Published by:
Sport and Wellbeing Press
University of Central Lancashire, Preston, UK.

Journal of Qualitative Research in Sports Studies

Volume 13, Issue 1, December 2019

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ISSN: 1754-2375
ISBN: 978-0-9955744-4-1 (200 pages)
JQRSS Article No: 7/10-13-1-2019-PG[83]-133

To cite this article:

Sellers, V. and Palmer, C. (2019) Sport and the aesthetic.
Journal of Qualitative Research in Sports Studies, 13, 1, 97-110

Self-archived URL link to this article:
https://www.academia.edu/41373995/Val_Sellers_and_Clive_Palmer_2019_Sport_and_the_aesthetic._Journal_of_Qualitative_Research_in_Sports_Studies_13_1_97-110

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Sport and the aesthetic

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Keywords: *aesthetics; appreciation; art in sport; meaning; performance qualities*

EDITOR'S NOTE: Dear reader, warning! A curious case of learning and time-travel lies ahead. Mr Val Sellers wrote this paper for his 'in-service' B.Ed. in 1976, some twelve years after completing his Certificate in Education in the 1960s, at York St. John (1960-63). Val Sellers was a fully-fledged PE teacher (rugby player, dancer and gymnast) *before* he did his undergraduate degree at Chelsea College in Brighton, Sussex. Clive Palmer was 10 years old when Val, at 35 years, wrote this essay for his teacher, Dr Graham McFee. Then, 25 years later at Liverpool John Moores University, Val Sellers taught and supervised Clive through his undergraduate, Masters and PhD degrees (Doctorate in gymnastics) when Clive was 35 years old. Curiously, Professor Graham McFee was Clive's External Examiner on a PhD thesis which I could not have completed without Val's meticulous help and total belief in me. Graham was also very helpful to me in this learning process, supporting various research initiatives of mine as an Early Career Researcher. Zipping forwards another 20 years, Clive now edits JQRSS, which has a distinctive pedagogical remit for student-teacher collaborative writing. While Val is now happily retired, philosophising down in Cornwall at the U3A, this paper provides a valuable glimpse back to the intellectual engagement for teaching PE in the 1970s. It also means that Val's student (me, now) gets to write with Val, but as if he were a B.Ed. student back in 1976 (notwithstanding a 45-year gap). So, with my mentoring hat on, and in Graham McFee's stead, I have polished the text, corrected some spellings and sorted out the references as Val did for me, and I have done for many others over the years. Enjoy.

Abstract

This paper discusses some perspectives as to whether the status of a form of art can claimed for sporting activities. I would like to question the assumptions contained within this point of view, by examining the idea of sporting activities being open to, and objects of, aesthetic appraisal; but also to go further and question the idea of sporting activities ever achieving the status of an art form. I would like to hypothesise that while a sporting activity can be an object of aesthetic appraisal, sports cannot attain the status of an art form.

Sport cannot as yet give us what we are offered by artistic expression and culture, namely a meaning which enables us to transcend the temporary, to transcend all that is ephemeral, and to discover something of eternal value.

René Maheu
Director General of UNESCO (1962-74)

(from: W.J. Anthony, 1968)

ISSN: 1754-2375 [print]
JQRSS Article No: 7/10-13-1-2019-PG[83]-133
Web: https://uclan.academia.edu/ClivePalmer/Journal-of-Qualitative-Research-in-Sports-Studies

Introduction

In order to pursue my hypothesis, I will initially look towards the notion that there is such a thing as an aesthetic point of view; thereafter, consider various sporting activities in order to establish what features there are inherent within them that could aid the claim that they may achieve the status of forms of art. Once the above are established, I shall try to substantiate my hypothesis by looking at some features of art in a central case; Dance, that is accepted by society as an art form, and compare them with the features of sporting activities that have perhaps the strongest claims to being forms of art, namely; Trampolining, Springboard Diving and Olympic Gymnastics.

