

SPORT AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION AS A MEANS OF AESTHETIC EDUCATION

On this theme, D. W. J. ANTHONY, a lecturer at the English college Avery Hill, has been working on an essay which will be of great interest to the advocates of the "nobleness of sport".

We publish long extracts from this below :

Aesthetics, the study of the philosophy of beauty, is not commonly thought of as a factor in the sporting education. It can be surprising therefore to find that sport and physical education provide innumerable opportunities for increasing aesthetic awareness. An aesthetic education can be attempted through the medium of the senses - visual, musical, verbal and physical. It is the "physical" aspects of an aesthetic education which tend to be neglected despite the Athenian ideal of "proportion, harmony and moderation" - a philosophy pervading theoretically, traditional "Western" educational thought. One area of physical education, dance, has of course not neglected aesthetics, and there is an increasing importance of educational dance in modern education. Gymnastics, at Olympic level, has become "artistic gymnastics" calling for musical feeling, imagination, and creative originality. Diving, skating, and other physical skills which demand a highly refined kinaesthetic sense, can also reach heights which are generally accepted as truly artistic. However, there are millions of ordinary people who do not watch the more sophisticated sports; neither do they attend the theatre, opera, symphony, or art gallery. They *do* watch football, the male element anyway, literally in their millions. Surveys, apparently show a large female, as well as male, tele-viewing audience for Rugby League. It is in this field of "mass sports", of which association football is the most popular, that the most gigantic possibilities for an aesthetic education lie.

RELATIONSHIP OF SPORT TO ART

A number of artists have pondered on the relationship of sport to art. TOYNBEE describes the sense of balance, the timing, the control of mind and body in rapid movement - the qualities of the athlete. . . . As, to an artist, a haystack is always a haystack yet each one is different, so in sport "each match pattern and design is unique". MOORE and WILLIAMS claim that in modern football, "space, creativity, effort and rhythm", are major factors. KITCHIN writes that his major gain from "soccer" was "an enormous pleasure, both playing and watching it". He went, "to see great teams or great individuals" in the same way that he went to see the Berlin Ensemble or the Bolshoi Ballet.

. . . DEYNEKA, a Soviet painter, writes, "I love sport; I can spend hours watching runners, swimmers, skiers. It seems to me that sport, like everything beautiful, enobles man." Paul VIALAR feels that writers and artists "bespeak of their times" when they are so often inspired by movement, controlled strength, the grace and beauty of gesture and effort. LAURENT describes the affinity of feeling between the athlete and the artist. The athlete, "modelling his body by repeated drilling", shares the feelings of the artist, concerned as he is, "with the need to correct a faulty line, to attenuate a corpulence, despairing ever to acquire the line or the curve so ardently desired".

COUBERTIN, the founder of the modern Olympic Games, in his address to the Consultative Conference of Arts, Letters and Sports, in 1906, was passionately concerned that the fine arts and sports should not be alienated one from the other. "We are gathered," he said, "to celebrate a singular ceremony - to reunite in the bonds of legitimate wedlock a long divorced couple - muscle and mind". The programme of this Conference embraced architecture, dramatic art, choreography (processions, grouped movements etc), decorations, letters, music, painting and sculpture. When, after the London Games of 1948 Olympic Fine Arts Competitions disappeared, to be replaced by "exhibitions", COUBERTIN would, no doubt have been disgusted. The immense love he had for sport is revealed in his "Ode to Sport". "O Sport you are beauty ! You, the architect of this house, the human body, which may become abject or sublime according as to whether it is defiled by base passions or cherished with wholesome endeavour. There can be no beauty without poise and proportion and you are the incomparable master of both, for you create harmony, you fill movement with rhythm, you make strength gracious, and you lend power to supple things". It was COUBERTIN too, who drew early attention to the relationship of sport to cinema art - a connection which has remained firm and has continued into the new domain of television.

MOVEMENT AS CULTURAL EDUCATION

... Within physical education there has been some heart-searching in recent years. NASMARK discusses how gymnastics can help to cultivate aesthetic taste. "He who holds himself straight, and moves well, controls his body and feels it as something which has been perfected. He experiences what may be regarded as an aesthetic feeling." NASMARK suggests that three fundamentals should always appear in gymnastics teaching - good order, good movement, and joy - and that these can contribute to an aesthetic education. Moreover a body which "looks good and moves well" is pleasing to others; the teacher encourages the search for movements which lack tension, which contain both "beauty and utility". . . . NASMARK reminds us of LABAN's warning that "one should not aim for great art at school"; it is sufficient to acquire strength, freedom, imagination, and pleasure in movement. BODE, LABAN, and LING all, says NASMARK, saw movement as "education for culture"...

Most sports have the straightforward, uncomplicated objective of scoring goals or points; any aesthetic element is *incidental* to the main aim. In some sports, however, and gymnastics, diving, and skating have been mentioned, one major aim is aesthetic - to create a "good" or "artistic" movement. The gymnastic judge is given official guidance to look for "general beauty", "elegance", "rhythm and precision", "harmony" and "perfect artistic execution". His diving counterpart must look for "grace". In skating, marks are awarded for technical merit and for "artistic impression"; among the terms used in this latter section are: "harmonious composition of the whole"; "conformity with music"; and "carriage". On the trampoline a good performer must satisfy requirements such as "continuity and flow", "symmetrical placing of body segments", and "aesthetic manner", according to the "established standards of art". In "educational gymnastics" which, in various ways and under various titles, has come to dominate teaching methods in modern English physical education, LABAN's qualities of weight, space, time and flow, are the four major factors which must be appropriately balanced to achieve the "good" performance. A partial survey of several movement "systems:" shows that symmetry and assymetry, rhythm, balance, harmony and economy of effort, are among the most-mentioned qualities used in assessing what is a "good" movement.

