

Altering the Narrative of Champions: Recognition, Excellence, Fairness, and Inclusion

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ABSTRACT. This paper is an examination of the concept of recognition and its connection with identity and respect. This is related to the question of how women are or are not adequately recognised or respected for their achievements in sport and whether eliminating sex segregation in sport is a solution. This will require an analysis of the concept of excellence in sport, as well as the relationship between fairness and inclusion in an activity that is fundamentally about bodily movement. I argue that attempts to address the problem of women's recognition in sport need to do so in ways that neither eliminate sport as a fairness regulated system for developing individual excellence in bodily movement nor that prevent women's achievement of sporting excellence, with the regard that belongs to them. Doing this requires us to decide whether sport is about champions or about individual excellence.

Keywords: recognition, respect, excellence, inclusion, fairness, sport

The maintenance of sex-based categories in sport has been frequently contested, whether as anachronistic (the quaint idea that women and men must not cross contaminate), or because it is exclusionary to particularly qualified women, and sometimes because keeping women in separate categories denies women status or recognition as equal to men, given that women's sports are not considered as valuable as men's. Within the field of sport, there are those who argue that sex segregation is ethically and politically offensive, and should at least be phased out. For example, Michael Burke (2010) argues the social benefit of women's access to men's competition, Edwards, et al, (2015) argue for the removal of the FA ban on mixed football, and Gleaves and Lehrbach (2016) make a positive case for ending sex segregation, dismissing the argument that fairness requires the separation. Others in the field defend aspects of sex segregation but possibly the most common stance is a moderated position, wherein some mixed sport is appropriate but forced or complete de-segregation is seen as unhelpful in the goal of gaining for women recognition of their sporting accomplishments, and of themselves, that they are due equally with men (Sailors 2014, Loland 2002).

The fight for equal pay for sportswomen is not unrelated to this, as I shall approach it in the following, though this is not a focus of this paper. Failing to pay women equally is not simply a matter of getting one's share of the available rewards; as Archer and Prange (2019, 6-7) argue, the often derisory wages paid to women in comparison to men may be understood as a morally objectionable unequal treatment, as an unjustified discrimination on the basis of membership in a particular group.

In an important respect, both of these issues are about a demand for recognition, one that is not only about just compensation for labour but about status as an equal citizen or moral subject. To demand equal pay, or that women not be excluded from the venues in which respect is earned, appears to be a demand that women be recognised equally with the men who are rewarded, economically and socially. This is not just about equality of *rewards*, however, but an equal claim to be taken into account.

In the following, I will not be explicitly arguing for or against sex segregation in sport, but exploring the philosophical foundation of such claims to recognition, including some possible problems that may complicate both the complete elimination of all protected categories and, potentially, *some* more moderated versions.¹ What I say will also have implications for transgender athletes in competitive sport although I will not be discussing this issue in any direct way. I will begin with an examination of the concept of recognition, and its connection with identity, and respect. I will then turn to an analysis of the concept of excellence in sport, as well as how this requires us to think about the complicated interplay between fairness and inclusion in an activity that is fundamentally about bodily movement. Recognition is not a simple act; it is achieved through interaction between self and other and has a strongly social character, involving a response to an externally generated demand. Excellence is implicated throughout this discussion but it has a specific place in the critique of sport's current ecosystem of recognition. Finally, I argue that attempts to address the problem of women's recognition in sport need to do so in ways that, first, understand this philosophical foundation for recognition and how it is and is not related to questions about excellence, and, second, that neither eliminate sport as a fairness regulated system for developing individual excellence in bodily movement nor that prevent women's achievement of sporting excellence, with the regard that belongs to them. Doing this, I suggest, requires us to decide whether sport is about champions or about individual excellence.