The aesthetic point of view

Before trying to assert my hypothesis, it is important that the idea of the way one perceives an object or event be discussed in order to give some indication of what the aesthetic point of view might be.

Whenever an object is perceived, one does so with a totality of perception, that is, it is perceived as a whole with a limited number of concepts, dependent upon the point of view from which one perceives the object. When the object is perceived deliberately for a longer period of time, or more frequently from a particular point of view, one's perception of an object may be heightened because more features are observed. For example, one could observe an antique chair from at least three contrasting points of view, each of which demand a different sort of appreciation and therefore, different concepts of knowledge about the chair. One could view the chair from a functional point of view and examine the features of the chair for comfort, for example, the angle of backrest, position of arms, height from the ground, or shape of the seat. Or one could examine the chair from the point of view of being an antique and therefore of worth as an investment. Here, comfort would not come into consideration, but certainly the age of the chair, the type of wood, who made it, how old it was would determine its worth, or prospect as an investment. One could, however, appreciate the chair for itself; its design, the shape of its legs or back, the quality of the grain in the wood etc. The appearance of the chair would be the point of view from which it was being considered. This sort of consideration could be described as being aesthetic. The appearance of the object is considered, not from any functional or purposive standpoint, but for the sake of the object itself.

Because there are many points of view from which to perceive objects, similar to the third aesthetic point of view indicated above, it follows that any object or happening may be perceived for its intrinsic features and its own sake. This includes sporting activities - the features of which may then be considered from an aesthetic point of view.

Sporting activities and the aesthetic point of view

I have claimed that anything may be perceived from an aesthetic point of view, or become an object of aesthetic appraisal, but in order to indicate how sporting activities may be considered from the aesthetic point of view I shall have to divide the area of interest into two distinct entities. Firstly, looking at sporting activities from a spectator's point of view and secondly from the participators point of view, because both appreciate the activities aesthetically but in an essentially different way.

The majority of sporting activities take place in front of an audience who choose to watch the activity probably because they have a knowledge of, or familiarity with the particular sport. Such an audience is a discerning audience who know the activity well, know the participants well and therefore go to the activity to appreciate the spectacle. One sort of appreciation is very partisan, with 'so long as they win' attitudes being the only form of appreciation the spectators bring to the activity. Clearly this sort of spectator does not really want to appreciate aesthetically the happening before him. Other spectators want to view the spectacle in order to derive pleasure and a sense of satisfaction from watching a skilful performance of either individuals or a team, not because of a winning end but because of the features of the sport itself, the way it is played and the skills displayed within it. There is a ready sense of evaluation on the spectators' part about the worth of what is displayed; a sense of good or bad relating to the performance with reasons being available for judgements given. Very often the reasons relate to an aesthetic appreciation of the performance and the features within the skills displayed that are publically available for evaluation. The spectator, to a degree, identifies with the performer and perhaps gains a sense of satisfaction from seeing and appreciating the qualities that are inherent in a skilful sporting activity.

What are these inherent qualities that may be aesthetically perceived and appreciated in a skilful performance? Possibly a sense of grace, speed, efficiency or economy of effort, balance, rhythm, an ease of performance, and even a sense of elan (speed) highlight skilful performance. The higher up one goes in level, the more readily is perceivable the epitome of the above features. This is perhaps an indication as to why dedicated spectators with a knowledge of and a love for particular sports, choose to watch the professional exponents of their sport. It is really only the professional (professional in the sense that they devote lots of time, effort and dedication to the attainment of a high level of skilfulness) who is an expert;

- one who feels he has attained a certain level of mastery of all the inherent elements of a particular sport;
- the necessary level of skill and physical co-ordination in relation to an environment and probably an implement such as a golf club, cricket bat or skis;

- the knowledge of tactics, an awareness of the means to achieve a successful end, and a psychological determination to achieve that end.

