.4) but this account identifies their bodies as masculine and feminine, expressing the gift of the man to the woman and the woman to the man (*TOB*, 14.5-6.). Their bodies visibly communicate that they are to give and receive. Adam and Eve subjectively discovered and experienced the truth of their spousal bodies in their unashamed nakedness. This nuptial meaning of the body demonstrates that physically the spousal body, according to the male sex with female sex and vice versa, is made for sexual union with the opposite sex (Gen.2:24). The body by nature is sexed and the two sexes complement each other’s physical differences. Adam and Eve complete each other by giving themselves, an expression of love, to each other as body-persons.

¹⁶⁹ This same implication for an entirely different moral matter is developed by Crosby, *Personalist Papers*, 243-263.

¹⁷⁰ *TOB*, 15.5.

a good towards which the only proper and adequate attitude is love.”¹⁷¹ Again, this is not an arbitrary principle, for it flows from the very essence and nature of the person.

In his sport homilies, John Paul II refers to this essential activity of love as the most authentic dimension of sport.¹⁷² His hermeneutic of gift has him charge the athletes to recognize in themselves and each other “the sign of the Fatherhood of God” because of love.¹⁷³ If the Father’s love was the divine motive for creation and the original covenant, then the body as a sign carries within itself this gift structure as the image of God.¹⁷⁴ If this gift structure is true, then athletes, like Adam and Eve, witness to this reality of the gift when they accept their own bodies and each other as gifts from God. Athletes understand the body as gift not only when they receive their own bodies as gifts, but also when this hermeneutic of gift moves them to play sport in a relationship of mutual gift. This mutual gift that was established in the original unity has John Paul II cite regularly from *Guadium et Spes* that man “can fully discover his true self only in a sincere giving of himself.”¹⁷⁵

The gift does not pertain to only one dimension of our humanity, but to the whole. Wojtyla recognizes the whole human person when he examines the natural ground of the dignity of the person.¹⁷⁶ If natural dignity applies to the whole person, since dignity is a gift of God, then an athlete is always conscious of how this gift relates to the being himself, other human beings, and the Creator in how he treats others and

¹⁷¹ Wojtyla, *Love and Responsibility*, 41.

¹⁷² John Paul II, “The Most Authentic Dimension of Sport: To Create a New ‘Civilization of Love’,” in *L’Osservatore Romano* English ed. n. 17, April 12, 1984.

¹⁷³ John Paul II, “The Most Authentic Dimension of Sport,” sec. 5.

¹⁷⁴ *TOB*, 14.4, 27.3.

¹⁷⁵ *GS*, 24.3; *TOB*, 15.1-2.

¹⁷⁶ Wojtyla, “The Dignity of the Human Person,” 178.

develops his gifts. If this ontological character is forgotten or denied, as it appears to be for Weiss, then “this leads to a fundamental disorientation of man’s cognitive and active powers.”¹⁷⁷ Thus, as Augustine warns, when humans lose sight of their intended end, misdirection is inevitable. What we do is intimately related to human dignity, personalistic value, and what and who we are as created by God.

Since existence is a gift, anything athletes do with their abilities is never entirely their possession or their achievement. If existence itself is a gift, then the capacities that ground sportive abilities themselves are equally gifts because they are rooted in human dignity. Furthermore, athletes should correctly consider sportive kinds of abilities as gifts from God to themselves. Because this gifting is realized in the context of sporting communities, athletes reciprocate by intentionally acting as gifts to others.

This concept of gift raises a few important implications as it relates to Weiss’s theory of sport and Christian ethics and sport. Since Weiss instrumentalizes the human body, his theory of sport begins with task and not gift. The body becomes primarily an instrument for completing the sportive task in order to obtain excellence. What unites Weiss’s athlete’s attraction to sport, the challenge of the body, and the urge to win is achieving certain goals, accomplishing certain tasks. Certainly deserving of credit for his phenomenological analysis of the sportive act, Weiss organizes the sequence of sportive moves for a specific sport in a manner where achievements motivate sportive action. These actions are the building blocks that prepare the body to realize success.¹⁷⁸ Weiss posits that “he [the athlete] should

¹⁷⁷ Wojtyła, *Sources of Renewal*, 51.

¹⁷⁸ Weiss, *Sport*, 40-57.

make his body a locus of rights and duties, and a source of acts, desirable and effective. Only if he so structures and directs this body will he have a body that is used and not merely worked upon by what is external to it.”¹⁷⁹ Weiss’s language of the body appears to be more akin to that of production, like a machine, than it does the language of body-person as a subject of gift.

Because Weiss’s Platonism swallows and thus uses this temporal sportive body, this utility value transvalues the sportive body primarily into task. His *telos* compels his athlete to produce something that “enables him to be self-sufficient.”¹⁸⁰ Weiss’s athletic portrait excessively demands bodily functions because he construes his man of action as focusing on public and maximum results, progress, striving to win, victory, and achievement in order to “set him over against the rest of men,” outdistancing all.¹⁸¹ What distinguishes his athlete is what he has constructed or built from his body. Weiss’s athlete is like an “acting machine” instead of an “acting person” because it is the finished sportive product that his athlete constructs and that becomes the empirical standard for assessing physical excellence.¹⁸² Weiss’s athlete gives his body not as a gift to be received and offered to others, but as a means to begin and complete the sportive contest unto himself. More precisely, since objective skills, training methods, and techniques bear the load of his means for achieving

¹⁷⁹ Weiss, *Sport*, 54.

¹⁸⁰ Weiss, *Sport*, 245

¹⁸¹ Weiss, *Sport*, 245, 176.

¹⁸² David Cloutier, “Human Fulfillment,” in *Gathered for the Journey: An Introduction to Catholic Moral Theology*, ed. David M. McCarthy and M. Therese Lysaught (London: SCM Press, 2007), 137-139.

excellence,¹⁸³ his athlete's body speaks a language whose vocabulary, syntax, and grammar emphasizes instrumentalism and production.

Weiss's math metaphor contributes to this machine-like analysis. His quantitative and analytical attention, given to physical moves and acts, technique, methods, and training, obscures bodily dignity. The body is an object, a thing, at the service of Weiss's impersonal human excellence. He focuses inordinately on "what part of us is involved in the movement" and pays less attention to the wholeness of the body as a gift to be received with wonder.¹⁸⁴ Kretchmar adds that, since bodily movement expresses who the person is, to limit our understanding of it to the level of quantitative symbols defies the other equally rich descriptions that are aspects of this lived experience. Perhaps it is because Weiss feels that the body has not been adequately considered that the body dominates his exposition in his attempt to justify the body. He acknowledges that no athlete lives entirely in his body. This acknowledgment is intended to balance the attention given to the sportive body, yet it is his Cartesian dualism that overshadows how the mind subjects the body to its ideals. This is where my view patently differs from that of Dombrowski, who classifies Weiss's mind-body relationship as hylmorphism; however, even he recognizes Weiss's tendency to resign the athlete to merely physical excellence.¹⁸⁵ If it were not for Weiss's metaphysical excursus coupled with his Cartesian assumptions and language, I would be inclined toward a different interpretation.

¹⁸³ See Weiss's chapter on the "Equipped Body", *Sport*, 73-85.

¹⁸⁴ Kretchmar, *Practical Philosophy of Sport*, 110.

¹⁸⁵ Dombrowski, *Contemporary Athletics and Ancient Greek Ideals*, 50. Although my interpretation differs, to Dombrowski's credit, his theory of sport envisages a body-soul unity which repairs some of these shortcomings in Weiss.

Because of the ontological lack in the human person as a contingent particular, Weiss's view of the body is such that his athlete is more at the service of objective skills, rightly performed acts, and techniques—what John Paul II refers to as transitive action—than he is concerned with perfecting and completing the subject of those actions. Weiss's self-completion is more for the body than the other aspects of being human in sport; the external actions are the necessary means for achieving excellence. He points toward the results his body produces--sportive performances--rather than to the dignity that, as an excellence, calls for special regard.

Fallen, Redeemed and Glorified Body

Because John Paul II's description of the body follows the progress of redemption, his account takes into consideration the fallen, redeemed, and glorified body.¹⁸⁶ I first explain three important implications concerning the fallen body before I conclude with the redeemed body.

Result of Sin: Distortion, Doubt and Cult of the Body

The advent of sin introduced into the world what John Paul II calls the “fundamental disquiet in all human existence.” John Paul II says that this negative original experience is true for “historical man,” or man after the fall. Following the biblical story, he holds humans responsible because the first sin gave birth to inordinate desire, or lust, which radically betrays the original experience that was God's plan.¹⁸⁷ I mention a few of the more important effects of original sin as they bear on this thesis.

¹⁸⁶ Hogan and Levoir, *Covenant of Love*, 39-67.

¹⁸⁷ *TOB*, 26-32.

First, original sin distorts how humans see and relate to reality. Man turned his back on and denied God's love when he was tempted to exchange the free gift of life and a relationship with Gift (God) for a lie.¹⁸⁸ Instead of dealing properly with reality, a lie distorts how humans see and relate the natural to the supernatural, or the visible to the invisible. In effect, Adam and Even thought they could share dominion with God. Man became "alienated from the Love that was the source of the original gift, the source of the fullness of good intended for the creature."¹⁸⁹ The body is no longer an unquestionable witness or sign of the image of God. The image of God is imprinted on the body, but sin obfuscates this witness because the body now witnesses to the objective reality of sin. John Paul II explains that sin as concupiscence does not come from God as a fruit of the mystery of the good creation but "from the world" as a fruit of misusing the body-person to eat disobediently from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.¹⁹⁰

Second, since Adam and Eve were meant to realize God's love as a gift through the body shared with each other, original sin casts doubt on this gift. This original sin resulted in a shame (Gen.3.10) that makes it difficult to sense "the human essentiality of one's own body"¹⁹¹ The very body that God intended to function as sign of the person now hides because humans experience disintegration. There was "a certain constitutive fracture in the human person's interior, a breakup, as it were, of man's original spiritual and somatic unity."¹⁹² This rupture in human identity means

¹⁸⁸ *TOB*, 26.

¹⁸⁹ *TOB*, 27.2.

¹⁹⁰ *TOB*, 26.1, 26.2.

¹⁹¹ *TOB*, 28.1.

¹⁹² *TOB*, 28.2.

that the gift of integration that God graciously created is lost. If this is true, then humans are no longer fully conscious of the meaning of the body. The original experience meant that Adam and Eve fully accepted and confirmed who they were via their bodies since “the body, as the expression of the person, was the first sign of the presence of man in the visible world.”¹⁹³ In Genesis 3:10, nakedness now shows that this source of certainty about the meaning of the body is changed because this verse confirms “the collapse of the original experience of the body as a sign of the person in the visible world.”¹⁹⁴ This nakedness frustrates the meaning that the human body communicates concerning the person. The dynamic unity is now a battle as the soul lacks communion and intimacy with the body. For a Christian ethic, it is important to note that the body is not the cause of sin because sin belongs to the spirit; however, because the inner and outer are so tightly related, the whole person experiences the fall.¹⁹⁵

Third, if the body no longer properly signifies the person, then the body (nakedness for Adam and Eve) can be misperceived as an object for self-gratification--an object to use, not to love. Rather than welcoming and accepting the other human being as a gift, a transmutation and reduction occurs, for other body-persons can become objects for my concupiscence.¹⁹⁶ Because of sin, the body is a tool instead of a visible sign for mutual self-donation. In particular, John Paul II sees this transmutation or objectification manifested in disordered sexual desire when a

¹⁹³ *TOB*, 27.3.

¹⁹⁴ *TOB*, 27.4. John Paul II also links this failure to accept our own bodies with the acceptance of the material world itself. This poses some interesting lines of inquiry for future research. How does treatment of the human body compare to treatment of the environment?

¹⁹⁵ *TOB*, 50-54.

¹⁹⁶ *TOB*, 17.3

person reduces the other person to a sexual object, use-value to satisfy sensual pleasure. When a person is thus objectified, the whole body-person is neglected, and the body is not understood as a sign of the invisible. In sport, objectification occurs when bodily attributes or goods are prized over the dignity of the whole person.

In his sport homilies, John Paul II recognizes this moral matter in sport as the cult of the body. Cult of the body is true when sportive performances do not respect the integrity and dignity of the *compositum humanum*. In particular, when the reality of who humans are is put to the service of worldly ideals (e.g., profit, perfectible body, winning-at-all-costs), bodily value is overturned and severed from its indispensable relationship to the soul.

John Paul II summarizes these deviations as a forgetfulness of the ontic goodness of the human body; therefore, this ethical activity does not comport with this reality:¹⁹⁷

Unfortunately there are many signs, and perhaps they are becoming more evident, of a malaise that sometimes calls into question even the ethical values that are at the basis of athletic activity. In addition to a sport that helps people, there is another that harms them; in addition to a sport that enhances the body, there is another that *degrades it and betrays it*; in addition to a sport that pursues noble ideals, there is another that looks only for profit; in addition to a sport that unites, there is another that divides.¹⁹⁸

Sport, however, becomes an *alienating phenomenon when the performance of skill and physical strength results in idolatry of the body*; when exaggerated competition leads to regarding one's opponent as an enemy to be humiliated; when the enthusiasm of fans prevents an objective evaluation of the person and events and, above all, when it degenerates into violence. A predominating commercial interest, moreover, can turn sports into a mere search for profit.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁷ Italics are mine for emphasis. My focus is on the body so I do not comment in any detail on the other moral matters.

¹⁹⁸ Pope John Paul II, "Jubilee of Sports People, Address to the International Convention on the Theme: 'During the Time of the Jubilee: The Face and Soul of Sport'," 28 October 2000, sec. 3.

¹⁹⁹ John Paul II, "Address to the Managers, Players and Supporters of the Roma Sports Association," Rome, 30 November 2000, sec. 2.

Every care must be taken to protect the human body from any attack on its integrity, from any exploitation and from any idolatry.²⁰⁰

The above quotes represent the negative form of each of the three original experiences.²⁰¹ Egoism and self-assertion mask original solitude in sport. Both of these are alienation, which not only refers to the body and to others, but because it is symptomatic of a deeper alienation, it also refers to God too, indicating idolatry.²⁰² The fear and shame that accompanied the first sin are re-narrated in sport when competition touches different concerns, thus resulting in violence and humiliation and degrading modern sport. Original unity is transgressed with the proclivity to use others, bringing division instead of unity. The contestant becomes an opponent, somebody whom another contestant must overcome at all costs in order to win. The game is reduced merely to a zero-sum outcome rather than functioning as a mutual striving toward the many excellences afforded by this test and contest. Athletic achievement overrides the other dimensions of sport, forgetting other energies and aspects of what it means to be human. Original nakedness stops at the body alone because now the body is a spectacle, a sensual object to obsessively observe or excessively display. The attraction to sport ends with the ideal sportive body, the very theory that Weiss appears to promote.

John Paul II attends to this attraction to the body when discussing his personalism in the artistic order.²⁰³ In particular, he addresses the ethical issue of encountering the “reality of the body” and “experiences of the body” when the body is the subject of

²⁰⁰ John Paul II, “Homily at the Jubilee for the World of Sport,” sec. 3.

²⁰¹ For a similar organization, see West, *Theology of the Body Explained*, 144-151.

²⁰² *TOB*, 27-28.

²⁰³ *TOB*, 60-62.

works of art. His point is that how we look at the human body in art “cannot be completely *isolated* in man’s subjective consciousness *from the “look” about which Christ speaks* in the Sermon on the Mount when he puts us on guard against concupiscence.”²⁰⁴ He deliberately links aesthetics with ethics. Thus, how we portray the body, both in art and for this thesis in sport, is related to human dignity. Because the ethos of the body is inextricably linked to the body’s ontological identification as the body of the person, when a sports contest cuts the human body off from its nuptial meaning—in general, the sincere gift of self of which God himself is the exemplar, and in particular, in spousal love to become “one flesh”—it offends the dignity of the body. The body signifies the gift of the person. How the athlete and institution of sport portray sportive bodies and how spectators look at these bodies becomes an issue germane to human dignity. If the body is objectified, then the interior structure of the person is hidden or veiled, which reinforces the rupture caused by original sin.²⁰⁵

John Paul II describes this misdirection as anonymity. Objectification strips the body from a particular person because it is no longer an intimate gift for communicating oneself to others in a sportive context. In sport, the adequate response to other body-persons is trust and acceptance. Trust lovingly furthers this test-contest so that a multiplicity of dimensions belonging to the person are developed and realized. Often, however, sport becomes a product in which sportive bodies are anonymously spread across different media, confusing the ethos of the

²⁰⁴ *TOB*, 60.2

²⁰⁵ *TOB*, 60.

body with ethos of the image.²⁰⁶ The body then gets transferred “outside of this configuration of interpersonal gift” and incorporated into a larger body with various ideologies and secular teleologies.²⁰⁷ This transfer in many ways is a transfiguration. These new contexts reorder this bodily reality as an ontic good to other intended ends. The body loses its concrete physicality as an unrepeatable body belonging to this or that athlete because now it is virtually everywhere, being watched by millions of others. It is now a subject of the institution of sport, of mass culture. Producers, photographers, and syndicated sports programs appropriate and reproduce it for many different viewers to know,²⁰⁸ albeit in a moral and spiritual climate that lusts arouse for ends quite contrary to the dignity of the human person. Athletes and viewers are engrossed not simply in entertainment or artistic value: because this is a human body, the encounter is moral.²⁰⁹

In the context of addressing pornography, John Paul II states that, when the dignity of the person is lost,

the human body loses that deeply subjective meaning of the gift and becomes an object destined for the knowledge of many, by which those who look will assimilate or even take possession of something that evidently exists (or rather should exist) by its very essence on the level of gift—of gift by the person to the person, no longer of course in the image, but in the living man.²¹⁰

With its erotic longings and sensual bodies, sport can easily become prey to voyeurism. It becomes a spectacle, thanks to a climate that often fosters exhibitionism, because big business targets and markets to consumers’ inordinate

²⁰⁶ *TOB*, 61-62.

²⁰⁷ *TOB*, 61.1. For a penetrating metaphysics of the body that complements John Paul II’s and goes beyond the scope of this thesis, see Graham Ward, *The Politics of Discipleship* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009), 221-260.

²⁰⁸ *TOB*, 61-62.

²⁰⁹ *TOB*, 61.2.

²¹⁰ *TOB*, 61.1.

lusts, which abound in “historical” man. Like pornography, sport as spectacle oversteps the limits of shame through its shameless exploitation of the body in a dynamic and complicated manner.²¹¹ The integral truth about man is overwritten by the spectacle itself. The body is reduced “to the rank of an object, of an object of “enjoyment” intended for the satisfaction of mere concupiscence.”²¹² These athletes, whether they choose or not, become a spectacle without any fundamental contact or relationship with the viewers; therefore, what is exposed and uncovered is a body as object and does not fulfill the nuptial meaning of the body. Furthermore, John Paul avers that the body as spectacle violates the full truth of the object—the inalienable dignity of the body—and that it therefore fails to ennoble everything that is human.²¹³ Certainly, the body is visible as an image on a screen or billboard, but it is disconnected from the person, so what is disclosed is not correlate to reality. Finally, the body becomes an object of production and is valued for its transitive action independent from the subject of those actions (intransitive action). I will say more about this distinction below. This production commodifies the sportive body because the body is sold and traded by the purveyors of sport at the expense of the person, thus sacrificing human dignity.

Weiss runs dangerously close to this reductionism and objectification with his preoccupation with the body, especially as he relates the athlete to others who equally if not inordinately prize the body—glamorous women, worldly successful, and the hero.²¹⁴ Weiss gives priority to the sensible goods at the expense of a fuller

²¹¹ *TOB*, 61.2-61.4.

²¹² *TOB*, 63.5.

²¹³ *TOB*, 63.5-63.7.

²¹⁴ Weiss, *Sport*, 85.

reality because the human person is not merely a perfectible body. Yes, Weiss claims that a healthy spirit should enrich whatever an athlete does; however, he never fully explains or develops what this means concerning the intellectual and moral goods of the interiority of man or how it comports with the reality of the dignity of the human person.

Redemption of the Body

As I conclude this section, it is necessary to summarize and tease out a few important implications as they relate to Weiss's theory of sport. This dialogue with Weiss then includes the redeemed and glorified body, as well as other pertinent issues.

To begin, I interpret Weiss's mind-body relationship as essentially characterizing human existence after the fall. As noted in the last chapter, Weiss's theory of sport includes no original state of innocence or historical fall. This is important because Weiss confuses the order of sin with the order of creation. For a Christian ethic, following John Paul II, although sin wreaks havoc on the whole cosmos, these orders are distinct and separate. Our original human experience (Gen. 1-2) is the real meaning of life. Sin is alien to humanity's original goodness. Sin and evil, according to the Christian tradition, cannot be reduced to the good. Original sin explains why there is disorder between soul and body. If humans are ontologically good, then sin is a parasite, a corruption of goodness. What is wrong for Weiss just is--a fact of our existence. Since he identifies human nature with evil, he must ultimately lay the blame on God. He believes that humans, who are contingent creatures, are guilty simply because they exist. However, for a Christian ethic, sin or evil is not the way it

is supposed to be, so redemption or restoration is a correction, a healing of human persons and of the cosmos by Christ.

For Weiss, redemption eliminates the human person that his preferred future pictures. His recourse for overcoming this state of affairs is to look to another world for a cure, but the outcome is the loss of self, both body and soul. Weiss begins his anthropology with this fundamental flaw as a fact of our existence and views redemption as an attempt to flee or escape from with his Platonic ascent. Furthermore, Weiss's dualism deifies the mind because it claims that the mind by itself knows what is good and true. His "mind" educates and directs the body because it is capable of discerning the excellent project intended for self-completion. His optimism concerning the mind's epistemic capacities is difficult to maintain if something is inherently wrong with our finitude. How is it possible to extricate the mind from its own problem? Weiss's epistemic confidence concerning moral knowledge grants the mind a power that human experience does not warrant. His "mind" is implicated in the fundamental flaw of human existence. Because of the inescapable confusion and misperception that result from man's fallenness, O'Donovan questions a method of moral reasoning that does not hold a measure of epistemological guardedness.²¹⁵ This is not say that Weiss's objectivism or moral realism are not without ontological grounds, only that human fallenness obscures this order to the human mind.

Because of this problem concerning the fall, a Christian ethic takes its epistemic confidence from the theological authority that God discloses the truth about man and

²¹⁵ O'Donovan, *Resurrection and Moral Order*, 19.

the moral order in and through his redemption of the world in Jesus Christ.²¹⁶ What is man? Utilizing his phenomenological method with a reflection on Vatican II ten years after its opening, Wojtyla elaborates in *Sources of Renewal* on the centrality that Christ has for the Church, a centrality that Vatican II adamantly reinforces. “Christ...fully reveals man to himself and brings to light this most high calling” (*GS* 22).²¹⁷ It is God’s definitive self-disclosure in Christ that a Christian ethic apprehends and that restores the true, proper value of man. The centrality of redemptive reality gives the ultimate answer to what or who human beings are. This plan of redemptive love is linked to the incarnation of God made man.²¹⁸ Again, Wojtyla cites this truth from his favorite text in Vatican II (*GS* 22),²¹⁹

He who is the ‘image of the invisible God’ (Col.1:15), is himself the perfect man who has restored in the children of Adam that likeness to God which had been disfigured ever since the first sin. Human nature, by the very fact that it was assumed, not absorbed, in him, has been raised in us also to a dignity beyond compare. For, by his incarnation, he, the son of God, has in a certain way united himself with each man.²²⁰

John Paul II deliberately draws on this link between incarnation and redemption because the restoration of man was the purpose of the incarnation, and restoration is accomplished only through participation in redemption by grace.²²¹ The mystery of man becomes meaningful in the mystery of the incarnate Word.²²² His embodiment

²¹⁶ O’Donovan, *Resurrection and Moral Order*, 17-22.

²¹⁷ *GS* 22 cited in Wojtyla, *Sources of Renewal*, 75.

²¹⁸ Wojtyla, *Sources of Renewal*, 77.

²¹⁹ See Charles Curran, *The Moral Theology of Pope John Paul II* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2005), 8-17.

²²⁰ *GS* 22 cited in Wojtyla, *Sources of Renewal*, 78.

²²¹ Wojtyla, *Sources of Renewal*, 78.

²²² *GS* 22.

objectively reveals the love of the Father and heals the problem caused by original sin.

In the second cycle of *TOB* series, John Paul II further elucidates the relationship between the incarnation and redemption:

Through redemption, every human being has received himself and his own body anew, as it were, from God. Christ inscribed in the human body—in the body of every man and every woman—a new dignity, because he himself has taken up the human body together with the soul into union with the person of the Son-Word.²²³

Because Christ in his body was given up for us, he has accomplished the redemption of the body.²²⁴ His incarnation and redemption vindicate the created order, human physicality. His death and resurrection secure for us as body-persons the possibility of functioning as God intended in the original experience. For “historical man,” this dignity survived the fall; however, as a mystery of faith through the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit, the in-breaking reality of the gospel epistemologically awakens and frees a Christian to affirm and more fully realize this great dignity.²²⁵

With respect to embodiment, redemption means, according to John Paul II’s interpretation of 1 Corinthians 6, that “man’s ‘body’ is no longer only; ‘his own’.”²²⁶ He is no longer his own because he has this new living reality of the Holy Spirit who tabernacles in our bodies, which we were originally given by God. Of course,

²²³ *TOB*, 56.4.

²²⁴ *TOB*, 4.3, 49, 86.8

²²⁵ *TOB*, 56.3.

²²⁶ *TOB*, 56.3. O’Donovan similar to John Paul II recognizes that this gift of new life “does not consist merely in the objective reality of a renewed order of things apart from myself... The Pentecostal gift means that the renewal of the universe touches me at the point where I am a moral agent,” the subjective mode (O’Donovan, *Resurrection and Moral Order*, 23.). O’Donovan appears in his lengthy analysis of salvation to make use of the tools of phenomenology to describe the lived experience of the (Christian) subject’s freedom in order to integrate the different dimensions. In particular, his discussion, reveals how this gift subjectively frees Christians as moral agents to lovingly accomplish God’s purposes as indicated in objective reality.

because of how God originally made human persons, the Christian's man still is constituted as a personal subject. But now St. Paul means to show that the Holy Spirit is a "further source of the dignity of the body...who is also the source of the moral duty that derives from such dignity." Furthermore, because of the fruit of redemption--being purchased by God and indwelt by His Spirit--this new dignity enables a Christian to receive himself anew as a gift from God.²²⁷ In addition, this new creation as a gift is a new reality that gives rise to new obligations, as John Paul II sees in 1 Corinthians 6:13-20. Because they have received this gift, Christians must not "sin against their own bodies" (1 Cor 6:18). Christians must ethically relate to this new reality according to its true nature. They must shun any immoral use of the body. Keeping the body pure by treating it according to its new dignity radiates the glory of God in and through the body.²²⁸ Hence, moral duties come from such dignity.

As I have argued throughout this chapter, Weiss does not begin with this presupposition about dignity. Even where he assumes dignity, as explicitly stated four times in his book,²²⁹ either his concept of dignity is underdeveloped and lacks explanation and justification, or his organizing telic principle (excellence) is detached from what it means to be human. Weiss's Platonic ordering gives a sense of dignity that the athlete might develop more fully as he participates in bodily excellence, but it provides no clear sense of the dignity that humans already have as gift. John Paul II reminds Christian anthropology and Christian ethics that dignity is both a present actuality, because humans are made in God's image, and a future

²²⁷ *TOB*, 56.3, 4.

²²⁸ *TOB*. 57.

²²⁹ Weiss, *Sport*, 98, 152, 153, 185.

potentiality, because eschatologically, humans are called to become the image of Christ and to more fully realize their moral dignity. For Weiss, the concept of dignity cannot do the kind of conceptual and ethical work that one might expect if there is more behind why we should or should not do certain actions. Since he does not explain who humans are, dignity in no way gives content or structure to what he claims is the goal of sport, bodily excellence. Thus, he claims excellence is the athlete's goal, but this goal may or may not be the true goal. In contrast, John Paul II's teleology is intimately connected to his metaphysic because the goal functions as an end of who humans in nature were intended to become. If humans are given natural dignity because they possess God's image, then we should strive to help others realize this good, both individually and socially.

How a person should treat his or her body depends on who humans are. Since bodies manifest persons, and since persons are given natural dignity, the constitutive, proscriptive rules and the sportsmanship rules of a particular sport should both properly relate to this reality. Weiss's explanation of moral duties is consistently grounded in the rules of the game, rules that determine how an athlete should function while she assumes this given role in sports.²³⁰ What is the basis for these rules? How do rules relate to the reality of being human?

John Paul II explains that the purpose of the human body is for the Lord, which means that "every Christian must take into account in his behavior toward 'his own' body and obviously also toward another's body..."²³¹ John Paul II's reference to another's body recalls the nuptial meaning of the body, for this new dignity directs us

²³⁰ Weiss, *Sport*, 80-85, 89-95.

²³¹ *TOB*, 56.5.

to freely love the gift of other bodies. The fullness of this dignity is possible because of the redemptive reality that Christians were bought with a price (1 Cor 6:19-20); therefore, Paul exhorts Christians to glorify God.²³²

It is important to point out the John Paul II does not concern himself merely with an individual's own body. Why? These bodies are the Lord's, so cosmic and social implications follow. If they are the Lord's, then no matter the sphere, embodiment matters so much that human bodies either glorify God by bringing out the fullness of dignity in interpersonal relations, or they do not glorify him at all. Graham Ward interprets "Lord" in 1 Corinthians 6 as a political title because this "Lord," not Caesar, is sovereign over these bodies.²³³ John Paul II intimates the cosmic dimension. He argues that the basis for this bodily behavior is the supernatural reality that, as a fact, affects every human being and "permeates every sphere of reciprocal common life between human beings...."²³⁴ This cosmic dimension presents a radical antithesis for Christians who play sport. Playing sport cannot be separated from the reigning politic, which demands that a Christian ethic inquire, "What do the 'lords; of sport want and intend? In what respect are these ends alien to the 'Lord' of sport?" I explore this line of inquiry more in my final chapter when I address idolatry in sport, a moral matter specific to sport.

Eschatological Body

In the third cycle of TOB, John Paul II looks at embodiment in the light of the eschaton. Eschatological man refers to a vision of man's future resurrection and

²³² TOB, 57.3.

²³³ Ward, *The Politics of Discipleship*, 253.

²³⁴ TOB, 57.3.

destiny. In this short series of addresses, John Paul II examines Christ's appeal to the resurrection when he responds to the Sadducees (Mt. 22: 23) because it relates to the body-person unity in the new heaven and earth. For the sake of this thesis, it is not necessary to rehearse the details of John Paul II's exegesis as it pertains to marriage because it is his conclusion that is important for the meaning of a Christian anthropology.

John Paul II states that the basis for a Christian faith in the resurrection is Scripture itself because Scripture witnesses to the power of the living God. The Synoptics (Mt. 22:24-30; Mk. 12:19-25; Lk. 20:28-36) testify to the future resurrection of the body and to the state of the bodies of risen human beings.²³⁵ "Resurrection means restoration to the true life of human bodiliness, which was subjected to death in its temporal phase."²³⁶ For John Paul II, this new state in the "other world" (Lk. 20:35-36) means that "man will keep his own psychomatic nature [hylmorphism]." He states if, this were not true, then the whole idea of the resurrection would be meaningless. Thus, the resurrection is not a disincarnation of man, but rather a "spiritualization of his somatic nature."²³⁷ This spiritualization represents a new system of powers. Instead of the discord that plagues the body and spirit relationship for historical man, there will be a harmonious and reciprocal relationship between body and soul in communion with God and others. The redeemed body begins to testify to this communion in earthly life as it matures in personality.²³⁸ John Paul II states that "the resurrection will consist in the perfect

²³⁵ *TOB*, 65.2.

²³⁶ *TOB*, 66.5.

²³⁷ *TOB*, 66.5.

²³⁸ *TOB*, 67.1.

participation of all that is bodily in man in all that is spiritual in him. At the same time, it will consist in the perfect realization of what is personal in man.”²³⁹

Because of the reality of the resurrection, John Paul II affirms several truths concerning theological anthropology. These truths have a direct bearing on this thesis.²⁴⁰ First, contrary to Plato’s idea, the body is not temporarily connected with the soul. Second, the body and the soul together constitute the unity and integrity of the human person. Third, if this harmonious and reciprocal relationship is the end state, then the earthly life in the redeemed body aims at this kind of relationship, both individually and socially, as a witness to this eschatological experience. He summarizes,

. . . the truth about the resurrection clearly affirms that man’s eschatological perfection and happiness cannot be understood as a state of the soul alone, separated (according to Plato, liberated) from the body, but must be understood as *the definitively and perfectly integrated state of man* brought about by such a union of the soul with body that it definitively qualifies and assures the perfect integrity.²⁴¹

Fourth, this reality is the definitive fulfillment of the human race where this “other world” is God’s world. His presence will completely fill it,²⁴² thereby creating “a wholly new state of human life itself.”²⁴³ John Paul II would be the first to admit that the details are shrouded in mystery; nonetheless, this future human embodiment will

²³⁹ *TOB*, 67.3.

²⁴⁰ In this section, John Paul II relates this theological affirmation to what Thomas Aquinas said about the resurrection to Aristotle and in contrast to Plato (*TOB*, 66.6.).

²⁴¹ *TOB*, 66.6.

²⁴² *TOB*, 66.2.

²⁴³ *TOB*. 66.3.

fulfill the nuptial meaning of the body as God's bride communes with God himself.²⁴⁴

The eschatological experience that John Paul II affirms is at odds with the sportive body that Weiss represents in his Platonic eschaton. Many of these details have been alluded to throughout this chapter, so I will address only a few here.

First, Weiss's ontological union is in reality formed between the effects of bodily performances and this divine ordering of excellence.²⁴⁵ The self is gone, and the body no longer exists. If the estrangement of the body was true while Weiss's athlete played on earth, then it is exponentially true in the afterlife. If anything exists from these excellent performances it is only a memory eternalized in the ideal of excellence.

Second, Weiss reserves this supposed union only for those who have identified or properly accepted their sportive bodies. Although each athlete participates in Being—the laws of existence—only those athletes who experience excellence are eternalized.²⁴⁶ Weiss's eschatological experience is reserved only for certain individuals—exclusively for the excellent athletes. (We must keep in mind that he uses "individual" loosely in the eschaton.)

Third, John Paul II's anthropology considers not only the relationship that humans have to one another, but also the relationship specific to God himself. Thus, who humans are, along with their intended end, ultimately depends upon this relationship with God. If excellence is dependent on God, and if athletes live in pursuit of

²⁴⁴ *TOB*, 68.1-6. John Paul II deliberately emphasizes that this is a Trinitarian participation and communion.

²⁴⁵ Weiss, *Sport*, 247-249.

²⁴⁶ Weiss, *Sport*, 247.

excellence, then this promised, eschatological good in Jesus Christ—a good that redeemed man begins to participate in now and envisage because of the kingdom of God—radically alters our conception of what an athlete is attracted to and strives for in and through sport.²⁴⁷ If our relationship with God affects any notion of excellence, this relationship implies that we must consider such goods as bodily excellence in light of this eschatological reality. As John Paul II claims, this eschatological end is the definitive fulfillment.

If the resurrection is the fulfillment of the nuptial meaning of the body, and if the nuptial meaning of the body is a call to self-donate, to love, then this gift of love lies at the center of any human practice. Thus, contestants are viewed as friends because in this mutual (gift) exchange, the giving and receiving fosters dialogue and openness to others.²⁴⁸ The gift reminds contestants that this exchange is a cooperative activity in which all sportive interaction witnesses to the richness of being, the value and dignity, of the others.²⁴⁹ This sense of mutuality, which springs from the reality of gift, is for John Paul II an eschatological sign. When sport is played accordingly, it is “for the whole of society and a prelude to that new age in which nation ‘shall not lift up sword against nation’ (Is. 2:4).”²⁵⁰ He notes that mutuality must be recovered because it is a qualitative aspect that easily falls prey to the quantitative ideals that the laws of production and consumption use and manipulate. In particular, when

²⁴⁷ See Max L. Stackhouse, “Ethics and Eschatology,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Eschatology*, ed. Jerry L. Walls (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 548-562.

²⁴⁸ John Paul II, “The Most Authentic Dimension of Sport,” sec. 4.

²⁴⁹ Wojtyla develops this mutual acceptance elsewhere according to the concept of participation. See Karol Wojtyla, “Participation or Alienation?,” in *Person and Community*, 197-207.

²⁵⁰ John Paul II, “The Most Authentic Dimension of Sport,” sec. 3.

athletes acknowledge this gift and strive to reciprocate it, it becomes an activity grounded in a mutual quest toward excellence.

Fraleigh follows a similar logic to that of John Paul II, though without the theological justification and explanation. When excellence is not grounded in this mutual exchange between contestants, then Fraleigh envisages “excellence not as a qualitative concept concerned primarily with how well the contest is played” between contestants of equal worth and value (as it should be according to Fraleigh), but instead as an “inherently and numerically exclusive concept.”²⁵¹ It is the latter point that characterizes Weiss’s logic of sport because excellence signifies or is measured by achieving maximum results and outdistancing all.²⁵² Here Weiss appears to conflate excellence and winning, or *arete* and *agon*. Weiss adamantly holds that the *agon* characteristic of games should cause athletes to try, strive, and want to win. He states that a true athlete—one who pursues bodily excellence—must give himself to winning.²⁵³ Why is this? I understand that, for Weiss, the main criterion of sportive excellence is winning. Weiss equates winning with the obtaining of maximum results, which means that winning constitutes excellence. If this link between winning and results is true, then his athlete must give himself bodily to winning because the road to victory rests on this criterion of exhibiting excellence.²⁵⁴ He claims that the objective of a game is the ability to produce results because sportive achievements are what differentiate the athlete from his opponent.²⁵⁵

²⁵¹ Warren P. Fraleigh, *Right Actions in Sport: Ethics for Contestants* (Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics, 1984), 84-85.

²⁵² Weiss, *Sport*, 176.

²⁵³ Weiss, *Sport*, 176.

²⁵⁴ Weiss, *Sport*, 176, 180.

²⁵⁵ Weiss, *Sport*, 176, 179.

For Weiss, this objective of a game does not mean that all men accomplish these objective feats of sportive excellence; rather, it means that, because we in our human nature share this attraction or desire for excellence, we are able to discern these self-evident truths of excellence as they are communicated in and through great performances. Nor does it mean that only the winners develop in this pursuit of excellence.²⁵⁶ Weiss observes that “even the defeated gain from the game. They benefit from the mere fact that they have engaged in a contest, that they have encountered a display of great skill, that they have made the exhibition of that skill possible or desirable, that they exerted themselves to the limit, and that they have made a game come to be.”²⁵⁷ Notice that, although the defeated achieve some gain or value, Weiss never indicates that they realize excellence because excellence is tethered to achievement. Why?

Weiss’s athlete strives to stand alone because, according to Weiss, to excel is to gain superiority “over against the rest of men.”²⁵⁸ Therefore, the athletic goal aims toward an individual and thus exclusive achievement.²⁵⁹ Dombrowski concurs that Weiss’s overall stance seems to commit him to accentuate winning and victory more

²⁵⁶ Sheryle B. Drewe, *Socrates, Sport and Students: A Philosophical Inquiry into Physical Education and Sport* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2001), 58-59.

²⁵⁷ Weiss, *Sport*, 183.

²⁵⁸ Weiss, *Sport*, 84-85.

²⁵⁹ Weiss makes and develops this claim even further in, “Records and the Man,” in *The Philosophy of Sport*, 23. Weiss modifies the athletic goal by stating that where others are involved in a sportive contest they are incidental and a means for individual achievement. Schacht responds to and corrects Weiss with some of the same reasons found in Dombrowski, i.e., his athletic goal is cut loose from a balanced ideal. This reinforces my whole thesis that excellence for Weiss is narrowly construed which undermines human dignity. If who we are is human beings is endowed with dignity, even though certain forms of life accent some aspects of our humanity more than others, then it is a violation of human dignity if a practice “requires that other men be treated only as means to one’s own achievement, or makes the attainment of satisfaction depend upon excelling over everyone else.” (Richard L. Schacht, “On Weiss on Records, Athletic Activity and the Athlete,” in *The Philosophy of Sport: A Collection of Original Essays*, ed. Robert G. Osterhoudt (Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas Publisher, 1973), 27-28.).

than other dimensions of sport.²⁶⁰ It is this perceived problem that Dombrowski prudently remedies and fills out with the Greek ideal of *kalokagathia*.²⁶¹ However, even if Weiss is guilty of overstating victory and under-developing other excellences (e.g., intellectual and moral), Dombrowski contends that, because Weiss does not view athletics as important as other pursuits in life, he deemphasizes winning in sport.²⁶² I beg to differ. Because Weiss's eschaton presents the burden of eternity and immortality, this reality puts the mutual gift and exchange of this whole sporting activity at the service of or for the sake of an impersonal form of excellence, which maximal results represent.²⁶³ Weiss's eschaton dehumanizes athletic activity because his Platonic prime value of excellence is not a participation that affirms the value and dignity of the athlete, nor is the future predicated on mutual giving, for all that is left is the Form. Thus, the solitary self is neither completed nor perfected.