Recognition as a Concept

In the philosophical literature, recognition has an ethical basis—in fact, it is an

¹ To be clear, I am not in favour of a rigid separation of the sexes, and have myself benefitted from being able to compete in a number of sports in women's, mixed, and (nominally) men's events. I have discussed some aspects of the segregation issue elsewhere (Howe 2015).

interpersonal relation that grounds the duty of another to treat one as a person, someone with moral standing. But it begins as the phenomenological ground for self-consciousness, without which we would be incapable of ethical existence at all. Our contemporary understanding of the ethical and political claim to recognition rests very heavily on this ground, which can be traced from the individualism of Rousseau, through Fichte and Hegel, and eventually into modern discussions, via Adorno, Habermas, and Charles Taylor, among others; in the following I will focus primarily on Hegel's account, supplemented by Fichte's earlier and more explicitly ethical analysis. This account is by no means exhaustive but is meant to lay out some of the theoretical ground that underlies contemporary discussion of issues of recognition and respect for the being and capacity for and actual achievement of others.

For Hegel, the problem arises initially because the subjective consciousness encounters the world through sense experience as something objective outside of and separate from itself, and therefore as open to doubt for some familiar skeptical reasons—my sensuous experience is of my experience (phenomena), rather than of things in themselves (Hegel 1977, ¶166-7). We assume that, while our knowledge of the outside world may be faulty in some respects, our knowledge of ourselves is incorrigible. But how can I acquire certainty about myself *as a consciousness* if the means by which I come to knowledge about myself is the same as that by which I acquire knowledge of the natural world? And if that is the case, how do I distinguish myself from the natural world? The problem, then, is that of how I can establish my own existence as a consciousness, that is to say, as distinct from the natural world of objects or, more simply, as subject rather than object.

We become *self-conscious* in the moment when we are not just aware of the world around us (in sensation) but aware of the awareness (Hegel 1977, ¶167); for example, when we not only feel the softness of a cat's fur but notice ourselves *as experiencing* the softness. This second moment of consciousness involves a distancing of self from the self's activity of (immediate, sensuous) consciousness as well as of the natural world, but also treating oneself, a subject, as an object. This distancing underlines for self-consciousness that we know the world as appearance and appearance can (as such) only exist for consciousness, whereas consciousness can only be a thing for consciousness (Hegel 1977, ¶174). Self-consciousness, therefore, requires an other for self-certainty as conscious subject, and specifically an other that is a self-consciousness in its own right. Although I am active in the world, I need the acknowledgement of my existence *as a self-conscious being* from another self-conscious being in order to be certain that I am what I think I am (Hegel 1977, ¶175)—and in order to be able to continue to assert myself in the world as a centre of self-conscious activity rather than as just another object. This is recognition and, as it turns out, recognition has to be reciprocal: if I attempt to deny the other as not-me but for-me, i.e., not a subject like me but something I can use as object, I lose that which I need for recognition, namely a consciousness that can affirm my own (Hegel 1977, ¶ 180-184).

Hegel, famously, frames the encounter with the other in terms of a struggle to the

death, though this is not so much about slaughter as about dependence, particularly economic. The confrontation arises as self-consciousness must now demonstrate to the other that they are indeed a subject that must be recognised by the other as such—how does one prove one's worthiness for recognition? Hegel puts it in terms of showing that one is not 'attached to any specific *existence*...not attached to life' (Hegel 1977, ¶187). In other words, that one transcends the mere objectivity and predetermined existence of a biological object. One proves this by action that risks one's own existence because this demonstrates that one is not determined by immediacy; one rises above this condition by risking it and in doing so shows that one exists for one's own determination of self. One knows, then, that one is one's own because one has chosen it. Of course, death negates consciousness, so actual death is counterproductive to the quest for recognition, and some solution has to be found that falls short of this. Lordship and bondage maintains an unequal relationship in which one party is for-itself and the other is held in subjection. But, as already suggested, a dependent consciousness is not what self-consciousness really needs for recognition and the subjected consciousness of the bondsman is actually considerably more developed than it seems, in that the bondsman experiences the self-affirmation that ensues from labouring on objects and in relating to the lord (Hegel 1977, ¶190-196).² The winner of the struggle thus loses insofar as the subjugation of the other nullifies the recognition sought after and the loser actually obtains a phenomenologically (if not socially or economically) better option. There is also the circumstance that the reciprocal relationship that grounds our ethical and political interactions is subject to reversal. That is, this relationship is constantly in danger of flipping back into one of ontological dependence: one of us could always go back to seeing the other as an object. And this introduces a desire to be the one who determines the meaning of the relationship, to control its interpretation.³

