

Although Sansone's book is intended, in part, as a refutation of the errors committed by less insightful scholars, he has chosen the high road rather than the low one. This choice befits his sometimes cavalier tone.

It is not my intention to subject the work of Guttmann, Mandell and others to an extended and rigorous critique. If the thesis to be propounded below, namely that there is no essential difference between modern sport and the sport of other and earlier societies, can be shown to be correct, then such a critique would seem unnecessary. After all, once I have constructed a new and wholly satisfactory stable, there will be no need for me to clean out that of Augeas as well. (p. 6)

Perhaps it is appropriate for Augeas to ask if the new stable built by the modern Herakles is indeed "wholly satisfactory" or if it is, as its builder disarmingly suggests, "a crock of self-evident nonsense" (p. 6). Since Sansone does at various moments in his text mention the positions which he seeks to dismiss, a word about his critique is in order before I venture a brief comment on the above-mentioned stable.

Citing *From Ritual to Record* for two examples of the connection between religion and sport, Sansone asserts that I assume "there was *always* a connection between religion and sport" (p. 10). But what I actually wrote was that primitive societies "frequently incorporated running, jumping, throwing, wrestling and even ball playing in their religious rituals and ceremonies" and that sports "may indeed have entered the lives of primitive adults primarily in connection with some form of religious significance" (pp. 16, 19). Not even in my oversimplified table, "The Characteristics of Sports in Various Ages" (p. 54), did I indicate that sports were *always* connected with religion.

Somewhat later in his initial chapter, Sansone writes that I sought "to show that professionalism is a logical extension of the ideals of sport as it had developed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, inasmuch as professionalism ensures equality of opportunity for all participants" (p. 65). Complimenting before lambasting, Sansone opines that my "clever argument" turns out to be "specious sophism" (*FRR*, p. 65). Here, too, Sansone has unfortunately failed to read the text he wishes to criticize. I thought my position was clear. Professionalization, I have argued in *From Ritual to Record* and elsewhere, is an aspect of specialization. Professionals are those persons, whether intercollegiate basketball players or NFL linemen, who specialize in sports performances. The "crucial factor in professionalization is not money but time-how much of a person's life is dedicated to the achievement of athletic excellence?" (*FRR*, p. 39). Needless (or perhaps, given Sansone's ability to misread, needful) to say, I never asserted that "professionalism ensures equality of opportunity for all

participants.” Professionalism, in the sense that I have defined it, is a part of a complex of systematically related characteristics which does, in ideal-type form, include equality of opportunity, but that is quite another matter.

One more instance of misrepresentation should suffice. Arguing, despite my discussion of numerous secular rituals, that I believe modern sports to be devoid of ritual, Sansone goes to considerable trouble to demonstrate that secular rituals are possible, a truth which I have never doubted. A single example ought to suffice: I refer in *From Ritual to Record* to John Wooden’s “invariant pregame ritual” (p. 41) and suggest that his odd ritual behavior did not interfere with the instrumental rationality of the game of basketball.

What most puzzles me about Sansone’s behavior in his first chapter is that he does not seem to recognize that his exhaustive discussion of ritualized religious elements in Greek sports supports rather than casts doubt upon my efforts to draw a contrast between Greek and modern sports. It may be that his jaunty dismissals are motivated by a desire to seem even more original than he actually is.

If this suspicion is justified, it is rather a shame because Sansone’s work is very original indeed. He defines not only Greek athletic contests but *all* sports as “the ritual sacrifice of physical energy” (p. 37). This definition Sansone proudly advances as “the most, indeed the only, satisfactory definition that has so far been advanced” (p. xv). Like the Greeks whom he studies, Sansone refuses the sham virtue of false modesty.

Most of *Greek Athletics and the Genesis of Sport* is a gloss on Sansone’s universal definition. He attempts to prove that *all* sports, ancient and modern, can be traced back to the needs and habits of prehistoric hunters. His ingenious analysis provides answers to a number of questions which have vexed generations of specialists. Why did Greek athletes anoint themselves with oil? Why did they favor naked competitions? Expanding the work of Karl Meuli and Walter Burkert, Sansone argues in every case that the roots of the antique can be found in the prehistoric. Experts like Donald Kyle are obviously in a better position than I am to judge the adequacy of Sansone’s anthropological analysis of the prehistoric sources of Greek sports rituals. Jasper Griffin’s generous assessment in the *New York Review of Books* (9/29/88) concludes with the remark that the book is “suggestive rather than convincing” (p. 6).

“Sport,” comments Griffin, “is not a simple phenomenon, and probably no single explanation will do justice to it . . .” (p. 6). Sansone’s bold definition does indeed seem too expansive. Do we really want to say that a spontaneous race run between two schoolgirls or even an elaborate event like the Indianapolis 500 is “the ritual sacrifice of physical energy”? I am doubtful. Can an explanation purporting to trace sports back to the experience of primitive hunters account for women’s sports as well as men’s? Once again, I am doubtful. And I am confident that any careful reader of sports history will be struck, again and again, by the fact that there *is*, contrary to Sansone’s disclaimers, an “essential difference between modern sport and the sport of other and earlier societies.” I agree with Griffin that Sansone’s ideas “will have to be taken seriously” (p. 6), but I recommend that they also be taken with a

grain of salt-especially when Sansone generalizes from the Greek experience to all of humankind. We may quarrel about the exact nature of the difference between their sports and ours and we may be forced by negative criticism to revise and modify our views, as I have been, but we should be wary of anyone who sees no essential difference between a chariot race at Olympia and the women's final at Wimbledon.

Amherst College

Allen Guttmann