Because of the ultimate end of his story,²⁶⁴ Weiss recognizes, respects, and responds not to the full dignity of the human person, but narrowly to those who have achieved bodily excellence. He does not see the full truth of who humans are because his metaphysic offers a partial account of humanity, amplifying some dimensions while overlooking others.²⁶⁵ Because the indications of temporal excellence that Weiss observes in the natural world are ultimately calls of excellence from the ideal

²⁶⁰ Dombrowski, *Contemporary Athletics and Ancient Greek Ideals*, 54-55.

²⁶¹ Dombrowski, *Contemporary Athletics and Ancient Greek Ideals*, 46-53.

²⁶² Dombrowski, *Contemporary Athletics and Ancient Greek Ideals*, 55.

²⁶³ I developed this line of reasoning in my last chapter when I explained the logic of immortality and Weiss's conception of excellence.

²⁶⁴ See Paul J. Wadell, *Happiness and the Christian Moral Life: An Introduction to Christian Ethics* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2008), 140-144.

²⁶⁵ Wadell, *Happiness and the Christian Moral Life*, 142.

world, this final end ultimately determines what is valued here on this earth. Thus, this final end does not affirm the full dignity and worth of human persons.

Excellent Persons

Finally, my final criticism draws from moral theologian Servais Pinckaers, who helps develop another important implication when excellence is divorced from human dignity. Weiss's failure to consider the whole person gives rise to the temptation discussed below, especially since his end reduces bodily value and performances to utility value.

Pinckaers makes an important distinction with respect to a difference between ethics and art or technique.²⁶⁶ This broad distinction proves helpful for John Paul II's analysis of sport. Pinckaers refers to art in a classical sense as "any production requiring special knowledge and aptitude," such as the fine arts. Technique is more "associated with modern sciences and designates the entire field of practical applications based on scientific discoveries, notably instruments and machines." Thus, when technique was used in a traditional sense, it "meant a number of procedures combined to produce a determined result." Pinckaers, for example, applies this distinction to the techniques comprising the movements in dance. Today, technique focuses on scientific applications, but the object is still production, a production culled from the constant search for the best methods. For example, in sport studies, the science of kinesiology, which includes physiology, biomechanics, motor learning, and motor control, is dominated by a focus on the empirical and relies on "controlled studies, actual measurements and statistically significant

²⁶⁶ Servais Pinckaers, O.P., *The Sources of Christian Ethics*, trans. Mary Thomas Noble (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1995), 83-88. The main ideas and references in this paragraph and the next are from Pinckaers, 83-88.

findings.”²⁶⁷ The elite and professional athlete is routinely subjected to this scientific knowledge and “expert systems” in order to employ the latest technology and information in his pursuit of excellence. William Freeman pleads that, although this information is helpful, it must not be separated from ethical concerns:

Success in 21st century sport should mean more than victory for whoever devoted the most time and money to sport. This obsessive approach to sport lessens the meaning of the achievement, because society is neither surprised nor uplifted by the success of one who strives only in a single arena of life.²⁶⁸

Although a person can be an excellent businessman, a famous physician, or a superb college instructor, if he is divorced from moral considerations, he still lacks moral excellence.²⁶⁹ In many cases, success is conferred on others because their excellent skills or technique realize an achievement of some external good. The converse is also true: a morally upright person can lack technical or artistic talent. Pinckaers avers, “Morality qualifies a person comprehensively: this individual is a just, courageous person. Art and technique qualify a person only partially, in the context of external activity: this individual is a good surgeon, a clever worker, a great musician,” or an excellent athlete.

²⁶⁷ R. Scott Kretchmar, *Practical Philosophy of Sport*, 4, 178-179. This point continues Guttmann’s thesis concerning how modern sport is organized around rationalization, quantification and specialization. It is dominated by a quest for the perfect as symbolized by records.

²⁶⁸ William H. Freeman, “Ethical Implications of Expert Systems in Sports Training: A Plea for Ethical Limits to Striving,” in *Sport...The Third Millennium*, ed. F. Landry, M. Landry and M. Yerles (Quebec City: Les Presses De L’Universite’ Laval, 1991), 610.

²⁶⁹ O’Donovan adds that if technological or scientific considerations deny teleology this creates a dangerous misunderstanding of humanity’s place in the universe. In sport, this implies that the science of performance enhancing sees and encourages an inert creation, i.e., a creation without movement and a point to its movement. If our knowledge of the world is without ends, then the mind creates and imposes its own teleological order on creation (voluntarism). What this means for sport is that ordering becomes the servant of *techne*. Therefore, playing sport has no ordered relationship as far as how it relates to ends given in nature so there is nothing to command our respect, leaving human nature (soul-body unity) vulnerable to unprincipled domination (O’Donovan, *Resurrection and Moral Order*, 49-52.). In sports today, this divorce from ends is particularly acute with genetic modification technologies for performance enhancement. See Tracy J. Trothen, “Redefining Human, Redefining Sport: The Imago Dei and Genetic Modification Technologies,” in *The Image of God in the Human Body: Essays on Christianity and Sports*, eds. Donald Deardorff II and John White (Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2008), 217-234.

Herbert McCabe makes the same point with respect to sport itself.²⁷⁰ He distinguishes between the skills or habits necessary to produce a good result in sport and the dispositions or virtues that are needed in order to excel morally in life itself. Sadly, these two often are divorced. McCabe states, “So while a skill or technique is directed to the excellence of the thing produced, a virtue [moral excellence] is directed to the excellence of the producer.”²⁷¹ This distinction parallels John Paul II’s own distinction between the transitive and intransitive aspects of human action.²⁷² Concerning these two aspects of human action, he argues, “Whatever we make in our action, whatever effects or products we bring about in it, we always simultaneously ‘make ourselves’ in it as well...We express ourselves, we in some way shape ourselves, we fulfill ourselves.”²⁷³ Weiss’s notion of excellence points more toward a thing produced and less toward the moral excellence of the performers. This neglect is to the detriment of human dignity. I have attested to this neglect repeatedly because the skills and results are objective measures for what constitutes excellence. However, it is only this kind of excellence that Weiss says will be eternalized.

A Christian ethic cannot leave excellence at the level of non-moral goods, such as excellent skills and technique, because non-moral goods are the transitive or objective aspect of an action that, in particular to elite sports, is governed by technical, economic, and physical laws. Again, the transitive dimension is only one aspect of human action; the other subjective dimension postulates that “the primacy

²⁷⁰ Herbert McCabe, O.P., *God Still Matters*, ed. Brian Davies, OP (London: Continuum, 2002), 192-194.

²⁷¹ McCabe, *God Still Matters*, 193.

²⁷² This distinction serves as the basis for his encyclical on work. See John Paul II, *On Human Work: Encyclical Laborem exercens* (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 1981).

²⁷³ Karol Wojtyła, “The Constitution of Culture Through Human Praxis,” in *Person and Community*, 266.

of the person [is] over technology, because the person is both origin and end of work [sport].”²⁷⁴ For John Paul II, the norm for excellence begins and ends with the dignity or personal value of the human person. As long as sport has other human beings as its object, this norm binds a sportsperson to treat persons for who they really and fully are. Thus, John Paul II’s personalism re-orders any kind of ranking so that “sport is at the service of man and not man at the service of sport, and therefore the dignity of the human person is the goal and criterion of all sporting activity...”²⁷⁵

²⁷⁴ Pinckaers, *The Sources of Christian Ethics*, 86.

²⁷⁵ John Paul II, “The Most Authentic Dimension of Sport,” sec. 2.

CHAPTER FOUR

BEHOLD THE MAN!: CHRIST AT THE CENTER OF SPORT REALITY

Aim of Inquiry: Direction of chapter

Let me begin by explaining what are and are not my reasons for consulting Bonhoeffer's ethical vision. I do not intend to compare and/or contrast Bonhoeffer and John Paul II along conventional Lutheran and Catholic lines of theological reasoning.¹ I do not seek to interrogate the Catholic vision of the Christian life according to problems raised in the Reformation. Undoubtedly, important differences exist between the two especially in regard to their assumptions about ethics and methods of moral reasoning.² However, for this thesis, they offer different voices that

¹ For an investigation on how they compare and contrast, see Jean Bethke Elshtain, *Who are We?*, 7-35.

² I hazard a misunderstanding of this chapter's thesis by Bonhoeffer scholars if I do not make this point clear. Bonhoeffer is critical of Roman Catholic theology and therefore Catholic ethics. In particular, he rejects an ethics rooted in Thomistic-ontology. For him the problem of Christian ethics must refrain from any starting point that inquires about the good where the focus ultimately is on "my own being good and doing good [for when this is done] the decision has already been made that the self and the world are the ultimate realities" (Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works*, vol. 6, *Ethics*, trans. Reinhard Krauss, Charles C. West, and Douglas W. Stott, ed. Clifford J. Green (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 47-48.). When this happens, the task improperly assumes some common ground or shared insight, based on an ontological connection between God and man, which the church can speak to and reason from with the world in order to discern and experience the good life (Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 357). Further Bonhoeffer rejects this ontological connection, *analogia entis*, on Christological grounds because the relationship humans have to God is given by God in Christ (See Jürgen Moltmann and Jürgen Wiessbach, *Two Studies in the Theology of Bonhoeffer*, trans. Reginald H. Fuller and Ilse Fuller (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1967), 53-55.). However, having duly noted this, Bonhoeffer expresses some sympathies—or as Bethge claims critical affections—(e.g., universality of the church, its liturgy, the concept of the church) for the Roman Catholic Church that his trip to Rome (1924) impressed on him and that he never forgot even while confined to his cell in Tegel (Eberhard Bethge, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: A Biography*, rev.ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 57-62.). For an interesting account of Bonhoeffer by a Catholic which accentuates a number of important themes that appeal to Catholics from Bonhoeffer's corpus of writings, see William Kuhns, *In Pursuit of Dietrich Bonhoeffer* (Dayton, OH: Pflaum Press, 1967). For an argument that Bonhoeffer's prison writings move him closer to the Roman Catholic view of natural law, see Robin

I consult based on the merit of their own distinctive emphases and strengths. By mutually informing a Christian ethic, the two voices together resist any kind of expectation that Christian ethics is a monolithic reality.³ Neither do I suppose that together these two men adequately describe all that appears as theological ethics. Dramm emphasizes that in *Ethics*, Bonhoeffer “was not concerned with erecting an edifice of thought that was in harmony with itself in all respects, and certainly not with giving us a perfect set of ethical precepts.”⁴ It is unfair to expect an entire ethic either of these two men or of this thesis, especially since my proposal has from the beginning been a modest (not comprehensive) attempt to fill the lacuna on theologico-ethical reflection on sport. Therefore, I intend to continue the constructive nature of my thesis by considering the significance of Bonhoeffer’s Christological basis for sport and thus how it contributes to a theological ethic for sport.

The task for Christian ethics with John Paul II in the last chapter was to extend the discussion of important anthropological matters in sport, i.e., matters concerning human excellence and dignity, to Christian ethics. John Paul II’s anthropology is the basis for his moral theology. Thus, the bridge from Weiss as philosopher to Wojtyla as philosopher was “natural” in the sense that moral reflection consists of using reason to attend to the truth about man and these indications of order, excellence. However, in response to the decisive influence and direction of the renewal of

W. Lovin, *Christian Faith and Public Choices: The Social Ethics of Barth, Brunner, and Bonhoeffer* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 154-155.

³ Long, Jr., *A Survey of Christian Ethics*, 28-41.

⁴ Sabine Dramm, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: An Introduction to His Thought*, trans. by Thomas Rice (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2007), 104.

Catholic moral theology subsequent to Vatican II,⁵ John Paul II equally reckons the role of faith when reflecting on lived experience.⁶ Wojtyla faithfully considers the truth about man not only from experience or a natural meaning,⁷ but also,

The dignity of the human person finds its full confirmation in the very fact of revelation, for this fact signifies the establishment of contact between God and the human being. To the human being, created in “the image and likeness of God,” God communicates God’s own thoughts and plans. But this is not all. God also “becomes a human being;” God enters the human drama of human existence through the redemption and permeates the human being with divine grace.⁸

Wojtyla assuredly asserts that “we must turn to theology and draw upon the full content of revelation” for it is “from above” that we obtain a fully adequate interpretation both of moral norms and the human being.⁹ In fact, because theology unveils this truth concerning ourselves and God, methodologically it demands that Christian ethics does “moral theology in strict connection with dogmatics.”¹⁰ In the last chapter, my analysis of John Paul II’s *Theology of the Body* demonstrated this aspect of his methodology. This work functions as theological discourse, which as a source supplements and critiques other convictions and sources of moral judgment instead of ignoring or remaining distant from them.¹¹ Moreover, his personalism is

⁵ This does not imply that postconciliar moral discourse has not had its share of major disagreements and dissenting voices. See Odozor, C.S. Sp., *Moral Theology in an Age of Renewal*, 17-43, 304-326.

⁶ The relationship between faith and reason as it pertains to Catholic moral theology is a complicated historical matter. My point is merely to note these turn of events and their affect. Nor should the reader infer that the role of faith was absent prior to Vatican II only that there was a renewed commitment to revelation.

⁷ Wojtyla, “The Dignity of the Human Person,” in *Person and Community*, 179; cf. Wojtyla, “Ethics and Moral Theology,” in *Person and Community*, 1993), 104-106. The beginning of my last chapter followed John Paul II’s method by moving from the natural to the supernatural in addressing what it means to be human.

⁸ Wojtyla, “The Dignity of the Human Person,” in *Person and Community*, 179.

⁹ Wojtyla, “Ethics and Moral Theology,” in *Person and Community*, 104-106.

¹⁰ Wojtyla, “Ethics and Moral Theology,” in *Person and Community*, 106

¹¹ Long, Jr., *A Survey of Christian Ethics*, 28-41.

taken up into and developed according to revelation, Christ, which means it is a Christological personalism. His favorite text from *Guadium et spes* (22) attests to this fact; the truth about the human person is only fully revealed from the vantage point of Christ.¹² Curran concurs that John Paul II's moral theology links anthropocentrism and theocentrism together.¹³ This link proves important for this thesis as whole because Christian ethics unapologetically focuses on what God has revealed concerning humans. Furthermore, Cessario argues that "to include nature and natural law in Christian ethics does not make life-in-Christ an afterthought for Roman Catholic moral instruction. On the contrary, Jesus stands at the centre of every Christian life."¹⁴ This decided emphasis on Christ and revelation forms a connection to Bonhoeffer, who begins and ends his *Ethics* on the reality of the revealed Christ.

With Bonhoeffer, my theological task continues, but my theological reflection turns on an important motif pertaining to Bonhoeffer's starting point for ethical reflection. My inquiry is concerned with Bonhoeffer's Christological basis for Christian ethics, directing particular attention toward interpreting how his Christological realism values penultimate activities, such as sport. My goal is not to offer a complete treatment of Bonhoeffer's ethic.¹⁵ I intend to focus on the above and, where necessary, to develop some of the general theologico-ethical

¹² See Simpson, *On Karol Wojtyla*, 68-92.

¹³ Curran, *The Moral Theology of Pope John Paul II*, 66-78, 91-97.

¹⁴ Romanus Cessario, O. P., *Introduction to Moral Theology* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2001), 183-184.

¹⁵ Because my thesis works from Bonhoeffer, without a full analysis of his ethic, then I organize his ethic around three core elements: christological foundation, ethics as formation, and his rejection of two-sphere thinking. I return to his ethical imagination in my final chapter where I pick up his thought concerning the natural life and his distinction between penultimate and ultimate.

presuppositions and implications. I will attempt to draw from and discern the possible trajectories in and the significance of Bonhoeffer's concrete ethic as a way forward for thinking about sports in a North American context.¹⁶ Bonhoeffer's own presuppositions and intentions open my thesis to consider different questions and answers as they relate to modern muscular Christianity in America. My task in this chapter is more specific to the existing evangelical theological assumptions in America and in sport ministries—modern muscular Christianity—about how sport and faith relate, which is a concern I raised in my introduction. My task is consistent with Bonhoeffer's *Ethics* because one of his main concerns as a theologian of the church was to help Christians reconceptualize social life, thus preparing them for new ways about their relationship as the church to public life.¹⁷

In this first section, my goal is to exposit three core elements of Bonhoeffer's ethical thought. The second section follows from Bonhoeffer's ethical thought in relation to a major theologico-ethical problem in modern muscular Christianity, namely, dualism—how to relate sport and Christianity.

Christological Basis for Ethics

What is distinctive about Bonhoeffer's posthumous *Ethics* is not merely that it is a Christian ethic.¹⁸ For Bonhoeffer, the conceptual foundation for the ethical problem

¹⁶ I recognize that there are fears when going beyond Bonhoeffer so I tread lightly so that I do not misuse Bonhoeffer (John W. De Gruchy, "A Concrete Ethic of the Cross: Interpreting Bonhoeffer's Ethics in North America's Backyard," *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 58, no. 1-2 (2004): 33-45.).

¹⁷ Clifford Green in his introduction attests to this impulse (post-war ethic) for the renewal of Christian life in Bonhoeffer's *Ethics* along with an ethic that addresses Hitler and National Socialism (Clifford Green, "Editor's Introduction," in *Ethics*, 10-11.).

¹⁸ The logic of Bonhoeffer's ethic certainly depends on his exegetical work in *Creation and Fall*. He argues that Christian ethics distinguishes itself from all other ethics. Christian ethics supersedes the task of knowing good and evil—the goal of all other ethical inquiry—because this quest points to this original falling away from mankind's origin and unity in God alone (Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 299-309.). Human beings were never intended to know good and evil, the first principle of non-Christian ethical

begins with Jesus Christ, who defines the good. Instead of beginning ethical inquiry with either a virtue-based system or an action-oriented system, Bonhoeffer radically asserts in his chapter “Christ, Reality and Good” that a wholly other ethical question must be considered: “What is the will of God?”¹⁹ He begins here, as influenced by Barth,²⁰ because the nature of ethics presupposes a decision about ultimate reality, which for Bonhoeffer turns on revelation. The other two systems of ethical inquiry are concerned primarily with being good and doing good, respectively. If one of these systems is the point of departure, then this starting point has substituted something other than God for ultimate reality. It presupposes that something creaturely or contingent is ultimate. For a Christian ethic, this presupposition is tantamount to idolatry because it blurs an ontological distinction between Creator and creature. In order to avoid this categorical mistake, Bonhoeffer conceptualizes reality (*Wirklichkeit*) in terms of Christ.²¹ He claims that, for a Christian ethic, these other realities, namely self and action in the world, “are embedded in a wholly other ultimate reality, namely, the reality of God the Creator, Reconciler, and Redeemer.”²² For Bonhoeffer, all other realities cohere in the reality of God as revealed in Christ. Christ is the interpretative key for his whole ethical inquiry. What

reflection, so any attempt to do this grasps at reality independent of God, living from their own origin, a consequence of the godless choice to eat the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The only way to recover this original unity with God is in Christ who lived by the will of God. A Christian ethic stands in this new knowledge of Christ as origin and reconciliation which means believers no longer stand between good and evil but free and unified to discern and do the will of God (Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 316-317.). Cf. Stephen Plant, *Bonhoeffer* (New York: Continuum, 2004), 77-91, 111-113.

¹⁹ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 47.

²⁰ Clifford Green *et al.*, “Editor’s Afterword to the German Edition,” in *Ethics*, 414-419.

²¹ This starting point for Bonhoeffer’s *Ethics* follows the most recent research done for the new English edition of the *Ethics* which argues that the “Christ, Reality, and Good” chapter was most likely Bonhoeffer’s starting point (Green, “Editor’s Introduction,” in *Ethics*, 1-44.).

²² Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 48.

follows then, according to Bonhoeffer, is that ethical reflection and deliberation in this world takes on a whole new character (*Gestalt*).²³

Ethics for Bonhoeffer is not divorced from theology,²⁴ so any talk about values or standards must be understood in light of God because he is the origin and goal of goodness.²⁵ Bonhoeffer inquires what meaning goodness would have without God. He answers that, “since God, however, as ultimate reality is no other than the self-announcing, self-witnessing, self-revealing God in Jesus Christ, the question of good can only find its answer in Christ.”²⁶ The ethical and theological come together in the reality of God in Christ because Christ is the revelation.²⁷ Therefore, ethical reflection does not begin with the world apart from this reality because this beginning would privilege the self or something from the world as more basic than the reality of Christ. This inversion follows the original consequence of disunity when humans erected themselves as the creator and judge of reality and, hence, of goodness. Bonhoeffer argues that, in the New Testament, this disunity is overcome in Christ, by rediscovering unity; this is the ground, “the point of decision” belonging to

²³ *Gestalt* refers to the concrete form of Jesus Christ that Christian action is supposed to realize and participate in.

²⁴ For an argument that Bonhoeffer’s ethic must be an ethical theology because of the necessary relationship between Jesus and God, see James H. Burtness, *Shaping the Future: The Ethics of Dietrich Bonhoeffer* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 25-38.

²⁵ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 49.

²⁶ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 49.

²⁷ I realize this raises Christological questions. Bonhoeffer upholds a classical Chalcedonian Christology which for him was central throughout his body of works, specially beginning with his 1933 lectures on Christology and in his posthumous *Ethics*. De Gruchy comments that Bonhoeffer’s Christology is informed unwaveringly by Martin Luther’s “theology of the cross” which is important with respect to the humiliation or condescension of Christ, so with Luther, Bonhoeffer teaches the weakness and suffering of God for Christ is our representative (John De Gruchy, ed., *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Witness to Jesus Christ* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 17-19.). This Christological foundation informs Bonhoeffer’s ethic also for conspiracy and thinking about tyrannicide.

an ethical experience.²⁸ The origin of the good for a Christian ethic is grounded in the reality of God because God is the ultimate reality in all that exists.²⁹ Thus, the ultimate and decisive question for Christian ethics for Bonhoeffer is, “With what reality will we reckon in our life?”³⁰

This reality of God carries a Christian ethic to God’s answer, which is revealed in Jesus Christ.³¹ It is only this revelation that answers the ultimate question and that allows a person to truly live. The bases for ethics are not some timeless principles but the concrete person and work of Jesus Christ. In other words, because of Jesus Christ, the world is reconciled and this new, in-breaking Christological reality is the ontological ground for a Christian ethic.³² Nothing in this created world stands outside the reality of Jesus Christ. For Bonhoeffer, the Lordship of Christ takes up the entire created world. To talk about the good then is language that refers to the real--the concrete reality located in Jesus Christ. Thus, what is good corresponds to reality as disclosed in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. According to Bonhoeffer himself,

In Jesus Christ the reality of God has entered into the reality of this world. The place where the questions about reality of God and the reality of the world are answered at the same time is characterized solely by the name: Jesus Christ. God and the world are enclosed in this name. In Christ all things exist (Col. 1:17). From now on we cannot speak rightly of either God or the world without speaking of Jesus Christ. All concepts of reality that ignore Jesus Christ are abstractions.³³

²⁸ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 309.

²⁹ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 54.

³⁰ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 49.

³¹ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 49.

³² Larry Rasmussen, “The Ethics of Responsible Action,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, ed. John W. De Gruchy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 216-218; Larry L. Rasmussen, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Reality and Resistance* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 15-24.

³³ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 54.

Since Christ has taken and embraced the reality of the world into himself, Rasmussen explains that Bonhoeffer's Christological realism establishes an "ontological coherence of God's reality with the reality of the world."³⁴ For Bonhoeffer, the radical nature of the Christ event redescribes all of reality, so any understanding of what is real must now be read in the light of Christ's reconciliation. There is no other reality apart from this. The reality of Christ is what Bonhoeffer calls to be actualized.³⁵ Christological realism means that any judgments of value or obligation apart from the Christocentric understanding of all reality are distortions and abstractions.

Ethics as Formation

If Jesus Christ is the cornerstone for Bonhoeffer's ethics, then it implies that the pivotal inquiry becomes "Who is Christ for us today?"³⁶ For Bonhoeffer, the answer to this question for Christian ethics is how Christ becomes real in this world.³⁷ Bonhoeffer uses repeatedly the phrase '*Ecce Homo*' as a fitting admonition to how Christian action should behold the form of Christ over those who tyrannize, accuse, and despise humanity.³⁸ Bonhoeffer aims at a concrete ethic so that this question is

³⁴ Rasmussen, *Reality and Resistance*, 16, 22.

³⁵ See Wolfgang Huber, "Bonhoeffer and Modernity," in *Theology and the Practice of Responsibility*, eds. Wayne Whitson Floyd, Jr. and Charles Marsh (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1994), 12.

³⁶ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works*, vol. 8, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, trans. Isabel Best, Lisa E. Dahill, Reinhard Kraus, and Nancy Lukens, ed. John W. De Gruchy (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2010), 362; Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 99-100.

³⁷ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 55.

³⁸ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*. 82-88. Historically, Bonhoeffer refers to Hitler's Nazism and for Christians to take the form of Christ as advocates who incarnate God's love and reconciliation toward those who are despised and shown contempt.

“about *how Christ may take form among us today and here.*”³⁹ Because this is a concrete ethic, Bonhoeffer claims that it is futile to search for a generalized or abstract ethic that attempts to apply what is good once and for all.⁴⁰ Yet, Bonhoeffer realizes that there are some difficulties with this inquiry: “What do ‘among us,’ ‘today,’ and ‘here’ mean?”⁴¹ Because these terms and the concept of formation itself are important, I will explain this concrete ethic briefly.

Rasmussen argues that, although there are two separate treatments for how Bonhoeffer discusses moral action, in the end there is a single method:⁴² “‘conformation to Christ’ (*Gleichgestaltung*) and action in ‘accordance with reality’ or ‘with due regard for reality’ (*Wirklichkeitsgemässheit*).”⁴³

³⁹ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 99.

⁴⁰ Bonhoeffer’s starting point once again has him reject other ethical theories, namely, casuistry and formalism. I realize there is considerable debate on how to classify Bonhoeffer’s ethic which he himself resists throughout because of his ultimate presupposition concerning the reality of Christ. For discussions about how to understand Bonhoeffer’s entire ethic, though recognizing it as an unintegrated, unfinished work, see Rasmussen (1990, 2005), Burtness (1985) and Ott (1972).

⁴¹ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 100.

⁴² Rasmussen, *Reality and Resistance*, 22. Larry Rasmussen, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer—His Significance for North Americans* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), 89-110. Because of the fragmentary character of *Ethics*, Rasmussen emphasizes the problems of organizing and dating the different parts, yet, this notwithstanding should not surprise us for the unpolished and undeveloped aspects are true of many Christian ethicists. This can be instructive on how we actually do theology and ethics. Rasmussen comparison of the two methods has him conclude that their similarities outweigh their differences and the differences are inconsequential (Rasmussen, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer—His Significance for North Americans*, 108-110.). For the nature of this thesis I will focus on the “formation” motif while realizing that nuances from the other “command” motif will be underdeveloped if not missing. Furthermore, my bringing together of the “formation” motif with sports is for the purpose of thinking about issues in everyday life though it might be appropriate depending on the historical context to appropriate other features of this motif for extraordinary, extreme cases in sport.

⁴³ Rasmussen, *Reality and Resistance*, 22; cf. Larry Rasmussen, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer—His Significance for North Americans*, 89-110. Within Bonhoeffer’s *Ethics* these two methods are developed in the respective chapters with the first motif concerned with ethics as “formation” and the second, ethics as command: “Ethics as Formation” (76-102) and “The ‘Ethical’ and the ‘Christian’ as a Topic” (363-387).

Focusing on the “formation” (*Gestaltung*) motif because of its primacy in his methodology,⁴⁴ Bonhoeffer explains that,

the Holy Scripture speaks of formation in a sense that at first sounds quite strange. It is not primarily concerned with formation of the world by planning and programs, but in all formation it is concerned only with the one form that has overcome the world, the form of Jesus Christ. Formation proceeds only from here. This does not mean that the teachings of Christ or so-called Christian principles should be applied directly to the world in order to form the world according to them. Formation occurs only by being drawn into the form of Jesus Christ, by being conformed to the unique form of the one who became human, was crucified, and is risen. This does not happen as we strive ‘to become like Jesus,’ as we customarily say, but as the form of Jesus Christ himself so works on us that it molds us, conforming our form to Christ’s own (Gal. 4:9). Christ remains the only one who forms.⁴⁵

Taking Galatians 4:19 as Bonhoeffer’s biblical cue, we can understand that formation is a transformative, dependent process in which Christ is responsible to give and draw thinking, acting humans into conformity with himself.⁴⁶ Furthermore, this form—what a person is to participate in as true reality—is clearly and concretely constituted as three essential components belonging to the person and work of Christ: Jesus Christ the Incarnate, the Crucified, and the Risen.⁴⁷ More specifically, a Christian ethic receives its form and unity in the dynamic interplay of this threefold structure pertaining to the person and work of Christ. Rasmussen instructs that the

unity lies in conforming to the *Gestalt Christi* in the given time and place and finding the fitting response there (*sachgemaess*); that is, determining whether the conforming action is one of ‘incarnation’ (affirmation and cooperation), ‘crucifixion’ (judgment and rejection) or ‘resurrection’ (bold creativity and newness).⁴⁸

⁴⁴ See Rasmussen, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer—His Significance for North Americans*, 89-110; cf. Heinrich Ott, *Reality and Faith: The Theological Legacy of Dietrich Bonhoeffer* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1972), 179-189, 270-274.

⁴⁵ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 93.

⁴⁶ For how Bonhoeffer thinks theologically about the human being, as a passive agent, in this process, see Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 226, 337.

⁴⁷ Ott, *Reality and Faith*, 183.

⁴⁸ Rasmussen, *Reality and Resistance*, 43.

Bonhoeffer continues that formation is not merely about individuals, but primarily about Jesus Christ taking form in His church. Bonhoeffer constructs his argument from the corporate reality of the church as the body of Christ with this formation happening “vicariously and representatively as a model for all human beings.”⁴⁹ Bonhoeffer qualifies, however, that the church is not so much a model as it is a witness to humanity’s true form. It bears the form meant for all people, “which belongs to it [the world], which it has already received, but which it has not grasped and accepted, namely the form of Jesus Christ that is its own.”⁵⁰ According to Bonhoeffer, this qualification puts the focus fundamentally on the sole form of Jesus Christ with the church acting as a piece of humanity in which the centrality of the Christ-reality is concretized. The church is not to be concerned with some religious or social strategy or world-formation, but rather, it is to exist as the form of Christ in his church in the world, whose interests and actions now help her neighbors to be human beings before God—preserving the real human being.⁵¹ Thus, the church contextualizes and realizes the reality of Christ’s form in space and time.⁵² Therefore, “among us,” “today,” and “here” indicate not merely a theological context, but they also point to the historical, definite context of our decisions, tasks, experiences, responsibilities, and encounters, in which Christ takes form.⁵³

⁴⁹ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 97.

⁵⁰ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 98.

⁵¹ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 97-99.

⁵² See Rasmussen, *Reality and Resistance*, 24-25.

⁵³ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 100-101. Rasmussen offers help in understanding the dual sense of Bonhoeffer’s contextual emphases in his ethic: theological and historical (Rasmussen, *Reality and Resistance*, 25.).

In summary, Rasmussen informs us that Bonhoeffer's methodological procedure first inquires about the indicative, "What is the real?"⁵⁴ The second inquiry takes up the imperative, "What action on my part would be in accord with reality?"⁵⁵ The objective of Christian ethics is then to realize the revelational reality of God in Christ.⁵⁶ That is, the form that Christ takes corresponds to what is real "because reality itself has a chistocratic structure."⁵⁷ Bonhoeffer emphatically claims that the subject matter is "God's reality revealed in Christ becoming real among God's creatures."⁵⁸ For Bonhoeffer, the "ultimate importance" is that this reality show "itself everywhere to be the ultimate reality." This reality demonstrates for a Christian ethic that the source of its ethical concern is for God to be known as the good.⁵⁹ Bonhoeffer continues that "the question of the good becomes the question of participating in God's reality revealed in Christ."⁶⁰

Since the task for Christian ethics is to wisely and responsibly discern how God's people should conduct their lives in reality so shaped, an immediate problem occurs when this one reality is forgotten or confused regarding conceptual clarity or Christian living "so that there could be other realms of this world which are not

⁵⁴ Rasmussen, *Reality and Resistance*, 23, 89.

⁵⁵ Rasmussen, *Reality and Resistance*, 23, 89. Because of the complexity of Bonhoeffer's ethic especially his own context and the impulse toward getting rid of Hitler and National Socialism, I simplify this aspect with respect to "Ethics as Formation." Green notes, like I organize above, that this christological foundation is also for resistance with an ethic of free, responsible action lying at the heart of Bonhoeffer's ethics of tyrannicide and coup (Green, "Editor's Introduction," in *Ethics*, 11-14.).

⁵⁶ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 49-50. Bonhoeffer goes beyond the traditional "is-ought" problem for this antithesis is replaced in Christian ethics with the relation between reality and the realization of the real.

⁵⁷ Rasmussen, *Reality and Resistance*, 88.

⁵⁸ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 49.

⁵⁹ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 48.

⁶⁰ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 50.

primarily relevant ethically, and have in the first instance nothing at all to do with this one.”⁶¹ According to Bonhoeffer, Christians have at times not affirmed Christ as the center of life and existence, which resulted in a divided reality. I now turn to Bonhoeffer’s rejection of this thinking because it holds important implications for how Christians relate to sport.

Two-sphere Thinking

Because God in Christ accepted and reconciled the reality of the world with the reality of God, Bonhoeffer’s comprehensive vision of reality entails that there is no such thing as reality as a whole split into two parts.⁶² Bonhoeffer’s concept of reality has critical implications for theological thinking.⁶³ Working from this “unified perspective on the God-world reality”, Bonhoeffer mounts a spirited polemic against dualism,⁶⁴ “two realm” (*Raum*) thinking.⁶⁵ If any kind of division of reality is admitted between the sacred and profane, supernatural and natural, and Christian and unchristian, then Bonhoeffer states that “the concern of ethics becomes the right relation of both parts to each other.”⁶⁶ Huber adds that this concern is the main consequence because it evades an integral understanding of reality by locating the central conflicts of human existence between the reality of God and the reality of the

⁶¹ Ott, *Reality and Faith*, 176.

⁶² Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 55-56.

⁶³ Huber, “Bonhoeffer and Modernity,” in *Theology and the Practice of Responsibility*, 12-13.

⁶⁴ For matters of translation and semantics concerning the German term (*Raum*) which is translated as “two realms”, see Clifford Green, “Editor’s Introduction,” in *Ethics*, 34-36.

⁶⁵ Clifford Green, “Editor’s Introduction,” in *Ethics*, 20-21. In the background to Bonhoeffer’s protest against this pseudo-Lutheran interpretation of the doctrine of two kingdoms [Zwei-Reiche-Lehre] is the *Volkstum*-theology that fatefully yielded ethical criteria for social life to the natural order which then juxtaposed law and gospel. By splitting the law and gospel, this muted the voice of the gospel as far as its authority to address public life and therefore, German Christians accommodated the natural orders that the Third Reich used as a justification for their racist ideology (Green et al., “Editor’s Afterword to the German Edition,” in *Ethics*, 417-418.).

⁶⁶ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 56.

world instead of within reality itself.⁶⁷ In other words, instead of reckoning the dynamic unity of the reality of God and the reality of the world as established in Christ, each of the two realms claims a law unto itself, thus leaving the two standing side by side, mutually exclusive. The two realms become ultimate static opposites bumping, warring against, and repelling each other.⁶⁸

Bonhoeffer explains that at different periods of church history—especially in his time with a misunderstanding of the Lutheran doctrine of the “two kingdoms,” which precluded German Christians from opposing Hitler’s tyranny and the National Socialist regime—the church has been guilty of granting different spheres or orders of the world an autonomy against the “law of Christ” that “deeply contradicts both biblical and Reformation thought.”⁶⁹ This autonomy is wrong. I will elaborate on this confused relationship as a bridge to addressing a primary problem in modern muscular Christianity and sport.

Bonhoeffer addresses this theme of the two realms in terms of his Christology. If all reality is drawn into and held together in Christ (Col. 1:17),⁷⁰ then this division of reality is a direct attack on Christ. Bonhoeffer states that

In all of this the concern of Christ becomes a partial, provincial affair within the whole of reality. One reckons with realities outside the reality of Christ. It follows that there is a separate access to these realities, apart from Christ. However important one may take reality in Christ to be, it always remains a partial reality alongside others.⁷¹

⁶⁷ Huber, “Bonhoeffer and Modernity,” in *Theology and the Practice of Responsibility*, 12.

⁶⁸ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 57-59.

⁶⁹ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 20-21, 56-58.

⁷⁰ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 58.

⁷¹ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 57.

For Bonhoeffer, the only reality that exists is Christ; therefore, when Christians partake in Christ, this reality embraces the reality of God and the world. “In Jesus Christ the reality of God has entered the reality of the world.”⁷² This participation leaves a Christian relationship standing not in one or the other space but in both at the same time. It is only in this sphere that the form of Christ is realized.⁷³ If Jesus Christ is to be the center of life, this dualism must be rejected.

Bonhoeffer explains that, if we allow this unity to identify one realm with another (e.g., the natural with the supernatural or the revelational with the rational), we draw an erroneous conclusion.⁷⁴ Like Luther, Bonhoeffer sees the two realms polemically related so that they dynamically relate in the Christ-reality, “and that means only as accepted by faith in the ultimate reality.”⁷⁵ Furthermore, this unity precludes any kind of static independence or opposition of principles. Instead, they dialectically witness to their common reality, unity in the reality of Christ.⁷⁶ Again, this witness is predicated on Bonhoeffer’s consent to Chalcedonian Christology. Bonhoeffer states that,

Just as in Jesus Christ God and humanity became one, so through Christ what is Christian and what is worldly become one in the action of the Christian. They no longer battle like eternally hostile principles. The action of the Christian instead springs from the unity of God and world brought about in Jesus Christ.⁷⁷

According to Bonhoeffer, deity and humanity are united in Christ—the two natures are one—while they are also differentiated at the same time. In the same way, his

⁷² Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 54.

⁷³ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 58.

⁷⁴ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 59.

⁷⁵ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 59.

⁷⁶ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 59.

⁷⁷ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 238.

Christological approach inextricably unites the reality of the world and the reality of God but never denies their difference. That means, a Christian belongs “completely to Christ, one [she] stands at the same time completely in the world.”⁷⁸

Dualism, therefore, denies God’s revelation in Jesus Christ.⁷⁹ Bonhoeffer notes that the wish for some has historically been “to be ‘Christian’ without being ‘worldly,’ or [to] wish to be worldly without seeing and recognizing the world in Christ.”⁸⁰ The first wish causes a person to abandon the world and seek God, whereas the second causes him to abandon God and embrace the world in an attempt to build the kingdom of God on earth.⁸¹ It is important to remember that it is Christ as Creator, Reconciler, and Redeemer who affirms the reality of this world. I will discuss this further in my final chapter in relation to the “Natural Life,” which is another important concept in *Ethics*.

Modern Muscular Christianity: Two-Sphere Thinking about Sport

Bonhoeffer’s Christological basis for Christian ethics critically addresses the two-sphere thinking in modern muscular Christianity. Modern muscular Christianity, or what Frank Deford labeled “Sportianity,” operates from a bifurcated vision in order to relate sport and faith in the evangelical community.⁸² Regardless of which sphere they originate from in order to justify their engagement with and in sport, both wishes neglect the reality of Christ, which embraces all of life. This bifurcated vision

⁷⁸ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 62.

⁷⁹ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 58.

⁸⁰ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 58.

⁸¹ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 57-59.

⁸² Frank Deford, “Religion in Sport,” *Sports Illustrated*, 19 April 1976, 88-102; “The Word According to Tom,” *Sports Illustrated*, 26 April 1976, 54-59; “Reaching for the Stars,” *Sports Illustrated*, 3 May 1976, 42-60. Deford’s three-part series brought critical attention to this relationship between sport and religion for a popular audience.

or split raises a host of questions: How has “Sportianity” split reality into two parts? Where is the central conflict of human existence between the reality of God and the sportive world? How do these realities repel and bump against each other when this reality is reckoned outside the reality of Christ? How does this split deny God’s revelation in Jesus Christ? How has sport (reality of the world) been justified as a sphere that exists “in and for itself”? How has modern muscular Christianity yielded ethical criteria for sportive life to the symbolism of modern sport? In this section, I take an extended look at two-sphere thinking in modern muscular Christianity and at how Bonhoeffer’s ethical thoughts on this matter expose some serious problems regarding how Christians often relate to and inhabit sport.