Hegel's phenomenological account needs to be supplemented by Fichte's in order to better grasp the moral consequences of the demand of a subject for recognition as such. In both *The Science of Ethics* and *Foundations of Natural Right* (Fichte 2000, 39), Fichte makes clear that the call to ethical activity can only come from another self-conscious being outside oneself and that therefore to become an ethically functioning individual at all requires recognition of the other as one who is self-conscious and also a rational being subject to the same ethical demands. Thus, to recognise oneself as a moral agent *requires* recognition of the other as one as well. Thus,

² The situation described by Hegel is perhaps better grasped in the terms presented in Lugones (1996), that is, as the capacity/necessity of oppressed or culturally erased individuals to pass through not just one, but several, 'worlds', their own and their oppressors. The consequence is that the subordinated individual becomes adept at recognising and expressing multiple languages of self and thus has a more developed consciousness of self.

³ This is extensively discussed by Sartre (1966). See Part Three, Ch. One, IV 'The Look' and Ch. Three 'Concrete Relations with Others'.

I cannot comprehend this summons to self-activity without ascribing it to an actual being outside of myself, a being that wanted to communicate to me a concept: namely, the concept of the action that is demanded [of me], [IV, 221] and hence a being capable of [grasping] the concept of a concept. A being of this sort, however, is a rational being, a being that posits itself as an I...It follows that my drive to self-sufficiency absolutely cannot aim at annihilating the condition of its own possibility, that is, the freedom of the other (Fichte 2005, 209-10).

Fichte is emphatic that the other *must* be posited as equal, or else there can be no subject (Fichte 2000, 40-41). Moreover, I cannot expect to be recognised as a rational being by the other unless I so recognise the other and must so act (not just think it). My doing so is my proof to the other that the other has recognised me as a rational being (Fichte 2000, 42-43).

Stephen Darwall's (1977) distinction between what he terms 'recognition respect' and 'appraisal respect' presupposes this history of the concept of recognition. On Darwall's account, recognition respect is something that restricts how we can act in relation to other persons. It is because they *are* persons that we cannot treat them as mere means to our own ends and that their interests must be given due weight in our deliberations. This does not necessarily mean that their interests are absolutely inviolable; only that they must be taken account of. Appraisal respect, conversely, is not categorical in this manner.⁴ Its interest for us is in Darwall's explanation of appraisal respect as 'an attitude of positive appraisal' of someone in respect of their disposition to act in certain ways or to display a certain character, or in respect of their excellence in a type of pursuit (Darwall 1977, 44-45).

Notice that the first of these alternatives is not just recognition repeated; the focus here is what one does with one's fundamental moral capacity or personhood—the kind of person one makes oneself into. Regarding the second alternative, Darwall rules out simply having some remarkable natural capacity, which would be the occasion for amazement rather than respect (Darwall 1977, 42). So, for example, the swimming advantage that Michael Phelps' long limbs and capacity to process lactic acid confer on him is something to wonder at, but not itself *alone* respect-worthy. But Phelps' success in winning races wouldn't (alone) be an appropriate source of appraisal respect either. Darwall uses the example of a tennis player to distinguish an excellence in technical ability from excellence that is the result of character. As he points out, one can be very good technically but not respected in one's sport, which latter would require 'some commitment to the (evolving) standards of the profession or pursuit' (Darwall 1977, 42). What this means is that appraisal respect is *also* an essentially

⁴ Darwall does in one place describe appraisal respect as categorical, but this is in arguing against a kind of conditional or instrumental appraisal. To describe someone as 'smart' only because they plead my case for me or in order to get others to view them in some way, is to fail to offer the kind of respect with which Darwall is principally concerned (Darwall, 1977, 44).

moral category insofar as the achievement so appraised is not the athlete's objective competitive achievement: that they have won so many matches, run faster than anyone else, won more gold medals, etc., but whether they have been a good sportsperson in some sense.⁵

Recognition and Identification

The 'summons to engage in free self-activity' (2000, 38) is one that Fichte sees as inherent in the process of self-consciousness and individuation of a free and rational being. There is no way that one can account oneself as such a being without acknowledging at least one other such being outside oneself. What we need to concentrate on here, however, is something that Habermas draws out of Fichte's position, in particular, the way in which Fichte's account of individualisation as involving mutuality fits Habermas' conception of communicative social action.