Although all sportsmen consider how they execute their skills in order to achieve a desired end, some sports have the manner in which the skills are executed built into the evaluation system of the sport. Evolving from the history of particular sports an aesthetic element has become incorporated in the norms and values of the sport, and is perceivable as such to an educated audience. For example, a sporting innovation in gymnastics is initially imagined, experimented with, tried, and finally executed. Once performance has happened, then a clarification process is embarked upon to present the innovation in an aesthetically pleasing way. Thus there is an evolution process from imagination of innovation to performance presentation.

In relation to an Olympic gymnastic vault, Best (1975:45) claims that, 'the term *vault* incorporates certain implicit aesthetic norms, which make it a vault and not just a way of getting over a gym-horse' (or vaulting box). Whilst not wishing to deny this claim, since it is certainly true when it relates to competitive gymnastics, it ought to be understood that the statement only becomes a true, when the level of vaulting begins to attain a standard above the minimum laid down by the International Gymnastic Federation as to what constitutes a vault. That is to say, a two footed take off from a spring-board, two hands touching the horse, and a two-footed landing with the whole body passing over the horse. If a movement over the box does not fulfil the statutory minimum requirement, when, for example, only one hand touches the box, then the movement is not a 'vault' in the accepted competitive sense of the term. It is certainly a way of getting over a box but it fails to fulfil the minimum rule requirement that constitutes the meaning of the term 'vault' in a competitive situation. When however, the execution of a vault fails to meet aesthetic norms then its worth is reflected in any evaluation and it becomes merely a bad vault. The spectator can clearly see and evaluate features of aesthetic form relating to a performance. In a vault, for instance, he sees when legs are straight and toes pointed, and when they are not, thereby correspondingly evaluating the worth of the vault – either as just a bad one, or given a low score against set criteria.

The performer cannot see his performance, unless he has access to a video-recorder, but he is certainly aware of the standard of his presentation. His awareness is, of course, personal, because he can only *feel* the features desired of his performance. Perhaps his coach has spent time adjusting body parts to correct a body line, or to shape a gesture, but ultimately the performer has to execute the features and therefore his own physical awareness and his perceptual senses must be the source of reference of his appreciation. He must physically feel when his legs are straight, toes pointed, and recognise the physical sensation that presents the most aesthetically pleasing line to an external observer, in relation to the norms of the

sport. The performer's appreciation comes with the actual performance as an intrinsic part of the action. The knowledge of his surety of execution alongside his awareness of having fulfilled the in-built norms of the sport, all amount to an aesthetic appreciation of his performance. Best (1975:43) hypothesises that when a batsman executes the perfect stroke 'the aesthetic satisfaction of the batsman is intrinsic to what he is doing. The aesthetic is not a distinct but perhaps concurrent activity'.

There is another facet of aesthetic appreciation the performer has access to, and that is retrospective. Perhaps this is a contentious issue - the notion of appreciation through memory, but performers of sporting activities have good and bad performances and their only reference for evaluation is their personal feelings with regard to their execution, *how it was*, alongside their knowledge of the criteria of execution, or how it should be. When the two correspond then probably a positive appreciation results. On a personal note I can recall when I played a good stroke in a squash game, so when I make a statement about a that stroke, perhaps "I enjoyed that particular stroke in the game this morning", my reference for such an aesthetic evaluation is my memory of the stroke and how well it matched the criteria of what constitutes a good squash stroke of this particular type.

Returning to the wider field of sports generally, some sports have a sense of the aesthetic built into their evaluation procedures. Although all sports are outcome-orientated (they have a definite focus – maybe it is to score more goals than the opposition in a football game, or to achieve the fastest time in order to win a competition), some individual sports have aesthetic requirements stipulated within the rules governing the sport. Referring to Olympic gymnastic floorwork, Allison (1963:57) states: 'consider speed variations, and avoid monotonous rhythm', and, 'Three points be awarded for general impression, i.e. elegance and surety of execution'.