Although modern, evangelical, muscular Christianity is arguably a rebirth of Muscular Christianity,⁸³ my primary aim does not concern its origin, relation to Victorian Muscular Christianity, or history, but rather its theological justification for how it relates to sport. Even if, as Ladd and Mathisen argue,⁸⁴ modern muscular Christianity lacks an explicit, developed theological foundation, it still seeks some form of justification, which I contend is theological and bifurcated. Hoffman iterates that this neglect from Christian intellectuals “has not kept in-the-pew Christians from deeply held beliefs and notions about sport and its relationship to the Christian life. These find expression in a kind of layperson’s Sportianity, a set of assumptions that

⁸³ Nick J. Watson, Stuart Weir, and Stephen Friend, “The Development of Muscular Christianity in Victorian Britain and Beyond,” in *Journal of Religion and Society* 7 (2005), <<http://www.moses.creighton.edu/JRS/2005/2005-2.html>> (5 May 2010), 1-17. Clifford Putney argues that the survival of muscular Christianity found a refuge in North America initially in fundamentalism that largely went unnoticed during its separatist phase but in the latter half of the twentieth century it gained momentum and prominence with a renewed vigour to promote manliness and health into American Christianity (Clifford Putney, *Muscular Christianity: Manhood and Sports in Protestant America, 1880-1920* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 206-207.

⁸⁴ Ladd and Mathisen, *Muscular Christianity*, 213-224.

are guaranteed to surface when Christians discuss sport and faith.”⁸⁵ What lies behind these attempts to relate sport and Christianity is an effort to reimagine sport in the Christian life, an effort that Hoffman capably criticizes and attempts to repair in *Good Game: Christianity and the Culture of Sport*. However, in his effort to redress this problem, Hoffman in the end falls prey to the same misunderstanding on how the reality of sport and the reality of God partake in Christ-reality. I address Hoffman’s form of dualism in the final section of this chapter.

In the mid-nineteenth century, Muscular Christianity helped forge this link between sport and religion.⁸⁶ However, because of its preoccupation with a healthy body and manliness,⁸⁷ modern muscular Christianity (notably in the form of sport ministry in North America) sought an alliance or compatibility between sport and Christianity, which Ladd and Mathisen argue is represented by five essential elements:⁸⁸ 1) pragmatic utility, 2) meritocratic democracy, 3) competitive virtue, 4)

⁸⁵ Shirl James Hoffman, *Good Game: Christianity and the Culture of Sports* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2010), 21.

⁸⁶ The relationship between sport and religion has been studied and characterized as a kind of religion: cultural, natural, civil and folk (See Shirl James Hoffman, *Good Game: Christianity and the Culture of Sports* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2010), 263.). I do not intend to settle this debate other than to address the attempt by evangelicals to justify this sphere because of its secular or religious bases. Others, like Michael Novak, Catholic philosopher-theologian, in *The Joy of Sports* (New York: Basic Books, 1976), see the play ethos in sport much like Johann Huizinga but he moves past a simple analogical relationship between the two by claiming sport as natural religion; “the rituals of sport really work. . . [to] provide an experience of at least a pagan sense of godliness. Among the godward signs in contemporary life, sports may be the single most powerful manifestation” (Novak, *Joy of Sports*, 20.). See also, Shirl Hoffman, ed., *Sport and Religion*, (Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics, 1992); Robert J. Higgs, *God in the Stadium: Sports and Religion in America* (Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 1995).

⁸⁷ Watson, Weir and Friend, “The Development of Muscular Christianity in Victorian Britain and Beyond,” 1-2.

⁸⁸ Ladd and Mathisen, *Muscular Christianity*, 215-224. These five essential elements are proposed at the end of their book as a hypothesis for understanding why modern evangelicals have re-engaged modern sport. Ladd and Mathisen are sociologists so their interpretation is heavily dependent on religious historians like Nathan Hatch who argues that evangelicals have “organized their faith [in the twentieth century] around the issue of communicating the gospel” (Nathan O. Hatch, “Evangelicalism as a Democratic Movement,” in *Evangelicalism and Modern America*, ed. George Marsden (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 78.).

heroic models, and 5) therapeutic self-control. Each of these elements serves as evidence of the dualism that grounds modern muscular Christianity, and they ground ethical thought in a dualistic principle that is divorced from Christ-reality. I will not attempt to evaluate fully each of the elements, but as will soon become clear, they all assume some form of dualism. This dualism is rather straightforward, and I follow others for the descriptive part of my argument, although my evaluation is unique to Bonhoeffer, specific to his critique of two-sphere thinking.

The Nature of the Problems

Modern muscular Christianity primarily values sport for its extrinsic, instrumental effectiveness. Mathisen claims that modern muscular Christians instrumentalize sport insofar as their method of engaging this world operates from their faith-based commitment to communicate the gospel. Sport is co-opted or used as a vehicle to save souls; it is used for evangelistic purposes.⁸⁹ However, this use-value presupposes that since sport appeals to the masses as something that people value, we should organize our engagement around the very ideals that attract sport enthusiasts. How is this use-value dualistic?

The evangelistic goal is construed as the sacred realm since the gospel proclamation attests to what is ideal; conversion is the goal for Christian engagement in the public sphere. Thus, sport is subordinate as a means “to recruit and promote religious beliefs and organizations.”⁹⁰ Mathisen and another sociologist, Jay Coakley, identify numerous religious sport organizations—special purpose

⁸⁹ Ladd and Mathisen, *Muscular Christianity*, 214-215.

⁹⁰ Jay Coakley, *Sports in Society: Issues and Controversies*, 8th ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2004), 544-548.

groups⁹¹—whose mission statements and practices verify this functional approach, which assumes a symbiotic relationship between sport and religion. For example, the National Christian College Athletic Association (NCCAA) states “that athletics are a means to an end; not an end in themselves.”⁹² The sport ministry of Athletes in Action overtly claims that they exist “[to] build spiritual movements everywhere through the platform of sport so that everyone knows someone who truly follows Jesus.”⁹³ Ashley Null refers to this approach as “Ministry through Athletes” because ministries that mold their strategies around this ethos look to sports to do three things:⁹⁴ 1) to reach as many people in the world for Christ as possible through massive global interest in sports; 2) to present the gospel in terms understandable to the experience of the sportive audience; 3) to convince the audience that Christianity offers them something that they desire. The key that explains, both for this and for all the five essential elements, why Christianity and sports are compatible is found in what Mathisen identifies as an “elective affinity.” That is, a kinship is forged between sport and religion so they can share certain functions and benefit each other in this symbiotic relationship.⁹⁵ Mathisen concludes that a grand spiritual purpose,

⁹¹ Robert Wuthnow argues that these muscular Christian organizations with their special purposes emerged post-World War II when American denominations experienced a significant decline in their cultural influence so new groups filled the void by combining religion with such common interests like hobbies or avocations (Robert Wuthnow *The Restructuring of American Religion: Society and Faith since World War II* (Princeton: Princeton University, 1988), 107-109.). Cf. Ladd and Mathisen, *Muscular Christianity*, 148-149.

⁹² Ladd and Mathisen, *Muscular Christianity*, 215. See also, James A. Mathisen, “A Brief History of Christianity and Sport: Selected Highlights of a Puzzling Relationship,” in *The Image of God in the Human Body: Essays on Christianity and Sports*, 1-41.

⁹³ Athletes in Action, *Home Page*, 2009, [online], available from <http://www.athletesinaction.org/about/html>, 21 May 2010.

⁹⁴ Ashley Null, “Some Preliminary Thoughts on Philosophies of Sports Ministry and Their Literature,” in *The Image of God in the Human Body: Essays on Christianity and Sports*, eds. Donald Deardorff III and John White (Lewiston, N.Y.: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2008), 242.

⁹⁵ Ladd and Mathisen, *Muscular Christianity*, 168-173, 204, 205, 215-216, 219, 241. Mathisen chronicles how the evangelical church (and other Christian institutions) and sport “found each other”

namely, the enhancement of the gospel and saving of souls, can be inferred “in the elective affinity between evangelical Christianity and modern sport represented by these five elements...”⁹⁶ He also cautions against interpreting this relationship as an exact symbiosis because the benefits are not shared equally; in fact, this relationship alters both sport and religion, which entails that losses and risks accompany some of the benefits.⁹⁷

Evaluation

Since modern muscular Christianity hinges the value of sport on its effectiveness as a vehicle for proclamation and conversion, it essentially localizes concerns for what is good in sport--its potential for good consequences. What at first appears to be sport used for religious purposes is subtly religion made attractive because of the attention given to sport. In Victorian Muscular Christianity, participation in sport had inherent value;⁹⁸ modern muscular Christianity does not depart from this core distinctive, but it looks to the platform that sport affords for the sacred results of evangelism and conversion. Oriard surmises that the twentieth-century marriage of sport and gospel in North America with groups like Athletes in Action is

for a variety of reasons: socializing Americans toward conservative social and moral values, cultural credibility and influence, character formation, manliness development, success and winning, etc.

⁹⁶ Ladd and Mathisen, *Muscular Christianity*, 219.

⁹⁷ James A. Mathisen, “Toward an Understanding of ‘Muscular Christianity’: Religion, Sport and Culture in the Modern World,” in *Christianity and Leisure: Issues in a Pluralistic Society*, eds. Paul Heintzmann, Glen A. Van Andel, and Thomas L. Visker (Dordt, IA: Dordt College Press, 1994), 194. I should also note from Mathisen’s chapter that he carefully chronicles the pluralistic types of muscular Christianity from the 1850s to present day: classical British (Kingsley and Hughes), Olympic (de Coubertin), urban-secular (YMCA), evangelical muscular (C.T. Studd, D.L. Moody and Billy Graham), institutionalized muscular Christian sport organizations and ministries (FCA, AIA) and Christian college movement.

⁹⁸ Ladd and Mathisen, *Muscular Christianity*, 14, 215. To be clear, Putney explains that Victorian Muscular Christianity, namely, Kingsley and Hughes, affirmed the value of sport which then this medium was acceptable for its positive benefits, spiritually, socially, morally and physically (Putney, *Muscular Christianity*, 11-72.).

fundamentally different than its forebears. He claims that “the shift from justifying sport in the nineteenth century by appeals to religion, to promoting religion by appeals to sport, reveals much about the changing status of both sport and religion in America in little more than a century.”⁹⁹ Sport as a secular space is essentially neutral, which provides an inroad for gospel proclamation, religious engagement in this sphere. The concern clearly is how to relate the gospel, the Christian or sacred sphere, to this sportive sphere.

When we follow the trajectory set by Bonhoeffer’s rejection of two-sphere thinking, we discover a few reasons why this is problematic. To begin, the appeal to sport is fundamentally misplaced. Modern muscular Christianity begins with the reality of sport existing alongside the church. Sport is a reality of this world that exists autonomously from Christ, and when it bumps against the spiritual sphere, it becomes a separate space with the potential to herald the gospel. Bonhoeffer characterizes this thinking “as an ever-progressing independence of the worldly over against the spiritual.”¹⁰⁰ It is precisely the ideals of sport, i.e., success, winning, and cultural relevance, that make it a likely candidate for proclaiming the gospel. When sport existence was not conducive to the agenda of muscular Christianity in the early twentieth century, America witnessed a retreat, or what Mathisen coins a disengagement, of evangelicals from this social arena.¹⁰¹ The net effect today, with

⁹⁹ Michael Oriard, *Sporting with the Gods: The Rhetoric of Play and Game in American Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 253. Cf. Ladd and Mathisen, *Muscular Christianity*, 149.

¹⁰⁰ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 57.

¹⁰¹ Ladd and Mathisen, *Muscular Christianity*, 77-94. This disengagement was the result of a number of social conditions (e.g., urbanization, mass marketing of spectator sports, technological advancements, professionalism, sport consumerism, etc.) which “forced secularizing changes in sport and in the attitudes of muscular Christians. Evangelical muscular Christians, who had earlier embraced sport to accomplish God’s redemptive purposes, now found themselves trapped by the

religion's current engagement of sport, is that sport becomes instrumentally a credible access to sharing the gospel. Mathisen explains that in this case, it is sport itself that gives cultural acceptance and a mythical certitude to Christianity's ethical and religious value.¹⁰² The reality of God is now dependent on, if not subordinate to, this creaturely medium. Ironically, the spiritual activity of evangelism is unrelated to the actual sport.

Since it does not value and locate social life in the reality of Christ, modern muscular Christianity does not begin with a decision of faith concerning ultimate reality but with the value of sportive reality as its goal. Evangelicals in North America reengaged sport because "sport redefined its niche as part of the American way of life in the post-World War era," and thus, "evangelical religion was quite happy to re-establish its ties."¹⁰³ Mathisen concludes that this alliance between the two was cemented primarily because evangelicals "rediscovered the conversion value sport possessed and subsequently adapted it for their purposes, built their own institutional structures, and created a rhetoric to support their activity—thus moving

values and structures of an institution rapidly moving in a different direction" (Ladd and Mathisen, *Muscular Christianity*, 78.). It must be noted that this disengagement is predicated on a dualistic thinking in that the separation is an attempt to evade the reality of the world, the very world that Christ accepted, judged and renewed.

¹⁰² Ladd and Mathisen, *Muscular Christianity*, 173.

¹⁰³ Ladd and Mathisen, *Muscular Christianity*, 235. Prior to this reengagement after World War II, in the early twentieth century, sport became increasingly secular and laden with social and private vices which caused fundamentalists to grow weary and suspicious about the value of sport, setting up a period of disengagement. Baker adds that the birth of born-again sport "was born of the vast social and ideological change that began shortly after the Second World War" (William J. Baker, *Playing with God: Religion and Modern Sport* (Cambridge: MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 194.). For example, religion provided a more positive public role and regained a familiar voice and anchor for customary values in the aftermath of World War II and this gap was supplied by a new kind of minister and evangelist who were less argumentative and more winsome. In particular a few new organizations were started with a focus on youth and college age which the appeal to sport stars and celebrities seemed like a perfect match. (Baker, *Playing with God: Religion and Modern Sport*, 194-198.)

significantly beyond their muscular Christian ancestors.”¹⁰⁴ The hopes of modern muscular Christianity are pinned on its action in the world in order to help sport become good. Mathisen notes that, historically in America, both periods of engagement (nineteenth century and post-World War II) “adapted an existing myth that sport intrinsically could make the good of society better, once they realized that sport also had great potential for enhancing their revival and conversion goals.”¹⁰⁵

As a movement, Muscular Christianity patently endorses a faithful “Yes” to the ideals of sport as its starting point, but it lacks any developed theological rationale for why it should inhabit and value sport. Sport is merely accepted as a viable candidate for pitching Jesus to others. Sport can leverage the power of the gospel to improve the conditions of the world rather than a radical concern that God alone is good; thus, the church witnesses to this sportive reality.

For Bonhoeffer, Christ is relevant because he became man; therefore, relevance has already been created. Modern muscular Christianity’s axiology builds from what it perceives is good. Bonhoeffer epistemologically rebukes this axiology because “all things appear as in a distorted mirror if they are not seen and recognized in God.”¹⁰⁶ God’s self-disclosure is the turning point or pivot for properly perceiving and discovering the deeper realities of activities like sport. To be more clear, if Christ is the real, then this aspect of dualism begins with the self and what the world deems as valuable, which for Bonhoeffer is an illusion. This illusion searches ignorantly for how sportive actions relate to positive outcomes. How can we know? This search is pragmatism. Consequences become the ethical criterion for engaging the world of

¹⁰⁴ Ladd and Mathisen, *Muscular Christianity*, 235.

¹⁰⁵ Ladd and Mathisen, *Muscular Christianity*, 235.

¹⁰⁶ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 48.

sport with the gospel.¹⁰⁷ Bonhoeffer argues that this is a vulgar understanding of reality “because it requires nothing less than complete surrender to what is at hand, given, accidental, and driven by temporary goals in any given time. It is unsuited because it does not recognize ultimate reality and so surrenders and destroys the unity of the good.”¹⁰⁸ According to Bonhoeffer, I should not surrender to what effect my action might have in or on the world, but rather, I should surrender myself to the fact that there is only one final reality—the reality that God is already present in the culture of sport. Therefore, I am responsible to this one final reality.¹⁰⁹ Bonhoeffer does not relocate this Christ-reality in something else or in the future, but in the reality of the world that we currently know. This reality has been drawn and held together in Christ.

Modern muscular Christianity is bent toward justifying its own message, but it does so on the terms of sportive ideals and attraction. Hauerwas contends from Bonhoeffer that this same kind of apologetic tactic is in step with Protestant liberalism because it correlates its message to the criterion of relevance or acceptance.¹¹⁰ Both Protestant liberalism and modern muscular Christianity try in

¹⁰⁷ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 52-53.

¹⁰⁸ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 54. Bonhoeffer makes this point in regard to pragmatism which sees good as that “which serves reality usefully and purposefully” (Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 53). Modern muscular Christianity as argued finds affinity with this concept, of course more loosely understood by the actual adherents, in order to justify its relation to sport.

¹⁰⁹ See Ott, *Reality and Faith*, 173.

¹¹⁰ Stanley Hauerwas, *Performing the Faith: Bonhoeffer and the Practice of Nonviolence* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2004), 46-47. Hauerwas develops this line of reasoning from Bonhoeffer on Troeltsch who represents the liberal presumption that the gospel “is purely religious, encompassing the outlook of the individual, but is indifferent and unconcerned with worldly institutions” (Hauerwas, *Performing the Faith*, 46.). See Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 236-239. Initially, this struggle to relate the gospel to the actual persons and groups within a particular culture appears to be standard for missionary activity. However, the danger is to overemphasize where the cultural concerns of sport, for example, dominate with its own myths, presuppositions and principles. This is especially a risk when something as large as sport is recognized “as effective means of socializing the populace to the importance of the American way of life” (Ladd and Mathisen, *Muscular Christianity*, 145.). What happened, beginning

earnest to locate some point of contact in cultural or human experience to help others make sense of the gospel. For modern muscular Christianity, the purpose of this method of correlation is to secure a place for the Christian message in sport.¹¹¹

Thanks to numerous changes in culture and sport, muscular Christianity began in the 1950s and 1960s to take “advantage of the populist, folk-religious status of sport within the cultural acceptance of the religion of the American way of life. They realized what an alliance with big-time sport might accomplish for their social status and their evangelistic purposes.”¹¹²

Another reason that dualism is problematic is that this posture toward the reality of the world falsely accepts sport as a neutral medium. Because this stance assumes a functionalist theory, its enlistment of sport to enhance the gospel demonstrates ignorance toward sin. In contrast to the disengagement that occurred in the early twentieth century because of the perceived social and moral vices misdirecting sport, modern muscular Christianity endorses numerous myths about sport, values that seemingly create an affinity between sport and religion. However, this endorsement overlooks the fact that modern sport more often hold interests for the powerful and wealthy and rarely for the form of Christ in the world--Christ who is there for

in the 1950s and 1960, as argued by Mathisen, is that sport “took on the characteristics of a folk religion that conveniently overlapped the religion of the American way of life” (Ladd and Mathisen, *Muscular Christianity*, 145.). Moreover, then for missionary activity and theology in sport, this should raise some concerns for a correlationist approach, however, it appears it did not nor has not for modern, muscular Christianity.

¹¹¹ To compare Protestant liberalism with muscular Christianity might seem far stretched especially because of the modernist-fundamentalist debates. However, the connection is based on how the two in general relate to culture. In each case there is presumed neutrality whether concerning reason or cultural givens. In particular, modern muscular Christianity accepts the cultural sphere of sport and accommodates it by how it presents the gospel in terms of the metaphors and principles of sport. For example, Mathisen illustrates this point with how Jesus is turned into a competitive kind of athlete, the use of heroic models in sport and religion to justify Christianity, and the use of sport language from the Bible and its correlation to winning and success in sport (Ladd and Mathisen, *Muscular Christianity*, 215-224.).

¹¹² Ladd and Mathisen, *Muscular Christianity*, 146.

others.¹¹³ Whether they are conscious of it or not, when sport ministers use the platform of sport, they work from a network of beliefs and values that are derived from a particular culture entrenched in a way of thinking that can be inimical to the gospel.

Hoffman captures this problem of endorsement well. He notes numerous problems that should stop evangelicals from pandering to big-time sports as a means for making the gospel relevant.¹¹⁴ My intent is merely to list a few to prove that, while there certainly are positive effects of sport, there are also equally negative effects; thus, this platform is not morally neutral. Sport systemically is beset with problems, such as the epidemic of injuries, the increase in violence, the effect that long-term participation has on the body, racism, sexism, drug scandals, criminal exploits, and the logic of big-time sports that the extrinsic goods of the business justify the means.¹¹⁵ Because of the secularity of sport, its perceived neutrality has caused the proponents of evangelical muscular Christianity opt “for an individualistic ethical response, with little consideration that somehow these evils may be built into the very structures of modern secular sport.”¹¹⁶ This individualistic ethic has precluded muscular Christianity from bearing a prophetic witness to the social and

¹¹³ See Coakley, *Sports in Society: Issues and Controversies*, 31-53.

¹¹⁴ Hoffman, *Good Game*, 282.

¹¹⁵ Hoffman, *Good Game*, 282-283. My thesis here follows from the fact that sport both mirrors the dominant norms and values of the wider culture, and because sport is a social construct, then sport produces, practices and projects its own myths and values onto culture as well (Coakley, *Sports in Society: Issues and Controversies*, 31-53.).

¹¹⁶ Mathisen, “Toward an Understanding of ‘Muscular Christianity’: Religion, Sport and Culture in the Modern World,” 201.

moral corruption in the structures of sport.¹¹⁷ Deford first drew popular attention to this failure of modern muscular Christianity when he wrote,

No one in the movement—much less in any organization—speaks out against dirty play, no one attacks the evils of recruiting, racism or any of the many other well-known excesses and abuses. Sports owns Sundays now, and religion is content to lease a few minutes before the big games.¹¹⁸

Mathisen contends that this focus on the personal, moral, and behavioral norms is due to the elective affinity that sport and religion have found in terms of conservative moral positions. This affinity certainly is neither a fixed nor a perfect fit, but sport, as represented by the NFL, NBA and NCAA, and religion appeal to audiences who largely accept cultural conservatism.¹¹⁹ The two can co-exist and share this secular sphere when together they socialize the kind of values that constitute good American citizens: self-sacrifice, loyalty, mental toughness, learning from and enduring hardships.¹²⁰ If modern, evangelical, muscular Christianity were to address other social vices, such as discrimination and racism, perhaps, it would risk offending the powerbrokers of modern sport and severing what (at least for now) seems helpful in advancing the gospel.

¹¹⁷ Mathisen qualifies that there are some exceptions for some sport ministries have challenged the commercialization of sports and the ethical issues surrounding drug use, however, this dichotomy of private and public sins still persists. For an updated argument by a journalist on this private-public split of morality, See Tom Krattenmaker, *Onward Christian Athletes: Turning Ballparks into Pulpits and Players into Preachers* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2010).

¹¹⁸ Deford, "Religion in Sport," *Sports Illustrated*, 19 April 1976, 100.

¹¹⁹ The fact that it is primarily male-dominated traditional sports is disconcerting for this uncomfortably has religion either form an alliance with or be associated with an institution which has historically neglected women and underrepresented other genres of sports which defy traditional categories (e.g., snowboarding, surfing, etc.).

¹²⁰ Hoffman in *Good Game* (198) makes a case that these type of character traits are given meaning and organized around the athletic ethos which so happens to be akin to the kind of societal values that sport organizations market and advertize in their appeal to youth today for, as Mathisen argues, these support the American way of life (Ladd and Mathisen, *Muscular Christianity*, 204.). That means, these organizations organize, use and market sport to promote their perspective on the world and values which reproduce their interests and power (Coakley, *Sports in Society: Issues and Controversies*, 31-53.).

Because of this perceived neutrality, Christ is not recognized as Lord of sportive reality. But because Jesus Christ has entered the reality of this world, ontologically a prophetic (and political) witness corresponds to the fact that Christ has judged these social evils in the crucifixion. Modern muscular Christianity not only fails to begin from a Christocentric reality, but, because of its duality, it also puts the church at the margins instead of claiming the center, the reality incarnated, judged, and redeemed by Christ.¹²¹ To address only the personal, moral sins is a pietistic impulse that denies both the Lordship of Christ and a full proclamation of the gospel to the world. Furthermore, in a manner reminiscent of a Constantinian social imagination, modern muscular Christianity attempts to forge a partnership with the institution of sport so that Christianity can be accepted and live at home with the world.¹²²

The irony is sobering because modern muscular Christianity has made the gospel its sole focus without realizing its compromise. Bonhoeffer charges that compromise becomes an option when Christians have not learned how to live in but not of the world. Bonhoeffer develops this false solution in connection to the problem of how to relate faith in the here and now in his chapter “Ultimate and Penultimate Things.”¹²³ I will say more about this in the next chapter. Compromise occurs when the gospel is divorced from a penultimate sphere, such as sport. Modern muscular Christianity compromises by not permitting the ultimate to threaten and subvert the status quo of the penultimate of the sport ethos. In fact, the penultimate becomes

¹²¹ See Hauerwas, *Performing the Faith*, 47.

¹²² See Bryan P. Stone, *Evangelism after Christendom: The Theology and Practice of Christian Witness* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2007), 115-130. To say that the church should be at the center is an ontological claim based on who Christ is and the form that Christ takes in and through the church; therefore, this does not mean it is at the centre in a Constantinian sense of power.

¹²³ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 146-170.

absolute because sport sets the agenda for how the gospel will use this platform.

Whenever Christians in church history have followed the spirit of the age, they have inevitably compromised their witness to the reality of Christ—incarnation, crucifixion and resurrection—for ideals and power in the public square. In principle, I see a relationship between German Christians who compromised the ultimate by preaching an Aryan gospel and modern muscular Christianity who proclaim a similarly compromised sport gospel. Both exchange the true gospel for the gospel of accommodation.

Coakley claims that modern muscular Christianity ignores ethical and social problems based on the primacy of faith. “This means that faith is given priority over charity in the organizations and that salvation is linked with accepting Christ into one’s life rather than with doing good works alone.”¹²⁴ Faith is not based on ultimate reality but on the demands and priorities determined by the sacred sphere, a sphere that attends to the inner life. This inward turn is pietism once again. Bonhoeffer’s ethic interprets this isolation of the gospel from public moral issues as allowing the whole arena to be “governed by the autonomous nature of the world. Things Christian belong to a special ecclesial, religious, or private domain in which alone they can be rightfully exercised.”¹²⁵

In summary, these different examples of dualism in sport, which on the surface appear to be mutually exclusive, “have in common that they understand the Christian and the worldly as principles, which means independently of the fact of God’s

¹²⁴ Coakley, *Sports in Society: Issues and Controversies*, 558.

¹²⁵ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 237.

becoming human.”¹²⁶ This split tears the possibility of Christian existence between the two spheres. Bonhoeffer says that, when this flawed view of reality is embraced,

we are left with only the following options. Giving up on reality as a whole, either we place ourselves in one of the two realms, wanting Christ without the world or the world without Christ—and in both cases we deceive ourselves. Or we try to stand in the two realms at the same time, thereby becoming people in eternal conflict. . . an eternally indissoluble conflict [for Christian existence], which practical action is never able to overcome, and by which it will be ground down.¹²⁷

These options bear testimony to conceptual frameworks that divide reality in two spheres.¹²⁸

Mathisen further notes, as another reason for why two-sphere thinking is problematic, that sport is a system based on “meritocratic democracy.” This means that “individuals are accepted and evaluated on the basis of their own decisions and performance.”¹²⁹ Sport mirrors a dominant value of the American dream. That is, individual hard work and discipline become the kind of virtues that demonstrate ability and enable athletes to achieve success and merit acceptance. This sort of basis has benefited some who, although they were excluded from certain opportunities based on arbitrary standards, experienced some degree of acceptance by their public performances because of the opportunities afforded by sport.

Bonhoeffer shatters such pretensions because this meritocratic value stands apart or outside the reality of Christ, thus functioning legalistically. To appeal to achievements, work, or, in this case, merit as a standard or norm for evaluating the goodness of a person is a serious aberration according to Bonhoeffer. This appeal

¹²⁶ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 237.

¹²⁷ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 237.

¹²⁸ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 57-58, 237-238.

¹²⁹ Ladd and Mathisen, *Muscular Christianity*, 216.

focuses primarily on the work of the self as primary, because the self decides how its works best contribute to and justify the self.¹³⁰ What are some more problems and implications associated with this skewed anthropology?

First, meritocracy is a myth founded by individualism. Bellah helps provide the social analysis that explains the soil that grows meritocracy. This quest to define oneself by decisions and performance takes the form of utilitarian individualism. This form yields a self defined by success because it prizes personal achievement and advancement.¹³¹ According to this understanding, sport becomes a social sphere in which athletes try to make something of themselves; they try to stand out on their own. The elective affinity is the putative merit because significance is gained by human effort. However, Bonhoeffer holds this way of thinking to be perverse because “it tears apart what is originally and essentially one, namely, the good and the real, the person and the work.”¹³² What is good, the actual sportive accomplishment or the person? Bonhoeffer refers to the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 7:17), where Jesus himself uses the organic metaphor of a fruit tree to teach that it is not the work or the person that is considered good, “but that *only the two together*, only both as united in one, are to be understood as good or bad.”¹³³

Meritocracy as an operant creed of American sports¹³⁴ attempts to justify the worth of a human being by reckoning his abilities and talents. Yet, plenty of people achieve great things while at the same time living dishonorably. The individualism

¹³⁰ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 48-51. Emphasis in the original.

¹³¹ Robert Bellah, Richard Madsen, William M. Sullivan, Ann Swidler, and Steven M. Tipton, *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (New York: Harper and Row, 1986), 65-69.

¹³² Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 51.

¹³³ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 51.

¹³⁴ Ladd and Mathisen, *Muscular Christianity*, 216.

inherent in meritocracy is flawed because it is anthropologically dualistic. According to Bonhoeffer, goodness considers the entire reality, not merely an aspect, namely, a demonstrable work issuing from a person. “Rather, good is reality, reality itself seen and recognized in God.”¹³⁵ Furthermore, what God judges as real in regard to human beings is that they are indivisible wholes, “*not only as individuals in both their person and work, but also as members of the human and created community to which they belong. It is this indivisible whole, that is, this reality grounded and recognized in God, that the question of good has in view.*”¹³⁶

Related to the above discussion, utilitarian individualists overlook the fact that this comparative enterprise relies on a social human context. Or, as indicated in the last quotation from Bonhoeffer, that these athletic performances are a part of a created athletic community. This bifurcation of reality again results in a truncated view of the human being as a social being. The only solution is to participate in ultimate reality, the reality in which all other realities are embedded, namely, Christ-reality. This reality reveals what is good and acceptable, the will of God.¹³⁷

To conclude this section on how the elective affinity between modern muscular Christianity and American sports reveals different aspects of two-sphere thinking, I will briefly mention how the remaining essential elements mimic this conceptual framework of two-realms. The acceptance of “competitive virtue”¹³⁸ that is akin to the sport ethos as a value that Jesus himself demonstrated in his victory over the

¹³⁵ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 53.

¹³⁶ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 53.

¹³⁷ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 74-75.

¹³⁸ Ladd and Mathisen, *Muscular Christianity*, 216. This element as defined by Mathisen correlates competition and winning in sport with the life of Jesus in the gospels and the St. Paul’s sport metaphors and teachings in his epistles.

forces of evil is another example not only of folk theology but also of accommodation. In this case, Jesus is transformed into the Jesus of sport culture in order to biblically justify how Christianity and sport relate and fit together. Hoffman, Krattenmaker, and Mathisen marshal many examples from the stories of contemporary evangelical, muscular Christians to prove this point. For example, Orlando Magic basketball executive Pat Williams claims,

The language of victory in sports is identical to the Christian faith. . . . Think about what it takes to be a great athlete: discipline, hard work, sacrifice, selflessness, teamwork, respect, trust, loyalty, humility, influence. All those words cross right over. The athlete understands that language. The two worlds fit together.¹³⁹

Besides the fact that these kinds of statements disclose ignorance and an inadequate understanding of theology, Mathisen explains that this accommodation occurs repeatedly because

in public settings they talk about what they know best—the world of sport—and use symbols and rhetoric of that world. Typically, they attempt to add some spiritual principle or theological insight which is often misguided, if not clearly incorrect, because that is why they were invited to speak in the first place.¹⁴⁰

In short, the use of competitive virtue as an essential element, like the other elective affinities, is disloyal to the reality of Christ. It breaks free from the reality of the incarnation--that Christ is relevant--and exchanges it for symbols and images that are selected on behalf of the sports culture because that is what is regarded as highest and best. A harmony or fittedness, according to the quote above, is found by interpreting Jesus in light of the dominant sport culture. This interpretation is deceptive because modern muscular Christians would be the first to announce that it is Christ they seek, yet what they obtain is the world without the true Christ. Carter

¹³⁹ Krattenmaker, *Onward Christian Athletes*, 170.

¹⁴⁰ Ladd and Mathisen, *Muscular Christianity*, 221.

reasons that, when Christ legitimizes culture—because he is viewed more as a symbol of the dominant forces of a particular culture—then

he [Christ] can become a symbol of anything. A symbol points to something other than itself; otherwise it would be the thing signified, rather than a symbol of it. What a symbol means is socially constructed, at least in part, by common agreement. What was previously understood to be a symbol of one thing can become a symbol of something quite different. [This type] uses Christ as the symbol of whatever that culture deems to be the highest and best, whether that is liberal individualism or blood and Volk. . . . In the modern West, Christ has been turned into the symbol of the forces of civilizing progress and state power that pushes progress forward.¹⁴¹

For modern muscular Christianity, Christ is transmuted into a symbol, which Bonhoeffer claims essentially ignores Jesus Christ and thus is an abstraction.¹⁴²

Furthermore, he views abstract thinking as dangerous—though the goal is to do the will of God—because the Jesus that is extolled is the fulfillment of oneself in the place of what is real.¹⁴³ This exchange is idolatry.

When determining what is good or valuable about sport, this same disastrous exchange of the reality of God for the reality of sport holds true for the remaining two essential elements of modern muscular Christianity: “heroic models” and “therapeutic self-control.” It is believed that, since sport provides the predominant context for who and what heroes are, having a hero who is a Christian sportsperson demonstrates Christianity’s relevance.¹⁴⁴ The concept of self-control is psychologized as a helpful trait that carries over from sport to Christianity and back again. These essential elements are again used to justify Christianity to sport; they

¹⁴¹ Craig A. Carter, *Rethinking Christ and Culture: A Post-Christendom Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2006), 135-136; cf. H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (New York: Harper and Row, 1951), 83-115.

¹⁴² Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 54.

¹⁴³ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 74.

¹⁴⁴ Ladd and Mathisen, *Muscular Christianity*, 217.

are an appeal, an elective affinity, to what sport and the Christian religions share in common.

In the final section, I want to more closely examine a research study that further illumines this problem of two-sphere thinking. This research study helps to give a thicker description of the problem. My interaction with this study further corroborates my above evaluation and analysis, and more importantly, it teases out some important implications concerning how Christians think about and relate to the sportive world.

Research Study: Christian Athletes and the Culture of Sport

From the research of others,¹⁴⁵ Coakley hypothesizes a model that further demonstrates the options and conflicts that materialize for many who try to relate their core Christian convictions to power and performance sports.¹⁴⁶ His hypothesis and Stevenson's own conclusions are helpful because they demonstrate the recurring problem of two-sphere thinking for many Christians who try to relate sport and religion. He contends that power and performance sports are the dominant sport forms today. That does not mean that all sports are organized in the same way, only

¹⁴⁵ The empirical research on this subject is limited but currently Stevenson's research is cited regularly in the literature as a starting point. Coakley suggests his hypothesis, from the research conducted by Chris Stevenson on evangelical Christians who competed at an elite level, to identify how Christian athletes relate their faith to sport. My point in using Coakley and Stevenson does not rest on how conclusive the research is but on the logical options available to Christians on how they combine or relate their religious convictions with and to sport. Many of these options make theological sense on the basis of two-sphere thinking. The primary research comes from the following studies: Christopher L. Stevenson, "The Christian Athlete: An Interactionist Developmental Analysis," *Sociology of Sport Journal* 8 (1991): 362-379; Christopher L. Stevenson, "Christian Athletes and the Culture of Sport: Dilemmas and Solutions," *Sociology of Sport Journal* 14 (1997): 242-262; R. Dunn and Christopher L. Stevenson. "The Paradox of the Church Hockey League," *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* 33 (1998): 131-142. For this thesis I focus on Stevenson's research in 1997 for it is a culmination of his previous research with an explicit focus on how Christian athletes have come to terms with the difficulties in the dominant culture of elite, competitive sports and how they related their faith to these challenges.

¹⁴⁶ Coakley, *Sports in Society: Issues and Controversies*, 555-563.

that many sports seem to fit a model that is organized along the characteristics of power and performance.¹⁴⁷ Coakley proposes that doubts may arise from the acute conflict between religious convictions in the context of sport, where athletes are confronted with violence, intimidation, self-promotion, and the aggressive pursuit of personal success.¹⁴⁸ From this research,¹⁴⁹ Stevenson finds three basic ways that Christian athletes who represent an evangelical muscular Christian group used their faith in dealing with and relating to contemporary sport. Though Coakley and Stevenson largely agree on the three general ways that Christians relate to sport, I follow Stevenson's options because his study serves as the empirical research for Coakley and others.¹⁵⁰ Where I do include Coakley, it is because he helps clarify a result or description. Below, I present each option or strategy and then demonstrate how each one attests to the compartmentalization internal to two-sphere thinking.

¹⁴⁷ Coakley works primarily from Allen Guttmann's comparative analysis and study of sports through history which Guttmann (see introduction to this thesis) found seven interrelated characteristics over the history of sport which first appeared together in modern sport: secularism (no direct link to religious beliefs), equality of opportunity to compete and in the conditions of competition, specialization of roles, rationalization, bureaucratization organization, quantification and the pursuit of records (Coakley, *Sports in Society: Issues and Controversies*, 66-67, 110-111, 555-560.). See Allen Guttmann, *From Ritual to Record*, 16.

¹⁴⁸ Coakley's model simplifies the problems by following the dominant sport model, however; Stevenson clarifies the personal problems and difficulties presented in sport for Christian athletes by centering the issues and sources of conflict around "(a) the importance of winning, (b) the importance of social status, (c) the relationship with the team and with the coach, (d) the relationship with the opponents, and (e) the expectations that others had of them as athletes in their surrounding social settings" (Stevenson, "Christian Athletes and the Culture of Sport: Dilemmas and Solutions," 243.).

¹⁴⁹ Stevenson studied 31 elite athletes (23 males and 8 females) all of whom professed faith in Christ and associated with the modern muscular Christian sport organizations, *Athletes in Action*. The data came from in-depth interviews. The athletes indicated in the study that "it was by turning to or returning to an evangelical Christian faith that they were better able to cope with their problems and with the demands of the culture of elite, competitive sport" ("Christian Athletes and the Culture of Sport: Dilemmas and Solutions," 241.).

¹⁵⁰ The difference between the two is accounted for by Stevenson. Coakley's model is a combination of Stevenson's research and arguments and inferences he drew from anecdotal evidence and in particular from Shirl Hoffman's essays. Coakley does this because of the fact that many Christian athletes as researched by Stevenson do not play as members of a Christian organization (Stevenson's sample) so he intended to address those outside of this sample but with the disclaimer that no studies have been done on these Christian athletes (Coakley, *Sports in Society: Issues and Controversies*, 557.).