Contemporary understanding of recognition has to do with identities, with who we think we are. This conception has an ethical component, particularly in the demand for rights, but it has diverged somewhat if not entirely from the metaphysical and epistemological question of how the ethical capacity of the individual is grounded in their awareness of their own self-consciousness. As Charles Taylor puts it, 'to be recognised is to be recognised as who one takes oneself to be as a human being,' to be recognised for one's own unique identity, as opposed to a universal capacity (Taylor 1994, 25, 38). In part, this is because there is already an assumption that all parties to the conversation agree on the ethical status of those parties as those who can make such a claim. That is, my claim that you should recognise my identity, what kind of a person I am, presupposes that my personhood *as such* is not at issue—or else I could not make the claim against you. We take the sameness (personhood) for granted and require recognition of difference. What we have seen over time, then, is a shift in the point at which the demand concerning recognition is lodged. It is not simply about whether one is self-conscious and thus to be recognised as a morally significant being, whatever else one then may do with one's agency, but that one has a specific being *apart from* that agency, which must also be acknowledged. Recognition is not only for one's humanness (and thus a presumed moral capacity) but for the particular (kind of) human one is.

Judith Butler, for instance, develops the more useful components of Nietzsche's explanation of the origins of conscience (Nietzsche 1956, Second Essay, II) to draw out the point that the self we present is a response to a demand to account for ourselves and our actions. As she explains, 'Nietzsche did well to understand that I begin my story of myself only in the face of a "you" who asks me to give an account. Only in the face of such a query or

⁵ Thus, one might be so appraised if one had won without resort to ethically wrong conduct—or lost when one could have won because one refused to cheat. See Darwall, 43: 'Furthermore, those features of persons which form the basis of appraisal respect seem to be those which belong to them as moral *agents*'.

attribution from an other—"Was it you?"—do any of us start to narrate ourselves, or find that, for urgent reasons, we must become self-narrating beings' (Butler 2005, 11). Though, here as well, the demand for an accounting has shifted from the proof of one's being defined as self-conscious rationality to the narration of what that self-consciousness has made of itself.

An interesting component of this is the significance Butler attributes to silence in the face of such a demand, where we, in effect, deny the legitimacy of the questioner's claim to our response and withhold our selves from the consciousness of the other (Butler 2005, 12).⁶ This refusal might amount to a failure of recognition, but need not. Butler's example is one that supposes a disagreement concerning legitimate authority to make the demand. Thus, if I deny that, e.g., a student has a right to know what I do in my free time, I do not thereby refuse recognition of them as moral agents—indeed, I am hauling them up on it.⁷

The intersubjective and linguistic character of the self-accounting is evident in both Charles Taylor's and Jürgen Habermas' discussions of recognition. Taylor is emphatic that the human self is not self-generated apart from the influence or structures of social meaning. In Taylor's discussion, as in Habermas', the dialogic and intersubjective character of identity-formation and recognition is understood to be strongly mediated by language and gesture (Taylor 1994, 32). This is so even when we struggle against the interpretations of self that others wish us to take on. This process relies upon the tools and methods of interpretation that we inherit and deploy; it is not a process performed in hermetic isolation, but *negotiated* 'through dialogue, partly overt, partly internal, with others' (Taylor 1994, 33-34).