These aesthetic considerations come under the surely dubious umbrella title of 'artistic merit', but nevertheless, they clearly relate to the mode of execution of the activity. Therefore, the performer, the spectator and the evaluator have to consider a gymnastic floor exercise from at least two points of view, the functional attainment of skill level in relation to the goal of winning, and the aesthetic in relation to the intrinsic features of skilful performance, simply because there are two separate marks awarded for these two sides of a performance. Both are however, added together to achieve a sum total which is of course, the reference to find a competition winner. Similarly, out of a competitive context an ice-dance performance or some other sporting exercise may be aesthetically appreciated for its intrinsic qualities, but this does not necessarily elevate the status to that of an art form.

Sport and the features of sport that aid its claim to be a form of art

To take part in a sporting activity is to enter a competitive situation in order to achieve an end goal of winning. Although it is possible to take part in a sport for the pleasure of participation. Indeed, Pierre de Coubertin echoes this sentiment in the Olympic oath when he indicates that it is not winning that is important, but taking part. However, the more usual aim is to try to win and in fact the Olympic motto is *Further, Higher, Faster!* All sporting activities have a definable aim or end to be achieved, from scoring more goals than their opponents, to climbing Everest. Within sport this aim indicates a sense of competition against an adversary, either another human or humans, time, distance, weight, or nature and the elements. Having to include aesthetic considerations within the exercises of some sports merely becomes an additional adversary within the competitive conditions of those particular sports.

The only sport which seems to incorporate 'further' with the manner (aesthetic) of achievement in its evaluation is ski-jumping, where the marriage of distance achieved with aesthetic form (posture, balance, stability in this example), is recognised directly in the evaluation procedures. Other sports like ice dancing, trampolining, diving and Olympic gymnastics recognise the same dichotomy indirectly but by issuing separate evaluation marks. This small group of sports may claim a strong similarity with forms of art, in that the aim of the sport, to win, cannot be considered apart from, or separate to, the way they achieve that end. As Best (1975:46) indicates, 'they are similar to the arts in that the purpose cannot be considered apart from the manner of achieving it. There is an intrinsic end, one which cannot be identified independently of the means'. It ought to be pointed out here though, that in the majority of sports, the most technically efficient style of performance seems to achieve the most successful end. There are notable exceptions to this rule both relating to individual performers like Douglas Pirie (GB) who had a most ungainly, inefficient running style, but nevertheless achieved considerable athletic success (Olympian: 1952, 1956 [silver] and 1960), and to individual activities like the 'Fosbury flop' (after Dick Fosbury, AUS) style of high-jumping, undoubtedly the most efficient technique of jumping, but not particularly pleasing to watch. Efficient style has evolved to be recognised by society as pleasing to watch. The criteria of efficient performance have become an attraction, and one of the reasons why spectators want to see high level performance of sports. In sports where efficient performance is married with aesthetic considerations there is an understandably high spectator appeal.

Spectator appeal as a point of reference, enables one to point to another feature of sporting activities that could be indicated as possible argument for their being forms of art. The whole spectacle of sporting activities fulfils the Aristotelian notion of unity he claimed for drama. He claimed action, a time span within twenty-four

hours and a place, as being the criteria for unity in Greek drama. Because the sporting spectacle meets these criteria, then it constitutes an argument for sporting activities being dramatic forms of art. Indeed, within a sporting event a spectator is able to see dramatic elements such as tragedy, human emotion and action climax on the field of play, whilst they themselves are able to react pretty much as a Greek chorus with cries, swayings, cheers and chants to echo the action.

Probably the strongest case of sports that claim the status of forms of art are those of ice-dancing and Olympic gymnastics. I would like therefore, to concentrate on the features of these two particular sports that aid their claims to be forms of art. The strongest claim lies within the elements which constitute the make-up of the sports. That is to say, the skilful movement of the human body's moving to music, (both of these being recognised as central cases of forms of art. Music is accepted as an art in its own right, as is human movement in the context of a dance) automatically makes the sports using these elements, forms of art. I would like to regard the linking of movement with music as one feature of these sports because within the context of the sports, the performers must endeavour to marry bodily and musical action. In the rules for Women's Olympic Gymnastics, for example, it is stated that the character of the music should correspond with the presentation of the exercise (Allison, 1963:52).