The kind of dualism that becomes apparent vacillates between a metaphysical dualism (how the different groups see reality) and religious dualism (how they use or relate faith to the world).¹⁵¹

One option is to cope with the apparent conflict by conforming to the dominant sport ethos (discipline, self-denial, and sacrifice).¹⁵² These athletes (one third of the thirty-one athletes) evaluate such values as winning, achievement, and success according to the normative expectations and values of the accepted ethos of sport.¹⁵³ They align their faith with those foci that apparently yield the good that demonstrates Christian faith in this sphere. As Christians, their faith zealously commits them to legitimize their interaction with sport as if this faith commitment moved sport to the sacred realm.¹⁵⁴ Stevenson records that this move from faith to sport was a particular interpretation of Christianity “that gives precedence to a notion that living a ‘truly’ Christian life and giving ‘true’ worship to God means giving one’s all in whatever situation one happens to be. It is giving oneself and whatever talents and abilities one has fully and enthusiastically to God.”¹⁵⁵ If a person who does not know Christ competes for the sake of sport values, this group competes even more enthusiastically for the same values because competition is ultimately referred to God. They conceptualized this as giving 100 percent, winning for the glory of God,

¹⁵¹ For a helpful analysis and critique of dualism, see Brian J. Walsh and J. Richard Middleton, *The Transforming Vision* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1984). Some of my language and description follows their explanation for they in particular bring out the praxis issues related to dualism. See also, Pedro Barrajón LC, “Overcoming Dualism,” in *Sport and Christianity: Anthropological, Theological and Pastoral Challenges*, eds. Norbert Müller and Kevin Lixey (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, *publication forthcoming*), 45-67.

¹⁵² Coakley, *Sports in Society: Issues and Controversies*, 555-563.

¹⁵³ Stevenson, “Christian Athletes and the Culture of Sport: Dilemmas and Solutions,” 244.

¹⁵⁴ Stevenson, “Christian Athletes and the Culture of Sport: Dilemmas and Solutions,” 251.

¹⁵⁵ Stevenson, “Christian Athletes and the Culture of Sport: Dilemmas and Solutions,” 251.

and maximizing their earthly potential. What was interesting about this commitment was that it allowed these athletes to justify playing through pain and suffering because of their faith in an exemplar Christ. Both Stevenson and Coakley conclude that these athletes' beliefs about God center on God being in total control and giving them their sportive talents in order for them to use those talents to their absolute fullest.¹⁵⁶

The previous is a clear example of giving autonomy to the realm or space of sport because one assumes that this reality lies outside the reality that is in Christ. It does not lie outside in that it does not relate to the reality that is in Christ, but in that the reality of God affords space to sport when sport enthusiastically adopts those values that appear compatible to the Christian ethos. When these athletes' Christian existence bumped against the sport sphere, the two repelled each other, giving the secular priority in deciding what is good. Stevenson notes that this relating of the two never really questioned the sport ethos and somehow dramatically increased these athletes' responsibility to sport, since God gave them their talents.¹⁵⁷

For this group of athletes, there does not appear to be a battle over which realm wins because the worldly realm's values determine how the two will be held together. Their ascetic emphasis (e.g., self-discipline, sacrifice, self-denial) moves them from sport reality to God because God is most glorified when these kind of earthly values are maximized. However, according to Bonhoeffer, if reality as a whole is unified, there is no movement from one to the other in order to justify one's existence because Christ already embraces, owns, and inhabits the reality of sportive

¹⁵⁶ Stevenson, "Christian Athletes and the Culture of Sport: Dilemmas and Solutions," 251; Coakley, *Sports in Society: Issues and Controversies*, 555-563.

¹⁵⁷ Stevenson, "Christian Athletes and the Culture of Sport: Dilemmas and Solutions," 251.

culture.¹⁵⁸ In fact, these athletes' attempt to appreciate the world of sport is misguided because sport as a part of the worldly reality only receives its validity from the fact that God in Christ has fully committed himself to this world.¹⁵⁹ Furthermore, since sportive reality is accepted in Christ, these athletes' aim of competing for God or Christ is myopic because Christ is already there. It is not necessary to try to lift sport to a higher sacred plan; it is already one reality in Christ. A Christian's effort or power does not make some reality sacred, nor does it form the bridge between the two spheres.

The direction of responsibility for this group of athletes is individualistic in that they organize their concern around how they can maximally glorify God. There are two problems with this.

One problem, for Bonhoeffer, is that the subject of any action presupposes a responsibility for others.¹⁶⁰ Christ-reality is the fact that God in Christ is there for others; thus, witness is to the shape of this concrete form in sport and not to some abstract principle such as God's glory.

A second problem is that the focus for this group can be reduced to sportive deeds because these deeds become the measure of God's power. They are committed to successful performances because such performances make God publicly known. What are beheld are not real human beings, but those who have proven themselves worthy to stand before God. They compete for God and for Christ. Stevenson calls to our attention that it becomes their sacred duty to try their best to win but to win "at

¹⁵⁸ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 58.

¹⁵⁹ Dramm, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, 106-107.

¹⁶⁰ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 219-245.

any cost” because winning is directed to the highest good, God.¹⁶¹ When the self and her success are aggrandized, then “the majority fall into *idolizing success*.”¹⁶² What is good is a successful effort, giving it your all. The same criticism applies to the second group because some standard of modern sport, such as winning or success, is identified as the means for promoting God. Bonhoeffer charges that, when success becomes the norm for people, “they become blind to right and wrong, truth and lie, decency and malice. They see only the deed, the success. Ethical and intellectual capacity for judgment grow dull before the sheen of success and before the desire somehow to share in it.”¹⁶³ Stevenson reports that one of the ways that some of these athletes manifested this drive toward successful efforts was a willingness to play while hurt, risking more injury. Furthermore, “if using your talents to the maximum means hitting people, hurting people, intimidating or fouling people—well that too can be perceived to be ‘for Christ’.”¹⁶⁴ Again, we see a moral compromise that these athletes justified in the name of success and winning. Because ethics begins and ends with Christ, then this compromise is a compromise of Christ. Bonhoeffer claims that only in the cross of Christ do we behold the true form of Christ, a human being accepted, judged, and awakened by God to a risen, new life.¹⁶⁵ If this is true, then a Christian athlete is free to inhabit sport, not to secure what appears to be exclusive to the winner, but to experience the reality of God’s unlimited love and grace. Christian

¹⁶¹ Stevenson, “Christian Athletes and the Culture of Sport: Dilemmas and Solutions,” 251-252.

¹⁶² Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 89. In this section of *Ethics*, Bonhoeffer is addressing perverted notions of success linked to Hitler himself. The argument follows that whenever a culture accommodates a worldly reality of what is good and successful then ideals and standards contrary to Christ-reality are apotheosized.

¹⁶³ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 89.

¹⁶⁴ Stevenson, “Christian Athletes and the Culture of Sport: Dilemmas and Solutions,” 252.

¹⁶⁵ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 91.

athletes confess this reality because in Christ they are real humans, free to be who they really are in sport without attempting to justify themselves. Does this mean that strength and success do not matter?

I believe that Bonhoeffer would affirm this group's emphasis on the natural life. This group appears to recognize something invigorating about the exercise of bodies, the use of power and strength, that recovers the natural life. Unlike some Protestants, Bonhoeffer does not denigrate or condemn creaturely physical life, nor does he consign it to a neutral value. His Christocentric understanding of reality causes him to claim that, because Jesus said "I am the life" (John 14:6; 11:27), Jesus binds all thoughts about life and transforms the inquiry from what is life to who life is--a particular and unique person. That is, true life is ordered to Jesus Christ.¹⁶⁶ This life comes from without. Christ takes up all that comes into being—in all that comes into being he was life (John 1:4)—and by faith he uniquely becomes the source of life for a Christian because of the word of the gospel.¹⁶⁷ If Jesus Christ is the origin, essence, and goal of all life, then Jesus' life is a "Yes" "to what is created, to becoming to growth, to flower and fruit, to health, to happiness, to ability, to achievement, to value, to success, to greatness, to honor, in short the Yes to the flourishing of life's strength."¹⁶⁸

Burtneff avers that Bonhoeffer's life-affirming philosophy¹⁶⁹ means

¹⁶⁶ Wüstenberg argues for the continuity of the theological theme of life in Bonhoeffer's works. See Ralph K. Wüstenberg, *Bonhoeffer and Beyond: Promoting a Dialogue between Religion and Politics* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2008), 57-67. This theme as is true for the whole of ethical inquiry is informed by Christology; in Christ we participate in the fullness of life, the centre of life who defines reality. See Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 249-250.

¹⁶⁷ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 249-250.

¹⁶⁸ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 251.

¹⁶⁹ For a detailed interaction covering Bonhoeffer's understanding of the philosophy of Life Affirmation, see Dramm, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, 110-114.

then the results of one's action are extremely important. It is a gift to have the strength and to be able to exercise the power by which one registers some success at accomplishing what one sets out to do. . . . If we embrace the natural, which is open to Christ, we ought not to be surprised if our actions are occasionally sufficiently congruent with God's purpose that good results follow.¹⁷⁰

Since Christ-reality embraces the world in itself,¹⁷¹ cultural activities, such as sport, find God at the center; however, this reality includes both strength and suffering. In Christ, the two are held together; therefore, to worship one over the other betrays two-sphere thinking. The responsible life exercises real humanity—success, strength, humility, surrender¹⁷²—in the service of others in sport.

On a personal side, Bonhoeffer's concern for the whole of reality-life was evident in his childhood and sports. His twin sister, Sabine, commented that he would become so engrossed in his games that he would be oblivious of heat and thirst.¹⁷³ "Dietrich liked to win at games, in fact he played with passion, but he was absolutely fair where others were tempted to cheat."¹⁷⁴ Emmi Bonhoeffer adds that, "He [Bonhoeffer] showed the same intensity in playing music, or games, whether tennis, ping-pong, up-jenkins or boccia; he played to win, but was a good loser."¹⁷⁵

A second way that the athletes in Stevenson's study chose (fifteen of the thirty-one) to use their faith was to pragmatically accommodate those problems (e.g., winning; social status; relationship with team, coaches, and opponents; and social

¹⁷⁰ Burtness, *Shaping the Future*, 108.

¹⁷¹ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 58.

¹⁷² Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 251-252.

¹⁷³ Sabine Leibholz, "Childhood and Home," in *I Knew Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, eds. Wolf-Dieter Zimmermann and Ronald Gregor Smith (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1966), 19.

¹⁷⁴ Leibholz, "Childhood and Home," 25.

¹⁷⁵ Emmi Bonhoeffer, "Professors' Children as Neighbours," in *I Knew Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, eds. Wolf-Dieter Zimmermann and Ronald Gregor Smith (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1966), 35.

expectations of them as athletes) present in their sport culture.¹⁷⁶ This group further substantiates Mathisen's point concerning the essential element of pragmatic utility. As athletes, they continue to assume the legitimacy of the sportive ideology along with sport practice itself. This accommodation is an accepted player ethos. In sport, just as any other role in life, an athlete accepts role-specific duties and operates "within these athletic expectations in as 'Christian' a manner as possible."¹⁷⁷

Whereas the first group concentrated on ascetic aspects of sport in order to glorify God, this group makes moral decisions based on the situation's given role and norms and then interprets the sportive norms within the Christian ethical framework. For example, according to one interviewee, retaliation in sport is wrong because the rules explicitly prohibit it and because you as a Christian should follow the Sermon on the Mount by turning the other cheek.¹⁷⁸ In addition, some athletes within this group focused on how sport offered an ideal platform for professing their faith to others-- Christian evangelism. Again, a functional valuation guides decision-making for these athletes.

My critique here is limited because I have already addressed this problem under pragmatic utility, the first essential element of modern muscular Christianity. If the worldly triumphs, though under the illusions of God's glory for the first group, then in their attempt to stand in the two realms at the same time, the second group of athletes experiences eternal conflict.¹⁷⁹ Stevenson reports that certain feelings, for

¹⁷⁶ Stevenson, "Christian Athletes and the Culture of Sport: Dilemmas and Solutions," 252-253.

¹⁷⁷ Stevenson, "Christian Athletes and the Culture of Sport: Dilemmas and Solutions," 252-253.

¹⁷⁸ Stevenson, "Christian Athletes and the Culture of Sport: Dilemmas and Solutions," 253.

¹⁷⁹ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 58, 62, 237.

example, worry or guilt, frustrated how these athletes related faith to sport. One athlete said,

It's a constant battle. Because to really excel [in soccer], [you] use many different methods of achieving things that are not right. There's so many things you do that are against the rules, that you do when the ref's not looking, to better your advantage in a situation. . . I feel awful afterwards but there's things that you do that are very acceptable in the soccer community. And it's like, where do I draw the line?¹⁸⁰

The constant battle and worry are symptomatic of two-sphere thinking. These athletes give up on reality as a whole. By keeping reality partitioned, they have the reality of sport and its laws on the one hand, and the reality of God on the other. This is where they draw the line of separation. However, their underdeveloped theological thinking, which is a trait of evangelical muscular Christianity, causes the role of an athlete to dominate and normalize how the two-spheres relate.

Other athletes chose to play the game by considering the right course of action according to their intentions or motivations. Stevenson observes that language about the "right attitude," which referred to whether their heart was in the right place, governed how they related to sport.¹⁸¹ One football player said, "I love hitting people. . . [but] I think if you have the right focus. I don't think there's any problem whatsoever. If you are right with God when you are playing, I don't see there's any problem at all."¹⁸² Bonhoeffer asks,

What right do we have to stay with inner motivation as the ultimate phenomenon of ethics, ignoring that "good" intentions can grow out of very dark backgrounds in human consciousness and subconsciousness, and that often the worst things happen as a result of "good intentions"?¹⁸³

¹⁸⁰ Stevenson, "Christian Athletes and the Culture of Sport: Dilemmas and Solutions," 253.

¹⁸¹ Stevenson, "Christian Athletes and the Culture of Sport: Dilemmas and Solutions," 253.

¹⁸² Stevenson, "Christian Athletes and the Culture of Sport: Dilemmas and Solutions," 253.

¹⁸³ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 52.

According to Bonhoeffer, this inward turn in search of God's will stops at an arbitrary point. The good is identified with some ready-made internal standard that is abstracted and severed from reality.¹⁸⁴ These athletes fail to embrace the whole reality because their right attitudes constitute only part of reality, forgetting consequences, relationships, and actions. For some of them, winning "at all costs" becomes a motivation to the glory of God. Because the good for a Christian ethic is the reality revealed in Jesus Christ, these athletes traffic between the two-spheres and invoke the spiritual sphere only to arbitrary, individual, or cultural standards.

Rejection of elite sport was a third approach that some athletes took in their attempt to relate faith to the dominant culture of sport. Three of the thirty-one athletes experienced some serious ethical problems with and objected to the norms of sportive culture; hence, they found it difficult to continue their participation in competitive elite sports. These athletes were unable to reconcile their faith with the overwhelming problems endemic to elite sport. How could Christian existence inhabit this sphere with ways and means that appear to conflict with Christianity? For them, "a central imperative of their Christian faith was that its values are to be the predominant values in their lives and are to be totally integrated into all of the various aspects of those lives."¹⁸⁵ The difficulty for them is how to bring the right perspective to sport. If God makes ultimate claims on a Christian's life, then to them, sport can no longer hold the place it once did in a Christian's life. God must be given a high priority, and if he does, then a Christian must rank and reprioritize how to think about and relate to sport. Stevenson notes that this mindset led these athletes to

¹⁸⁴ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 52-53.

¹⁸⁵ Stevenson, "Christian Athletes and the Culture of Sport: Dilemmas and Solutions," 254.

an ability to critique the sport culture.¹⁸⁶ However, this critique took a while before it resulted in a withdrawal. Stevenson reports that, at first, these athletes attempted to compromise by trying to live in both spheres; they attempted to maintain both their Christian identity and their athletic identity. They did this by adopting the second groups' strategy of attempting to play sport as Christians with the right motivations and even by attempting the first groups' ascetic emphasis. However, this insoluble conflict between spheres was insurmountable. This attempt to live in both spheres was short lived, as recorded by one participant: she felt guilty and uneasy because the two spheres held values and practices that were antithetical to one another. This guilt eventually led these athletes to withdraw from elite sport competitions and to either look for sport contexts that did not compromise their values or to retire. Stevenson adds that this process of compromise and withdrawal was chock-full of confusion, anxiety, and guilt, and when the athlete decided to withdraw, a time of loss ensued.¹⁸⁷

The third group of athletes experienced an inability to reconcile their Christianity and sport. Though at first they followed the two-sphere thinking of the second group by trying to stand in the two realms at the same time, they eventually wanted God without the world of dominant sport. I believe that Bonhoeffer would be the first to admit to this struggle; however, the struggle present in the reality of sport is not an ultimately static opposition. That is, these athletes do not have to choose between sport and Christ. If so, that would imply that these two are mutually exclusive and statically independent. Certainly, sport as a reality of the world behaves polemically;

¹⁸⁶ Stevenson, "Christian Athletes and the Culture of Sport: Dilemmas and Solutions," 255.

¹⁸⁷ Stevenson, "Christian Athletes and the Culture of Sport: Dilemmas and Solutions," 255.

however, this polemic tension proves this reality's existent relation to Christ; therefore, it witnesses to the common reality that sport and the Christian share in the unity of Christ-reality.¹⁸⁸ Furthermore, these problems prove the validity of the gospel for sports. The reality of the gospel certainly means that we must examine the institution of sport; however, sportive reality is not beyond gospel proclamation and living. God has accepted these athletes as reconciled and judged, and it is the responsibility of Christians (the church) to offer to this reality the form of Christ in order to responsibly shape this mandate of culture in Christ. To play sport in Christ means to love sport enough that you stay with this worldly reality, a reality that points to the ultimate.

Bonhoeffer, further addresses this way of relating Christianity to this world in the vocabulary of penultimate and ultimate. I will discuss this more in the next chapter regarding how the tension between the two properly unites reality, and I will suggest what this means for sport. In particular, the attitude of this final group is what Bonhoeffer calls radicalism. Radicalism takes many faces, but for these athletes, it correctly brought the necessary critique to the ethical problems of the dominant sport culture. Bonhoeffer recognizes this kind of attitude as one that correctly utilizes the paradigm of the crucifixion. Yet, because it rejects modern sport by virtue of its withdrawal, it neglects to resolve the conflict in the unity of Christ-reality incarnated, crucified, and resurrected.¹⁸⁹

The radical solution is one of the extreme positions that people take when trying to resolve the relationship between the penultimate and ultimate. The ultimate is the

¹⁸⁸ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 59.

¹⁸⁹ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 153-159.

event of a sinner's justification because nothing is greater than a life justified before God by the ultimacy of this word.¹⁹⁰ However, this final word is preceded by the penultimate, "some action, suffering, movement, intention, defeat, recovery, pleading, hoping—in short, quite literally a span of time at whose ends it stands."¹⁹¹ For Bonhoeffer, the penultimate prepares the way because all must go through it; therefore, the penultimate remains in existence in order to hear the ultimate word. This distinction between the two is eschatological: the "things before the last" exist for the sake of the "last things." Bonhoeffer clarifies that it is because of the final importance of the ultimate that we must consider the penultimate.¹⁹² He provides an example for how Christians can address tragedy and despair both penultimately and ultimately, and he adds that this "particular case holds for countless other situations in the daily common life of Christians. . ."¹⁹³

Since this distinction between the two is true, let me consider a concrete example in sport. Sport is played in juxtaposition to the completely serious situations of world poverty, environmental disasters, economic woes, etc., and uselessness stands next to daily ethical issues. The non-serious is beside the serious. Nevertheless, sport as a form of play is part of the created reality that witnesses to the goodness of creation, which goodness the incarnation affirms. Sport as a penultimate experience teems with gifts and joys. Though it is easily burdened with sin (and the ultimate gospel truths judge this misdirection), it still exists as a way to the ultimate. Yes, it will eventually be annulled, but for now it must be preserved. Jesus Christ as human

¹⁹⁰ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 149.

¹⁹¹ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 150-151.

¹⁹² Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 149, 151.

¹⁹³ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 153.

wants such activities because they confirm real humanity; simultaneously, Jesus Christ the crucified judges fallen creation, and Jesus Christ the resurrected calls a new creation into a life where the goods of sport may be restored. What this means for sport is that Christians must responsibly prepare the way in this created reality or space where there is an impediment to knowing Christ.¹⁹⁴ For example,¹⁹⁵ the overworked man needs play, the mediocre man needs excellence, the sluggish man needs the strength and order characteristic of sport, and the burdened adult needs the childlike freedom experienced in sport. All of these are characteristics of sport that the ultimate accepts and empowers since they are token gifts and conditions of what it truly means to be human. Bonhoeffer strongly asserts that, if life is deprived of such goods that are unique to what it means to be human, then the justification of such a life by grace and faith is obstructed, if not impossible.¹⁹⁶ In anticipation of the coming of the Lord, Christians should prepare the way by being human and being good because this way shows respect for the very reality that Christ assumed and ultimately fulfils.¹⁹⁷ Therefore, the way for the word takes this preparation seriously, not as a precondition for the arrival of the ultimate, but because “in Christ the reality of God encounters the reality of the world and allows us to take part in this real encounter.”¹⁹⁸ This dynamic way is how the penultimate relates to the ultimate.

In comparison, radicalism sees only the ultimate; therefore, a complete break severs it from its relationship to the penultimate. Since the third group of athletes

¹⁹⁴ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 157-159.

¹⁹⁵ I contextualized the example Bonhoeffer provides for the applied area of sport (Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 163.).

¹⁹⁶ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 160.

¹⁹⁷ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 159, 165-166.

¹⁹⁸ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 159.

sees the penultimate and ultimate as mutually exclusive (or as Stevenson says, antithetical), they neglect to come to terms with the penultimate because they absolutize the ultimate.¹⁹⁹ Stevenson surmises that there was conflict because “they did not always find it possible in practice to give full expression to their Christianity.”²⁰⁰ Christianity, as they interpret it, is absolutized. Thus, what is at issue is the Christian life, which according to Bonhoeffer is not the real matter because seriousness has to do with Christ alone.²⁰¹ The Christian life means integration; however, they regard integration as impossible, so they reject sport because the two cannot commingle for fear of contamination and impurity. Integration, for these athletes, starts with how to relate Christianity and sport rather than with Christ. Their two-sphere thinking occurs in terms of their version of Christianity and less in terms of Christ-reality, where God’s reality and human reality become one. Consequently, their radicalism causes them to think that they are preserving Christianity while they are in fact forfeiting the very temporal existence that the ultimate cares for and about as preparatory for the ultimate. If Jesus Christ holds all reality, then it is only through him that anything will be preserved. Furthermore, what essentially bothers them is not so much Christianity, but their own relationship with God. Stevenson’s interviews record personal growth—private personal piety, individualism, a me-centered focus—as the article they feared was being attacked by the dominant sport ethos.²⁰²

¹⁹⁹ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 153-154.

²⁰⁰ Stevenson, “Christian Athletes and the Culture of Sport: Dilemmas and Solutions,” 255.

²⁰¹ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 154-155.

²⁰² Stevenson, “Christian Athletes and the Culture of Sport: Dilemmas and Solutions,” 255.

These modern muscular Christians so desperately want to live out their Christianity. However, because they do not know how, their rejection of sport is a hatred of the very embodied existence that sport penultimately affirms. One of the interviewees believes that the priority of being more with God is the one thing she can hold on to even if she leaves sport. This Gnostic tendency is not what it means to be a human, but if it were, according to Bonhoeffer, the very God she wants is excluded.²⁰³ The real God is found in Christ, who as the God-man resolves this relationship between the ultimate and penultimate.

In summary, any attempt to relate or make Christ and the reality of the world commensurate, regardless of the form, results in “the destruction of the world reconciled in Christ with God.”²⁰⁴ Feil asserts that this tragic result proves that, whatever the attempt, in the final analysis all the forms are identical, “no matter whether they are called secularism and provincialism, compromise and radicalism, secularism and enthusiasm, or Cultural Protestantism and monkhood.”²⁰⁵ Feil continues, saying that these different forms “attempt to explicate Christian faith and the understanding of the world on the *same* basis or at least in a one-sided fashion either by affirming the world or negating it, a negation which in the end becomes a one-dimensional affirmation of the world.” Furthermore, this identity is apparent empirically in their bondage to the world.²⁰⁶ Modern muscular Christians become more like the world because their two-sphere thinking precludes their conformity to the form and reality of Christ.

²⁰³ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 155-156.

²⁰⁴ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 264.

²⁰⁵ Ernst Feil, *The Theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, trans. Martin Rumscheidt (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 148. Cf. Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 55-66, 237, 264.

²⁰⁶ Feil, *The Theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, 148.

If two-sphere thinking misses the mark on how the church should integrate her thoughts related to the (sportive) world, how should a Christian integrate her commitment to the ultimate amid the penultimate of sport? This inquiry gets at the heart of the issue that Christians in sport have struggled to understand. The dialectic tension between this-worldly affirmation and other-worldly orientation appears to break when a Christocratic structure of reality is neglected. Before I proceed to the next chapter to address how Bonhoeffer helps a Christian ethic to positively value the penultimate desires and joys experienced in sport, I want to turn to Shirl Hoffman, who attempts to integrate sport and Christianity. However, his attempt still reflects a fragmented vision of sport: two-sphere thinking or dualism.

Shirl Hoffman: The Enduring Problem of Two-Sphere Thinking

In *Good Game*, Hoffman states that “how Christians, and especially evangelicals, have managed to live in these two diametrically opposed worlds, even to the point of harnessing one to serve the other, is the focus of this book.”²⁰⁷ At least initially, this opposition continues what Hoffman and Higgs have concluded for some time: there appears to be a fundamental incompatibility between Christianity and sport.²⁰⁸ For Hoffman, the relationship between sport and Christianity is mired in conflict between two worlds. His description of the problem frames it as a dilemma between two different worlds. But what kind of dilemma is it? Would not this dilemma be true for a relationship between Christianity and the world of business, music, medicine, etc? What does Hoffman mean by diametrically opposed worlds? Obviously, they are not

²⁰⁷ Hoffman, *Good Game*, 11.

²⁰⁸ Higgs, *God in the Stadium*, 1, 21; Higgs and Braswell, *An Unholy Alliance*, 1-15, See also, Shirl Hoffman, “The Sanctification of Sport: Can the Mind of Christ Coexist with the Killer Instinct,” *Christianity Today* April (1986), he refers to this relationship as an “inevitable contradiction”.

truly diametrically opposed, or his solutions toward the end of the book would undermine his initial thesis. Along with many others, Hoffman recognizes that intellectual neglect—“the scandal of the evangelical mind”²⁰⁹—dominates the religious-sport discourse and thus reinforces the problem of how to relate sport and Christianity. Because of this intellectual problem, modern muscular Christianity, as evidenced above in my own analysis, has often preached a worldly gospel, a gospel of accommodation that blindly apes the model of sport from the dominant culture.²¹⁰ This accommodation is how some have tried to relate the two. In effect, it mirrors the culture in which it is embedded.²¹¹ What is Hoffman’s solution? Let us consider his theological strategy for addressing this problem of how to relate sport and Christianity.

Hoffman claims that

thinking Christianly about sports means locating it not in the body or in the aims and purposes of institutions [sport], or even in evangelism, but in the Christian imagination, a point far removed from its typical placement in the arsenal of instrumentally useful things. The intellectually curious Christian will find himself or herself engaged at a level not commonly reached when thinking about sport: the symbolic, the aesthetic, the ritualistic, and the religious.²¹²

I argue below that Hoffman goes in this decisive theological direction as a riposte to the disoriented evangelical muscular Christians who sought an unholy alliance with sport, thus leading to accommodation. As noted by Feil’s interpretation of Bonhoeffer’s two-sphere thinking, this accommodation is a one-dimensional

²⁰⁹ Hoffman cites Mark Noll’s work where Noll claims that evangelicals in North American have failed to think Christianly about what they deem as the secular world (Mark Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994). This of course historically substantiates the sacred-split theory or two-sphere thinking that I address above.

²¹⁰ Hoffman, *Good Game*, 14-15, 21, 264.

²¹¹ I do not mean to imply that it merely mirrors this dominant culture for this social interaction also creates and shapes this social reality.

²¹² Hoffman, *Good Game*, 20.

affirmation of reality. In order to avoid these religious and ethical problems, which Hoffman critically and capably covers in his book, he identifies the good “direction” of sport with certain play elements of the structure of sport.²¹³ He locates and reads what is sacred about sport in the distinct play elements of sportive reality, while he locates what is evil in sport in (as he interprets them) other, inferior elements of the sportive structure. This isolation of the different aspects of sport forms the basis of his dualism. For Hoffman, the antithesis is not merely ethical, but structural, located in how he divides sport reality itself. The language of his methodology is important.

Hoffman directs us to the Christian imagination.²¹⁴ His explanation about this imagination is terse. I sense that he wants to talk about Christian aesthetics, which bears an important relationship to epistemology, anthropology, and ontology. This aesthetic mode of knowing engages aspects of reality specific to symbols, rituals, aesthetics, and religion. According to Hoffman, this imaginative reflection is capable of “gleaning the spiritual fruits sports have to offer.”²¹⁵ What he means is that Christian imagination permits us to know intellectually what is religiously significant about play experiences that can manifest divine reality. This experience and method

²¹³ See Al Wolters, *Creation Regained*, 49-56. In my first chapter, I make this important distinction in Augustine’s ethic, namely, the difference between structure (ontology) and direction (ethics). An Augustinian ethic is a proper relating or ordering of our loves in and toward God, the highest good.

²¹⁴ Here is a place where Hoffman lacks precision on what Christian imagination is especially in light of the fact that this topic is receiving a renewed interest theologically and philosophically. For an analysis of the concept of imagination in Huizinga whom Hoffman quotes but does not follow directly, see Robert Anchor, “History and Play: Johan Huizinga and His Critics,” *History and Theory* 17, no. 1 (Feb. 1978), 77-78. For a theological and philosophical examination of this topic, see James K. A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview and Cultural Formation* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009). Smith’s proposal is akin to my approach which I began in chapter 1. He avoids carefully the pitfalls of dualism with his deft attention to the history of ideas, a plurality of methods for reading culture which also escapes reductionism and the biblical plot-line. A survey of Hoffman surfaces the fact that he has limped for years with this sacred-secular split which burdens his theoretical considerations.

²¹⁵ Hoffman, *Good Game*, 287.

of engaging with sport is what is missing in evangelical muscular Christianity.²¹⁶ Moreover, his description of the object of this imagination is more precisely that of the intellect that apprehends what is sacred or religiously significant concerning sport.²¹⁷ Without this Christian thinking, which he later calls Christian worldview,²¹⁸ we are liable to adopt other myths or imaginaries that hold us hostage to this-worldly concerns and values. However, when we rightly employ the Christian imagination about sport, sport can become, as described by Hugo Rahner, holy play, something sacred that is a rehearsal or gesture of that future eschatological reality—playing fully embodied before God. In short, what he loves about sport is the “essence of the sport experience,” which is the sacred reality that pierces through this world ever so palely as an echo or gesture.²¹⁹ The true riches of what sport has to offer are its spiritual benefits.²²⁰ As will become clear, he deposits all the play elements of sport in this sacred realm because they make sport acceptable to the Christian worldview as a symbol of religious expression—a sacred category.²²¹ How does he conceive this?

²¹⁶ Hoffman, *Good Game*, 19.

²¹⁷ By placing the emphasis on the mind, it might appear I have misrepresented Hoffman’s account of imagination. However, it is not until his final chapter that we get a brief explanation, yet fuller, that correlates this way of knowing more with the cognitive. He refers to the Christian worldview as the framing story or myth for how we “think” Christianly about sports (Hoffman, *Good Game*, 20, 280.). Doctrines provide the beliefs (e.g., eschatology and creation) for how we ought to think about sport. That is, these beliefs are tools to inquire about and reflect on what is spiritual about sport, for in fact, it is the spiritual realities which are of the highest order for Hoffman. Why? Because this is the point missed by evangelical, muscular Christians and these beliefs must be recovered so that the primary purpose of sport is known and then lived.

²¹⁸ Hoffman, *Good Game*, 280.

²¹⁹ Hoffman, *Good Game*, 280. I will return to the implications of Hoffman’s eschatology for they reveal another dualism. He is indebted to C. S. Lewis and Hugo Rahner both of whom have dualistic (and idealistic) tendencies of relating to and reading this world.

²²⁰ Hoffman, *Good Game*, 19-20.

²²¹ Hoffman, *Good Game*, 21-22.

In his final chapter, Hoffman determines to offer a tentative theological answer that reimagines sport within a Christian worldview.²²² That is, he contemplates a way to conceptualize sports and their relationship to the Christian religion. He organizes his answer around a number of defining criteria for how to relate Christianity and sport: leisure, play, autotelic, and symbolic sport.²²³ Hoffman begins with a standard discussion of how sport differs from other areas of life. Though the necessary and sufficient conditions are debated and, thus, are neither entirely satisfactory nor certain, I do grant that a number of characteristics of sport make it distinct and separate (in a relative sense) from other human endeavors.²²⁴

I believe this starting point is important not merely for definitional purposes, but also because it permits Hoffman to rescue the best elements of sport from the negative elements of modern sport (e.g., excellence achieved through dedication, hard work, pushing bodies to limits, sport dominated by work, sport highly organized and specialized).²²⁵ He organizes sport around those elements of play that structurally point to the sacred. He believes that “realizing the best that sport has to offer is highly conditional upon human enactments that, in their intent and

²²² Though Hoffman qualifies that he is not a theologian and philosopher so he resigns the task of synthesizing theology, ethics and sport to others more capable; nonetheless, he still sketches a theology and ethics not simply in the final chapter but throughout for his arguments presuppose theological paradigms for interpreting, critiquing and marshalling his evidence (Hoffman, *Good Game*, 20-22, 263-265.).

²²³ Hoffman, *Good Game*, 231, 263-281.

²²⁴ For discussions concerning the defining characteristics of sport, see Guttmann, *From Ritual to Record*, 1-14; Bernard Suits, “The Elements of Sport,” in *Philosophic Inquiry in Sport*, eds. William J. Morgan and Klaus V. Meier (Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics, 1988), 39-48; Graham McFee, *Sport, Rules and Values: Philosophical Investigations into the Nature of Sport* (New York: Routledge, 2004); Feezell, *Sport, Play and Ethical Reflection*, 3-18; Mike Slep, *Social Issues in Sport* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1998), 1-15.

²²⁵ Hoffman, *Good Game*, 231, 265-270.

expressiveness, symbolize the spiritual realities toward which they point.”²²⁶ In effect, he splits the reality of sport into two parts with a hierarchy: play is more important than the characteristics or elements specific to modern sport’s organization of sport because it is what is sacred. He ethically values leisure, for example, because it appreciates and is grounded in the sacred sphere. By implication, the other elements in sport are morally dubious because their sustenance is drawn putatively from the secular. He continues his theological reasoning:

At leisure, released from the crushing demands of daily life, the Christian has a few moments of freedom to shed the camouflage of natural man, to polish up the *imago Dei*, to regain spiritual balance, and to recover a sense of who he or she really is. For Christians ineluctably wedded to the world, leisure is the opportune time for enlarging, not their own ambitions or an already outsized appetite for entertainment, but their spiritual visions. If it indeed is true that inside every furrow-browed, culture-constrained, work-manipulated Christian, there is a more ethical, sensitive, radiant, vibrant, joyous, worshipful Christian trying to get out, one would logically expect this latent side to appear in its most splendid form when the Christian is most free to choose.²²⁷

Hoffman believes that leisure expresses the deepest and freest desires of the heart;²²⁸ therefore, he consecrates this aspect of sport because it is integrally related to worship, which is a spiritual framework. In fact, he dogmatically asserts that, when played in this sphere, sport helps others to recover their spiritual identity.²²⁹ He follows other Catholic writers (Johan Huizinga, Joseph Pieper, and Hugo Rahner) to corroborate his claim that sport is justified and valued religiously by turning to those play elements that correlate it to the sacred realm.²³⁰ Again, I believe this division is

²²⁶ Hoffman, *Good Game*, 20.

²²⁷ Hoffman, *Good Game*, 266.

²²⁸ Hoffman, *Good Game*, 266.

²²⁹ Hoffman, *Good Game*, 267.

²³⁰ Hoffman, *Good Game*, 19-20, 266, 269, 277-280. Pieper et.al have made it their noble trade to recover leisure and play from the perverse effects (e.g., mechanized forms of mass production, efficiency, usefulness and productivity) characteristic of the modern age. Being busy today is valued

necessary for Hoffman to be able to justify his starting point as a way of relating these two distinct realities that modern sport has torn apart. That is, if sports today, as Guttman argues,²³¹ are not related to the transcendent, then Hoffman's origin is an attempt to put sport back together by identifying the true riches that are spiritual.²³²

Remember, Hoffman earnestly rejects any justification of sport based on instrumental reasons or extrinsic goods. He declares that utilitarian justification based on secular ideals and goods has dominated the Christian imagination throughout church history. He is also reacting to the "Protestant model" of sport in

as more important than play and leisure. Again, Hoffman believes this way of viewing the world dominates modern sport on top of the fact that evangelicals inject their own extrinsic values into this highly instrumentalized context. Pieper's argument is a return to a pre-modern period especially to the Greeks because of the centrality of leisure for defining life's purpose or goal (Joseph Pieper, trans. Alexander Dru, *Leisure the Basis of Culture* (London: Collins, 1965), 21-24.). Leisure for Pieper like Hoffman is a contemplative and spiritual attitude, a condition of the soul, for "steeping oneself in the whole of creation" (Pieper, *Leisure*, 43.). It is this attitude which has both maintain the primacy of leisure or play over labor (Pieper) or work-dominated sport (Hoffman) and other secular characteristics (Hoffman). Hoffman in essence conflates the work associated problems of sport with other characteristics (e.g., striving for excellence and records, human achievement). I grant Hoffman the debilitating effects and misdirections from the institution of sport which values such external goals like profit, fame and rewards over against the internal goods, however, these are not the same thing as some of these other characteristics which arguably are just as internal to the good and flourishing of sport. In fact, sport includes other characteristics like physical prowess, physical activity, exercise, competition, rules, goal orientation, excellence, dedication, and unpredictability. On what basis, must we choose the play element over these others? Hoffman suggests it because the play elements are akin to the sacred while these others appear to be easily manipulated and oriented to what is inferior and problematic about sport.

²³¹ See Allen Guttman, *Sports: The First Five Millennia* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2004).

²³² At times, Michael Novak runs this same risk when he uses hyperbole to make his claim that play and sports are undervalued. He says, "The basic reality of all human life is play, games, sport; these are the realities from which the basic metaphors for all that is important in the rest of life are drawn" (Novak, *The Joy of Sports*, xii.). Novak like Huizinga tries desperately to "protect play from 'the fatalities of the real world'" which is based on a false antithesis between work and play (Anchor, "History and Play," 90). This antithesis grows out of romantic, idealized versions of pure play failing to see that play is situated in a real world with real objects and persons. Gruneau notes that for Novak his ruminations include a good bit of romanticized hagiography which is derived from his sacred justification (Richard S. Gruneau, "Freedom and Constraint: The Paradox of Play, Games and Sport," *Journal of Sport History* 7, no. 3 (1980): 68-86.). That does not mean that there are not important differences but I agree both with Fink (Anchor, "History and Play," 89-93) who argues for a symbiotic relationship, for the double character of play, that has its function both in and separate (dialectic tension) from the world and Johnston's integrated model for sport and work (Johnston, *The Christian at Play*, 125-137.).

which the criterion of work judges what is successful in different spheres.²³³

According to Hoffman, the church got it right during the medieval age because it valued games as religious experiences by focusing on their spiritual realities. By using this example, Hoffman suggests that this way of valuing sport should be normative for Christians today. This return to some pre-modern period as if it was the halcyon day of sport follows Pieper.

Beyond this criticism, Hoffman goes on to follow Guttmann's thesis that what the Romans began, modern sport intensified--namely, the break between sacred and secular. Once the religious rationale was absent, the shift to such characteristics as quantified human achievement and records occurred. He concludes that

the dislocation can't be blamed only on forces external to religion. Christianity's insistence on denying sport's appeal to the human spirit, subverting it with external objectives, may have played a greater part in achieving distance between sport and religion than have the forces of secularization.²³⁴

Therefore, Hoffman's goal is to convince the Christian community that sport has religious significance because it is a religious experience. To heal the breach, he selects specific aspects of sport that he contends are religious or sacred. Sport deserves our attention because it is a matter of the spirit, the religious or sacred realm. In his estimation, he must reform sport this way because evangelicals have left sport in the secular, morally neutral realm of the body divorced from the soul. That is, evangelical muscular Christians are guilty of a split-vision of life because they conceive sport as non-spiritual. He explains this mistake as dualism because

²³³ Hoffman, *Good Game*, 266. Robert Johnston argues that, "In this model, industry, individualism, frugality, ambition, and success are considered the primary virtues. . . . [which results in] an unfortunate diminishment of the play experience. . . ." (Robert K. Johnston, *The Christian at Play* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 85.).