Hence, the importance of recognition in this development—I need you to respond to me in order for me to constitute my identity. Recognition does not require acceptance in the sense of agreement, but it does require it in the form of an acceptance of the capacity of the

⁶ See also Nance re: Fichte: '...recognition is a public judgement that expresses an attitude toward the recognized, who endorses the attitude and the authority of the recognizer to make such a judgement....[T]he element of mutuality is what makes recognition a unique practical attitude that is distinct from, say, respect or admiration, which need not involve "uptake" from the other who is respected or admired. Secret admiration is possible, but secret recognition is not' (2015, 612). Butler's view is in this respect closer to Fichte's than Nietzsche's: 'If I give an account of myself in response to such a query, I am implicated in a relation to the other before whom and to whom I speak. Thus, I come into being as a reflexive subject in the context of establishing a narrative account of myself when I am spoken to by someone and prompted to address myself to the one who addresses me' (Butler 2005, 15).

⁷ Consequently, these examples are very different from the denial of the other inherent in the 'how dare you' response that many women (and others) encounter when questioning the right of those in dominant positions to proceed as they please unchallenged. Brett Kavanaugh's US Senate confirmation hearing provided a particularly egregious instance.

other as person and agent, i.e., to choose for themselves, even if the correctness (coherence) of that identity is disputed.⁸

For Habermas, as for Taylor, socialisation through communication is critical in the individualisation of persons (Habermas 1998, 208). In the essay “Individuation through Socialisation”, he also contrasts two ways in which we can understand the concept of an individual: on the one hand, something like a detailed and verifiable inventory of the self and, on the other, the self-understanding of a subject who “in the face of other dialogue participants presents and, if necessary, justifies himself as an irreplaceable and distinctive person” (Habermas 1993, 168). Habermas thus brings us back to the notion of accounting for oneself, here in terms of the individual *vouching for* their self-accounting.

Standing within an intersubjectively shared lifeworld horizon, the individual projects himself as someone who *vouches* for the more or less clearly established continuity of a more or less consciously appropriated life history; in light of the individuality he has attained, he would like to be identified, even in the future, as the one into whom he has made himself. In short, the meaning of ‘individuality’ should be explicated in terms of the self-understanding of a first person in relation to a second person. (Habermas 1993, 168-9)

Habermas is not denying the reality of the descriptive inventory, and admits that the identity thus vouched for cannot count as knowledge in the way that the former does, but the latter is doing a different kind of work. It is not a description but a guarantee, a performative, something that one does only in relation to an other (Habermas 1993, 169).

Recognition and Respect

It should now be evident that the kind of recognition with which the philosophy (and politics) of recognition is concerned is that which is owed to any person just in virtue of their personhood, i.e., because they are self-conscious and agential beings, regardless of what they then go on to do with their agency (hereafter recognition P), and that which requires that the other accept the particularity of the individual because that particularity has been consciously appropriated into the individual’s self-accounting, i.e., their subjectively incorporated identity *at a fundamental level* (recognition I). It is important to see that the second of these is a (historically situated) development out of the first and that it presupposes the first. To require that the other recognise me as x identity presupposes, indeed is a variant of, the demand for recognition as *person* (self-conscious moral agent/subject).⁹ It is worth stating this explicitly to

0. See also Habermas (1993), 189-191 on this point.

⁹ Thus, for example, the politically explicit recognition of indigenous peoples by settler governments is a recognition (I) of particularity and concrete history, one that is self-appropriated as defining for members of First Nations, but it is not simply a recognition of difference from non-indigenous peoples. It is also the recognition (P) of those peoples as peoples and *persons*, subsequent to a colonising history of failing to do so.

avoid confusing the second of these with a different kind of social ‘recognition’ altogether, a confusion relevant to social attitudes evinced in and around sport. Recognition (I) is not a matter of the specific objective accomplishments or adoptive identities that correspond to career or other voluntary and essentially disposable allegiances.