This principle is the same for both sports; the athlete, (gymnast, or skater) must 'go with' the music. Actions must be designed to correspond with the tempo and any crescendo or climax within the musical piece chosen for the exercise. This marriage of action with the chosen music's character is termed 'musical interpretation, being evaluated within the sport as a positive or negative feature of any performance. June Allison (1963:44), writing about this particular marriage of music and action, states,

> The wide selection of music at our disposal enables a gymnast to choose something which is in keeping with her type of work. [She illustrates this statement with the following example] Ingrid Fost of East Germany is extremely fond of, and good at executing very fast spins and butterfly legs and so her music allows for this flair.

To some degree this marriage is now being falsified in top-flight gymnastics by the employment of a pianist to play the music whilst watching the gymnast perform, thereby lessening the need for the gymnast to interpret the music:

> The success of the combination of music and gymnastics lies in the fact that a top-line gymnast has her own pianist (Allison, 1963:45).

This, however, does not negate the claim that the performer uses music to highlight physical action in exactly the same way as a dancer does within the context of a ballet.

The designing of a sporting exercise both in ice-dancing and women's Olympic gymnastics is called by its practitioners ‘choreography, that is, an exercise is said to be choreographed. As Allison (1963:45) points out, ‘on the Continent [Europe], floor-work is aptly named artistic gymnastics because of the choreographic qualities woven into the fabric of rather ordinary dancing steps and spins’.

The linking of the various elements that go together to create the whole and the designing of the marriage of music and action, are what constitute the term choreography in relation to both sports. Because choreography is the art of composition in relation to human movement in a dance context, the use of this term in relation to the building of a sports exercise constitutes a claim for the sport to be a form of art.

Art and the possible criteria of evaluation of forms of art

To aid my hypothesis, that is, to refute the claims made by sporting activities to be forms of art, I feel that I must look towards the concept of art in order to establish what the features of a particular work of art are, that contribute to their being recognised as such.

As a concept, art has a historical tradition in relation to a particular culture or society from which it derives its norms and values. This means that members of that particular culture are able to discriminate and make judgements about objects or happenings within the cultural norms established. The judgements range from simple statements of taste or preference, to reasoned judgements based upon the socially evolved rules and comprehension of the presented object. For example, any Western audience watching a performance of *Kathakali* dancing[1] may appreciate something of the spectacle, but an audience of the same cultural origin will have a greater understanding of the dances: and will be more able to critically evaluate a particular performance. Understanding the meaning of a particular object or happening occurs in reference to the context; that is, the particular cultural and historical tradition. For example, the body markings, as a beautifying practice of some African peoples is seen and understood as such by the particular tribes, whereas any European might regard the practice as distasteful and physically harmful. Writing in relation to the art of dance, Best (1974:171) says,

> Meaning demands a context. It does not depend on something else lying behind it. Roughly, the meaning of a particular movement is given by the whole dance, the meaning of the dance is given by the dance tradition of which it is a part or extension, and the meaning of that tradition is given by the culture, society, form of life to which it belongs.

[1] *Kathakalī* is a major form of classical Indian dance. It is a ‘story play’ genre of art, but one distinguished by the elaborately colourful make-up, costumes and face masks that the traditionally male actor-dancers wear.

Because the meaning and content of an object in an art-sense demands a context, it is also open to interpretation, but not an unlimited one. Still referring to the art of dance, Best (1974:172) says: Though a particular movement may be open to various interpretations, this does not imply that we can simply choose any meaning whatever for it. The limits of interpretation are linked to the meaning of, say, a gesture, which is in turn linked to the historical and cultural traditions of a society. For example, our cultural tradition of nodding in order to say yes to something means, in fact, the opposite in a Mongolian society.