²³⁴ Hoffman, *Good Game*, 268; cf. Guttmann, *From Ritual to Record*, 16-26, 54-55.

evangelicals have falsely relegated sport to what they perceive as the secular, neutral realm, the bottom tier—the body compartment.²³⁵ Hoffman’s corrective, however, puts the solution for properly valuing sport in a different tier, the upper tier. Hoffman employs Nancey Pearcey’s elementary explanation on dualism as a critique of modern muscular Christianity;²³⁶ however, he himself takes over the upper tier as his starting point to justify sport as religious and spiritual. He maintains dualism. By keeping his explanation and warrant for sport primarily to the spiritual realm, he misses and/or minimizes other important areas that are equally significant for a total understanding of sport from a Christian worldview. If modern muscular Christians ran too close to the earth, he soars above in the higher realm. Sport as worship, religious experience, or sacred becomes the origin, purpose, and grounds for defending Christian involvement in sport: the sacred stands over the natural.²³⁷ The irony here is subtle because Hoffman points to the inherent dualism that has precluded evangelical muscular Christians from properly relating to sport; however, in the end, it seems that he allows the pendulum to swing to the other side to locate sport fundamentally in the higher realm of the sacred, which is equally a mistake and an example of dualism. Instead of the non-spiritual side eating up the spiritual,²³⁸

²³⁵ Hoffman, *Good Game*, 272-273.

²³⁶ See Nancey Pearcey, *Total Truth: Liberating Christianity from Its Cultural Captivity* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004).

²³⁷ It is important to note the continuity in Hoffman’s thought. This same line of reasoning began over twenty years ago when he first addressed this topic for a popular audience. Hoffman, then like now, attempts to connect the structural characteristics of worship with that of play. By connecting sport to this realm it automatically gives it a sacred status and thus a ranking which governs Hoffman’s valuation. His reason is that, “The integration of sport and genuine Christianity is possible only when we recognize the potential for sport as celebrative and worshipful act” (Hoffman, “The Sanctification of Sport: Can the Mind of Christ Coexist with the Killer Instinct,” 19.).

²³⁸ See Francis A. Schaeffer, *Escape from Reason* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1968). Hoffman claims that the evangelical mindset permitted the religiously irrelevant or neutral tier of the body compartment to not take serious the religious experiences and expressions of sport (Hoffman, *Good Game*, 272.).

which has historically been true for evangelical muscular Christianity, Hoffman's dichotomy desiccates and enervates materiality. Hoffman has erred in the opposite direction from modern muscular Christianity.

Two other examples serve to support my claim. First, in a recent *Christianity Today* essay, a summary of *Good Game*, Hoffman claims that sports "fundamentally appeal more to our spirits than to our physiologies. . . . [it is this religious expression which] may signal their proper place in the created order."²³⁹ Here we have evidence not only of a value dualism but also of a metaphysical dualism. He clearly focuses on what part of us is involved in sport.²⁴⁰ How can sport appeal more to the spirit unless some dualistic image of human existence is accepted? For Bonhoeffer, the sensuous, perceptual, and kinetic movement of the body participates just as much in the whole person as the other (immaterial) human dimensions. As willed by God, the body intrinsically bears the rights and dignity of the whole person and thus needs to be

²³⁹ Shirl J. Hoffman, "Whatever Happened to Play," *Christianity Today* 54, no. 2 (February 2010): 24. Cf. Hoffman, *Good Game*, 269, 274. In correspondence with the author, Hoffman admitted to John White that this was dualistic (John White, jwhite@cedarville.edu, "Sports is More than Play," private e-mail message to Shirl Hoffman, 15 February 2010.). In reading his book, which was published before this article, I found him ambivalent because in some places he escapes my criticism but the enduring argument invariably falls off the balance beam dislocating the integrity of Christian thought and practice. In his book, he claims the same thing about the theological justification for sport finding its appeal to players' spirit, but it is meant to balance an instrumentalizing of sport for its health benefits (Hoffman, *Good Game*, 174.). Nonetheless, his justification begins with a part of the human person rather than an indivisible relationship. Hoffman later asserts the theological significance of the body as an end in itself for he rails against violence, pain and injury to the body, resisting unethical use of the body as a machine (Hoffman, *Good Game*, 187-192.). Even if I grant him a more holistic understanding of the human person, in spite of his theological *faux pas*, in the end his "myth of eternity" (see below) functions regulatively and thus overwhelms bodiliness.

²⁴⁰ For a sustained argument against dualism in sport, of which I am indebted, see Kretchmar, *Practical Philosophy of Sport and Physical Activity*, 47-62, 101-135. Kretchmar argues for a horizontal schematic of behavior which his holism organizes so that the attention is given not to parts of a person but to kinds of behavior. That means human actions are infiltrated both with physicality (e.g., genes, chemistry, strength, flexibility, cardiovascular) and consciousness (e.g., personality, ideas, perceptions, hopes). An important implication for this thesis is that sportive actions are homogeneous, ambiguous and variable so to identify play as primary because of its appeal to the sacred and eternal part of us then misses the richness and complexity of human behavior all of which Christ-reality reconciles (Kretchmar, *Practical Philosophy of Sport and Physical Activity*, 109-111).

respected and preserved.²⁴¹ “Bodiliness and being human [*Menschein*] belong indivisibly together.”²⁴² Bonhoeffer includes the whole person as an end itself; thus, the body has a right to joys and pleasure just as much as do the spirit and soul. In fact, because of his holism, he does not describe being human according to material or immaterial parts.²⁴³

Second, in a much earlier essay, Hoffman again locates sport as play in an entirely different realm:

By positioning sport within the family of activities called play we acknowledge that sport is more than perspiration and heart rate and muscle endurance; it impacts the human spirit and gives access to untranslatable expressions of the soul. There is a *world of difference* between the experience of hitting a golf ball or running a mile or serving a tennis ball and the mundane experience of repairing broken pipes. Plumbing is a useful and important activity that can be performed to the glory of God, but there is nothing inherent in the experience of fitting pipes together that quickens one’s imaginative impulse or sharpens one’s spiritual vision. If this distinction between these *two vastly different realms* of human experience is denied, any attempt to integrate sport with Christian thought and belief is doomed from the start.²⁴⁴

In this example, Hoffman draws a hard and fast dichotomy between work and play in order to make the argument that play, unlike work (because work is more utilitarian), appeals to our imagination and spirituality in a manner radically different in kind from those more earthly, mundane kinds of activities, such as plumbing.

Johnston claims that this method of configuring sport/leisure/play and work is a “Leisure-oriented-unilateral” model. It is consistent with a Greek model, which

²⁴¹ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 185-186. I say more about this in the next chapter under the penultimate and I implicitly assume this throughout with Bonhoeffer. I have not developed this aspect of Bonhoeffer’s ethics fully mainly because his conclusions are compatible with John Paul II’s, though he theologically explains and describes this differently.

²⁴² Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 186.

²⁴³ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 186.

²⁴⁴ Shirl Hoffman, “Sport, Play, and Leisure in Christian Experience,” in *Christianity and Leisure: Issues in a Pluralistic Society*, eds. Paul Heintzman, Glen E. Van Andel and Thomas L. Visker (Dordt, IA: Dordt College Press, 1994), 141. (Italics mine); cf. Hoffman, *Good Game*, 273-274.

divorces work and play by denying the efficacy of work.²⁴⁵ Hoffman does not appear to deny plumbing some value, yet he clearly understands this practice as inherently devoid of imaginative impulse and spiritual significance. According to Hoffman, what makes sport unique is that the play element impacts the human spirit in a radically different way than do physical activities, such as plumbing. This occurs because Hoffman has drawn a line, if but a fine one, between the physical (even mundane) and the spiritual. The human spirit is the “part” that he singles out as the key to differentiating sport from work. When compared and analyzed in this dualist manner, physical, manual behavior is insufficient and inferior to play. Play realizes and expresses something that is off-limits to plumbing. Why deny these other goods? In reality, the human maker and player is just as present in plumbing as in sport, although each practice uniquely and dynamically accents a diverse plurality of goods. A plumber’s trade requires hand-eye coordination, artistic judgment, and creative imagination to handle different kinds of materials and negotiate corners and angles while joining, welding, fitting, and crimping pipes. This “mundane” activity appeals equally to the whole person unless we assume some kind of vertical hierarchy that artificially identifies some part of the person, and the experience itself, as the inherent element for determining its sacred nature. Hoffman’s dualism requires that he rearrange the thick, rich, and diverse state of affairs of reality—human behavior and experience—not only in general, with this plumbing example, but also in sport, where other equally important aspects of sport (e.g., physical prowess, physiology, striving for excellence) are slighted or reduced in importance.

²⁴⁵ Johnston, *The Christian at Play*, 83-84, 128-129.

Furthermore, this example suggests another dichotomy that assumes other sources' arguments and paradigms. Hoffman's emphasis on play as an "attitude" is in keeping with Pieper's view that leisure is a contemplative and spiritual attitude,²⁴⁶ a condition of the soul for "steeping oneself in the whole of creation".²⁴⁷ Pieper, who follows Aquinas' division of human life into *vita activa* (servile arts) and *vita contemplativa* (liberal arts),²⁴⁸ holds that leisure is associated with man's spiritual capacity. If this is true, then leisure is the more valuable because these contemplative kinds of activities fulfill the highest promise in man—that of being truly human.²⁴⁹ The higher calling of this "attitude" rules over not only human life in general but also the sportive life in particular because it is located vertically in the upper tier of the spiritual.²⁵⁰ Hoffman claims that the spiritual (upper tier) is the ideal state to which Christians should aspire and that "at most, sports are a spiritual response, a way of expressing the remarkable feelings of spiritual activity."²⁵¹ Hoffman, according to the Scholastic ethos, maintains the primacy of leisure or play because leisure or play touches the human person, unlike other modes of being, at the essence of their humanity--their spiritual identity.²⁵²

In his final chapter, Hoffman's subheading "The Spiritual Footing: Sport as Play (and its subsequent content) brings this dualism even more into view. If I interpret

²⁴⁶ Hoffman, *Good Game*, 247-248, 266, 277-78. Hoffman, in "The Sanctification of Sport: Can the Mind of Christ Coexist with the Killer Instinct," claims directly from Pieper that leisure is a mental and spiritual attitude for which Pieper characterizes this as *vita contemplativa* in *Leisure the Basis of Culture*.

²⁴⁷ Pieper, *Leisure*, 43.

²⁴⁸ Pieper, *Leisure*, 25-39. Cf. Mary G. Parr, "Repositioning the Position: Revisiting Pieper's Argument for a Leisure Ethic," *Leisure* 33, no. 1 (2009): 79-94.

²⁴⁹ Pieper, *Leisure*, 28-39.

²⁵⁰ Hoffman, "Sport, Play, and Leisure in Christian Experience," 145.

²⁵¹ Hoffman, "Sport, Play, and Leisure in Christian Experience," 147.

²⁵² Hoffman, *Good Game*, 273-274.

him correctly, play as his lodestar is the organizing assumption that gives meaning to sport because of the metaphysics of the spiritual. This spiritual “footing” is his first principle because he begins with and from this *a priori* split of reality. He states that play experiences “have a way of riveting our being, transporting us to a different time and space, and affirming a different order of existence.”²⁵³ Certainly, this mode of comportment is unique phenomenologically when compared to non-recreational stances; however, this criterion appears to function metaphysically because play carries us (maybe even upward) to a different order. That is, it is different in kind because it is in a different realm. Play strikes a chord at the core of our being because like begets like. Hoffman adds that this play element has “a spark of eternity,” which, according to Berger, points beyond itself to a “supernatural justification.”²⁵⁴ Thus, sport reaches its highest potential when it realizes or fulfills this transcendent purpose.²⁵⁵

Once again, Hoffman locates his justification ultimately in the transcendent realm, which explains “how sport fits into the Christian experience. . . .” Play is at the core of the sport experience because it bears kinship with the human spirit and, therefore, with its religious significance. More precisely, this kinship puts it in the sacred realm. This realm is where autotelic leisure and play experience belong, for “this alone is sufficient reason for the Christian’s involvement [in sport].”²⁵⁶ With Hoffman, the church has come a long way because he has superbly demonstrated that the play element of sport is sacred, yet this sacred justification comes with a price.

²⁵³ Hoffman, *Good Game*, 274.

²⁵⁴ Hoffman, *Good Game*, 277; cf. Peter L. Berger, *A Rumor of Angels* (New York: Doubleday, 1969), 57-60.

²⁵⁵ Hoffman, *Good Game*, 291.

²⁵⁶ Hoffman, *Good Game*, 268.

Critique

What do I mean by this charge of dualism? Unlike some versions of dualism, Hoffman's view does not advocate cultural withdrawal or accommodation. Rather, he combats these two options as unfaithful, although he calls for a line to be drawn between the sacred and secular aspects of sport.²⁵⁷ Because sport as play is located in the higher sacred realm, this metaphysical description predicates an ontological dualism.²⁵⁸ This dualism is two-fold.

Hoffman draws a line within the human person between spirit and body. This line then causes him to organize sport according to those elements that inherently fit or appeal to one or the other parts of his hierarchy. Furthermore, he draws his line between the play elements of sport that are good and innately bent toward the sacred, divine reality, and the aspects of sport that are lower (e.g., cathartic release, sweat of our brow, diligence, effort, physiology, winning, rewards) and inferior by nature because of his assumed separation. By isolating and separating these aspects, which together make up the whole of sportive reality, he values some aspects while simultaneously devaluing others. In all fairness, I do not believe this to be some kind of radical Gnostic dualism, but his language and descriptions attribute a higher value to those aspects and experiences of sport that are in the sacred realm, and they even privilege the soul/spirit. Specifically, he situates all the play-leisure elements in the sacred because this sacred realm is what gives sports its religious significance. He

²⁵⁷ Hoffman, *Good Game*, 264

²⁵⁸ I find Hoffman difficult to interpret when he uses important philosophical and theological terms because he wields language and explanations that I am not sure if they warrant a loose or strict interpretation, according to the genre of discourse. He might object that what he means is a different mode of being (phenomenology) if so then on this I stand corrected but this does not dissolve my contention. Hoffman exacerbates this interpretative problem with his abstract universal connections between play and religion and hyperbolic language.

then posits that all that is warped belongs to the secular either because of its work-oriented emphasis or because it is located in a lower realm.²⁵⁹

His division of reality is most clearly evident when he organizes a list of binaries, which compares how he and modern muscular Christianity assign value to each of the pair, as aspects of sport. “The concrete trumps the symbolic; doing, accomplishing and struggling are favored over mystery, joy, feeling, transport, and spiritual insight.”²⁶⁰ He faults evangelical Christians for this “trumping” of the first over the second in each pair. His criticism implies that one is more important than the other. If modern muscular Christianity tips the scale toward the seriousness of sport, he appears to assign greater value to the play elements of sport because they evidence our spiritual essence, which is religiously significant. Each member of the pair bumps against and repels each other in the dialectical serious-nonseriousness nature of sport. For both Hoffman and evangelical muscular Christians, it appears that the dialectic is torn asunder based on their tendency to assign values and rank to each pair, which creates a hierarchy.

Perhaps an even better example of this dualism occurs when Hoffman explicitly pits “power and performance sports” [PPM] against a “pleasure and participation model” [PP] of sport. “The PPM is characterized by antagonistic relationships, aggressive domination of opponents, excellence achieved through dedication and hard work, the setting of records, pushing bodies to human limits, rigid selection systems based on ability, and hierarchical authority structures.”²⁶¹ The PP “values

²⁵⁹ Hoffman, *Good Game*, 231, 265-270.

²⁶⁰ Hoffman, *Good Game*, 15.

²⁶¹ Hoffman, *Good Game*, 231. Hoffman is not precise in his description of the PPM for his source includes a finer explanation. See Coakley, *Sports in Society*, 110-111.

active participation over watching, enjoyment through personal expression, health and well-being, democratic decision making, and interpersonal support rather than hardnosed competition.”²⁶² Notwithstanding the debate over whether these characteristics of PPM and the problems in sports are straightforwardly causal (a conjunction that Hoffman suggests is true),²⁶³ Hoffman incorrectly assumes that what is true for all of the PPM is therefore true for each of the parts of the PPM. However, the problems in the PPM cannot be attributed to some of the parts unless, like Hoffman, one overly simplifies by assuming that organized competitive sports are always constraining and guilty of “ikishness”.²⁶⁴ In fact, attribution is a complex

²⁶² Hoffman, *Good Game*, 231.

²⁶³ Hoffman, *Good Game*, 145-162, 231. See my next footnote for an expanded discussion on competition.

²⁶⁴ Hoffman, *Good Game*, 147. Hoffman claims that the nature of sport demands that I ignore a contestants’ troubles and in fact I must squelch my sympathy for others. Hoffman’s metaphysical and correlative ethical language is important. In short, he claims not unlike Marxist’s analysis of sport that playing to the formal logic of sport commits one to alienation. However, Hoffman himself admits that this “ikishness” does not occur in every contest so the causal connection is broken. Kretchmar defends that in sport the zero-sum logic, which is what Hoffman is trying to explicate, is not necessarily wrong. First, the nature of sport involves both a test (a problem to be solved) and a contest (a problem to be solved in comparison with others). Together this is a “sweet tension” which because human beings enjoy and seek out such desirable, dramatized goods like play and excellence, then it makes sense that projects which offer two sources for these desirable goods are preferred over those that offer only one. The switch from test to contest is a move from doing an activity singularly, because you can solve a problem alone, to community, because in community we can share tests. Second, in competition, the primary relationship is with the practice itself and the members of the testing family. Kretchmar explains that what joins contestants is their love for doing x (e.g., catching, running, climbing) and then secondarily the love for competing at and comparing these skills. Fundamental to this attraction is the fact that these concrete activities require hard work, intellectual acumen, strength and skill. What does this mean for the zero-sum nature of sport? First, even though there is only one winner this exclusionary outcome is not absolute from the standpoint that it is temporary and I have another chance either with the same contestant or with another to test my endurance, skill and determination. Second, not all the outcomes in the game are zero-sum. Other goods like fun, pleasure and enjoyment exist plentifully and are produced and shared by winners and losers. And the contest consists of a plethora of skills that both losers and winners can share regardless of the outcome. Therefore, competition is not necessarily a suspension of my moral judgment and sympathy and in fact if I care about my opponent then when I sense a weakness in skill development it is not a lack of sympathy that has me run to the left, where she is underdeveloped, but actually I demonstrate more care and concern because I desire with her to test and develop our skills more fully. She needs me and I need her to examine both the strengths and weaknesses of our skills. Competition is dependent on cooperation. This can be mutually enriching as we strive together toward sharing these excellences. See Kretchmar, *Practical Philosophy of Sport and Physical Activity*, 170-174; R. Scott Kretchmar, “From Test to Contest: An Analysis of Two Kinds of Counterpoint in Sport,” in *Philosophic Inquiry in Sport*, eds. William J. Morgan and Klaus V. Meier (Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics, 1988), 223-229.

dynamic and dramatic relationship between personal, socio-cultural, spiritual, and institutional conditions. For these conditions, it is difficult to know exactly what is causing the problem unless you again lump everything that is alienating about sport under one convenient polemical model, such as PPM. I take three aspects of the PPM as my example. Excellence, dedication, and hard work are just as spiritual and directed toward our true end as Christians as these other elements and goods native to the sport experience and player, respectively. My second and third chapters defended these other elements and goods with Paul Weiss and John Paul II. Furthermore, excellence and hard work are fruits that can arise from a proper response to the gospel. Sport performances can be a testimony of a plurality of excellences (i.e., personal sacrifices, strenuous efforts, courage, intellectual and physical skills) that cannot be reduced to the PPM. Hoffman's use of this PPM unnecessarily ties goods, such as excellence, to domination and alienation. Hoffman even offers Pedro Zamballa as an example of an athlete who expressed personal sacrifice and courage while playing in the context of PPM. Pedro Zamballa is a counter-example that defeats his own thesis.

I concede that some of the other characteristics of PPM (e.g., aggressively dominating an opponent, defining the body as machine, defining the opponent as the enemy) are morally wrong, but these characteristics are not the same as the other parts. Furthermore, because of this faulty division, Hoffman poses a false dilemma when he claims that "only someone with a severely skewed view of the gospel taught by Jesus and the apostles would conclude that the worldview of the PPM better exemplifies the gospel's fundamental core than the pleasure and participation

model.”²⁶⁵ Hoffman oversimplifies the problem and leaves us with only these two models, suggesting the PP as the true model. Again, there is nothing intrinsic to some of the parts of the PPM that preclude them from Christian deliberation and action. As it stands, PP over PPM is a hypothetical hierarchy that requires much further justification. In summary, Hoffman reacts to modern muscular Christianity’s overvaluation of the seriousness of sport with his own overvaluation, which lends itself to a grading of what is best or ideal in sport. PP is best because, in his explanation, it corresponds more to the spirit or the sacred.

Hoffman has the opportunity to redress this problem when he places and reads sports in a theological context according to the Christian narrative. He chooses eschatology, what he calls the “myth of eternity,” and creation, what he refers to as the “myth of God at play in creation.” Both of these doctrines function as his control-script or beliefs to “give life to sport and offer a center for thinking about it in a Christian context.”²⁶⁶ I will concentrate on the first of these two.

Hoffman’s eschatological understanding of the human player strangely hurts, rather than helps, any misperceptions about his dualism. His explanation of eternity seems to be more distant and under-realized, a preferred future that lies ahead. He defines this myth as “the Christian hope that the end of the present life is but the beginning of an eternal life in heaven spent with God and fellow believers with incorruptible bodies and everlasting joy. . . .”²⁶⁷ Note how the newness of the eternal life begins after this present life, which implies that the way we sport and play now only vaguely anticipates this future reality. He speaks of play in the here and now as

²⁶⁵ Hoffman, *Good Game*, 231.

²⁶⁶ Hoffman, *Good Game*, 280.

²⁶⁷ Hoffman, *Good Game*, 280.

a “signal” (Berger), “imitation” (Rahner), and “echo” (Lewis) of the true play that we will experience in the eschaton. Certainly, there is a tension between the “already” and “not yet” experience. Horton explains theologically that this tension is an eschatological dualism not to be confused with an ontological dualism.²⁶⁸

Ontological dualism draws a line, a sharp line for Hellenistic dualism, between the temporal, mutable earthly realm and the heavenly, eternal, perfect realm. Hoffman claims that sport on earth “reflects” or at best imitates a vision of eternity.²⁶⁹

I believe this dualism for Hoffman has him characterize the eschaton as the true world versus the apparent world. His conflicted world, an unbearable tension, forces him to hook sport as a cultural activity to the highest order, which rips this tension in two and leaves us with two different realms, thus creating dualism. At the conclusion of his book, he envisions Christian sport as an opportunity “for recovering our spiritual centers of gravity and for *rehearsing spiritual truths*, keeping in mind that our games are but *dim images of the real game* that will begin when this world has been left behind.”²⁷⁰ His eschatology tips more to an otherworldly cosmology, especially since he depends on C. S. Lewis and Hugo Rahner to justify his description of this heavenly reality. Indeed, he quotes from *Weight of Glory*,²⁷¹ in which Lewis conceives reality Platonically.²⁷² That is, like Plato, Lewis makes sense

²⁶⁸ Michael S. Horton, *Covenant and Eschatology: The Divine Drama* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 32. Horton’s detailed analysis of this relationship between dualism and eschatology informs this part of my criticism. Eschatological dualism, which I see Bonhoeffer’s penultimate and ultimate scheme functioning as, is the duality between “this present age” and “the age to come” instead of an ontological dualism where this realm is inferior to the next for ontological and necessary reasons.

²⁶⁹ Hoffman, *Good Game*, 280-292.

²⁷⁰ Hoffman, *Good Game*, 292. (Italics mine).

²⁷¹ Hoffman, *Good Game*, 280-281.

²⁷² Andrew Walker, “Scripture, Revelation and Platonism in C. S. Lewis,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 55, no. 1 (2002): 19-35.

of the natural in reference to the sacred realm. Walker argues that Lewis' Platonism "assumes that the spiritual realm is the primary reality, in a hierarchical sense, over the natural world, though not against it. . . ." ²⁷³ This means that, for Lewis, material reality was "a diminution of spiritual reality, the symbol of it, an etiolated world." ²⁷⁴ Hoffman follows this same Platonic reasoning when he proclaims that "tennis is not eternity and baseball is not heaven, but they may bear a *symbolic relationship to the real thing lying outside of our immediate experience.*" ²⁷⁵ He goes on to apply Lewis's concept directly to sport, with sport in the here-and-now functioning as a shadow of the real thing. According to Hoffman, this is sport's purpose in the Christian life! ²⁷⁶ Moreover, Rahner's argument, of which Hoffman gives only an excerpt, advances a Platonic mysticism because he understands play as a preparation of and a reach for a release from our bodily and earthy burdens. ²⁷⁷ Therefore, Hoffman's myth of eternity construes reality dualistically, which diminishes the

²⁷³ Walker, "Scripture, Revelation and Platonism in C. S. Lewis," 28.

²⁷⁴ Walker, "Scripture, Revelation and Platonism in C. S. Lewis," 29.

²⁷⁵ Hoffman, *Good Game*, 280. (Italics mine).

²⁷⁶ Hoffman, *Good Game*, 280.

²⁷⁷ Rahner bases his argument throughout his book on Greek philosophy and Christian theology. While this by itself does not pose any necessary problems, Rahner in his final chapter, where Hoffman quotes from, presents earthly life as structurally incomplete thus why play (dance) is a participation of sorts in the very being of God which perfects and whom humans seek union with. He states that this new world of the eschaton is a place where humans will "be relieved of all the weights that bear it down, to be free, kingly, unfettered and divine" (Rahner, *Man at Play* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972), 65.). Rahner's "grave-merry" man is supposed to take stock and "measure of the cramping boundaries of our earthly existence" (Rahner, *Man at Play*, 27.). Are the boundaries that hem us in merely ethical or are they ontological? For the latter, is something wrong with, or thin about our finitude? Rahner claims, an implication from Plato's and Plotinus' thought about God and the world, that the spiritual man must not lose sight that this earth is unreal and transitory (Rahner, *Man at Play*, 38-45.). His view of materiality and eschatology is compatible in many ways with Lewis'. Hoffman again uses these sources paradigmatically for establishing his Christian framework for sport. That is, they help form the perceptual categories through which he describes and interprets sportive reality.

earthly reality that his player's purpose is to know and feel on sports fields. Christian athletes play to recover their spiritual identity and participate in spiritual truths.²⁷⁸

Hoffman's ontological dualism also thins and depletes the richness of the material play medium as an embodied practice, because this medium awaits and hopes for the real, restored play experience. If it lacks a realness and fullness, its ontic goodness, which a robust doctrine of creation affirms, is cast in doubt. This dualism undermines his second myth as well, for what kind of creation does this God play in and with (Prov. 8) in light of ontological dualism?²⁷⁹ Furthermore, dualism means that both the player and the sport experience lack substantive value, and that this lack of value instrumentalizes this earthly pursuit as a mere rehearsal. He runs the risk of repudiating those highly physical, earth-situated (bodily) elements of sport (e.g., physical prowess, hard work, dedication, competition, excellence) along with the very play experiences he most values, and hence the human person as well. If he were trying to overcome and distance himself from the ascetic problems of evangelical muscular Christians (because in his reasoning the ascetic problems are a misdirection of sport), then his lack of preciseness in places leaves the reader wanting to know how to integrate the sweaty, sensual, erotic, competitive, and strenuous aspects of sport.²⁸⁰ Therefore, Hoffman's whole thesis is turned on its head

²⁷⁸ Hoffman, *Good Game*, 292.

²⁷⁹ Hoffman, *Good Game*, 280-281.

²⁸⁰ Hoffman's chapter on competition is titled, "Christians and the Killer Instinct." He identifies this instinct and other misdirections as intrinsic to the nature of competition (Hoffman, *Good Game*, 147, 158.). He states in his first *Christianity Today* essay that the competitive urge is by nature driven by the spirit of self-promotion. "This is the way it has to be" (Hoffman, *The Sanctification of Sport: Can the Mind of Christ Coexist with the Killer Instinct?*, 18.). What I find interesting about Hoffman on competition is that he is so dependent on Huizinga for his conception of play, however, Huizinga himself roots the impulse to compete in human nature just as is the social impulse to relate because both positively pervade all of life; they are intrinsic to the structure of our humanity. Undoubtedly, relationships and competition can be misdirected but damning the structure presents irreparable problems. I see Hoffman's leanings here equally dualistic. This might explain why he so carefully

because, while he complains that evangelical muscular Christians instrumentalized sport by accommodating the gospel, his own Platonic leanings demean and instrumentalize this worldly reality as a mere gesture of what is to come. When his athletes run, they only dimly feel God's pleasure.

According to Hoffman's myth of eternity, the location or space of this future play is in heaven. What happened to Revelation 21, where John envisions a new earth? Hoffman's restoration includes only individuals in redeemed bodies before God. What about the smells, sights, tastes, and touches affected by our intimate contact with the materiality of this good earth where we run, glide, jump, bump, and holler as players? What about the "streets," the ground where we will meet each other as God's children who will play freely (Zechariah 8:5)? This material reality is where we will meet God, and it is in the new earth that we will communally celebrate the fullness of new life. This physical stuff textures and informs our Christian imaginations because, as embodied beings, we enact and perform rituals in and on a solid world that is given and redeemed by God. This material problem in the eschaton is another real-time implication of his ontological dualism.

If both the future and the beginning of the Bible's plotline are in question, then what about the center of salvation history? Jesus Christ the human being entered created reality, not a pale imitation. What kind of human being was he if dualism is true? With dualism, the incarnation itself confirms a reality that is thin or that lacks something instead of affirming creation and the form of real humanity that we are to

defines play since this sacred element is essential to his salvation of sport. Granted, identifying and defining what is competition is very important, but I sensed less rigor on his part when defining and developing the concept of competition than his theoretical consideration of the concept of play. For example, what is the difference between the moral values that come from competing in sport and moral values that are intrinsic to this concept? This gets at the relationship between metaphysics and ethics which Hoffman's treatise on sport stopped short of.

become in Christ.²⁸¹ The “myth of Christ” is sorely missing in Hoffman’s work. It is because he does not unify divine reality and sportive reality in Christ that I turn to Bonhoeffer.

In the next chapter, I will begin with Bonhoeffer’s Christ-reality in order to redress this acute problem of dualism and to offer a modest way forward on how to think Christocentrically about the relationship between sport and the Christian faith. Bonhoeffer’s Christ-reality incorporates believers into an in-breaking reality where this newness has already appeared. As depicted by his ultimate and penultimate framework, Bonhoeffer’s eschatology structures the inescapable tension between this world and the next in Christ, for only in Christ is this tension resolved. Bonhoeffer’s duality, not dualism, keeps our feet immediately close to the penultimate “natural life” so we can enjoy sport as a contrapuntal desire of human life, a melody to be shared freely and responsibly with God and others in the midst of life now.

²⁸¹ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 92-98.

CHAPTER FIVE
ULTIMATE AND PENULTIMATE: CHRIST, THE GOSPEL AND
DISORDERED LOVES

In the preceding chapters, I have attempted to interpret and understand certain features of modern sport from the perspective of theological ethics. This thesis is not a comprehensive audit of sport. I have tried to cull from a few exemplars of the Christian tradition who might instruct us on how to think about and inhabit sport faithfully. In tapping this living tradition, I have drawn specifically from Augustine, John Paul II, and Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Each of these three serves as a theological guide to establish some important categories that a theological ethic should contend with for the Christian tradition. In particular, I have organized this thesis around a few of their primary motifs so as to use them as heuristic tools for critical inquiry—to examine basic assumptions upon which others ground their judgments and interpret sport—and core convictions concerning this world and how Christians imagine and relate to this form of life as an embodied, penultimate good.

In this final chapter, I endeavor to bring all three voices to bear on moral matters related to integration and disintegration in the sphere of sport. First, I continue where I left off in the last chapter concerning dualism and modern muscular Christianity. I repair this problem of integration with Bonhoeffer's ultimate and penultimate duality so a Christian sportsperson is free to enact the gospel in this cultural activity of sport.

Second, Augustine's commitment to God gives meaning to and coherence for how a Christian should regard or value goods, sport in this thesis, for the sake of the highest good. With Augustine, I want to extend my moral reflection on perhaps the most debilitating moral matter in modern sport, i.e., the inordinate loves of politics and money, which damage sport and its true, intended end.

Third, I conclude this thesis with John Paul II, who proposes that 1 Corinthians 9:24-27 is a moral paradigm for how we integrate our faith in sport. John Paul II's conclusion envelops this whole thesis, for his framework capably repairs the folk theologizing endemic to modern muscular Christianity as a way forward for how Christians envision sport theologically.

Ultimate and Penultimate: A Paradigm for Integration

For Bonhoeffer, the unity of reality is true because "In Jesus Christ the reality of God has entered the reality of this world."¹ Bonhoeffer believed that, in order to think and speak correctly about either God or the world and to live faithfully in this world, one must do so in Jesus Christ. "The question about the Christian life, therefore, will be answered neither by radicalism nor by compromise [forms of two realm thinking]; Jesus Christ himself decides and answers it . . . [it is] resolved only in Christ."² His Christological grounding for all of life is the reason why he rejects the doctrine of two realms (*Räume*). Any splitting of reality into sacred and profane, natural and supernatural, etc., leaves a Christian schizophrenic, torn between dual citizenship.³ Unlike modern muscular Christianity and Shirl Hoffman, the Christian

¹ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 54.

² Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 157.

life does not search for answers below or above or look to either the secular or sacred as its justification because the world is already reconciled by God in Christ.⁴

Although he recognized this unity in Christ, Bonhoeffer was not naive about the ambiguity and tensions between the Christian and the world, living in but not of the world. However, instead of talking about the sacred and secular as two opposing spheres, Bonhoeffer constructed a way forward with his language of the “ultimate and penultimate.” These categories, according to Burtneß, “are ways of structuring the duality of the whole of creation under sin and grace.”⁵ Bonhoeffer claims that this duality properly structures and relates creation to redemption and time to eternity, thus keeping the integrity of faith in God.⁶ Wüstenberg analyzes that this duality does not “describe certain spheres, empires, or kingdoms. Instead they are categories that describe events both theologically and in terms of political reality.”⁷ Thus, Christ-reality confirms a connection between theology and public life; it unifies the tension between the two. Let us review briefly Bonhoeffer’s teaching on the ultimate and penultimate in order to set up my further analysis and its accompanying implications for how to relate the two.

³ John Panteleimon Manoussakis, “‘At the Recurrent End of the Unending’: Bonhoeffer’s Eschatology of the Penultimate,” in *Bonhoeffer and Continental Thought: Cruciform Philosophy*, eds. Brian Gregor and Jens Zimmerman (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2009), 229.

⁴ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 60.

⁵ Burtneß, *Shaping the Future*, 72. Burtneß notes that these categories were operative for Bonhoeffer beginning as early as Barcelona in a sermon on 1 John 2:17, where he was an assistant pastor of a German-speaking church in Barcelona and in *The Cost of Discipleship* (*Shaping the Future*, 72.). Cf. Bethge, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, 114, 456-457. He later returned to these categories and their mutual theological relation while in prison in two letters that he wrote (December 5 and 18, 1943) (Ján Liguš, “Ultimate, Penultimate and Their Impact,” in *Bonhoeffer’s Ethics: Old Europe and New Frontiers*, eds. Guy Carter, René van Eyden, Hans-Dirk van Hoogstraten and Jurjen Wiersma (Kampen: Kok Pharos Publishing House, 1991), 60.).

⁶ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 154.

⁷ Wüstenberg, *Bonhoeffer and Beyond*, 72.

Ultimate: Explanation and Implications

Bonhoeffer wrote his chapter “Ultimate and Penultimate Things,” along with a few other chapters of *Ethics*, while staying at the Benedictine monastery of Ettal (1940-1941).⁸ In these chapters, Bonhoeffer sought to recover or rediscover the natural for the sake of the gospel, which the natural for Protestant thought had fallen into discredit, contrary to Catholic moral theology.⁹

According to Bonhoeffer, the ultimate is the event of justification of a sinner by faith and grace alone because in this event the origin and essence of all Christian life are consummated. “Here the length and breadth of human life are concentrated in one moment, one point: the whole of life is embraced in this event.”¹⁰ What occurs in this event is something ultimate; the word of God bursts in as His compassion and mercy to a sinner, which frees us to recognize and properly relate to God, others, and ourselves. This whole event is true and real when Jesus Christ comes to a person; therefore, a person is justified by grace and faith alone.¹¹ Let me expand upon what I initially described in the last chapter so this construct and its implication can allow me to further critique modern muscular Christianity and to provide a way forward on a few other problems.

If justification is the ultimate,¹² it is ultimate in two senses: qualitative and temporal. First, the qualitative sense means that justification

⁸ Bethge, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, 718-720.

⁹ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 171-172.

¹⁰ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 146.

¹¹ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 146-147.

¹² Bonhoeffer uses different expressions to refer to the “ultimate” whether in a narrower context (i.e., “justification of the sinner by faith and grace alone”) or a wider context (i.e., “God’s compassion on a sinner”, “God’s final word”, “God’s own free word”, or “the Gospel”) (Ján Liguš, “Ultimate, Penultimate and Their Impact,” 62.).

involves a complete break with everything penultimate, with all that has gone before; because it is never the natural or necessary end of a way already pursued but rather the complete condemnation and devaluation of that way; because it is God's own free word that can never be forced from God by anything whatsoever; therefore it is the irreversibly ultimate word, the ultimate reality. It excludes every method of reaching it by one's own way.¹³

What Bonhoeffer means is that all creaturely methods or means—deeds or works—are rejected and condemned in their attempt to achieve the ultimate. The Christian message is about costly grace because both the content and the goal of the message are Christ himself; therefore, all examples, whether moral, pious, heroic models or biblical figures, are excluded once and for all as a method or means of justification. “Faith is not a method, however, but the gift of God.”¹⁴ O'Donovan adds that it is this final word that preempts all human judgments about human achievement and worth. When this final word is forgotten, Christians often turn to penultimate standards, such as subjective experience or successful and sustained efforts, in order to justify or appraise their works. God's judgment is “apart from works” (Rom. 3:28); justification is only what has been done and accomplished in Christ.¹⁵ What does justification mean existentially for many athletes who anxiously perform to prove themselves before multiple tribunals? In the final part of this section, I follow Bonhoeffer's justification construct in order to demythologize this modern form of self-justification.

¹³ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 149.

¹⁴ Ján Liguš, “Ultimate, Penultimate and Their Impact,” 63.

¹⁵ O'Donovan, *Resurrection and Moral Order*, 255. For O'Donovan, the doctrine of justification functions not only as a judgment on a person's past but as God's decisive final word, the ‘Yes’ of God in Christ, upon every achievement of eternal worth because this foundation presupposes this as decisively prior to all works of love—good works (254-255). Bonhoeffer says something similar in that the very event of justification as a gift is accompanied by the works of repentance and love, everything is given to a believer but only faith justifies (Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 148.).

Second, justification is ultimate in a temporal sense. Therefore, some span of time with its concomitant experiences (e.g., actions, suffering, movement, intention, defeat, recovery, pleading, hoping) literally precedes it as the penultimate. Only what is under God's judgment now during this time of grace can hear this ultimate word because after this time of grace, the ultimate breaks off the penultimate. It is during this earthly trek that God graciously interrupts and puts an end to any human striving, any planned or calculable method of self-justification.¹⁶

One of the persistent problems with modern muscular Christianity has been its evangelistic methods. Undoubtedly, Bonhoeffer's paradigm of penultimate and ultimate accepts this group's emphasis on gospel preaching since we are responsible to proclaim God's good news. This is a non-negotiable New Testament function for God's church. Part of preparing the way for the word is proclaiming the gospel. As will become clearer below, this aspect of preaching the gospel as penultimate activity is absent from Hoffman's theological offerings of how gospel proclamation relates to sport. In fact, he says that sport is not constitutionally suited to proclaiming the gospel. For modern muscular Christianity, however, what is troublesome for this thesis is that they conflate form and function or what Bonhoeffer says about the use of method.

Mathisen describes this problem as the way in which modern muscular Christianity regularly uses and organizes outreaches around professional or celebrity athletes who attract crowds because their audience identifies with them.¹⁷ Hoffman adds that this method is analogous to marketing because these athletes sell the gospel

¹⁶ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 150-151.

