

Book Reviews

*What experience and history teaches is this—that people
and governments never have learned anything from history,
or acted on principles deduced from it.*
Georg Wilhelm Hegel

Cavallo, Dominick. *Muscles and Morals: Organized Playgrounds and Urban Reform, 1880-1920*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981.

Conventional Western thought and intellectual development has conditioned students to understand the dilemmas of philosophic and theological debates in dualisms. Good versus evil, nature versus nurture, urban versus rural, etc. have provided the Western world with its greatest debates as well as focusing discourses and research on the human condition. Dominick Cavallo studies those individuals whose thought provided the critical underpinnings for organized playgrounds in the period between 1880 and 1920. He finds, not surprisingly, that the seminal thinkers found their inspiration for the advocacy of organized, adult directed playgrounds in the tensions between immigrant and native American, between feminine morality and masculine values, as well as between rampant individualism and conformity to roles.

The Playground Association of America was organized in 1906 by a variety of play advocates all of whom had basic disagreements on the reasons that playgrounds were necessary, but all of whom agreed that these institutions were a necessity in the prevailing urban oriented, immigrant dominated society of progressive America. According to Cavallo, the playground movement did not derive from a simple design which sought to control society (indeed, he argues that all reform is social control motivated), but rather, Cavallo argues, it came from a desire to inculcate into young Americans certain desirable attributes which could best be taught through physicalism and sporting activity. In short, the body taught the rest of the being (spirit or soul-another dualism) proper modes of action and life. Thus organized play and particularly team sporting events taught the individual to subordinate his instincts to proper roles. Thus sport was not simply to be used to achieve another end, but was, in the eyes of the psychologists and biologists, a natural phase of the ontological cycle, which if left unfulfilled stifled socially desirable attributes.

Cavallo carefully and thoughtfully analyzes the impact of Luther Gulick, G. Stanley Hall, John Dewey, James M. Baldwin, Jane Addams, and Jacob Riis on the playground movement. Cavallo, an historian, makes significant use of psychological and sociological theories in this multidisciplinary vol-

ume in order to create a better synthesis of learning. What he does not succeed at is the production of a readable and stimulating volume.

Cavallo is moderately successful in moving the sport historian beyond a simple approach to play as a means of social control. But he fails to convince the skeptic that these scholars and reformers did not feel the need to regain social control of a chaotic society. We know however from Cavallo's work that these men and women had well-thought-out and empirically derived biological, psychological, and sociological foundations for their attitudes. But when studied as a group, Cavallo fails to disprove the broadly held thesis of social, economic, political, and sport historians that the heart and soul of progressive reform came from a diversified desire by separate groups of disaffected Americans to control those who threatened the perceived status quo. As a former colleague of mine at Texas Tech frequently remarked, "if it walks like a duck and quacks like a duck, it is undoubtedly a duck." What Hall, Dewey, Addams, Gulick and Riis sought to achieve and what Cavallo carefully explicates from their ideas sounds like social control of the young during a period when controls seemed to be in short supply.

Capital University

Harry Jebson, Jr.