As an important feature in relation to an object, in order to become a work of art, is to belong to that class of objects which certain societies have classed as being works of art in relation to their historical traditions and culture. Best (1974) hypothesises that the medium out of which they were created must have the potential to make a comment about life-issues. This points to two important considerations relating to art itself, and to the claims of some sports to achieve art status. In relation to art, to potentially have the status of art, the object must evolve from a potential art medium such as wood, metal, paint, plastic, clay, stone, sound or movement. The inherent qualities of which an artist may exploit, if he so desires, to make comment about human life issues or emotions, for example, Man's inhumanity to man, the cruelty of the elements, or, sadness might be examples of such issues.

How these points have relevance to the claims of sport to be forms of art, I will cover in the next section of the paper. However, a development of these points is another important feature of art, that is, the fact that there is not a distinction between what is expressed in an object or happening, and the form of expression. Best (1975:41) claims that:

> Where art is concerned the distinction between the means and ends is inapplicable, there is a peculiarly intimate connection between the form of an object of aesthetic assessment i.e. the particular medium of expression and its content, i.e. what is expressed in it.

Referring to *A Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* Best (1975:42) indicates that 'the best way of expressing the content of *A Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* is in the particular form of that novel. This point has important implications with regard to sport, especially the use of music in ice-dance and gymnastics. But in relation to art, it is important to realise that if one were to try to extract what is expressed in a particular work of art, (which is an impossible task as already indicated above) and transpose it in to another medium, then the whole meaning of what is expressed will be altered. The external form of expression will have been changed, and therefore the meaning of what is expressed has got to change also; the content cannot be the same as that expressed in the original form. Such a transposition really amounts to a new form of expression which could be a new work of art. Once a new form of

expression comes into being, the different criteria of evaluation, particular to the new work must be applied. What is expressed in an art object then, can only be expressed in that way and no other. The means of expression are indistinguishable from the ends.

The organisation of features of objects or happenings in relationship to one another to create a whole artefact can be described in art as being the process of composition. This process may be an intellectual one, of organising features in a particular way, varying or developing particular aspects in order to achieve the greater whole that is the complete work. It may, however become a random organisation of features relying upon a chance relationship to create the wholeness of the work. Both these forms of composition, classical and antiteleological [*avante-guarde* in dance], refer to the underlying idea of the work, and as such are forms of expression of a particular idea and may be understood as such. The composition of a work may be pointed to as one feature that may be understood, analysed and evaluated in terms of worth. In the central case of the art form, dance, this compositional process is termed choreography, and the artist related to this process, the choreographer. The work of a choreographer may be said to be two-fold in nature: to conceive the piece of work, and to use dancers to bring the work into being. In relation to the first part of his work, he has to design patterns of movements in relation to the idea of the work; choose the body actions, movement qualities and movement dynamics that correspond to the idea of the dance, possibly referring to a human theme like Man's inhumanity to man.

Once the dance motifs (the designed patterns of movement) are evolved, then these features of the work have to be ordered in a sequentially unfolding way and over a time duration, in order that the sense of the work be communicated to an audience. This may at times involve varying or developing particular features of the work, in order that the unfolding nature of the work may be more readily understood. With regard to the second part of his work, the choreographer must teach his designed ideas to a dancer or dancers and then both teach and evolve the construction or form of the dance, so that it best communicates the idea of the dance though its performance. In relation to music, the choreographer at times designs his motifs to go with, or correspond to the tempo, melody line or crescendo in the chosen music. But at times he designs the relationship between music and movement ideas to clash and highlight each other by their incongruity, where as in the sports of ice dancing and gymnastics, the rules state that the performers must always remain in harmony with the musical accompaniment. I should to point out too, that in the case of dance choreography there does not have to be music to accompany action in order for there to be a choreography. Much of Merce Cunningham's *Rain Forest* is danced without musical accompaniment.

Can sporting activities be forms of art?

In order to carry through my hypothesis, I now need to point to the differences between the features of sport and art, whilst accepting the fact that there are strong similarities in some cases.