¹⁷ Ladd and Mathisen, *Muscular Christianity*, 204-213.

like a product.¹⁸ For many Christian groups, this appears to be an obligatory model; thus, it might suggest to their audiences that this method is how you reach the ultimate: become like person X so you can have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. The form overwrites and usurps the authority and content of the gospel itself. Hoffman contends that, with its marketing orientation, sport evangelism ends up pitching (intentionally or not) the Christian faith, not on the merits of Christ's work, but on the strength of their own status, performances, and success.¹⁹ Stone argues that, when this method is true, the logic of the market instrumentalizes the church's comprehensive witness with external ends, such as power, influence, church growth, accomplishment, effectiveness, and success. These external ends then function as evaluative measures for the practice of evangelism.²⁰ The worldly means compromise the ultimate. For Bonhoeffer, this method misconstrues the relationship between the penultimate and ultimate. He rejects any kind of Lutheran or Pauline method as self-made ways to attain the ultimate word because this method suggests a necessary continuity between the penultimate and ultimate. Bonhoeffer claims that the ultimate, as God's grace, severs any kind of natural tie between itself and the penultimate: "it is never the natural or necessary end of a way already pursued but rather the complete condemnation and devaluation of that way."²¹ Therefore, he summarizes that "no method leads to this end [justification by faith and grace alone]. Otherwise the gospel would lose its price, its value. Costly grace would become

¹⁸ Hoffman, *Good Game*, 232.

¹⁹ Hoffman, *Good Game*, 229-234.

²⁰ Stone, *Evangelism After Christendom*, 30-37.

²¹ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 149.

cheap.”²² When method becomes a ministry’s focus, the gospel is cheapened and exchanged for relevance and credibility.

Extreme Options: Radicalism and Compromise

The duality of the ultimate and penultimate leads Bonhoeffer to describe two unethical, extreme ways of resolving this tension: radicalism and compromise.

Bonhoeffer states,

Both wrongly absolutize ideas that are necessary and right in themselves. The radical solution approaches things from the end of all things, from God the judge and redeemer; the compromise solution approaches things from the creator and preserver. One absolutizes the end [ultimate], the other absolutizes what exists [penultimate]. Thus creation and redemption, time and eternity, fall into an insoluble conflict; the very unity of God is itself dissolved, and faith in God is shattered.²³

From my last chapter, where I first introduced these false options, and from the discussion at the beginning of this chapter, it is apparent that Bonhoeffer rejects both extremes because “both attitudes are equally opposed to Christ; for the concepts that are here set up against each other are one in Jesus Christ.”²⁴ Both of these false attempts juxtapose the ultimate and penultimate so as to make them mutually exclusive. For the first, Christ annihilates and stands as a foe to everything that is penultimate; for the second, the penultimate stands as its own law with its own inherent rights, leaving it unthreatened by the ultimate.²⁵ Moreover, both of these false options misrepresent Christ because their dualism divides Christ into “judge and redeemer” and “creator and preserver,” respectively. That is, both positions are “opposed to Christ,” which leads Bonhoeffer to argue for and affirm a duality in

²² Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 150.

²³ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 154.

²⁴ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 157.

²⁵ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 153-154.

Christ. “There is only the God-man Jesus Christ who is real, through whom the world will be preserved until it is ripe for its end.”²⁶

Penultimate: Explanation and Implications

Bonhoeffer believes that it is for the sake of the ultimate that he must talk about the penultimate. How the two of these relate “is not just a single case but basically the entire range of Christian common life”²⁷ What is the penultimate?

Bonhoeffer explains that,

It is all that precedes the ultimate—the justification of the sinner by grace alone—and that is addressed as penultimate after finding the ultimate. At the same time it is everything that follows the ultimate, in order again to precede it. There is no penultimate as such, as if something or other could justify itself as being in itself penultimate; but the penultimate becomes what it is only through the ultimate, that is, in the moment when it has already lost its own self-sufficiency. The penultimate does not determine the ultimate; the ultimate determines the penultimate.²⁸

Manoussakis interprets this relationship between the two not merely in terms of the penultimate being a temporal indicator, as in prior to sequentially, of the ultimate, “but rather a relational one. . . . it exposes the inner relation—a relation of interdependence and reciprocity—between God’s creation and God’s kingdom.”²⁹

This inner relation sets the ultimate-penultimate duality as tantamount to the eschatological duality of the kingdom being *already* here and *not-yet*. Manoussakis presents the penultimate as already “impregnated by the ultimate things-to-come, which, since they are already to be found in the penultimate, that is, in the things-

²⁶ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 155.

²⁷ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 153.

²⁸ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 159.

²⁹ Manoussakis, “At the Recurrent End of the Unending,” 231.

themselves, are not only to-come but also already here.”³⁰ Or, as I understand it,³¹ the ultimate suffuses and mixes with penultimate earthly activities in the here and now. Bonhoeffer ultimatizes the penultimate.³² This eschatological duality has an immediate implication for how Hoffman misconstrues sportive reality in the present.

Hoffman’s myth of eternity seemingly opposes this dialectic unity in Christ because his ontological dualism diminishes the fullness of sport and play in the here and now. This kind of rendering of eternity is opposed to Christ. Only in Christ is this tension resolved. In Jesus Christ the resurrected, God ends death and calls a new creation into life. Bonhoeffer instructs that the form of Christ is God giving new life:

‘The old has gone.’ ‘See, I am making all things new.’ The resurrection has already broken into the midst of the old world as the ultimate sign of its end and its future, and at the same time as living reality. Jesus has risen as human; so he has given human beings the gift of resurrection. Thus human beings remain human, but in a new resurrected way that is completely unlike the old. To be sure, those who are already risen with Christ will remain, until they reach the frontier of death, in the world of the penultimate to which Jesus came and in

³⁰ Manoussakis, “At the Recurrent End of the Unending,” 231.

³¹ See my summary of Kretchmar’s argument concerning embodiment and games as ambiguous experiences that are dynamically invested and infiltrated with the reality of God and the world (Donald Deardorff II and John White, “Section II: Embodied Contestants: Created for Play, Games and Sport,” in *The Image of God in the Human Body: Essays on Christianity and Sports*, eds. Donald Deardorff II and John White (Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2008), 58; Doug Hochstetler, Peter Hopsicker, and Scott Kretchmar, “The Ambiguity of Embodiment and Sport: Overcoming Theological Dichotomies,” in *The Image of God in the Human Body: Essays on Christianity and Sports*, eds. Donald Deardorff II and John White (Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2008), 61-77.).

³² I find an interesting connection between Bonhoeffer and Radical Orthodoxy’s supernaturalizing the natural (Milbank) or what Paul Ramsey years earlier referred to as “this-worldly supernaturalism”. See Paul Ramsey, *Basic Christian Ethics* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1950), 132. Cf. Charles Mathewes, *A Theology of Public Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 22-23. Mathewes argues that in Augustinian thought there is not a conceptual dichotomy of “nature” and “supernature” which the same could be same said for Bonhoeffer’s Christocratic structure and even John Paul II who positively relates the *humanum* and *divinum*. Wojtyła, as cited by Woznicki, claims: “God, Who is the goal of all creatures, does not tear them away from themselves and from their own immanent perfection. On the contrary, He places and grounds them in it even more securely. This also applies to man. God, as man’s goal, does not draw man away from his perfection—from the fullness of his humanity, but He places and grounds him in it. All that is a real perfection of man, all that, in any way, perfects him, lies at his goal: God. It is indirectly a revelation of His perfection, of His fullness, regardless whether anyone is aware of it or not” (Woznicki, *A Christian Humanism*, 2-3; Karol Wojtyła, “Humanizm a cel człowieka” [Humanism and Man’s End] *Tygodnik Powszechny* 11, no. 31 (1957): 7.).

which the cross stands. Even the resurrection does not abolish the penultimate as long as the earth remains; but eternal life, the new life, breaks ever more powerfully into earthly life and creates space for itself within it.³³

The newness and future restoration of sport as play is something, according to the trajectory of Bonhoeffer's duality, that Christians "truly" participate in now, not only in the blessed state when this world has been left behind.³⁴ Christ the incarnate does not simply affirm play as a gift and right of the natural life,³⁵ but Christ the resurrected renews these goods for humans; they are opened up and directed toward the ultimate. The penultimate is the object and the context of the drama of Christ's redemption. The beginning of God's kingdom is now in Christ in the world; it is not some "gesture" pointing to the afterlife. The penultimate is not a way station. In Christ, the natural life becomes the penultimate, which is directed toward the ultimate. By participating in Christ, we encounter the penultimate experience of sport. Thus, what demands our attention while we contest is our full humanity, not how it ideally witnesses with our spirit as a playful, celebrative act, to the sacred realm.

Since this participation in Christ occurs now, this implies that sport as play is not intended to carry the kind of favored expectation that transports and lifts us to divine reality. For Hoffman, this divine reality is the religious direction and potential of

³³ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 158.

³⁴ Hoffman quotes Hugo Rahner whom I have argued against above and Rahner seems to follow a Roman Catholic classical view of eschatology that made a dualism out of the natural and supernatural (Hoffman, *Good Game*, 280-281.). Bonhoeffer and Augustine avoid the deleterious effects of this nature-supernature distinction because their eschatology accentuates continuity between the penultimate condition and ultimate. The key reason is the participatory relationship of everything or being in God's being (Augustine) and Christ-reality (Bonhoeffer). Cf. Ulrik B. Nissen, "Dietrich Bonhoeffer and the Ethics of Plenitude," *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 26, no. 1 (2006): 97-114; Mathewes, *A Theology of Public Life*, 22-23.

³⁵ Bonhoeffer actually locates sport as play as a gift and right of bodiliness, and because this is part of the constitution of the natural life, then the coming of Christ confirms its character as penultimate (Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 173, 186-188.).

sport. As explained above in reference to Hoffman, what points us to the divine reality are ideals with the penultimate (earthly realm) itself mediating ideal experiences of human play. Bonhoeffer rebuts this kind of reasoning: “In Christ the reality of God encounters the reality of the world and allows us to take part in this real encounter. . . . Christian life is participation in Christ’s encounter with the world.”³⁶ To abstract the play elements from the sportive experience and to treat them as the fundamental characteristics that function as a window to the (ideal) next world is a Platonic kind of justification. Hoffman attempts to integrate or make sense of play on earth in reference to the sacred realm, which for him belongs eschatologically to the future. The eschaton appears to be a realm for Hoffman, not an eschatological age, because he views this future eternal realm as failing to affirm the fullness of our play experience now on this earth. Hoffman sees what is “fantastic” about the eschaton as a world transformed, but his attention under-realizes those goods that are truly possible in this world.³⁷ Bonhoeffer indicates that this kind of reasoning is a cousin of radicalism because Hoffman’s “not-yet” disparages the fullness of creaturely existence in time.³⁸ Furthermore, since Hoffman places so much weight, as far as justification, on the myth of eternity, he borders on absolutizing this eternal, sacred criterion, which for a Christian ethic tears apart the unity of the Christ-reality by pitting one aspect against another. This, too, is radicalism. The fragile balance between the ultimate and penultimate is broken. Hoffman’s player is uncomfortable or at odds with the created world because he only

³⁶ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 159.

³⁷ See Kathryn Tanner, “Eschatology and Ethics,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Theological Ethics*, eds. Gilbert Meilaender and William Werpehowski (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 41-56.

³⁸ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 155-156.

dimly reflects what is real. Hoffman's "eternity" does not bring us into real contact with what it means to be a true human as we play in the here and now. The move for Hoffman is from man to God through such ideal play experiences, whereas for Bonhoeffer, it is from God to man in Christ so man can experience his true humanity as he plays, works, parents, etc.³⁹ The shape of sport as human play and its future goods are already at work in humans because the ultimate interpenetrates the penultimate. This emphasis on our humanity is important because the penultimate aims to address human life.

Bonhoeffer speaks of the penultimate as directing our attention to prepare the way concretely toward two aims: *being human* [Menschsein] and *being good* [Gutsein].⁴⁰ Because it is the human being that is justified, it is imperative that the penultimate be protected and preserved for the sake of the ultimate.⁴¹ If human life is deprived of the goods or conditions necessary for it to flourish, it harms the ultimate, the reception and hearing of the final word of God, and justification by faith and grace alone. For Bonhoeffer, preaching the gospel and preparing the way for the word are necessary in order "to care for the penultimate in order that the ultimate not be hindered by the penultimate's destruction."⁴² It is the church's immeasurable responsibility as a mission to this world, something that Christians are not released from even though Christ makes his own way when he returns, to do what it takes to remove with compassion those hindrances or conditions that make it difficult to receive God's

³⁹ For further treatment of Bonhoeffer's eschatology and ethics and how Bonhoeffer's justification is freighted with the Pauline, apocalyptic logic, see Philip G. Ziegler, "Dietrich Bonhoeffer—An Ethics of God's Apocalypse," *Modern Theology* 23, no. 4 (October 2007): 579-594.

⁴⁰ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 159, 165.

⁴¹ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 160-161.

⁴² Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 160.

grace and to believe. Bonhoeffer reasons that this preparation is necessary because the word itself demands it, since the word's claim is for a free and smooth way, and because Jesus Christ himself desires to come to all people.⁴³ A few important implications follow from this summary of the penultimate.

First, preaching the gospel is both a penultimate, human activity, and an ultimate, God-directed action. Since God alone creates faith, faith comes from the reality that God in Christ acted freely to demonstrate his mercy toward sinners.⁴⁴ Liguš summarizes that the preaching of the Gospel “is considered penultimate because in preaching the human being acts with God. However, it is only God's action that has soteriological significance.”⁴⁵

Second, preparing the way for Bonhoeffer is Christian social responsibility.⁴⁶ Though this activity must not be equated with the preaching of the gospel, Bonhoeffer nevertheless perceives it as an inseparable task given to all who know about the second advent of Christ.⁴⁷ Clements interprets this as “if divine grace is to be preached to man, humanity must at least be preserved in all its aspects—physical, mental, social and cultural—for the reception of that word.”⁴⁸ This social responsibility corresponds to the very reality of this world that Christ encountered and reconciled. What this means, once again, is that how we relate to sport is

⁴³ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 160, 163, 166.

⁴⁴ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 149-150, 160-165.

⁴⁵ Ján Liguš, “Ultimate, Penultimate and Their Impact,” 63.

⁴⁶ Clements notes that this principle was important for Bonhoeffer especially from the fact that he did not abandon his own country during Hitler's regime, all the more pointing out the importance of preserving the penultimate through responsible actions (e.g., suffering with and for the people under this tyranny) in view of a future time when the ultimate word of justification of sinners could be preached (Keith W. Clements, *A Patriotism for Today: Love of Country in Dialogue with the Witness of Dietrich Bonhoeffer* (London: Collins, 1986), 59.).

⁴⁷ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 160-161.

⁴⁸ Clements, *A Patriotism for Today*, 59.

determined by Christ's form--the form in which we are called to participate in the church's encounter with the world. When this social responsibility is neglected in modern sport, in particular in North America, then a variety of personal and social circumstances can deprive sportspersons from conditions that are consistent with being human in sport and that therefore harm the ultimate.

Sports, like other areas, is a space often overrun with beliefs and practices that can encourage abuse, exploitation, and injustices, all of which disgrace and humiliate sportspersons at all levels of sport. These conditions, as well as the formative habits that inculcate a host of vices, are often tethered to the extrinsic demands and goals of big business and bureaucratic institutions. Extrinsic demands contest with the goods necessary for a human to flourish in sport. Playing sport, like other basic goods, constitutes who humans are; thus, when the concomitant goods are neglected or overvalued, human lives and communities are affected.

Some of the main hindrances to preparing the way concretely toward the two aims—being human and being good—for this penultimate activity are the following:⁴⁹ lack of adequate sport facilities for kids in urban and rural areas, equipment costs and fees related to having the opportunity to freely play a particular sport, untrained coaches, nutrition, diet and lifestyle problems in sport, over-emphasis on winning, performance-enhancing drugs, commodification and commercialization, violence and injuries to the body, other deviant forms of behavior

⁴⁹ See Coakley, *Sports in Society*, 96-523; David L. Shields, Brenda Light Bredemeier, Nicole M LaVoi and F. Clark Power, "The Sport Behavior of Coaches, Parents, and Athletes: The Good, The Bad and the Ugly," *Journal of Research in Character Education* 3, no. 1 (2005): 43-59. Cf. United Nations UNOSDP, "Sport for Development and Peace: The UN System in Action," United Nations, <<http://www.un.org/themes/sport>> (accessed 22 June 2010). My point is not to scrutinize the morality of these problems but only to list them as proof of the complexity of the problems related to this penultimate activity.

in practices and games (e.g., cheating, bad sportsmanship, trash-talking), sexism, racism, etc. Hoffman commendably points to these problems in *Good Game*. These systemic conditions and individual problems, which of course mirror many of the same disorders in society, can alienate sportspersons, thus socializing debilitating effects for those in sport. For Bonhoeffer, to address such social conditions is part of the coming kingdom of God—it complements evangelism, which as social outreach struggles to help people become human and preserve the integrity of the penultimate’s social order.⁵⁰ As God’s church, engaging the world this way frees believers to be about worldly activities because it is for the sake of the ultimate that Christians must attend to the penultimate.⁵¹ Bonhoeffer, however, warns against any misunderstanding that the goal is to get the world in order prior to people becoming Christians. The New Testament witnesses to the fact that what is at stake is the coming of Christ. Preparing the way is grounded in the gospel. If justification is the final word, how might justification paradigmatically embrace a Christian athlete’s own life and identity as she plays, contests, and performs in this penultimate activity?

The Gospel and Christian Identity in Sport⁵²

In his own parodic manner, Umberto Eco examines and exposes such everyday life “texts” as sport.⁵³ Eco reflects that

⁵⁰ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 160, 165; Liguš, “Ultimate, Penultimate and Their Impact,” 64.

⁵¹ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 151. Cf. Ziegler, “Dietrich Bonhoeffer—An Ethics of God’s Apocalypse?,” 588-589.

⁵² Parts of this section are informed by a previous chapter co-authored by John White, see Nick J. Watson and John White, “‘Winning at all Costs’ in Modern Sport: Reflections on Pride and Humility in the Writings of C.S. Lewis,” in *Sport and Spirituality: An Introduction*, eds. Jim Parry, Simon Robinson, Nick J. Watson and Mark Nesti (London: Routledge, 2007), 61-79.

⁵³ See Umberto Eco, “‘Sports Chatter’,” in *Travels in Hyper Reality*, trans. William Weaver, (New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1986). See also Peter Pericles Trifonas, *Umberto Eco and Football* (Cambridge: Icon Books, 2001).

There is one thing that—even if it were considered essential—no student movement or urban revolt or global protest or what have you would ever be able to do. And that is to occupy the football field on a Sunday.⁵⁴

As a European, he is referring to soccer, but the same could be said for North America, whether it be college or professional baseball, American football, or basketball. Sport, according to Eco, has emerged as a social phenomenon (in the experience and minds of the fans) that conceptually connects it with what it truly means to be human with and in society. Thus, Eco concludes that “Sport is Man, Sport is Society”—*Homo Sportivus*.⁵⁵ Eco is highlighting the circus-like behavior of the fans as spectators who articulate this “Maximum Cement” between sport, man and society.⁵⁶ However, the actual drama of competition (for the spectators are responding to something) is a practice where the logic and values from its wider cultural and institutional context often govern actions and even shape the personal identity of the contestants.⁵⁷ From an Augustinian viewpoint, this dynamism of the practice and its rituals, in this particular context, orders and disorders our loves. I will say more about this in the next section. Unfortunately, “the value system in high-performance sports often encourages overconformity to a set of norms or guidelines that athletes use to evaluate themselves and others as they train and compete.”⁵⁸

⁵⁴ Eco, “‘Sports Chatter’,” 159.

⁵⁵ Eco, “‘Sports Chatter’,” 160.

⁵⁶ Eco, “‘Sports Chatter’,” 160.

⁵⁷ Steenbergen and Tamboer, “Ethics and the Double Character of Sport,” 38. Cf. MacIntyre, *Back to Virtue*, 187-200.

⁵⁸ Coakley, *Sports in Society*, 168. I might add to Coakley that it is not as if there is some monolithic value system germane to sport. What he means is that sport as they are often played in the West, in particular in America, are played according to the logic and norms of a wider network, socio-culturally and institutionally. He refers to this as power and performance sports, namely organized around strength, speed, power, competition, excellence, skill selection, antagonism, aggression, domination, and technological control (Coakley, *Sports in Society*, 110.). The double character of sport is such that the nature of sport consists not only of its formal characteristics (e.g., play, rules,

Sport sociologist Jay Coakley explains that this sport ethic is an overconformity to, unqualified acceptance of, and unquestioned commitment to the values, norms, and goals of sport itself.⁵⁹ What often follows is that their identities become habituated to this logic and thus cemented in sport itself, *Homo Sportivus*. According to Coakley, athletes who most commonly adopt this sport ethic are those “athletes whose identity or future chances for material success are exclusively tied to sport,” because “self-identification becomes lodged within sport.”⁶⁰ Hughes and Coakley maintain that “the role of the athlete (player, climber, skier, runner, etc.) becomes extremely salient to a person’s identity.”⁶¹

Theologically, this confusion concerning identity and overconformity is not merely an ethical, sociological, and psychological problem, but it is also a desperate attempt at self-justification, which is a theological problem.⁶² Jüngel helps us to

goals, competition, skill, excellence, physical prowess) but a wider network of values which a Christian ethic must consider in deliberation. Sports are sites and social constructions which have a relative autonomy (See Steenbergen and Tamboer, “Ethics and the Double Character of Sport,” 49-53.).

⁵⁹ Robert Hughes and Jay Coakley, “Positive Deviance among Athletes: The Implications of Overconformity to the Sport Ethic,” *Sociology of Sport Journal* 8, no. 4 (1991): 307-309. Overconformity is one of the extreme options with underconformity representing the other extreme type of deviance. Both types are grounded in different personal and social dynamics that constitute, organize and situate this practice.

⁶⁰ Hughes and Coakley, “Positive Deviance among Athletes,” 312.

⁶¹ Hughes and Coakley, “Positive Deviance among Athletes,” 318.

⁶² In many ways this section theologically is consistent with a classical Pauline, Augustinian Lutheran view of human nature. However, that does not mean the problem is addressed merely at the individual level as if changed self-understanding or identity is a substitute for the form and practice of Christ in God’s church (See Stanley Hauerwas, *The Church’s Witness and Natural Theology: With the Grain of the Universe* (Grand Rapids, Brazos, 2001), 132-140.). Bonhoeffer is not guilty of the criticism that Hauerwas and others have leveled at “Christian realism”. Bonhoeffer’s justification by faith from beginning to end was in a Christological context. That is why “Ethics as Formation” is critical to Bonhoeffer’s ethic but also for this thesis. The church is where Christ has taken form, although Bonhoeffer qualified it is a nothing but a piece of humanity where Christ has taken form, among human beings. Yet, in true Lutheran form, there is a paradox that exists between the self and community. If Christ takes form in the church as Christ incarnate, crucified and resurrected, and, if this becomes a reality for an individual and people upon justification by faith and grace alone, we cannot speak of this formation in the world apart from the true form both in the self and community. The tension is that a person’s identity does determine his or her actions while at the same time what a

understand the terminology of justification and what justification means for the contemporary person. He claims that “to justify something, to justify oneself, to be justified—these are primary life-processes that occur daily.”⁶³ When a person justifies her life, her whole being as a whole, she asserts that her life has meaning. This worldly life process, the act of justification, takes place before some authority, whether that be before others, an institution, or myself, as “an event which summons me before a forum.” The nature of life, a condition of our contingent humanity, is such that we exist before these kinds of forums, i.e., athlete before his teammates, spectators, coaches, media, sponsors, and so on. In these events, a person experiences himself ordered to appear before someone. We exist in relation to others, and our responsibility to ourselves is a responsibility before others. Behind this justification is a longing that is bound up with the reality that a person desires approval; this quest is innate because the person depends on it.⁶⁴ “The will to justify ourselves springs from this fundamental anthropological need for approval.”⁶⁵ The problem with this drive is that it can never satisfy perfectly finite and fallen standards and sources of approval before these different tribunals.

person does, the practices that form and shape identity, comprises who he or she is. Plant explains from Bonhoeffer’s *Sanctorum Communio* that this change in identity occurs primarily when a human is addressed personally with God as the ultimate Other (Plant, *Bonhoeffer*, 58-69.). Therefore, for a Christian ethic, it is important to understand the theological problems related to moral identity. Human sin spoils, due to the curvature of the self, and misdirects this particular form of life as self-justification. Justification is God’s revelation to know what is wrong with self and this world’s formation in order for Christians to responsibly practice and represent the concrete form of Christ in human relationships.

⁶³ Eberhard Jüngel, “On the Doctrine of Justification,” trans. by John Webster, *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 1, no. 1 (March 1999): 28. I follow Jüngel’s description of this phenomenon of self-justification throughout this section.

⁶⁴ For an argument that organizes this image as *homo faber* (i.e., man who makes or fabricates his world and himself), see Brian Aitken, “Sport, Religion, and Human Well-Being,” in *Sport and Religion*, Shirl Hoffman, ed., (Champaign, IL.: Human Kinetics, 1992). Cf. Sam Keen, *An Apology for Wonder* (New York: Harper and Row, 1969).

⁶⁵ Jüngel, “On the Doctrine of Justification,” 29.

In sport, self-justification is an attempt to travel the road of sport as a means to achieve worth and value, an attempt to justify a person's life through something other than faith in Christ alone. Though this road definitely precedes the ultimate, it is not able to traverse and realize this goal of justification. But God's final word of justification puts an end to this achievement-oriented quest for finding one's true identity. Bonhoeffer reiterates that "my life is justified only by that which belongs to Christ and never by what became mine."⁶⁶ Justification breaks any connection from the penultimate to the ultimate as if the ultimate is the realization or "crowning" achievement of what was begun on this earth in particular to sportive performances.⁶⁷

All of this is not to say that participation in sport does not afford us considerable insights into and tacit experiences of self-understanding and personal identity. Again, these embodied experiences and skillful movements are intrinsically satisfying and reveal much about our humanity. Nor does it imply that a sport is less important when compared to other activities, for that would be dualistic. However, even if a person experiences deep play--those moments of spiritual transcendence and playing in the zone--or the enriching challenges and tests that confront the human player, all of these already participate in Christ because "God and the world are enclosed in this name." Any flattening of these experiences, as a kind of immanentism, ignores that this reality for a Christian ethic is conceived in the light of Christ.⁶⁸ In Christian theology, the ultimate is the source of value, form, and meaning for what is true,

⁶⁶ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 148.

⁶⁷ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 151.

⁶⁸ Nissen argues that Bonhoeffer is compatible with Radical Orthodoxy from the standpoint that both conceive of human reality as participating in divine reality which implies that there is no such thing as a secular, neutral area or being apart from God (Nissen, "Dietrich Bonhoeffer and the Ethics of Plenitude," 97-114.).

good, and beautiful. Again, Christ-reality is not equivalent to the sacred realm, for the sacred realm describes something that is abstract, whereas Christ-reality is concrete and infiltrates the penultimate. For Bonhoeffer, the ultimate renders intelligible the best and worst of penultimate experiences because in Christ, ultimate reality is revelation. A person understands the parts in light of the whole, which the part depends on our relation to God's revelation.⁶⁹ Or, as Jüngel proclaims, this "confession of Jesus Christ comes to be a truth that illumines human existence...so procuring for them the truth of their own life and liberating them from their living falsehoods."⁷⁰ Let me explain in more detail why the ultimate is important and what immediate implications it holds for a Christian sportsperson.⁷¹

First, justification is the foundation of Christian identity and action. For Bonhoeffer, the whole of life is captured in this event of justification.⁷² Justification as the ultimate is his point of departure for the Christian life. The gospel of Jesus Christ gives rise to Christian ethics.⁷³ It is a response to the Christian gospel. Instead of beginning with some mode of comportment or stance, such as play or excellence, as a part of the natural life, the Christian life grounds its understanding of life in this

⁶⁹ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 48-49. Bonhoeffer's use of "ultimate" not only denotes ethical, eschatological and soteriological reality but because this concept relates in particular to Christ then it is ontological. That is, since the reality of Christ is ultimate reality, from which he thinks about all of life, then it illuminates and penetrates everything concerning human existence. Bonhoeffer claims, "Where God is known by faith to be the ultimate reality, the source of my ethical concern will be that God be known as the good. . . . All things appear as in a distorted mirror if they are not seen and recognized in God" (Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 48.). In sum, the confession of Jesus Christ has maximal depth of ingression in Bonhoeffer's thought which means it is logically, existentially, epistemically, ethically and theologically central.

⁷⁰ Jüngel, "On the Doctrine of Justification," 25.

⁷¹ For an argument which claims that the problem of selfhood or personal identity is an eschatological problem, see Jean-Yves Lacoste, *Experience and the Absolute: Disputed Questions on the Humanity of Man*, trans. Mark Raptery-Skehan (New York: Fordham University Press, 2004), 137-140.

⁷² Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 146.

⁷³ O'Donovan, *Resurrection and Moral Order*, 11. It is important to remember that for Bonhoeffer the source and form of the gospel is Jesus Christ incarnate, crucified and resurrected so that the article of justification is not reduced only to the cross.

world according to the gospel. One might object that this rendering of the gospel burdens sport as play with ethics and that it subsequently hinders the freedom of sport. When we believe that justification is extrinsic to sport itself, we diminish the play experience itself. However, to hold such a belief is to misunderstand Christian ethics and human action in general. The extreme position of compromise seeks to divorce the play world from the ultimate, wanting the penultimate to retain its inherent rights so that the ultimate is kept beyond daily life.⁷⁴ The gospel is not some add-on to life so that when we play sport, we play to witness to those goods extrinsic to sport. This understanding appears to be how modern muscular Christians have understood it since they so easily allowed sport to conscript religion for its ends and values. On the contrary, the gospel is life. For Bonhoeffer, through the mediation of Christ, the ultimate takes seriously the penultimate “in its own way.”⁷⁵ The relationship between the ultimate and penultimate are not mutually exclusive since in Christ incarnate, crucified, and resurrected exists an essential unity. As I presented above, the ultimate suffuses or impregnates the penultimate.

The starting point for Christian ethics is not the goal or the duty of the ethical act (doing or becoming good), but the presupposition of human acts themselves.⁷⁶ That is, as explicated in the last chapter and applied directly to this chapter, all human actions—which sport as play does not escape—are embedded in the reality of Christ. Thieliicke explains that the ethical act⁷⁷ “proceeds from the fact of justification as accomplished and given. . . . it [the ethical act] is simply and expression of the prior

⁷⁴ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 154.

⁷⁵ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 168.

⁷⁶ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 47-51.

⁷⁷ I include all of sports and life because we inescapably are moral beings so all acts are either pleasing or displeasing to God.

fact of justification.”⁷⁸ Therefore, in Christian ethics, human actions are not evaluated merely by the logic of a practice (what tasks are to be performed in order to preserve the goods internal to sport). Rather, they are fundamentally determined by the promise of the gospel as a gift that is already given.⁷⁹

The gospel as the final word enables us as humans to understand the authenticity and freedom of sport. We come to Christ in child-like faith, and, like a child in her freedom, we enter sport truly free. Again, this move is from God in Christ to man; therefore, in the form of Christ, athletes manifest this reality as ultimate in the sportive form of life.⁸⁰

Moltmann argues similarly that a fundamental change must first occur in a person’s being: “What man is in his ground precedes what he does and manifests itself in his actions. His deeds do not change him fundamentally.”⁸¹ Instead of inhabiting the penultimate of sport and trying to measure up to its tribunal—its laws of success and worth based on an alternative logic—the gospel deconstructs the

⁷⁸ Helmut Thielicke, *Theological Ethics: Foundations*, vol. 1 (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 51.

⁷⁹ Thielicke, *Theological Ethics*, 51-52.

⁸⁰ My language about sport as a form of life raises an important point concerning mandates. Rasmussen notes that Bonhoeffer was experimenting when trying to name and think comprehensively about mandates. By that, he means his list was not intended to be exhaustive. I do not believe it is a misrepresentation of Bonhoeffer to include sport as play under culture or with friendship. Sport as play is an embodied activity given in the natural life, the penultimate. For Bonhoeffer this means the following: 1) Bodiliness is a gift through no effort of our own; and thus, as a gift willed by God it bears rights and must be properly related and preserved for the whole person. 2) Bodily life is both a means to and an end in itself. 3) If the body is an end in itself, then it follows that the joys and pleasures expressed within the natural life of the body are rights to be valued for their own sake. 4) Duties arise from the given rights, as tasks from gifts (Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 178-181, 185-188, 217.). I do not intend on developing this further in this thesis. In general, I have assumed implicitly that sport functions like other mandates as a medium of Christ conformation (see last chapter). That is, sport is an historical form of the *Gestalt Christi* so if a person is called to sport this becomes a medium where he or she conforms to Christ incarnate, crucified and resurrected (Rasmussen, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, 29-31, 41-42, 88-92.). Cf. Moltmann and Wiessbach, *Two Studies in the Theology of Bonhoeffer*, 71-94, 133-148.

⁸¹ Jürgen Moltmann, *Theology of Play*, trans. by Reinhard Ulrich (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1972), 47. See my footnote above concerning this dialectic between being and doing for Bonhoeffer. Here I lay stress on the direction from being to doing.

alternative logic of this move because the gospel is something given to us, a gift we freely receive. God in Christ comes to us in new life.⁸² The unconditional word of acceptance reverses the relationship between doing and being so that a sportsperson demonstrates her new identity by playing freely. She is no longer under the duress to perform and to prove herself or seek approval. For the Christian sportsperson, free works in sport (i.e., exercising strength and skills, competing with and against others, playing, seeking goals and excellence, etc.) can flow forth as an expression or fruit of gospel liberty.⁸³ Note, however, that play is reconciled to Christ because this worldly reality is directed toward him; thus, where there is perversion, Christ crucified rebukes these forms of alienation. In summary, justification as the final word encounters a person's entire life so that now the "Christian life means being human [*Menschsein*] in the power of Christ's becoming human, being judged and pardoned in the power of the cross, living a new life in the power of the resurrection."⁸⁴

Without question, the act of playing sport is a practice that affords players fecund experiences of freedom phenomenologically, regardless of their relationship with Jesus Christ. Yet, a person outside of Christ is not free in her identity. Thus, even if she plays under the best conditions that sport might offer, play is penultimate, so it pales in comparison to the grace and freedom that the final word offers salvifically and, hence, existentially. In other words, to participate fully and freely in what sport as a practice offers becomes a reality in Christ. The ultimate renders intelligible what is good and right about sport. Because of the power from above, the ultimate disposes a person to abandon oneself to responsibly enjoy the natural joys of the

⁸² Jüngel, "On the Doctrine of Justification," 27.

⁸³ See Moltmann, *Theology of Play*, 46-53.

⁸⁴ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 159.

body. These penultimate joys, which are valued for their own sake, are also “signs of the eternal joy that is promised human beings in the presence of God.”⁸⁵

A second reason for why justification is important for Christian identity and action is that justification as the final word counters any man-made attempts to justify, validate, or authenticate an athlete’s identity and existence by performing (winning). Central to human identity and the search for human meaning is the question, “who am I?”⁸⁶ Under the value system of modern sport (although it does not occur in all sport as it is played, nor is it a necessary feature of sport), the athlete is tempted to use another human being as a mere sporting thing (an *IT*) to achieve a win for his self-worth. According to Bonhoeffer, when another human being is used as a mere thing, the natural life is misused; thus, this misdirection is unnatural.⁸⁷ This misdirection eventuates in human beings becoming things, commodities, or machines. I explore this disorder in relation to our loves in more detail below with my discussion of Augustine’s ethical thought. Instead of directing the penultimate to being human and being good, we witness humans severed from the natural life. The natural in this specific order of life is arbitrarily destroyed.⁸⁸ Theologically, for Bonhoeffer, this misuse of the natural means that sport as a penultimate activity is

⁸⁵ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 186-187.

⁸⁶ For an exposition of human identity in regard to Bonhoeffer’s poem *Who am I?*, see Michael Northcott, “‘Who am I?’: Human Identity and the Spiritual Disciplines in the Witness of Dietrich Bonhoeffer,” in *Bonhoeffer’s Theology through His Poetry*, ed. Bernd Wannewetsch (New York: T & T Clark, 2009), 11-30.

⁸⁷ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 172-173. Bonhoeffer’s concept of natural and unnatural appears to function similarly as common grace, structure and direction in neo-Calvinist ethics. The natural is preserved and directed toward the coming of Christ just as common grace preserves the created order. When the natural is misdirected it is unnatural and when the created order, the structure of a thing, is abused or spoiled it is directionally morally bad.

⁸⁸ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 165.

neither respected nor taken seriously. Only the final word exposes this perversion as the destruction of the penultimate.

Third, as a justified sinner, when I choose any temporal or penultimate mode to determine my identity and worth or to find favor, I am anathematizing the true gospel for an alternative gospel. The good news is the justification of the sinner by grace and faith alone, which “cannot be grasped by anything we are, or do, or suffer.”⁸⁹ Moreover, every sport “work” that is employed as an ultimate means for finding acceptance and value not only pours contempt on the sufficiency of Christ’s work for the redeemed sinner, but also personifies unregenerate thinking. Today, our technocratic-western ethos contoured in the dogma of sport apotheosizes this compulsion for personal achievement. Jüngel responds to this impetus in modern man by pronouncing it to be sin: “Amongst the worst human failures is the desire to realize oneself alone through one’s good acts....”⁹⁰

Fundamentally, the gospel is a paradigm shift that reinterprets reality and renews an athlete’s perspective to realize that the quest is over and that I am now right and valuable by faith in Christ. It is the unconditional nature of this event of justification and its application that has always frustrated the world, especially those who believe that their works or winning should determine their standing or identity. As Hughes and Coakley argue, the norm for this sportive ideology identifies the “real athlete” as striving for distinction through this obligatory quest of “seeking to improve, to get

⁸⁹ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 146.

⁹⁰ Eberhard Jüngel, “On Becoming Human: The Significance of the Reformation Distinction between Person and Works for the Self-Understanding of Modern Humanity,” in *Theological Essays II*, trans. Arnold Neufeldt-Fast and J. B. Webster, ed. J. B. Webster (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1995), 235; John Webster, *Barth’s Moral Theology: Human Action in Barth’s Thought* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1998).

better, to come closer to perfection,”⁹¹ all “...because real athletes are a special group dedicated to climbing the pyramid, reaching the top, pushing limits, excelling, and exceeding or dominating others.”⁹² What lurks primarily in the moral ontology of these real athletes is an agency that is actualized by what they do, their works of righteousness. Works righteousness is incompatible with and condemned by the doctrine of justification. In good Lutheran form, Bonhoeffer reverses the moral inertia of humankind as exacerbated by this ideology in sport, which believes that it is by doing that our being is found acceptable and right. A wedge is driven between sport works and the self-realization of the athlete. In summary, contemporary Lutheran theologian Oswald Bayer contends for the priority of God’s grace in that, “it is neither justifying thinking nor justifying acting, neither contemplative nor active righteousness. It is a passive righteousness.”⁹³

Since it is God’s work alone that interrupts and severs an athlete from associating her identity with her deeds, there now exists a new mode of being with and in Christ toward the world of sports. A few practical implications follow from this new identity.

First, the athlete to herself, as addressed by God’s revelation, is not evaluated as “real” because of her usefulness in this limited role as an athlete. An athlete’s worth is not increased through her role and action in sport. Perhaps, this false equation is one of the reasons for the social problems and personal struggles that often plague professional athletes or coaches after they have formally retired from competition.

⁹¹ Hughes and Coakley, “Positive Deviance among Athletes,” 309.

⁹² Hughes and Coakley, “Positive Deviance among Athletes,” 309.

⁹³ Oswald Bayer, *Living by Faith: Justification and Sanctification*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 19.

Some research suggests that retired, highly competitive athletes experience a kind of “social death” because they have lost either their membership in the winning class or their opportunity to authenticate their selfhood through sport.⁹⁴ Instead, the core identity of what it means to be human is grounded in Christ; it is a new union as derived from God’s undeserved gift. This new reality is constant and true before, during, and after competition. God is the objective standard, and my acceptance is based on his unconditional love. I have been liberated from any self-made law, sports norm, or good work as the source of my identity. Under this reality, competition is no longer fraught with the anxiety or despair of whether today an athlete will earn or lose her selfhood based on her performance or lack thereof. Athletes now live life *Coram Deo*. Their historical existence has been radically renewed, so their playing space and time are altered, transformed into a sanctuary before the face of and in the presence of God.

Second, if an athlete as a new creation no longer lives under the tyranny of self-actualization (saving self), she is freed to responsibly inhabit sport and to cooperatively relate to others in sport. Or, as Bayer reasons, this new kind of life means the agent is not “condemned to success,”⁹⁵ fabricating meaning and value via successful performances, often at the expense of others. Certain moral and non-moral goods, ordinarily extrinsic, were formerly perceived as scarce; thus, the presence of others posed a threat. But now, this self-securing orientation is mortified by the event

⁹⁴ S. Lerch, “Athletic Retirement as Social Death: An Overview,” in *Sport and the Sociological Imagination*, eds. N. Theberge and P. Donnelly (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1984), 259-272; Hughes and Coakley, “Positive Deviance among Athletes,” 314.