Moreover, this analysis of the concept of recognition, from Hegel through to Darwall, and then Taylor and Habermas, exposes the extent to which the question of the recognition of women in sport is a tangle of several distinct demands. First, women, as self-conscious and socially situated human beings, are owed basic recognition (P) as persons. They are also, following this, owed recognition (I) as who they are *as* persons, i.e., as persons who are women, meaning that they neither have to cease being women to be worthy of recognition nor forego recognition in order to be women. Third, they are owed appraisal respect (A) insofar as their efforts constitute the practical enactment of their personhood by virtue of issuing from conscious commitment to practical norms relevant to their specific practice (Darwall’s appraisal respect). Fourth, and independently of this, is the question of whether they attain a level of excellence (E) in the technical accomplishments peculiar to that practice, and of whether their objective performances are equal to those of men, indicating technical excellences either on par with those of men or in some other regard as comparable in kind. The last two overlap somewhat since the achievement of technical excellence may involve a characterological commitment that possesses an ethical dimension, but we cannot reduce the technical to the ethical. Moreover, neither natural talent nor acquired skill are proper subjects of appraisal respect, at least as Darwall conceives of it.

If the justification for ending the sex segregation of sport is that doing so would finally permit the proper recognition of women as athletes, it would be well to be clear about what kind of recognition is sought. Certainly, the demand for equality, to be regarded as worthy of consideration, is a demand for recognition (P) and, in many ways, the demand for respect for female athletes certainly looks to be such a demand—to be *seen* in a moral sense because of what one is *owed*. The activity that is at the centre of this question, however, is excellence and/or achievement in a particular kind of voluntary practical activity (respect E). Consequently, we must now turn to the question of what constitutes excellence in sport, since what is valued is not necessarily the kind of excellence to which Darwall refers.

Excellence and Sport

Bodily movement, most commonly self-propelled bodily movement, is central to sport. Character and psychological skills are important in developing physical skills and are also important in an athlete’s response to the stress of competing and to the aftermath of competition. All of this presupposes the physical performance of skill, endurance, and power that defines a given sport activity, whether this is throwing a javelin, running onto and kicking a ball, skating with speed and control, swimming a particular distance in a pre-set style, running for 100 m or 50 km, sliding through snow on skis, and so on. The one thing that *always* matters in sport is (gross) bodily movement, however specifically it is being tested. Without this, one

does not simply have bad sport; one does not have sport at all.¹⁰ Bodies matter in sport, in a fundamental way.

But bodies also differ. Hence, *fairness* is the most important regulating principle of sport; otherwise, we would indeed have a lot of very bad sport, if sport at all.¹¹ Unfair sport is deficient as sport because, although people may engage in sport activity for a wide range of purposes, including what could be characterised as heteronomous or instrumental ones, one is very difficult to separate from sport activity itself, and that is the pursuit of excellence in the activity, which cannot be achieved without fairness.

At its most limited, we may take up sport voluntarily because we just want to learn how to do something, to get better at it, or involuntarily because parents and schools direct us into it so that we can learn how to use our bodies a little bit better. One's time in a sport is a progression, from a state of relative incompetence to excellence or something short of that. One of the joys of sport is the development of new skills and the sense of increasing bodily competence, ease in the accomplishment of tasks that once seemed daunting, and the challenges presented and resolved. Moreover, challenge implies a degree of imbalance, but a challenge one cannot possibly meet is pointless, both for oneself and for the other involved in the challenge. This is where fairness and excellence intersect.

Fairness operates in sport as a sorting principle. This is not to argue that sport itself constitutes a sorting principle, as that would be to confuse part with whole in a way that undermines the other values of sport. Nor is this to claim that sport is, *in fact*, fair, as anyone can readily cite examples to the contrary. Indeed, sport incorporates enough uncertainty to frequently seem unfair. The fairness principle does not eliminate the unexpectedly broken equipment, the undetected medical condition, the freak change in weather conditions that derails the contest for one participant but not another, or the opponent who wilfully cheats. Cheating is, of course, an attempt to gain an unfair advantage in a contest and the cheater does not just get what they do not deserve; they make a sport contest invalid, because it is no longer a true, i.e., fair, assessment or sort of the participants' abilities.

The sorting principle operates in the following respect. Two athletes train in their sport, developing technical skills and physical conditioning (endurance, power, dexterity, etc.) as appropriate for the specific activity. If they are of comparable technical ability and physical capacity, then they will each provide for the other a good, that is, an exacting, test. If one is

¹⁰ This is one of the reasons (there are others) that 'esport' isn't sport, but a different kind of activity with sportive analogies. This claim does, however, require a more substantive defence than can be offered at this time.