The observation of the aesthetic features in an appropriate context indicates a significant difference between sport and art. The large majority of sporting activities do not need a specific cultural context in order that they be appreciated and understood. Generally, the aim of the activity can readily be perceived without reference to a cultural or historical context, but this is not the case in relation to art. As I have already indicated the concept 'art' exists within a cultural and historical context and reference to these needs to be made in order that an art work may be understood. Observations and evaluations of sporting activities may cross cultural barriers and allow more universal comment. A football game for example could be discussed by a large number of the worlds' cultures, whereas observations and evaluations about a work of art, a *Kathakali* dance for example, cannot.

A similarity of audience participation in both sport and art may be recognised, but what is seen by an audience can very different. The drama seen on a field of play is only incidental to the purpose of playing, which is usually to win. Any emotion seen in this context is only dramatic in a superficial sense of the word, where players react to a situation, and not in an artistic sense of representing an emotion in the dramatic context of say a play in a theatre. They are playing; they are not acting at playing the game.

Looking towards the sports with stronger claims to the status of being a form of art, I think it is vital that we recognise the fact that in the cases of trampolining, ice-dancing, diving and Olympic gymnastics, the similarities between the end aim and the means of achieving the end are comparable to those of art. In the case of art, the end result of a particular form of expression may only be achieved in the particular form it takes, and no other. Within a wider sporting context, the result of winning may be achieved in many different ways but within the sports in question, the way one achieves the end result is important and central to the activity. In these sports, as in art, the means of attaining the end result are intrinsic to the activity.

Narrowing down the sports under consideration to those with perhaps the strongest claim to art status, namely women's Olympic gymnastic floor-work and ice-dancing, their claim must be evaluated in relation to a central case of art and one crucially employing human movement, namely dance.

It is true that the sports named, and dance use the body, its actions and music as constituent ingredients. Where the difference arises is in how they are used in the

activities. In these sports, music is used to highlight the action, and the demands of the sport ask the competitor to interpret the music chosen through action within the exercise. Within the art form of dance, if music is used, it is used to highlight action similarly, but interpretation is rarely asked for. Martha Graham in a television interview, said that dancers lean on music, but they do not attempt to interpret it.

As already indicated, the rules of these sports demand harmony between music and action, but in the case of dance, music may be used to go against or contrast the action. It need not be related to the action at all, merely, perhaps, present a mood in relation to the intended content of a dance. In these sports the music is chosen because the performer finds the music appropriate for his style of exercise, but within the art of dance, if music is chosen, it is usually chosen with regard to its appropriateness to the underlying idea of the dance.

Perhaps another great area of difference between the two sports under consideration and art, lies in the realisation that the end product in the sporting context is an exercise designed to fulfil a specific aim of winning a competition. Accepting that there are such things as competitive music festivals, a point which seems to contradict my argument, whereas the point of designing a sporting exercise is to fulfil the ultimate intention of the competition; to try to win. The point of composing any piece of art work, probably, is not primarily to win a competition.

Probably both art and sports are guided by rules in relation to them as activities, but again within the world of sports, usually they are tabulated and any deviation from the guiding rules are penalised in relation to the end result. In both sports for example, any lengthening of the time duration of the exercise is penalised by a points deduction. The criteria governing art however could never be strictly set down and any breach of the rules could be seen as possibly extending the concept of art, maybe as a unique feature of a particular artefact, and one that gives it a definite worth.

A summary of this point of difference might be that the rules, governing the sports in question do not really allow for artistic licence whereas the art of dance and other art forms do. Anything superfluous to the exercise is seen as detracting from the exercise, the trivial introduced for its own sake lowers the standard of the exercise. Normally, the content of a competition exercise (for gymnastics) is set out in the form of guidance to the performers. For example: An exercise should contain at least three C class movements, six B class movements and seven A class movements. (Berger, 1975: FIG Code of Points). With equal guidance as to what constitutes movements of particular degree of difficulty.