⁹⁵ Bayer, *Living by Faith*, 35.

of justification.⁹⁶ Being in Christ unfetters athletes' wills from the self-entrapment that deceptively biases them to use and to disrespect others in an attempt to break free from this bondage. These dehumanizing tendencies, as illustrated in sport, are by faith killed in Christ. The fruit of righteousness is a new-found freedom to assume a cruciform posture toward others (opponent, teammate, etc.) because this earthly contest is a game concerning skill, play, and other human excellences, not identity. Freedom allows athletes to "live outside themselves in God"⁹⁷ in order to live objectively and other-regarding, which opens them up to the privileged duty to bless and serve others. In other words, with nothing to lose metaphysically or existentially, contestants are free to share in the test of competition and to encounter the other as an authentic human being. Justification implies that a Christian athlete no longer enters the sport arena to get, to use, or to prostitute the system and other participants of sport.

When competition⁹⁸ as a mutual quest is interpreted through the doctrine of justification, it is substantively grounded in an "I-Thou" relationship rather than the "I-It" relationship that arises from neglect to and violation of the orders belonging to this world.⁹⁹ This dynamic union or relationship with God in Christ exchanges a utilitarian ethic for a Christian ethic, for actions corresponding to the form of Christ,

⁹⁶Mark C. Mattes, *The Role of Justification in Contemporary Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 47. 'Event' is used as the existential or interior reality of justification.

⁹⁷ Bayer, *Living by Faith*, 39.

⁹⁸The word competition derives from the Latin *com-petitio* which means "to question or strive together" (Drew Hyland, "Competition and Friendship," *Journal of the Philosophy of Sport* 5, no. 1 (1978).).

⁹⁹ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 165-166. For the I-Thou relationship and its importance in Bonhoeffer's personalism, see Moltmann and Wiessbach, *Two Studies in the Theology of Bonhoeffer*, 32-42, 53-55, 100-103. A future topic of research for sport and in particular other social relationships would be to compare the theological and philosophical warrant of Wojtyla's personalism with Bonhoeffer's.

which is God's initiation toward us in Christ. These actions witness to the reality of the penultimate, which aims at helping others be human and be good. In summary, Christian athletes greet others not as a foreign enemy *against* whom they are battling for the high ground, but as fellow image-bearers *with* whom they are contesting on this good day, on this good field, at this (*kairos*) time before God.

Third, a slight variation of the above, the values system of modern sport often causes the "real" athlete to strive for distinction by securing accolades, trophies, money, and other rewards as proof of their winning status and identity. Justification unmasks the illusion that extrinsic goods, such as fame, prestige, honor, or rewards, determine my identity. Instead of viewing rewards as a temporal evaluation of a performance,¹⁰⁰ these athletes invest them with symbolic capital as evaluative markers of their personal identity. Thus, they are governed by these markers as they try to perform for the sake of these tangible benefits or rewards. Justification as the final word demythologizes this local narrative by exposing the wrong beliefs, motivations, and practices. When Christian sportspersons (and church) transfer their trust, affections and allegiance from sport (or whatever the earthly form) to Christ's redemptive work, they inhabit sport with nothing to lose.

Fourth, justification brings a correction to Hoffman's short-sighted proposal for sport. More precisely, this article of faith serves to complete Hoffman's underdevelopment of the gospel. But this underdevelopment only proves my point that Hoffman's theological strategy is lacking in how he reimagines the relationship between Christianity and sport. The gospel, as I argued above, lies at the center of a Christian ethic. As described in my chapter on Augustine and reinforced with the

¹⁰⁰I am not saying we cannot appreciate rewards or learn from loss but that this does not ultimately appraise my worth as an individual.

doctrine of justification, humans are divided selves in a division that only God's final word can overcome. Hoffman remarkably chronicles the symptoms of the human predicament as narrated in the practices and logic of modern sport because these symptoms get at or help to detect what is wrong with sport. However, he looks vaguely and intermittently to the nature of the gospel and its implications for sport; thus, he emphasizes practically a different starting point.

Hoffman proposes that "the first step toward a well-played game will come when Christians appreciate the death-grip that big-time sports have on sports played at any level and when they recognize how this can snuff out the spiritual potential of sports."¹⁰¹ His focus and starting point is on the practice itself since this is where both evangelical muscular Christians and the institutions have instrumentalized the goods of sport, thus extinguishing its true spiritual end. It makes sense that he would begin from here and would try to repair their ruins. He wants to restore its internal goods, that is, its play elements. He later recommends moral education that is consistent with a focus on right practices and with how the context informs and forms character and the goods native to sport. Evangelical athletes should spend more time "studying the social and ethical dynamics of sport",¹⁰² should consider the debauched moral climate of the games,¹⁰³ should keep games from becoming an exercise in self-interest,¹⁰⁴ and should develop and organize games around an ironic, serious-non-serious attitude so that sport achieves its desired affectivities.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰¹ Hoffman, *Good Game*, 282.

¹⁰² Hoffman, *Good Game*, 284. This list is meant to be representative of the fact that for Hoffman the emphases is on communal practices and hence an ethic of character.

¹⁰³ Hoffman, *Good Game*, 285.

¹⁰⁴ Hoffman, *Good Game*, 145-165, 286.

¹⁰⁵ Hoffman, *Good Game*, 276-279, 288, 291.

Certainly, the role of community practices and virtue are important for a Christian ethic. Hoffman presents certain sport exemplars (e.g., Pedro Zamball, Andrea Jaeger, 2002 FIFA match between the bottom ranked teams in the world ranking) whose humility and good sportive deeds prepare the way of being human and being good. I would add that, for a Christian ethic, the form of Christ being manifested in sport is the good, and thus this Christ-reality constitutes God's specific way of liberating sportive life. Furthermore, it is of no small consequence when virtuous behavior is manifest in sport, even if difficult.

Hoffman's strength is his prophetic call to inveigh against "competitive excess, violence, objectification of opponents and riotous spectators."¹⁰⁶ A Christian ethic cannot allow sport to remain as it is, for not attending to sport cares not for the penultimate, and it risks hindering the ultimate. Hoffman's solutions and pronouncement fight against the strongholds that the institutions of sports have had on the penultimate. His work proposes concrete ways to intervene in the visible world of sport. These ways and means impede the individualism, the retarded social conscience, and the pragmatic gospel of modern muscular Christianity. Hoffman's focus on social practices and conditions is not unique; there has been a groundswell of local organizations along with national and international reform movements.¹⁰⁷ Furthermore, as an example, Benford, like Hoffman, diagnoses that the problems are

¹⁰⁶ Hoffman, *Good Game*, 284.

¹⁰⁷ For some of the same objections and aims to change sport on a collegiate level, see Robert D. Benford, "The College Sports Reform Movement: Reframing the 'Edutainment' Industry," *Sociological Quarterly* 48, no. 1 (2007): 1-28. Other sport reform organizations include: *National Institute for Sports Reform*, *Positive Coaching Alliance*, *Positive Coaching*, *Josephson Institution: Center for Sport Ethics*, *Canadian Center for Ethics in Sport*, and *United Nations Sport for Development and Peace*.

systemic, a by-product of political economy and sports culture.¹⁰⁸ Hoffman does not suggest working with these other groups, though it is conceivable that Bonhoeffer might hold that such cooperation between the groups can exist, if it is rooted in the gospel.¹⁰⁹ Regardless, the contribution to social change that Hoffman proposes remains an activity of the penultimate. Herein lays the problem.

Although I believe Bonhoeffer would concur that Hoffman's diagnosis and his accompanying strategies can introduce significant inroads for "preparing the way" and changing the social living conditions that occlude people from believing in God, Bonhoeffer distinguishes that they are important precisely because of the ultimate, and not the other way around. Underdeveloped for Hoffman is the other side of the paradox: the ultimate and what it means in illuminating athletes' moral identity and their helplessness to extricate themselves from this theologico-ethical problem. If sports are forms of culture constructed through social interaction with participation "grounded in the decisions made by people in connection with their identities and relationships,"¹¹⁰ then who people are makes all the difference regarding what they do and what kind of moral community they will enact. Moreover, if evangelicals have failed to the extent that Hoffman describes, then for him to weight the preponderance of his redemptive strategies on a community that has perverted the gospel in sport appears to be inane.¹¹¹ I do not mean that the church should not be the

¹⁰⁸ Benford, "The College Sports Reform Movement," 9.

¹⁰⁹ See Ján Liguš, "Ultimate, Penultimate and Their Impact," 59-72.

¹¹⁰ Coakley, *Sports in Society*, 36.

¹¹¹ Hoffman's solutions to the moral problems in sport aims at churches, church camps, community outreach programs, and Christian schools and colleges because he claims that these are the best chances for change to occur since Christians exert direct control. In spite of the fact that this proceeds in a mildly totalitarian way, these contexts, as argued by Hoffman, have been compromised by their inability to define their beliefs and practices in relation to the dominant ideology of sport. How then

primary agency for removing the obstructions and even for changing social conditions in sport since the Christ-reality as centered in the church is paramount in Bonhoeffer's ethics as formation, but these athletes need to hear the gospel too. Thus, the church does provide the language and practices for how to live, but it is the gospel itself that redescribes sportive reality and relationships.

Hoffman might respond that he heralds the selfsame gospel, yet he does not develop the gospel and how it acutely retrains the self and community for those in and around sport. Hoffman tries to rehabilitate communal practices for the purpose of redeeming sport; however, the problem for evangelical Christians in sport lies with a radical misunderstanding and misuse of the gospel and how it relates to sport. This is the problem that Hoffman and Mathisen recount repeatedly. The gospel of Jesus Christ has been acquired by the narrative and habits of modern sport. Therefore, to address the penultimate conditions in sport without equally emphasizing preaching and relating the gospel to the identity of these athletes leads sooner or later to the demise of the penultimate.¹¹² Proclaiming the gospel is the essential mission of the church. The church is present, renewed, and extended where the final word of justification is spoken and performed.¹¹³ Of course, for a Christian ethic as proposed

can we expect them to know what to do? His emphasis on Christian imagination loses sight of the centrality of the gospel in this whole endeavour.

¹¹² Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 169

¹¹³ An inference should not be drawn that by gospel proclamation I only mean verbal (words) proclamation. Bonhoeffer strives hard for a concrete ethic where deeds in the name of Christ are just as much a part of witness. Technically, both are types of deeds. Telling it and living it are inseparable and in fact together they give coherence to the gospel. Again, a dialectic is preferred when thinking about evangelism. Evangelism as a human activity is penultimate and our good works testify to the place of the ultimate in our lives. Hoffman stresses good works, while backing away from evangelism as proclamation. I understand why he does this because of the problems associated with the sports medium itself coupled with the troubling misuse of the gospel by modern, muscular Christians. However, it is not an either-or proposition if we are to be the church in sport. Stone clarifies that, if evangelism is intrinsic to the Christian faith, there are not any activities which in some respect are not evangelistic (Stone, *Evangelism after Christendom*, 45-53.). Furthermore, Hoffman offers repeated examples of unchristian behaviour and Christian behaviour in sport. However, these examples are not

by Bonhoeffer and explained thoroughly in this thesis, gospel proclamation is not an either-or; however, because “the penultimate and ultimate are closely bound to one another. . . the task is to strengthen the penultimate through a stronger proclamation of the ultimate and to protect the ultimate by persevering the penultimate.”¹¹⁴ The gospel or justification as the final word exposes the root problem both theologically, sociologically, and historically for modern muscular Christianity.

Mathisen concludes in his book, which in many ways served as justification for this thesis, that evangelical muscular Christians are committed fundamentally to evangelizing and saving souls “with less interest in conceptualizing an *a priori* theological basis for their activity.”¹¹⁵ My argument from Bonhoeffer for a Christian ethic of sport contends that justification as the final word is that basis. Hoffman further claims that, ultimately, how Christians reflect on and deliberate about the complex moral matters in sport depends on their consciences. Unfortunately, as Hoffman himself points out, these consciences are malformed, so to turn to the moral subject without a clearly articulated, objective final word compromises following Christ in sport.¹¹⁶ A Christian ethic must confess Jesus Christ if it is to properly illumine a sportsperson’s moral standing and identity. Bonhoeffer warns, “Only from the perspective of the ultimate can we recognize what being human is.”¹¹⁷

O’Donovan adds that, in order for a theological ethic to evaluate and interpret critically cultural (sport) phenomena, it must do so from the vantage point “where

self-interpreting which I have argued above requires the gospel itself for a Christian ethic to adjudicate between true witness and false witness in sport. Therefore, the final word is indispensable to valuing properly the penultimate.

¹¹⁴ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 169.

¹¹⁵ Ladd and Mathisen, *Muscular Christianity*, 224.

¹¹⁶ Hoffman, *Good Game*, 284.

¹¹⁷ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 160.

true knowledge of the moral order is given, under the authority of the gospel.”¹¹⁸ We hear this glorious gospel when it is embodied and preached in and through cultural activities, such as sport.

If the value or goodness of the penultimate is understood in terms of its relationship to and participation in the ultimate, then the unnatural life closes or cuts itself off from the ultimate when this relationship is forgotten,¹¹⁹ thus powerfully molding and disciplining our loves toward an alternative end. Let us return to Augustine for a closer analysis of the practice of sport itself, an analysis that affirms Hoffman’s, but goes beyond it theologically.

Augustinian Critique of Misdirected Loves in Sport

In this section of this final chapter, I want to draw out Augustine’s concept of ordered and disordered loves as it relates specifically to the moral problem of idolatry in sport. As we saw with Paul Weiss’s proposal, people are attracted to and value sport, which, for the Christian tradition, is another way of saying that their loves move or pull them toward the plurality of goods that pullulate in this cultural practice. Within the matrix of modern sport, there are desires that we should cultivate, while at the same time, we should be cultivating appropriate dissatisfactions for the latter reveal misdirected longings, *cupiditas*—idolatry.¹²⁰

In particular, one of the most significant features of modern sport that shapes and disciplines its *telos* are the owners, sponsors, nations, promoters, and bureaucratic

¹¹⁸ O’Donovan, *Resurrection and Moral Order*, 90. Hoffman might respond that this is implied; however, the gospel for a Christian ethic cannot be merely implied. When Hoffman consults the Christian narrative, which for his communitarian ethic this is a responsible move, he does not explicate the whole gospel but leaves his theology to eschatology and creation.

¹¹⁹ See Manoussakis, “At the Recurrent End of the Unending,” 233.

¹²⁰ Mathewes, *A Theology of Public Life*, 10-15, 18-23.

institutions that either supervise, organize, or fund sports.¹²¹ For a Christian ethic,¹²² this social and political context is important for several reasons.

To begin, Christian moral reasoning must understand that this phenomenon is connected to a wider network of interrelated beliefs and values that give meaning to and interpret what is good and desirable in sport. What and how we love as creatures characterizes not only individuals but also the entire history of the human drama.¹²³

Further, a corollary of the first, sports are played, embedded in, and connected to other spheres of social life: family, economy, media, politics, education, entertainment, etc.¹²⁴ Thus, a Christian ethic for sport must be on guard against a narrow construal of sport ethics because the moral matters within sport also include wider ethical discussions and socio-cultural contexts.¹²⁵

Also, if all of life is lived in light of God as the highest good and hence the proper aim of our loves, then worldly concerns, i.e., “always already are theological: care for the world already is a mode of comportment which has as one of its purposes the satisfactions of theological longings, however normally misconstrued these longings

¹²¹ As alluded to in this thesis, there is a dynamic interrelationship between a number of characteristics of modern sport in post-industrial societies which make them unique when compared to pre-modern times. Furthermore, though the modernization of sport occurred in the mid-nineteenth century, the change from production orientation to consumption orientation occurred mid-twentieth century (Gibson, *Performance versus Results*, 26-31.).

¹²² In order to link Augustine and the examples below, there is an important assumption that warrants this interpretation. Sport is a social and political construct by the very fact that it is embedded in and united through a political system, social and economic institutions and processes which shape and sustain its purpose and identity. Augustine recognized that people and their way of life are organized around common agreement on the objects of their love (Augustine, *City of God*, 19.24). Just as the Roman commonwealth socialized or educated the desires of its people toward a certain end so do particular modern states and institutions in and through sport. In other words, an Augustinian analysis of sport looks not simply to the sportspersons themselves but the community and cultural processes which narrate the beliefs, values, goods and language for understanding and inhabiting sport. See George H. Sage, *Power and Ideology in American Sport: A Critical Perspective* (Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics, 1990).

¹²³ Augustine, *The City of God*, 14.28.

¹²⁴ See Coakley, *Sports in Society*, 12-18.

¹²⁵ Steenbergen and Tamboer, “Ethics and the Double Character of Sport,” 49-53.

(and their ‘satisfactions’) may be.”¹²⁶ Christian moral reflection and deliberation must give heed to the reality that this slice of the City of Man often has competing, ultimate loves that revalue and transvalue the goods of sport and life. This evaluation of loves is a more focused point that follows from number one.

Finally, modern muscular Christianity has historically held a functionalist interpretation of sport: it engaged and read sport naively without giving weight to the different ideologies, practices, and contexts that affect the meaning, purpose, and ethical direction of sport.¹²⁷ Therefore, building on my last section on Bonhoeffer, where I examined this problem more from the angle of the moral subject’s personal identity, I endeavor to describe what happens with our loves when a penultimate concern is raised to ultimacy.¹²⁸ For a Christian ethic, this area needs much further development, but I intend to at least raise the stakes for how Christians understand sport as a social practice. I will not suggest or prescribe how we ought to practice sport since my aim is to describe this problem theologically. In short, I will use an Augustinian basic structure of love, in principle form, to read provisionally what is wrong theologically with how nations and big business often relate to and value sport.¹²⁹

¹²⁶ Mathewes, *A Theology of Public Life*, 85.

¹²⁷ For a description of how sports co-opted religion, religion conscripted sports, and sports supplanted religion in regard to the institutions, language, myths and rituals, see Joseph L. Price, “From Sabbath Proscriptions to Super Sunday Celebrations: Sports and Religion in America,” in *From Season to Season: Sports as American Religion*, ed. Joseph L. Price (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2001), 15-38.

¹²⁸ See Paul Tillich, *Dynamics of Faith* (New York: Harper and Row, 1957), 10.

¹²⁹ See Kevin J. Vanhoozer, Charles A. Anderson, and Michael J. Sleasman, *Everyday Theology: How to Read Cultural Texts and Interpret Trends* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2007) 15-60, 228-245. Cf. James K. A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009).

The Business and Politics of Idols: The Inordinate Love of Power and Money¹³⁰

For those who enter sport with blind optimism or idyllic visions of playful leisure when the winner was the best “gentleman” competing as an amateur, it only takes an elementary reading of the history of sport and one entry through a modern stadium’s turnstile to conclude with deep suspicion that sport might be an “opiate of the masses.” Although conflict and critical theories overstate the role of money and power in shaping such realities as sport,¹³¹ they do illumine the tendency (perhaps systemic defect) for businesses and political entities to make money and power the terminal value, the end that sport serves. Sport ethicist Robert Simon rightly considers that an instrumental valuation of sport aptly describes how external values functionally conscript sport to serve their goals.¹³² So, Simon interprets these social norms as arising from the (dominant) values preferred as best by a particular institution and society.

Certainly, there is some appeal to valuing sport instrumentally when the use-value is for such aspects of our well-being as physical fitness and health. When sport is promoted toward these useful and acceptable ends, we can find plenty of instances in which people have been bettered. Physical education programs can serve this value in many schools. However, even these ends can be politicized, abused, and misused.

¹³⁰ For a more detailed account of idolatry and sport from which this portion of my chapter derives from, see John White, “Idols in the Stadium: Sport as an ‘Idol Factory’,” in *The Image of God in the Human Body: Essays on Christianity and Sports*, eds. Donald Deardorff II and John White (Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2008), 127-172.

¹³¹ See Guttmann (1978) for a critical analysis of Marxist assumptions concerning sport, and why eliminating or avoiding sport all together is a shallow strategy for redeeming sport. The structure of sport per se is not evil but it certainly gets abused for a variety of reasons. However, this does not mean that there may not be times when Christians should oppose sport in a *Christ against Culture* manner.

¹³² Robert L. Simon, “Sports, Relativism, and Moral Education,” in *Sports Ethics*, ed. Jan Boxill (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), 15-28.

In addition, this abuse stretches us to consider the role that social location holds for the values that we validate. Our moral experiences are not transacted in a sociological vacuum. Though at times use-value does yield good consequences, there exist some undercurrents rife with disordered love, idolatry. Let us examine how this happens in sport with big business and politics.

One of the chief problems lies with the starting point. Whether they are useful or socially preferred, external goods, such as money or political power tend to supplant the value of sport while dehumanizing sportspersons along the way. As for supplanting the goods native to sport, Alasdair MacIntyre locates this corrupting influence with the institutions whose external goods override the goods internal to the practices of sport.¹³³

For example,¹³⁴ in the 1970s and 1980s, the German Democratic Republic (GDR/DDR) used its athletes for political purposes by systematically administering illicit drugs (secretly doped anabolic steroids) to athletes with neither their knowledge (although in some instances they did know) nor the consent of their families.¹³⁵ The medal count at the end of the 1976 Olympics had East Germany successfully in third place overall with a total of 90 medals, but we now know that

¹³³ Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 194. Cf. William Morgan, *Leftist Theories of Sport: A Critique and Reconstruction* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1994) 128-75.

¹³⁴ I have chosen this example because it is so well known. However, to varying degrees, this kind of experience is true from youth sport to professional sport in the United States. Because of the subtlety of idolatry, we should not infer that this category only diagnoses the most *grotesque* examples. Certainly, most if not everybody condemns with what happen in Germany however idolatry explains the moral relevance with respect to God and mankind. For an argument that addresses this same problem in the United States, see Dionne L. Koller, "From Medals to Morality: Sportive Nationalism and the Problems of Doping in Sports," *Marquette Sports Law Review* 19, no. 1 (September 2008): 91-124.

¹³⁵ Barbara Carol Cole, "The East German Sports System: Image and Reality" (Ph.D. diss., Texas Tech University, 2000), 1-3; Sigmund Loland, "Normative Theories of Sport," 112. This example is quoted repeatedly in the literature; however, the problems surrounding these abuses are presumably more ambiguous than the popular report.

many of these young athletes suffered physically, and some incurred acute damage to their bodies. Over 30 years, about 800 athletes experienced serious ailments ranging from “infertility among women, embarrassing hair growth, breast cancer, heart problems and testicular cancer.”¹³⁶ For example, the dosage ingested by sprinters Bärbel Wöckel and Marita Koch was nearly double that given to Olympic sprinter Ben Johnson.¹³⁷ This inhumane treatment was the by-product of an attempt by the institutions in power to prove their political ideal or norm through sport.¹³⁸ Günter Erbach, the former State Secretary for Sport under the GDR, commented, “The social function of competitive sport, particularly top-level elite sport, was seen as a means of strengthening and presenting the political system of socialism and the state through the highest levels of sporting achievement.”¹³⁹ Hoberman argues that such sportive nationalism is a part of the political culture of nations that intentionally manage sport policy. For example, Congress passed the American Sports Act in 1978, which was geared toward promoting American success through international sport events, and the Canadian government sought to develop elite athletes for the express purpose of national unity only to be reminded by the Ben Johnson’s drug scandal in 1988 that this strategy can easily go awry.¹⁴⁰ In his brief analysis of sport and religion, Jürgen Moltmann adds, “The superiority of a country’s sportsmen and

¹³⁶ Luke Harding, “Forgotten Victims of East German Doping Take Their Battle to Court,” *The Guardian* 1 Nov 2005, 9 <<http://sport.guardian.co.uk/athletics/story/0,10082,1605761,00.html>>. (Accessed September 20, 2007).

¹³⁷ Guttman, *Sports: The First Five Millennia*, 305.

¹³⁸ See John Hoberman, *Sport and Political Ideology* (London: Heinemann Educational, 1984).

¹³⁹ Cited in Gertrud Pfister, “A World Power in Women’s Sport—Women without Power in Sport: Gender, Power and Sport in East Germany,” *idrottsforum.org web journal*, (09 December 2003). 1-13, <http://www.idrottsforum.org/articles/pfister/pfister031209.pdf> (Accessed 19 September 2007).

¹⁴⁰ John Hoberman, “Sportive Nationalism,” *The Sport Studies Reader*, ed. Alan Tomlinson (New York: Routledge, 2007), 124-129.

sportswomen is to prove the superiority of its [nation's] political system."¹⁴¹ When nationalism happens, a country or culture (or even a college, university, or a team, in differing degrees) equates meaning and purpose with superiority and ascendancy. Instead of maintaining the ontological distinction between God and creation, the metaphysical line is drawn between nations or some other competing organizations, thus demonizing the other and seeking salvation from the threat of another rival or country through a political ideology.¹⁴² The GDR's purpose was to undermine "West Germany's claim to be the sole representative of the German nation," to gain "international recognition for the GDR," and to increase "the country's influence in the politics of sports as well as in world politics."¹⁴³ Furthermore, in these kinds of instances, since the state is sovereign and its survival is envisaged as absolute, trust must be given to its ideology for promoting liberty, prosperity, and peace. This trust can come with a heavy price tag. How is this idolatrous? How does an Augustinian framework interpret this as disordered love?

Because the state (GDR) is autonomous, the athletes in these kinds of sport programs forfeit their freedom. Of course, some of this forfeiture is necessary for any calling or cultural pursuit by virtue of the opportunity costs or sacrifices that a sportsperson does make. But this domination is heteronomy in that the state privileges itself to know what is best by controlling athletes' future success and livelihood (i.e., the top athletes were afforded jobs, military deferments, and new

¹⁴¹ Jürgen Moltmann, "Olympia between Politics and Religion," in *Sport*, eds. Gregory Baum and John Coleman (Edinburgh, Scotland: T & T Clark, 1989), 102.

¹⁴² David T. Koyzis, *Political Visions and Illusions: A Survey and Christian Critique of Contemporary Ideologies* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2003), 27-41.

¹⁴³ Pfister, "A World Power in Women's Sport--Women without Power in Sport: Gender, Power and Sport in East Germany," 2.

accommodations), which is witnessed to by the selection and testing that began at young ages in these sport programs.¹⁴⁴ Who does not want to guarantee a path to success for self and family, all for the praise and honor of nation or state? These athletes were socialized to accept a vision of what appeared good and necessary for the good life. This vision of what is good is problematic.

In the first place, the object of their desire is not directed to the true end of life (God), which means their desires are cut off from their true source and end and cultivated wrongly within this system of sport.¹⁴⁵ There are no critical reflections on ends and values. To possess and to be oriented toward success (for the sake of political status) in this way is inappropriate to human fulfillment. According to Augustine,¹⁴⁶ this kind of person is unhappy because, even though it appears that these athletes have what they want, it is in fact not good for them, bringing personal hurt instead. They were duped and cheated, for they received what is not desirable.

The harm came to the GDR athletes not only because drugs were administered to them but also because the state expected too much from them as their means to the ultimate good. This expectation abuses their finitude.¹⁴⁷ Paradoxically, although it at first might appear to be an overly serious account of sport, it turns out that the GDR also trivialized sport and its practitioners by not respecting the goodness and worth of

¹⁴⁴ D. Stanley Eitzen and George H. Sage, *Sociology of American Sport* (Dubuque, IA: Wm. C. Brown, 1978), 145.

¹⁴⁵ See Augustine, *Confessions*, 2.5.10-11. I am assuming that their desire is the drive to be the best (excellence) and winning or success is the primary value which constitutes excellence. This is not to say that these athletes nor the state did not desire a substantial good; however, it was a good not properly referred to God as the source and final, highest good. Furthermore, in sport itself when improperly pursued and practiced, it becomes an exercise to fill oneself with inferior goods which has an athlete return game after game in persistent search of something that is in fact to desire nothing, because it is disconnected from its final end.

¹⁴⁶ Augustine, *On the Morals of the Catholic Church*, 1.3.4.

¹⁴⁷ Mathewes, *A Theology of Public Life*, 82-88.

humans according to their God-given nature. Essentially, the GDR did not love its athletes enough. The GDR's love was improper to who the athletes were; thus, it failed in how it expressed its love toward its own athletes. Therefore, instead of making God its goal and axiological centre and then properly relating, respecting, and enjoying sportive and human goods in God, the GDR instrumentalized these athletes toward its socially constructed value of power. The GDR played the desires of these athletes and aimed their loves to its own intended end of enhancing national prestige.¹⁴⁸

In addition, the GDR's commitments reflect a direction of love that aims for glory from human beings and praise from its own people and the wider political community. The GDR's love determined that it glorify human achievements, worldly success via athletic performances. It invested sport with ultimate meaning, molding people into "socialist personae," strengthening its native people's identification with these sport heroes and the system itself.¹⁴⁹

By constructing a perception that West Germany (and others) was its rival, the GDR created an outsider that posed an external threat; thus, it had something to defeat and prove itself against. The GDR pressed sport and the goods it offers into the service of its goals of legitimacy and peace. Sage comments that the ideological work of sportive nationalism is to maintain and create social stability, and the mechanism of sport is used (innocuously) to inculcate people to accept and to bolster

¹⁴⁸ Koller, "From Medals to Morality: Sportive Nationalism and the Problems of Doping in Sports," 96-97. Koller describes the ends that sportive nationalism values in the following way: to demonstrate superiority of a political superiority, to realize national interests via athletic success, to enhance national prestige, and to emphasize winning above all else.

¹⁴⁹ Pfister, "A World Power in Women's Sport--Women without Power in Sport: Gender, Power and Sport in East Germany," 2.

current social arrangements.¹⁵⁰ Similarly, Augustine signals that this kind of social arrangement was true for the Roman republic because it used fear, law, and desirable goods to achieve its quest and desire for peace.¹⁵¹ Moreover, for Augustine,¹⁵² such things as public games and theatre were wielded by the powers of the state as “hidden persuaders” to communicate, arouse, and rehearse visions of the good life.¹⁵³

In an effort to keep this vision alive, when the GDR selected an athlete to compete, it demanded a level of service beyond what is normal for most young children and teenagers--they often were separated from their parents, sent to attend special sport universities or schools, and made to train for hours to assure ascendancy for the nation. Co-dependency resulted because the state was sovereign neither in its power nor in its knowledge of its rivals. Thus, its fragility required that it pay constant attention to its athletes to ensure that they out-perform others (the state needed the athletes). In turn, the athletes faced the looming fear that they would be cut, dismissed, or lose privileges if they failed to achieve the state’s expectations and instead brought shame to family and nation (the athletes needed the state). The two groups meet at the point of idolatry, inordinate love. In order to maintain this relationship, the athletes were compelled to objectify what the state wanted, and the state was under a similar compulsion if it wanted to maintain and control the freedom and peace supposedly propagated by its ideology. In his profoundly simple theological account of idolatry, Luke Johnson claims that this is idolatry’s course:

¹⁵⁰ Sage, *Power and Ideology in American Sport*, 75-76.

¹⁵¹ Augustine, *City of God*, 19.12. See Michael Hanby, “Democracy and Its Demons,” in *Augustine and Politics*, eds. John Doody, Kevin L. Hughes, and Kim Paffenroth (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2005), 117-144.

¹⁵² Augustine, *City of God*, Books 1-6.

¹⁵³ Hanby, “Democracy and Its Demons,” in *Augustine and Politics*, 118-121.

“The objects of our worship require our constant attention if they are to remain gods, because they have no necessity of their own... The essential sign of an idolatrous spirit, therefore, is compulsion, which is simply a clinical term for enslavement.”¹⁵⁴

A telling biblical account of the kind of manipulation and bondage that compulsion foments is found in 1 Kings 18. In their attempt to get their god to answer by fire, the prophets of Baal called out frantically for hours, only to resort to extreme behavior, mutilating and harming their own bodies (1 Kings 18:28). Like a modern day parallel to this story, the German Democratic Republic under no less a real power inflicted harm and pain on these athletes for the sake of their god, boosting itself above others (ontological), perverting reality (ideological), diminishing freedom and using athletes (ethical and teleological), and engendering trust (doxological). As “diplomats in tracksuits,”¹⁵⁵ the athletes were in essence the scapegoats to deliver the GDR from the perceived evil or enemy identified with other nations’ ideology. Lying deep within the GDR’s institution of sport (Physical Culture and Sport) was a constellation of powers—social, political, and economic—that dominated sportspersons through this mechanism of the ruling party (SED) (*die Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands*).¹⁵⁶ Sport is a discipline in this system where athletes conform to what the system desires: good athletes for the sake of national interests. Thus, “sport functioned as part of the system of domination in which the will of the party [SED] was imposed entirely.”¹⁵⁷ Augustine names this

¹⁵⁴ Luke T. Johnson, *Faith’s Freedom* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1990), 62.

¹⁵⁵ Pfister, “A World Power in Women’s Sport--Women without Power in Sport: Gender, Power and Sport in East Germany,” 3.

¹⁵⁶ Pfister, “A World Power in Women’s Sport--Women without Power in Sport: Gender, Power and Sport in East Germany,” 2.

kind of disciplining of desire and seeking of power *libido dominandi* and locates its roots in the City of Man.¹⁵⁸ Rowan Williams specifies that

Preoccupation with achievement brings in its wake a preoccupation with power and pre-eminence: the whole point of the quest for glory lies in the urge to gain advantage over another. In contrast, the love and longing for goodness which marks the city of God is of its essence a desire which seeks to share its object.¹⁵⁹

When this variety of idolatry occurs, it requires the strange world of scripture to absorb this phenomenon as a pattern of this world (Romans 12:1-2),¹⁶⁰ thus exposing it for what it is—demonic. On one level, a powerful institution deprived these athletes of their freedom and dignity, but on an ultimate level, this power exercises demonic force and attraction on this whole unredeemed sphere.¹⁶¹ Although this concept borders on the paranormal for our technocratic modern world, the Bible magnifies this scene as a deceitful partnership involving misplaced worship and allegiance from all. Ironically and prophetically, Karl Barth associated these problems and perversities in the created order, specifically sport, with the work of “the lordless powers”—those alienated forces, both human and demonic, that wreak havoc on man’s abilities and activities.¹⁶² Barth asserted, “Today what is called sport seems to have become the playground of a particular earth-spirit.”¹⁶³ In this case, the

¹⁵⁷ Niese, Cited in Pfister, "A World Power in Women's Sport--Women without Power in Sport: Gender, Power and Sport in East Germany," 3.

¹⁵⁸ Augustine, *City of God*, 14.28.

¹⁵⁹ Rowan Williams, “Politics and the Soul: A Reading of the City of God,” *Milltown Studies* 19, no. 20 (1987): 62. See Thomas W. Smith, “The Glory and Tragedy of Politics,” in *Augustine and Politics*, eds. John Doody, Kevin L. Hughes, and Kim Paffenroth (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2005), 187-216.

¹⁶⁰ See George Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1984), 117.

¹⁶¹ Helmut Thielicke, *The Evangelical Faith*, trans. and ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1974), 97-98.

¹⁶² Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: Lecture Fragments*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), 215.

¹⁶³ Barth, *Church Dogmatics: Lecture Fragments*, 229.

deviance perpetrated by those in power is a kind of idolatry. However, because this face of idolatry is so complex, it points to forces that are neither human nor simply demonic, but as Walter Wink suggests, the kind of idolatrous powers that an institution or system can embody as a life of its own.¹⁶⁴ That is, this idolatrous power is a spiritual force emanating from a real institution, such as the GDR, that values a way of life antithetical to God by making its interests the *summum bonum*,¹⁶⁵ a power consistent with the kingdom of darkness and the prince of that domain.

Because the GDR fixated on this nonmoral good (i.e., political superiority), it contravened the human rights of these contestants and the goods internal to sport. Utilitarianism (the greatest good for the greatest number of people)—the apparent method of moral reasoning—“cannot accommodate the distinction between goods internal to and goods external to a practice,” thus violating the moral worth of these innocent athletes and degrading the practice of sport.¹⁶⁶ What is more, this justification transvalued the morally horrible (inhumane treatment) for a greater good because it was believed to produce more benefit. As an implication, utilitarianism in this context was unable to perceive the depth of the moral outrage because it failed to assign moral blame or even to account for the denigration of the moral worth of these sportspersons. Robert M. Adams raises a similar point regarding how often ethical theories fail to account for the morally repulsive or horrible.¹⁶⁷ Of course, not all moral problems in general nor in sport fall into this category, but abuses of power, such as this and some forms of violence in sports today, exact a toll on those theories

¹⁶⁴ Walter Wink, *The Powers That Be* (New York: Augsburg Fortress, 1998), 22-36.

¹⁶⁵ Wink, *The Powers That Be*, 28-29.

¹⁶⁶ MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 198.

¹⁶⁷ Robert M. Adams, “Moral Horror and the Sacred,” *Journal of Religious Ethics* 23 (1995): 201-203.

that neglect to elucidate the gravity of these deeds. Idolatry plumbs the depths of these kinds of problems at a basement level that few others can.

Sport sociologist D. Stanley Eitzen locates deviance “in the structural conditions of society and in the organization found therein.”¹⁶⁸ However, as part of its larger story, the Christian interpretation unmask these kinds of moral problems by incorporating other dimensions of reality, such as the spiritual (certainly manifested in social institutions), which includes humans, the demonic, and ideologies. The GDR’s ideology was a skewed conception of reality that arose from a basic religious orientation that was thoroughly humanistic. These athletes competed and labored within this belief system, which was a network of idols from within and without. Eitzen limits his analysis to the system and even calls other options, such as original sin, genetics, and evil psyches, shallow explanations.¹⁶⁹ Indeed, Eitzen gets at many features of the problem as understood through a sociological critical lens, one which a Christian should culturally understand and employ. However, to limit our analysis to Eitzen’s level is a false choice, for there are other dimensions of reality in a Christian worldview that cannot be reduced to economics and power–dimensions that enable us to more fully understand the ethics of this cultural discourse. Alasdair McFadyen explicates this point as the radical nature of sin, for “there is an underlying, systemic and structural distortion of the conditions of human sociality, of the most basic patterns of disposition which constitute our personal identities, and

¹⁶⁸ D. Stanley Eitzen, “Conflict Theory and Deviance in Sport,” in *Sport in Contemporary Society*, ed. D. Stanley Eitzen, 4th ed. (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1993), 21.

¹⁶⁹ Eitzen, “Conflict Theory and Deviance in Sport,” 21.

which underlie our actions.”¹⁷⁰ We enter this world—encountering and assuming a number of selves or roles (i.e., citizen, child, family member, etc.)—under these radical conditions that are due to moral corruption, which constrains our freedoms and is intensified with our own choices to sin. Furthermore, even if one were to grant that social conditions explain these moral degradations, to make social conditions the source of evil is problematic. We must ask, where does this come from?

Notwithstanding the other important issues of personhood, freedom, and moral responsibility (beyond the scope of this chapter), the effects of sin and idolatry run like a jagged edge that distorts and pollutes all relationships that we as humans have with God, others, ourselves, nature, and things. As fallen humans and against modern sentiments, this excessive or inordinate love (idolatry) is a result of both nature and nurture.

As an analogue, Morgan concludes that this same pernicious system rears its head with the commodification of sport. Commodification occurs when the valuing of sport shifts from the goods of sport (internal practices) to the market value determined by the business side of sport.¹⁷¹ With their utilitarian, cost-benefit grid, businesses neglect to attend to these kinds of goods because sport, like any other commodity, is “something to be marketed, packaged, and sold... The consequence of the process of commodification is that the multifarious forms of human activity lose their unique and distinct qualities to the principles of the market.”¹⁷² Again,

¹⁷⁰ Alistair McFadyen, *Bound to Sin: Abuse, Holocaust, and the Christian Doctrine of Sin* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 16.

¹⁷¹ Morgan, *Leftist Theories of Sport*, 144; cf. Walsh and Giulianotti, *Ethics, Money and Sport*, 28-31.