¹¹ Fairness thus also stands as the sort of constitutive ethical principle of a practice to which Darwall refers.

significantly more advanced or capable than the other in one of these areas the contest may still be of interest, though this depends on the degree and type of variance and the particularities of the sport. If one is significantly superior in all of the relevant areas, such that the contest is decidedly imbalanced, the contest would be unfair in an important sense. But why should we call it “unfair”? Certainly, if winning the most medals and trophies are all that matters, if the only purpose of sport is to “own the podium”, then unfairness is a loser’s excuse.

Let us say that excellence in some specific set of physical bodily movements is a primary goal in sport. Fairness should ensure that the participants are tested in such a way that the widest sample of participants are tested maximally, so that it is not a test for only some. The widest sample is tested because that gives a greater likelihood of participants’ inclusion in an enjoyable pursuit but also because there is a greater likelihood of ultimately finding out who is the best at the activity in question, supposing that is worth knowing. Artificially narrowing the pool of possible contestants also narrows the likelihood of finding out who is best and may well produce a false ‘best’. So, fairness has a procedural efficacy towards achieving an important aim of sport. But this may not be *your* aim. If you only want the acclaim of being accounted the best, and ‘the best’ just means to you ‘most wins’, ‘biggest contract’, etc., then fairness has less relevance. ‘Most wins’ is an alternate sorting principle, one that has a problematic, if not necessarily wholly antagonistic, relationship with fairness. ‘Most wins’ *should* be an indicator of excellence, but it can only be that in truth *if* it also applies a very broad and rigorous principle of fairness.

This situation parallels the analysis of recognition. The unmatchable opponent is like Hegel’s lord who seeks recognition by conquering the other but ends up with an empty dish because recognition requires the reciprocity of self-conscious citizens, not of defeated bondsmen. Excellence, like recognition, is not produced alone, but intersubjectively, through mutual interaction; it is not spontaneously generated and the most innately talented individual is nothing in sport without testing. Even if I am only interested in my own development, I still need the other. This other must also be within the range of my own abilities. I need to find ways to improve that I won’t if I don’t have to, and I need to lose in order to find out about winning. To always win or to always lose are equally pointless. Thus, sport is a cooperative enterprise, relying on reciprocity of effort and ability that also establishes excellence in bodily movement. As with recognition, I need the other as my equivalent self-consciousness/bodily opponent in order to establish my ethical/physical status as requiring the just regard and acknowledgement as who I am.

Fairness, Respect, and Inclusion

Inclusion in a deeply satisfying human pursuit is a human good. All humans have physical bodies and, for a great many of us, moving them is both enjoyable and something which has important benefits. We are physical beings and movement for physical and emotional amusement is a strongly human identifying trait. Our physical bodies are variable

and this means that some will nevertheless find no joy in movement or that what movement is possible will be likewise variable. None of this denies that what movements our bodies are capable of matters to how we can participate in sport. As argued above, the greater human inclusion in sport is also advantageous to the aims of sport as well as those participating.

One conclusion we could draw from this is that sport participation should be, in effect, one great human category, that we should not be doing, e.g., 'men's sport' and 'women's sport' (or, presumably, disabled rather than non-disabled, etc.), but just 'sport'. But, as the previous discussion also suggests, good sport would need to incorporate a sorting principle of fairness and there is no point having gross mismatches, for both sporting and safety reasons—there is not only no sporting sense but it would be irresponsible to have five-year olds playing rugby against the New Zealand All Blacks. Hence, classes based on age, weight, ability, and so on would make more sense.¹²