In order to build an exercise in Artistic Gymnastics, the performer and coach merely decide upon particular actions they would like to include, choose suitable

music that goes with the dynamic and rhythm of the chosen actions and then design the marriage of music with those actions. Within this process there is no variation or development of idea, nor any significant juxtaposition of movement idea, save for ease of performance and transition from one action to another, as there would need to be in the art form of choreography, in the manner in which the term is used and understood in relation to the art of dance.

When performing an exercise, the gymnast or skater is required by the rules to 'express their personality', the degree to which this happens is evaluated in the 'artistic merit' mark awarded to each exercise performance. The expression of personality through the medium of movement is a difficult thing to do and even more difficult to evaluate, but within these two particular sports, personal qualities brought to movement are encouraged and asked for, whereas in the art of dance the performer is often asked to submerge their personal qualities in order that the content of the dance may come through the chosen movement ideas. In the sports-context, there is no desire to express anything other than the personal how well and with how much grace and elegance the chosen movements are performed, whereas the form of dance may incorporate this feature at times, but it has the potential also to make a comment about human issues. The ballet *Green Table*, choreographed by Kurt Jooss (1932) is a good example of a dance making a comment about a political situation (Jewish persecution by the Nazis). The rules of the sports do not allow the amount of freedom that the art form has to do just this.

Conclusion

The claim that both ice dance and gymnastics use dance steps from ballet within their exercises, which therefore must make them an art form, does not really amount to a claim at all, because it is not what movements are used that makes sport or art, but the context in which they are used. Ballet attitudes and steps may quite legitimately be used in ice dance or gymnastics, as gymnastic actions may be used in modern ballet. It is not what the movements are, but with what intention they are used which makes them part of an exercise and not part of an art form, or vice versa. Human movement can be aesthetically pleasing to watch, and sports may be appreciated from an aesthetic point of view, but I do not feel that I can accept that some sports are forms of art.

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JQRSS Author Profiles

Val Sellers[1] after his teacher training at York St John, 1960-63, taught Physical Education at Ferry-Fryston [new] Secondary Modern high school in Castleford, Yorkshire, from 1963 to 1969. A year's secondment to The Studio in Manchester (est. Lisa Ullman and Rudolf Laban) to teach dance in 1969, was his stepping stone to I.M. Marsh College of Physical Education in Liverpool. Val's in-service B.Ed. at Chelsea School, Sussex, was followed up with an MA in Philosophy at Leeds University. I.M. Marsh College then became part of Liverpool Polytechnic in the 1980s, which later became Liverpool John Moores University in 1992. Val retired to Cornwall in 2002 where he continues to philosophize with friends at the U3A; University of the Third Age.

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Reviewer Comments

This paper presents a philosophical discussion about sport and art / sport as art, that is rarely explored in the performance-pedagogy based literature of contemporary PE in the UK. Personally, I too was taught by Val during my PGCE PE course over 25 years ago. I remember to this day, Val dressed in full Olympic gymnastics attire demonstrating and then explaining the most complicated yet fluid movements to a group of Neolithic football, rugby and hockey players, being reprogrammed to teach young people PE. Despite our complete lack of movement literacy and engrained team sports mentality, I remember vividly that we were always engaged and inspired by Val and his passion for gymnastics. Looking back on the attitudes of my fellow students all those years ago, little seems to have changed in modern day PE. Too often the value of movement, whether as art or sport, is undervalued by teachers who desire the comfort of more populist activities, secure in their own knowledge and proficiency at the games they will oversee. Where is the depth of intellectual thought now that is so evident in this paper? Where is the space for teachers to deeply philosophise about all areas of PE in order to develop their own and others' professional practice? Where is the time for teachers to investigate new concepts, experiment, reflect and learn in the outcome-based subject that PE has become? The one thing I do remember about Val's sessions was that although they were never easy for me physically, uncomfortable in fact, they did make me think about the nature of movement and the nature of teaching PE. For that I will always be grateful.