¹⁷² John J. Sewart, “The Rationalization of Modern Sport: The Case of Professional Football,” *Arena Review* 5, no. 2 (September 1981): 47-48. Sewart uses professional football to illustrate how its growth has evolved for which he attributes to it being organized around capitalistic ends. Owners are the ultimate decision-makers when it comes to rule changes, technical innovations, and marketability.

degradation results because these external, use-value goods do not adequately take into account how their use (toward the service of money and power) is morally connected to the meaning of sport and the moral identity of the sporting participants. Consequently, this idolatrous feature proves both the ignorance (toward God's prescriptions) and moral callousness of businesses that capitulate to market forces, for supply and demand do not care about these moral problems unless businesses perceive (egoistically) that moral degradation might jeopardize the maximization (read greed!) of their exchange-value (profit and power).¹⁷³ When big donors, sponsors, shareholders, or alumni hear about some moral impropriety (especially when it is reported by the media), universities, sport governing bodies, and the professional leagues often rally to censure such behavior because this moral problem effects public image, power bases, and profitability. In other words, the ethic of this variety of idolatry, strictly speaking, is incompetent to account for ethics in sport because its norms and values are non-sport-specific. Ironically, with an idolatrous twist, businesses tacitly work from the assumption that enough residual value remains in sport that institutions and businesses would even care for their purposes and preferences to be expressed or marketed through this medium.¹⁷⁴ Perhaps, too crass of an example, but the parasitic nature of idolatry (evil) can only exist when the substance or structure of something is good; this is a goodness that people are prone to misuse or inordinately misdirect.¹⁷⁵

Thus, the logic of consumption dictates the value and meaning of sport as commodity; Gibson, *Performance versus Results*, 38-43.

¹⁷³ Loland, "Normative Theories of Sport: A Critical Review," 113; Walsh and Giulianotti, *Ethics, Money and Sport*, 28-31, 32-46.

¹⁷⁴ Loland, "Normative Theories of Sport: A Critical Review," 113.

¹⁷⁵ Augustine, *City of God*, 12.8; Augustine, *Confessions*, 7.12.18.

Moltmann identifies this problem as “the estrangement of sport from its own particular experience of life.”¹⁷⁶ This horizontal estrangement bears the mark of a deeper estrangement from God; it characterizes our restless condition as human beings who desperately need a center and source for meaning and purpose. Therefore, when money, power, and prestige as external goods command and dominate this discourse, they exact a crippling effect. Christopher Lasch attests to this crippling effect with the trivialization of sport by invasive (and often sensational) media-driven and corporate tactics—exploding scoreboards, television time-outs, half-time shows bordering on burlesque—that serve to intensify the desire for consumption, the cult of the spectacle.¹⁷⁷ Maybe Tertullian and Augustine were not too polemical after all, for this kind of behavior witnesses to the *panem et circenses* of Rome, but with a power even more global than the Caesars’. The patrons of sport today who wield imperialist power belong to the market forces of capitalism (e.g., Nike, ESPN, and the NFL), thus permeating and influencing all nations with respect to sport.

In summary, the symptoms that result from this variety of idolatry as illustrated with the GDR express in a Christian ethic what Augustine knew as the disordered love of people who immorally pursue their own perceived happiness and destroy the order of this sphere of life. As a critical choice, this option depicts a kind of character that enters the wide gate (Matt. 6:13-14), serves mammon (Matt, 6:24), hates and despises God’s wisdom (Prov. 1:28-33) and chooses death and destruction (Deut. 30:11-20). As members of the sport community, sportspersons from the GDR were

¹⁷⁶ Moltmann, “Olympia Between Politics and Religion,” 102.

¹⁷⁷ Christopher Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism* (New York: Warner, 1979), 194-203.

discriminated against because who and what was selected was ordered by greed and irrelevant consequences--consequences ruled by an idolatrous master. Whenever idolatry occurs, morally harmful actions are justified irrespective of the norms of sport or the value of human life. If sport as a form of play is a substantive good of our humanity that expresses freedom and joy, then when it is valued more for

the sake of one's country, or in honour of socialism, or as a supreme achievement of capitalistic meritocracy—these are alienations, misuses and obliterations of the fundamental human dimension of sport, which is therefore the truly religious one.¹⁷⁸

Theologically, a Christian ethic interprets this value exchange as a teleological confusion between the use and enjoyment of a good like sport.¹⁷⁹ According to Augustine, there are two classes of things: those (goods) we are meant to enjoy, which make us happy, and those (goods) we are meant to use, which “assist” our path to happiness.¹⁸⁰ Since God is the only good we value for its own sake, then all others goods “must hold a subordinate position.”¹⁸¹ Enjoyment (*frui*) is the “attitude we entertain towards things we value for themselves, and ‘use’ (*uti*), the attitude we entertain towards things we value for the sake of something else.”¹⁸² The aim of our desires dynamically sets in motion what we love and how we love, manifesting whether we are enjoying God and referring properly all others loves to him.¹⁸³ Thus, a Christian ethic resists this idolatrous exchange so that sport as a penultimate good is lovingly related to and enjoyed in God, which is a splendid experience.

¹⁷⁸ Moltmann, “Olympia Between Politics and Religion,” 107.

¹⁷⁹ See Augustine, *Christian Doctrine*, 1.3.3.

¹⁸⁰ Smith, *Speech and Theology*, 120-50; cf. Burt, *Friendship and Society*, 45.

¹⁸¹ Burt, *Friendship and Society*, 45.

¹⁸² R. A. Markus, *Saeculum*, 67.

¹⁸³ Augustine, *Christian Doctrine*, 1.4.4.

In summary, this chapter thus far has been about two important themes in relation to how Christians think about and inhabit sport itself: integration and disintegration. According to Bonhoeffer's paradigm, a Christian ethic for sport properly integrates the church's commitment to the ultimate amid the penultimate of sport. This problem of integration has been a perennial problem for modern muscular Christianity and for evangelicals in general. However, even if the final word discharges a person's moral identity, the forces at work within and without can frustrate and morally debilitate a person's most promising end and good. With Augustine, I reflected on disordered loves, a form of idolatry, which threatens to undo or disintegrate the natural life, the penultimate activity of sport. Finally, in this last section, I want to continue with Christian reflection by providing another paradigm that complements Bonhoeffer and Augustine, so as to ground moral reflection and to integrate how sport can be related to the ultimate.

John Paul II proposes that 1 Corinthians 9:24-27 includes sport among the human values and offers a paradigm¹⁸⁴ to recognize "the fundamental validity of sport, considering it not just as a term of comparison to illustrate higher ethical and aesthetic ideal, but also in its intrinsic reality as a factor in the formation of man as a part of his culture and his civilization."¹⁸⁵ My use of this athletic image is not meant

¹⁸⁴ By paradigm, I follow Richard Hay's different modes of appeal to Scripture for ethical discourse. St. Paul's use of this extended athletic metaphor functions as a summary and model for how a Christian, no less a Christian sportsperson, practices and lives life for the sake of the gospel. St. Paul's pattern of meaning in this text is how the athlete models a life like Paul's where self-sacrifice is performed for the sake of some goal which for a Christian is the gospel. Yet, the meaning St. Paul willed cannot neglect the implications that this text has for those who actually play sports, and therefore, John Paul II recognizes this as a paradigm and even a general outlook of moral consideration (principles) from which a Christian sportsperson deliberates about sportive action. See Richard B. Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament: Community, Cross, New Creation* (New York: HarperCollins, 1996), 207-214.

¹⁸⁵ John Paul II, "The Most Authentic Dimension of Sport," sec.1. Cited in Robert Feeney, *A Catholic Perspective: Physical Exercise and Sports*, 69. See also, John Paul II, "Sports Can Be Viewed as a

to encapsulate all the other theoretical constructs that this thesis has employed for how Christians think theologically about sport; rather, it is another paradigm for interpreting and engaging ethically the complex lived experience of sport itself. In fact, this metaphor is unable to stand as the organizing image for a theological ethic.

First, this metaphor is not a root metaphor for interpreting all sportive actions. As I have described in this thesis, sport consists of a number of markers, namely, the play and aesthetic elements, which St. Paul's metaphor simply does not illumine. If this metaphor served primarily to help theologically interpret and imagine sport in the Christian life, it would be reductionistic, neglecting equally important dimensions of sport and the human actor herself. St. Paul's use of this metaphor is specific to his Corinthian correspondence and his co-text. It does not exhaust this complex human activity. Furthermore, the practice of sport can inculcate and realize a number of virtues, yet St. Paul only focuses on self-control. Although self-control is especially important in modern sport, sport demands other virtues as well, such as trust and honesty.

Second, the nature of any metaphor is for comparison, not necessarily for a wholesale adoption or justification of the actual thing or image used in the comparison. For example, St. Paul's use of the soldier analogy should not be construed as necessarily justifying a Christian ethic on war. Instead, I describe below how this metaphor imaginatively links Scripture to the phenomenon of sport and what it implies for the actual practice of sport.

Service to Mankind," Address to Conference on Sports and Ethics, *L'Osservatore Romano* Weekly English Edition, no. 2, 8 January 1990, 5.

Third, if this metaphor is divorced from the other aspects of my theological foundation for sport--namely, human dignity, sign, gift, and Christocratic structure of reality--I fear that it again opens a Christian ethic to the charge of idealism that has undermined Christians' past attempts to integrate their Christian faith and sport. This metaphor as a standalone image illumines the spiritual life itself, but actions are performed for the sake of a higher goal or end while not telling us about the uselessness or *autotelic* element of sport as play. In other words, to participate in sport does not only involve moral or spiritual excellence, however important that may be, but it also entails a plurality of excellences and goods that are both internal and external to the practice of sport itself. In this form of life, a Christian ethic must be on guard against making some goods so important that in earnest zeal it overlooks the freedom and richness of the trivial nature of play itself.

For this thesis, the use of the biblical paradigm is important especially since, as Mathisen argues, modern muscular Christianity is guilty of folk theologizing when they interpret St. Paul's sporting metaphors. The charge is that these texts have been used primarily from the perspective of sports subculture.¹⁸⁶ I intend to follow John Paul II's interpretation and moral reasoning in order to demonstrate how 1 Corinthians 9:24-27 can be used in Christian ethics as a paradigm for moral reflection on sport. Though this final section of the thesis gives further warrant for how to think theologically about sport, more work is necessary to create a fuller Christian ethic of sport.

¹⁸⁶ Ladd and Mathisen, *Muscular Christianity*, 223.

St. Paul's Sport Metaphor: Paradigmatic for Moral Realities in Sport

John Paul II biblically explicates the value of sport by appealing to St. Paul's own use of an athletic metaphor in 1 Corinthians 9:24-27 to infer that sport is a human value.¹⁸⁷ Curran instructs that John Paul II's use of Scripture in general is consistent with Vatican II and its call for a renewal of moral theology nourished by the primary source of scripture.¹⁸⁸ Specifically in his moral teachings on sport, John Paul II does not develop any kind of critical exegesis but bases his ethic on meditative and homiletical reflection on and exposition of scripture, which insists on paradigmatic moral realities.¹⁸⁹ Following John Paul II's meditative method, I will draw out some important theological principles from this paradigm's meaning for Christian sportspersons today. John Paul II theologically reads this passage, not unlike any other theology,¹⁹⁰ as an important metaphor for moral discernment concerning how to live virtuously in sport and life.

A brief explanation of this passage serves the reader before addressing John Paul II's use of it. Alois Koch observes that this passage has been a favorite of the last popes in the twentieth century, with Pope Pius XII referring to it as the "Sport

¹⁸⁷ Paul's use of athletic imagery motif can be found in other passages, utilizing different terms: Philippians 3, 1 Timothy 6, and 2 Timothy 4.

¹⁸⁸ Curran, *The Moral Theology of Pope John Paul II*, 45-69. See John Paul II, *Veritatis Splendor*, 6 August 1993. J. Michael Miller, ed., *The Encyclicals of John Paul II* (Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, 2001).

¹⁸⁹ See Curran, *The Moral Theology of Pope John Paul II*, 37, 56. I agree with Curran, as it relates to my limited interaction with John Paul II's exegesis, that John Paul II primarily draws inferences and moral principles from scripture for his moral theology, especially when using St. Paul's didactic genre.

¹⁹⁰ Hays cites Kelsey who argues that every theological reading of Scripture works from an imaginative judgment or metaphor which governs how to interpret a passage (Hays, *Moral Vision*, 193-205.). I do not intend to defend John Paul II's hermeneutic only to explain his use of this passage as another angle from which to build a Christian ethic of sport.

Epistle.”¹⁹¹ As a human value, according to John Paul II, sport gave St. Paul a point of contact to dialogue about the gospel in the Hellenistic culture and to compare the athletic life to the “higher ethical and aesthetic ideal.”¹⁹² The athletic metaphor signifies themes and values of St. Paul’s contemporary culture.¹⁹³ This athletic imagery or the *agōn* motif is a classic *topos* surviving from Hellenistic literature.¹⁹⁴ St. Paul’s readers would undoubtedly have been familiar with this theme since the Greek world attended the Games at Isthmus every second year.¹⁹⁵ Moreover, the point of similarity between this imagery and the Christian life only holds if there is some explicit connection, something the two things share in common, between the human value of sport and the Christian life; however, that does not mean that all aspects of the analogy are transferred. If we fail to understand this incomplete transfer, we fail to understand the nature of a metaphor in the first place. Nor, as stated above, does this sport metaphor mean that this image can function as a root metaphor for interpreting all human actions in sport. This motif especially fits the

¹⁹¹ Alois Koch, “Der hl. Paulus und der Sport,” in *Begegnung*, vol. 1, ed. W. Schwank and Alois Koch (Aachen: Meyer and Meyer, 1999), 42-74, 123–126; Alois Koch, S.J., “Sport in christlicher Sicht: Biblische und patristische Grundlagen,” <<http://www.con-spiration.de/koch/sport/menschenbild.html>> (Accessed 20 January 2008). See Alois Koch’s website, <http://www.con-spiration.de/koch/>, for his own work in theology and sports with numerous references to primary works in German; Alois Koch, S.J., “A Christian View of Sport: Its Foundations in Scripture and in the Writings of the Church Fathers,” in *Sport and Christianity: Anthropological, Theological and Pastoral Challenges*, eds. Norbert Müller and Kevin Lixey (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, *publication forthcoming*), 89-112.

¹⁹² John Paul II, “The Most Authentic Dimension of Sport,” sec.1. Cf. Connie Lascher, “A Hymn to Life: The Sports Theology of Pope John Paul II,” *The Living Light* 39, no. 2 (Winter 2002): 6-8.

¹⁹³ See Timothy Friedrichsen, “Disciple as Athlete,” *The Living Light* 39, no. 2 (Winter 2002): 15-18.

¹⁹⁴ Raymond F. Collins, *First Corinthians*, ed., Daniel J. Harrington (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1999), 357. Collins notes that this motif has roots in Homeric writings with Stoic and Cynic literature using it “as a metaphor for the struggle on behalf of truth and virtue,” and moralists like Epictetus, Plutarch and Seneca exploiting the element of public contest where competitors try to win spectators to the truth (Collins, *First Corinthians*, 357).

¹⁹⁵ It is debated whether Paul actually had in mind the actual Isthmian games or whether this was a popular enough metaphor that its widespread use and symbolism granted him a rhetorical point of reference to use the literary style of diatribe for engaging his audience. See Alois Koch, “Der hl. Paulus und der Sport,” 47; Victor C. Pfitzner, *Paul and the Agon Motif: Traditional Athletic Imagery in the Pauline Literature* (Leiden: Brill, 1967), 23-37.

Corinthian ethos because they had an inordinate, competitive concern for the individual to attain a privileged status.¹⁹⁶ However, against their competitive striving and self-adulation, St. Paul adopts the symbolism of this metaphor to admonish all Corinthian believers, not merely the individual believer, “to accept the full commitment of following Christ.” This commitment is compared to the total commitment of an athlete who trains for the games.¹⁹⁷ Garland makes it clear that by no means does St. Paul’s metaphor compare the Christian life *in toto* to competitive sport in the sense of outdoing or outperforming others to the point that some endure the shame of defeat,¹⁹⁸ for that is contrary to the very essence of Christianity. Nor should the reader reduce the Christian life to the lone athlete training and struggling by herself in order to obtain some first-place prize; there were no team sports in the original games, so this aspect of the metaphor does not transfer. The root of the argument, according to Garland, “is that simply entering a race and running does not automatically qualify one as a winner.”¹⁹⁹ The Christian life, like sport, requires a certain kind of effort, a virtuous striving, that participation itself does not guarantee.²⁰⁰ Hence, St. Paul goes on to develop this metaphor (verses 25-27), paying particular attention to self-control as a virtue, along with the proper goal or aim needed in the Christian life in order for all Christians to eschatologically realize the real reward or objective. Both Collins and Horsley note that St. Paul’s

¹⁹⁶ Richard A. Horsley, *1 Corinthians* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1998), 133.

¹⁹⁷ Roman Garrison, *The Graeco-Roman Context of Early Christian Literature* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 98.

¹⁹⁸ David E. Garland, *1 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academics, 2003), 438-446.

¹⁹⁹ Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 440.

²⁰⁰ The reader should not equate this statement with any kinds of works righteousness for Paul in 1 Corinthians clarifies that the message of the cross is God’s wisdom and power so any kind of character- ethic must operate from Christ’s gospel work. Furthermore, the immediate context is governed by an eschatological framework.

eschatological perspective serves as a subversive twist to the *agōn* motif with the contrast in verse 25 between “a perishable victory wreath and an imperishable one....”²⁰¹ This contrast invokes and invites for reflection the qualitative difference between sports and the Christian life.²⁰² The latter point, a shift from the natural to the supernatural, brings us directly back to John Paul II, who finds in this *agōn* motif “the elements for outlining not only anthropology but an ethic and also a theology of sport which highlights all its value.”²⁰³ Let us look at how this paradigm theologically informs his sport ethic.

To begin, John Paul II begins with the human value of sport because, as I argued in chapter three, the truth about the human person is central to his personalism and is a main problem of contemporary human beings.²⁰⁴ Thus, the human value of sport is inseparably linked to the human person, from which such cultural aspirations and activities arise. If this is true, then for John Paul II “the fundamental validity of sport” is based on God’s plan set forth for his image-bearers in creation. Although it may be contested to what degree St. Paul actually endorses sport through his use of the *agōn* motif, John Paul II nevertheless fuses the sportive activity of the human person in general with the creation, incarnation, and redemption horizon. According to Genesis, man was given the mission to creatively make and develop culture, which witnesses to his own humanity as made by God.²⁰⁵ Again, sport is an aspect of this cultural commission, an aspect that John Paul II interprets as valid in St. Paul’s literal

²⁰¹ Collins, *First Corinthians*, 359; Horsley, *1 Corinthians*, 133.

²⁰² Anthony Thistleton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 714.

²⁰³ John Paul II, “The Most Authentic Dimension of Sport,” sec. 4.

²⁰⁴ The fact of human culture and what this means depends upon human nature for John Paul II. This follows from *Guadium et spes* (53).

²⁰⁵ Woznicki, *A Christian Humanism*, 45.

use of the sport metaphor. In other words, it is a metaphor that signifies a fundamental good because of the positive value that Catholic theology affirms about any cultural reality belonging to human beings. John Paul II believes that St. Paul builds from the teaching of Jesus, whose incarnation and redemption affirm the real meaning of what it means to be human, a human in any sphere of life.²⁰⁶

Participating in play, games, and sport is part of what it means to be human.

Therefore, according to John Paul II, in this Corinthian context, St. Paul is witnessing to the intrinsic reality of human development and fulfillment that the gospel affirms and directs properly to man's true end. John Paul II declares that St. Paul

established the Christian attitude towards this [sport] as towards the other expressions of man's natural faculties such as science, learning, work, art, love, and social and political commitment. Not an attitude of rejection or flight, but one of respect, esteem, even though correcting and elevating them: in a word, an attitude of redemption.²⁰⁷

We observe the Catholic Church's "openness" because sport comes from our "natural" abilities, as gifts intrinsic to how God made human beings.

Further, St. Paul's use of the *agōn* motif in verse 25-27 emphasizes self-control (*enkrateuetai*). In this passage, St. Paul's thoughts center on the broad spiritual virtue of self-control that he elsewhere identifies in a catalogue of other virtues as a significant trait of a mature Christian (Gal.5.22-23).²⁰⁸ Most insist that the sense of this virtue as adopted by St. Paul for this aspect of the *agōn* motif is "to exercise self-

²⁰⁶ For an argument about the theological significance of culture in post-Conciliar magisterial thought, which lies behind much of what John Paul II says about sport and work for example, see Tracey Rowland, *Culture and the Thomist Tradition: After Vatican II* (London: Routledge, 2003). See also, Matthew Levering, "Pastoral Perspectives on the Church in the Modern World," in *Vatican II: Renewal within Tradition*, eds. Matthew L. Lamb and Matthew Levering (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 165-183.

²⁰⁷ John Paul II, "The Most Authentic Dimension of Sport," sec. 1.

²⁰⁸ Garrison, *The Graeco-Roman Context*, 98.

discipline”²⁰⁹ or self-denial; it “refers to ‘vigorous control of appetite and passion.’”²¹⁰ Hence, John Paul II claims that St. Paul’s symbolism places the emphasis on “the interior and spiritual significance of sport: ‘Every athlete exercises self-control in all things’ (1 Cor 9:25).”²¹¹ This recognizes the healthy dose of balance, self-discipline, sobriety, and therefore, in a word, of virtue, which is implied in the practice of sport.”²¹² John Paul II, not unlike St. Paul and others in Hellenic literature, interprets the realization of self-control with the practice of sport. He further infers that St. Paul’s use of self-denial instills the necessity not only to train athletic muscles but also to train the spirit through the exercise of the cardinal and theological virtues.²¹³ How does he reach this conclusion in light of his philosophy of human action?

John Paul II’s conception of sport praxis fits St. Paul’s image of an athlete deliberately exercising her free choice with the effect of self-control. As noted above in *Laborem exercens*, John Paul II distinguishes two primary aspects when referring to human praxis. In this Corinthian passage, he associates self-control as a virtue that forms the sportsperson and that thus is linked to the intransitive dimension of human action. When construed and practiced correctly, which St. Paul assumes lest an

²⁰⁹ Collins, *First Corinthians*, 361.

²¹⁰ Garland, *First Corinthians*, 440-441. See also 1 Corinthians 7:9 for a similar sense of mastering sexual drive.

²¹¹ This does not imply that the spiritual was at the expense of or instrumentalized the body. For John Paul II, as I argued in chapter three, in his sport homilies adamantly claims that in the first place sport is an embodied contest which requires, in an Augustinian sense, a proper “use” of the body in order to reach optimum health and well-being (John Paul II, “The Most Authentic Dimension of Sport,” sec.4.).

²¹² John Paul II, “The Most Authentic Dimension of Sport,” sec.4. Cf. John Paul II, “Sports Can Become Instrument of Reconciliation and Peace,” *L’Osservatore Romano* Weekly English Ed., no. 6 (11 February 1985): sec. 2.

²¹³ John Paul II, “Sports Offers Opportunity for Spiritual Elevation,” *L’Osservatore Romano* Weekly English Ed., no. 50 (10 December 1984): sec. 3.

athlete be disqualified, sport is a practice that affords the development and fulfillment of virtues, an immanent activity of the human person. For John Paul II, sport is an activity that can ennoble humans individually.²¹⁴

John Paul II goes on to explicate that the virtues discovered and expressed in sport correspond to the moral order itself. This is important because the goods or values internal to sport have an “onto-logic” to them.²¹⁵ How a person plays sport is not determined solely by the practice since that determination could easily justify some kind of relativism, but by whether the goods realized in the practice correspond to an order already given in the purposes of the moral order. John Paul II summarizes that

To be a good sportsman, one must have honesty with oneself and with others, loyalty, moral strength (over and above physical strength), perseverance, a spirit of collaboration and sociability, generosity, broadness of outlook and attitude, and ability to live in harmony with others and to share: all these requirements belong to the moral order. . . .²¹⁶

Just as John Paul II addresses the category of human praxis in economic and social relations, so does he apply it to the sport discourse. The nature of sport praxis, according to his Thomistic conception of human action, affords an athlete the opportunity to form himself through his actions, which remain in the subject:²¹⁷ “The priority of the human being as the subject of activity has fundamental significance

²¹⁴ John Paul II, “Sport, A School of Human Virtue,” Rome, 31 August 1979. I might add that in this passage though St. Paul encourages the imitation of the athlete it is not a specific athlete but in general to pattern Christian character after one who strives, runs and exercise self-discipline. This makes sense because the cotext pictures Paul himself as a worthy model who is like the athlete in training (Garrison, *The Graeco-Roman Context of Early Christian Literature*, 100.).

²¹⁵ For the term “onto-logic”, see Rowland, *Culture and the Thomist Tradition*, 63-71.

²¹⁶ John Paul II, “The Most Authentic Dimension of Sport,” sec. 4.

²¹⁷ Karol Wojtyła, “The Constitution of Culture through Human Praxis,” in *Person and Community: Selected Essays* (New York: Peter Lang, 1993); cf. Buttiglione, *Karol Wojtyła*, 292-305. See also John Paul II, “Sports can be Viewed as a Service to Mankind,” sec. 1.

for the constitution of culture through human praxis.”²¹⁸ Because the activity of sport arises from the fact that a human being already exists (*operari sequitur esse*), St. Paul’s appeal to this cultural activity makes sense to John Paul II. What remains in the subject, the I-act, are virtues, such as self-control. In *Acting Person*, Karol Wojtyla draws on these kinds of “man-acts” (“I act”) as the kinds that constitute the essential experience of efficacy.²¹⁹ Efficacy is the experience that the actor realizes dynamically as the agent who self-causes her actions versus passively experiencing something that happens within herself.²²⁰ This kind of action is an ethical experience in that the good actions that comprise the virtue of self-control are owned by the agent who causes these acts. Karol Wojtyla comments that we truthfully accept these actions as our own because they are moral in nature and thus fall in the domain of moral responsibility. Therefore, when John Paul II indexes self-control from St. Paul, it is precisely an ethical experience that he has in mind. The moral agent, like the image of the athlete, can freely choose to master her appetites and passions, whether they are realized inwardly or spiritually as self-control.

Closely following the last point, sport can be an effective “school of human formation and personal in [sic] maturity.”²²¹ Since virtues like self-control, tenacity, and sacrifice train the will,²²² this school as a practice has educative significance.²²³

²¹⁸ Karol Wojtyla, “The Constitution of Culture through Human Praxis,” in *Person and Community*, 266.

²¹⁹ Wojtyla, *AP*, 66-71, 74-75, 98-100; Simpson, *On Karol Wojtyla*, 23-45.

²²⁰ Wojtyla’s explains this more specifically in terms of efficacy and subjectiveness with the former constituting the structure of “man-acts” and the latter shaping or forming “what and who he [man] actually is” (Wojtyla, *AP*, 98). See Simpson, *On Karol Wojtyla*, 18-22.

²²¹ John Paul II, “The Ideals of Sport Promote Peace,” In Address to the Participants of the 43rd Italian International Tennis Championship, Rome, 15 May 1986, sec. 2.

²²² John Paul II, “Sports Can Become Instrument of Reconciliation and Peace,” sec. 2.

When acting-sportspersons perform certain acts of self-discipline—acts in which the decision to do X is caused by the good of the desired object,²²⁴ (which in this passage is for the sake of the gospel)—this immanent activity leaves its marks and fruit in the human person. Pfitzner elaborates that the “apostle [Paul] also knew that grace calls and equips its recipients for hard work! The image of the striving athlete implies intense effort and application of all one’s energies, but Paul’s main focus is always on the goal of Christian striving.”²²⁵ John Paul II imagines that, when sport is practiced accordingly, it “has in itself an important moral and educative significance: it is a training ground of virtue, a school of inner balance and outer control, an introduction to more true and lasting conquests.”²²⁶ Thus, he construes sport as a “human and social phenomenon that has such importance and influence on people’s way of acting and thinking today.”²²⁷

The logic of sport is governed by its *telos*. I believe that John Paul II discerns that St. Paul’s use of this metaphor imaginatively situates the Corinthian church (and the

²²³ This point is contentious because it implies that sport builds character. I do not intend to take up an argument for or against this other than if sport is understood as a practice (MacIntyre), it is at least plausible that sport like any other practice occasions the moral development of virtues. Yet, there is nothing preeminent in sports in its capacity to educate a person’s moral vision coupled with the reality that it is played in and through a complex context often plundering its potential for internalizing moral and non-moral goods. Furthermore, the issue on whether sport builds character or not involves many different variables which are difficult to isolate when analyzing empirical and anecdotal evidence for and against character building (e.g., the notion of character itself, psychological pressures, pre-sport ethical experiences, prior moral and spiritual formation in general, different levels of competition, the role of coaches and parents) (See Feezell, *Sport, Play and Ethical Reflection*, 123-142.). John Paul II carefully crafts a view which does not underestimate how the social context and the logic of production and consumption can and do ignore the goods and virtues central to this practices flourishing. So, I concur with Feezell that sport contingently and incompletely provides opportunities and experiences for moral formation.

²²⁴ Karol Wojtyła, *AP*, 134.

²²⁵ Victor C. Pfitzner, “We are the Champions! Origins and Developments of the Image of God’s Athletes,” in *Sport and Spirituality: An Exercise in Everyday Theology*, eds. Gordon Preece and Rob Hess (Hindmarsh, SA: Adelaide Press, 2009), 57.

²²⁶ John Paul II, “Sport as Training Ground for Virtue and Instrument of Union among People,” Rome, 20 December 1979.

²²⁷ John Paul II, “The Most Authentic Dimension of Sport,” sec.1.

implied reader) in this symbolic world to reread their own lives.²²⁸ John Paul II deduces that the sacrifice or self-control in order to achieve certain results (1 Cor 9:25) is not merely a logic of sport, but it is also the logic of life and the gospel, for “without sacrifices, important results are not obtained, or even genuine satisfaction.”²²⁹ Just as sport is directed toward a desired end and affects the actions chosen by sportspersons as they play it, so too the logic of the gospel directs Christians toward their intended end of eternal life. Again, the point of similarity means that the two share this in common. Therefore, St. Paul values this similarity, and yet he does not leave it merely at this level of comparison. John Paul II asserts that

It was appropriate, then, for Paul to refer to athletic contests in order to spur the Christians of that city to push themselves to the utmost in the "race" of life. In the stadium races, he says, everyone runs, even if only one is the winner: you too run. . . . With this metaphor of healthy athletic competition, he highlights the value of life, comparing it to a race not only for an earthly, passing goal, but for an eternal one.²³⁰

John Paul II follows the whole discourse (8:1-11:1) eschatologically, with his homiletical attention given to the eternal goal (imperishable). St. Paul specifies that the gospel itself is the *telos* that frames how he practices evangelism (1 Cor 9:23) and how the Corinthian church should handle the problem of eating meat that had been offered to idols (1 Cor 8). St. Paul chooses to exercise his freedom for the sake of the gospel, which when accomplished, glorifies God in all areas of life, particularly the mundane (1 Cor 10: 31-33). St. Paul makes an *a fortiori* argument with this comparison between the two different goals of both endeavors. That is, if

²²⁸ See Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament*, 207-214, 291-312.

²²⁹ John Paul II, “Homily at the Jubilee for the World of Sports,” sec.4.

²³⁰ John Paul II, “Homily at the Jubilee for the World of Sports,” sec. 1.

sportspersons strive with this kind of exacting discipline toward a fading, temporal crown, how much more should Christians maintain self-control for the sake of a higher, enduring goal--an imperishable crown?²³¹ This goal has some immediate implications for how a Christian ethic construes sport.

First, the eternal goal for a Christian ethic invests this end with an eschatological element because the natural ends of earthly activities such as sport are not sufficient by themselves.²³² If sport points to horizontal ends, the Christian gospel transformatively deepens and directs the Christian sportsperson to her ultimate fulfillment and relationship with God, a vertical end.²³³ What is objectified and externalized in sportive action (human praxis) is transitive, passing away and dying, while what is formed in the human person is intransitive and rises to another level in the hierarchy of values.²³⁴ Thus, the sport narrative is subordinate to the scope and weight of this gospel metanarrative.²³⁵ The ultimate or supernatural determines and judges what the flourishing of this narrative, belonging to the natural life, is to be.²³⁶ Therefore, this end relativizes and resolves any conflict.

Second, because of this *a fortiori* argument, a Christian sportsperson's moral responsibility is not simply to respect the game (fair play) but also to maintain her

²³¹ Richard B. Hays, *First Corinthians* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1997), 155-156.

²³² O'Donovan, *Resurrection and Moral Order*, 53-67.

²³³ Ks. Stanislaw Kowalczyk, *Elementy filozofii i teologii sportu* (Lublin: Katolickiego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego, 2002), 190-192.

²³⁴ Wojtyła, "The Constitution of Culture through Human Praxis," 272.

²³⁵ O'Donovan references the significance of the Scholastics, on this point of the wider good, who repaired a problem for a Christian ethic that either follows Aristotle's teleology or Plato's cosmology exclusively. Scholastic Christianity retained Aristotle's purely natural ordering while including or protecting the truth of a Platonic conception of the world, a wider order—ordered-to-serve divine truth—which frames or determines the whole discourse concerning what flourishing means for a kind (O'Donovan, *Resurrection and Moral Order*, 34-35.).

²³⁶ O'Donovan, *Resurrection and Moral Order*, 35. Dombrowski makes a similar point in reference to Feezell when trying to appraise morally the standard of accuracy for judging a local narrative like sport (Dombrowski, *Contemporary Athletics and Ancient Greek Ideals*, 136-139.).

higher responsibilities. A Christian in sport has a higher, more binding responsibility to the gospel. John Paul II claims that this goal of eternal life means the more excellent way of love (1 Cor 12:31), which requires Christians to serve the growth of God's kingdom in a sportsperson's life and in the world.²³⁷ St. Paul's own example of sacrifice and self-control (1 Cor 9:12) was to "endure all things," and he later instructs his Corinthian audience that this sacrifice and self-control indeed is love (1 Cor 13:5, 7).²³⁸ Therefore, the exercise of self-control for the sake of the gospel exhibits a form of Christian love. For a Christian ethic and sports, John Paul II concludes that our aim is to build a culture of love in sport over against a civilization that gives higher priority to goods of production and consumption, which are purely utilitarian and hedonistic considerations.²³⁹

Third, self-control in sport is not practiced for the sake of self or sports. A gospel-directed life in sport is an other-directed life, as evidenced by St. Paul's own example in ministry (1 Cor 9:15-23). A Christian ethic does not stop with a personal ethic in sport because striving in sport pertains to the free course of the gospel.²⁴⁰ Following St. Paul's example and aim, then this means that the ennobling power of the gospel is not merely a training ground for individual virtues, but rather, the gospel is a "getting on together" that is possible only in a network of mutual relations.²⁴¹ More broadly, if this is a school of virtue, sport, as a shared activity in the interpersonal sense, can and should promote mutual fellowship.

²³⁷ John Paul II, "The Most Authentic Dimension of Sport," sec. 4.

²³⁸ Garrison, *The Graeco-Roman Context of Early Christian Literature*, 101.

²³⁹ John Paul II, "The Most Authentic Dimension of Sport," sec. 5. Cf. Wojtyla, "The Constitution of Culture through Human Praxis," 271-272.

²⁴⁰ Pfitzner, "We are the Champions! Origins and Developments of the Image of God's Athletes," 58.

²⁴¹ John Paul II, "Sport, A School of Human Virtue."

Fourth, more precisely, the imperishable wreath or crown (1 Cor 9:26) is the eschatological blessing of salvation, the consummation of the gospel. This otherworldly focus, which Christians participate in now, is a life of virtue and fidelity to Christ that determines how Christians relate in sport and life. Furthermore, since for a Christian ethic, virtue is eschatological rather than merely teleological, ultimately this goal is not something realized by our own efforts, as if the efforts in sport or life bring about an incomplete *telos*.²⁴² John Paul II reckons that this ‘imperishable crown’ is a gift received from God,²⁴³ while at the same time, as St. Paul recognized, it is also something aimed for in light of the promised resurrection (1 Cor 9:24-26; 1 Cor 15; Phil 3:8-21). This *telos* puts sports back on its heels because this is an activity that should not be taken too seriously but rather should be viewed as a splendid occasion to enjoy freely and responsibly the goods of this cultural activity.

In summary, John Paul II believes that St. Paul valued sport for its intrinsic reality to form persons and for how Christians then and now ought to conduct themselves, including Christians in sport. This focal image of the athlete orders his acceptance of sport as a human value—especially against the modern demands of life and work that often preclude or dampen the time for sport and leisure—for an athlete can choose to become somebody. When these kinds of goods are made manifest in the kingdom of sport, they serve as concrete examples for how Christians redemptively participate with Christ in his kingly office over sport for the primacy and enhancement of the

²⁴² Stone, *Evangelism after Christendom*, 280.

²⁴³ John Paul II, “The Most Authentic Dimension of Sport,” sec. 4.

good of persons.²⁴⁴ According to John Paul II, when sport is practiced this way, it “acquires an ethical and formative value, and is a valid school of virtue for life,”²⁴⁵ thus opening up and directing souls to the transcendent dimension of faith. He exhorted his audiences regularly to see this redemptive mission not only for themselves personally, but also at the collective level, so that “it may become a vehicle of fraternity and friendship for all who are following these sporting events.”²⁴⁶

²⁴⁴ Woznicki, *A Christian Humanism*, 44; Curran, *The Moral Theology of Pope John Paul II*, 72.

²⁴⁵ John Paul II, “Sports Can Help Spread Fraternity and Peace,” sec. 2.

²⁴⁶ John Paul II, “Sports Can Help Spread Fraternity and Peace,” sec. 3.

CONCLUSION

In this thesis, I have formulated a modest Christian ethic of sport as a way forward for speaking theologically to this area of public life for which Christians in North America have lacked a theologically informed rationale and critique.

Augustine substantiated the fact that, since God is a good creator, all created and cultural goods ultimately derive their value from God. If sport is valued in such a way that we love others and the goods of the game toward God, then this love is morally praiseworthy, but if we love it as an ultimate end, then it is morally blameworthy; it is idolatry. Furthermore, Augustine's view that our bodies are structurally good opened a way to more completely realize other goods intimately connected to this particular aspect of human activity. That is, if sport operates in the Christian tradition as a form of play and human excellence (basic goods) among other goods specific to this practice, then it is a determinative feature of our humanity as embodied selves who play and excel. These embodied goods specific to sport are important because the value of sports inheres in the activity itself as a capability and function of our God-created humanity.

John Paul II, contrary to Paul Weiss, contributed to a Christian ethic by furthering Augustine's thought specific to the goodness of embodied life in sport. John Paul II's theology of sport identified a direct relationship between who we are as embodied humans and what sport is as a practice for realizing a plurality of goods or excellences unique to our personhood. John Paul II's personalist anthropology specifies our human fulfillment and dignity in Christ. As Christians, our sportive

actions have other persons as their goal and criterion; therefore, this is a mutual quest to exalt the dignity and fundamental value of the whole person in sport. A Christian ethic attends throughout to the value of an athlete, a sportsperson, for this value then gives rise to the moral requirements and relates to the ends (excellences), habits, and actions that either affirm or retard this personalistic value. As long as sport has other human beings as its object, a sportsperson is bound by this personalistic norm to treat persons for who they really and fully are.

I have argued that, in particular, if this value is true about human persons, then a Christian anthropology must consider and defend the meaning of the body not as a mere object of nature for human power and athletic achievement, but as a primordial wonder, which as a gift and sign must be received and respected as integral to human dignity. For a Christian ethic, the sportive contest is established and oriented equally, if not primarily, around gift and love, not around the self-mastery of the body as a task.

With Bonhoeffer's ethical vision, I have repaired a moral and theological problem, namely dualism and instrumentalism, that has precluded evangelicals in North America from properly valuing sport as a penultimate good. Bonhoeffer's Christological basis embeds the question of what is good in a wholly other reality, that is, the reality of Christ as incarnate, judge, and redeemer. This reality redescribes all of reality; therefore, Christians in sport are to participate in this concrete form because it reveals that Christ is the center of life and existence. This way of being in the world negates any division of reality that modern muscular Christianity perpetuated; it affirms the Lordship of Christ over the entire cosmos rather than giving certain spheres, such as sport, autonomy and neutrality.

In conclusion to my thesis, I have considered the importance of an eschatological paradigm for how Christians construe sport. I presented Bonhoeffer's ultimate and penultimate distinction as an eschatological paradigm that properly situates and integrates how a Christian values sport in the midst of the natural life. This eschatological paradigm is important in order for a Christian sportsperson to be free to enact the gospel responsibly and enjoyably in this cultural activity. However, I argued from Augustine that this teleological paradigm must equally regard the social context that educates our desires or loves either toward or away from God. For a Christian ethic, the ultimate holds normative value and rank so that all sportive actions and attitudes are directed to the true end and highest good. John Paul II complemented this paradigm, for I argued that his use of St. Paul's sport metaphor in 1 Corinthians 9:24-27 is a moral paradigm for how we integrate our faith in sport. John Paul II's conclusion enveloped this whole thesis because his framework capably repaired the folk theologizing endemic to modern muscular Christianity as a way for Christians to imagine sport as a moral practice governed by the logic and end of the gospel itself.

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