It is not, however, only in doing or in teaching sports and other movement activities, that an aesthetic experience can be secured. A majority of mankind apparently enjoy watching sport. Some pundits throw up their hands in horror bewailing the fact that "we are becoming a nation of onlookers". This is a strange reaction since few dispute the value of the

gallery, the museum, the professional theatre, in *stimulating* mass interest in the recognized arts. Similarly the stadium performances of the elite sports teams can be used to stimulate mass interest in sports - although perhaps in other sports more appropriate to the different ages and abilities of the spectator.

The good spectator is not a pawn in a passive culture; he is part of the active performance; by his efforts the player is uplifted. The French actor J. L. BARRAULT describes how the actor and the sportsman share several experiences; both get stage fright, both are prone to "swollen heads", both are weighed down by the presence of the audience when they are inexperienced and both then learn to use the presence of the audience to lift their own performances to previously unattained heights. GEBLEWICZ says that the sports spectator is not "recognized for his culture" yet "aesthetic emotion is one motive for watching sport". The match is embellished by ceremonials, by cheering and handshaking rituals, by flags, colours and distinctive dress. There can be an atmosphere of solemn magnificence and of colour and movement. The "sportive fight" must itself contain chivalry and other positive ethical elements. Those of us who follow sport know that the artistry and genius of a soccer player of the calibre of EASTHAM or MATTHEWS can draw forth the appreciative "Oohs" and "Ahs" of tens and thousands of spectators; this is for them perhaps the only avenue in which they can experience, and sometimes create, beauty.

GEBLEWICZ calls for solutions to the meanings of words such as "beautiful", "gracious", "majestic" and "natural" which are ubiquitous in the world of physical education and sport. The work of the physical education teacher he suggests, contains "elements of artistic creativeness" and he can both help to create beauty and aid the "masses" in the "aesthetics of daily life." . . .

THEMES FOR THOUGHT

Certain phenomena which are specially aesthetic could be found in sport (harmony, rhythm, symmetry, etc). By increasing human receptiveness to aesthetic phenomena one could aid aesthetic education. Among many pertinent questions are the following :

How can one define an aesthetic performance in different forms of motion ?

What aesthetic experiences do sports offer athletes ? Are those who, in close contact with nature, practise various sports (climbing, skiing, sailing etc), more susceptible to aesthetic impressions ? Do the strict binding of sports to

detailed rules, record hunting, and competition, have a negative effect on the aesthetically educational value of sports ?

If tension, competition, and identification with the "heroes", are psychologically important to the spectators how can the aesthetic factor in sports be emphasized without risk of losing the favour of the public ?

... A coach or "trainer", should set a good example to his proteges; he should be a man of culture and high principles. He should study his event deeply and also art and nature, and make a critical assessment of himself. Some humble men who have shown great prowess as "trainers", have managed to integrate sports training with other artistic qualities. CERUTTY, coach to the famous Australian Olympic athlete ELLIOT, is a case in point. CERUTTY would mix hard running over sand dunes, withweight lifting, sea swimming, poetry and classical music - a tough balanced diet for anyone!

CULTURAL AND ARTISTIC PROGRAMME FOR THE OLYMPIC GAMES

... The sports facility has long been neglected; the stadium can provide the architect, the landscape gardener, the sculptor with a feast of creative potential. The Finnish Olympic Stadium is one example of sport patronizing the modern artist; a throwback to the unity which marked the Ancient Games and for which both COUBERTIN and, later, MAHEU called. In many countries a Museum of Sport centralizes endeavours to relate-sport, physical education, recreation and, in some cases, "tourism" to other fields of culture including aesthetics.. Film libraries, photographic and postage stamp exhibitions and other visual displays with sport as the theme, are organized by these Museums which flourish in Sweden, Finland, Poland, Hungary, the United States and other countries. Apart from the Lords Cricket Museum we can boast nothing of this kind, despite the fact that almost all modern competitive international sports originated in these islands. It is hoped that among the many facilities planned for the Lee Valley Regional Park a Sports Museum will be one. In 1972 as part of the events associated with the Olympic Games in Munich an extensive "Cultural and Artistic" programme is envisaged. Among members of the Organizing Committee are H. von KARAJAN, Gunther GRASS, Carl ORFF, and Carl ZUCKINZYER. This is yet another attempt to wed "muscle and mind". The design of facilities *might* shed some light on how the physical accommodation of spectators at "tension" sports events could influence their behaviour. It is *just* conceivable that if the aesthetic standards of our major stadia were raised, and people found themselves seated comfortably in elegant surroundings, the ugly spectator incidents, becoming a regular feature of our major sports, could be mollified.

There is a fascinating amount of content in this field of physical education and aesthetics; there are many unsolved problems. Much can be studied as a discipline at university level: some can be taught as aspects of the physical education lesson. This is the significant factor - it must be taught. Like fairplay and sportsmanship, a sense of aesthetic awareness must be deliberately awakened - it is not a natural concomitant of physical activities. For women, with the current emphasis on dance and dance-like movements the task is easier. For men the first task is to show that aesthetic should not be a synonym of *feminine*. Whilst dance forms could of course further enrich the male's movement experience, much more could be done immediately to draw out the aesthetic elements from the dynamic sports which he currently practises.

The physical education teacher has the unenviable but challenging task of first creating aesthetic awareness in the exciting, fundamental, areas of sports and physical education and then attempting to encourage the transfer of any understanding which has evolved to what GEBLEWICZ calls the "aesthetics of daily life".

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