An oft-cited support for removing barriers to equal participation in social roles in philosophy of sport discussions is Trebilcot's double curve which illustrates that there are no traits that belong exclusively to males or exclusively to females, but that there is a degree of overlap. (Trebilcot 1975) Therefore, supposing that one should hire the best qualified candidate, it would be unjust to deny employment to any given man or woman simply for being male or female on the grounds that only men or women have the necessary trait for that role, as this would be false. A problem with relying on Trebilcot's argument in the sport context is that she was presenting the case with respect to *psychological* traits, not bodily ones, and what she was working to deny was the essentiality of 'masculinity' and 'femininity', i.e., gender rather than sex.¹³ Moreover, a great many of the traits under review are ones that we would now generally agree are not defensibly gender specific. But could the case be reasonably applied analogically to the male-female distribution of physical abilities? *Prima facie*, yes. Of course, some women are better than some men (and vice versa) at some physical tasks relevant to sports. But, as with Trebilcot's original graph, the overlap is present but limited. *If* males typically have a biological advantage in certain sport relevant tasks and movements, then males will end up filling one side of the curve, *even if* there are some number

¹² Loland (2002). Note also the complex classification systems in disabled sport, which are meant to balance abilities in a way to maximise fairness in competition. Indeed, disabled sport is a particularly trenchant example of the way in which bodies matter in both the defining and the conduct of sport as in defining disability, as well as in determining how inclusion and fairness interact.

¹³ Tännsjö relies on the statistical argument as a prelude to his suggestion (1) that highly competent women should not be prevented from demonstrating their superiority over most men (Tännsjö 2007, 349) and (2) that women should have the possibility of gaining their sporting equality with men through genetic modification (Tamburrini and Tännsjö 2005, 182), in effect, improving their statistical anomaly to 'catch up to' the male standard. A fuller discussion of these views is in Howe (2015). See also Sherwin and Schwartz (2005).

of women who are superior to some or even to all men. This is a question to be settled by empirical measurement, not philosophy, and I will not settle it here.¹⁴

Once again, fairness comes in here as a sorting principle. De-segregating sports altogether is a fairness question, on a number of levels. If there are a number of extraordinary sportspersons from one category who can triumph over all the other members of another category, it seems unjust to confine them to a 'lesser' category because the competition is not fair to them—they are insufficiently challenged and to keep them down would be to suppress their capacities for excellence, and perhaps not help their present lower-classified opponents who can never get past them (this could be argued in either direction). But eliminating the category lines altogether will likely do something else: those in the lower categories are now, perhaps, flooded with contestants who can despatch them even more easily. The suggestion of alternate categories is germane here, as is Sailors' suggestion of several differentiating criteria (2014, 73-75). Fairness in competition will require that we put competitors of relevantly similar capacities together on the basis of characteristics other than sex. An outcome of this, *if* males typically have a biological advantage in certain sport relevant tasks and movements, will be that males will largely displace females in a significant number of those competition classes for which those biological capacities are an advantage. Again, this is an empirical question, but it is fairness that would mandate this readjustment of competition classes.¹⁵ This then seems to generate the apparently paradoxical outcome that a (presumed) biological advantage operates with principles of both fairness and inclusion to suppress the achievements of female sportswomen, and conceivably, render them largely invisible to the sport-spectating public, thus wiping out the looked-for recognition benefit of de-segregation.

This hypothetical scenario is proposed in order to get us to think through the motivation for the de-segregation demand. The thought appears to be that, because women compete in a separate category to that of men, they do not get the recognition that men do, or that they deserve. Hence, there is 'sport' and then there is 'women's sport' and only the former is respected or even recognised *as sport*. For women in sport to be respected properly, there must be men and women competing together, with women having the chance, at last, to show that they are as good as men. Visibility and achievement will lead to women being properly recognised as athletes. For almost any other field, this is achievable with adequate social will and resources. But in sport, bodies matter, and this is complicated by the historical circumstance that our sports are social practices that have evolved, by and large, to display and to valorise male physiological capacities. That they favour male physiques is, I think, not an

¹⁴ A relevant recent study, however, is Knox, Anderson, and Heather (2019).

¹⁵ See also Devine (2018) on fairness in relation to athletes with a history of legitimate or illegitimate steroid use.

accident¹⁶, but this, *by itself*, need not be as big a problem as it seems. Women are perfectly capable of doing these sports and at the highest levels of competence, thereby demonstrating that not only males can do the things that these sports require, regardless of whether they compete against each other.

Sylvia Burrow sees the widespread failure to accord respect to female athletes to be a consequence of the emphasis on excellence in sport. She maintains that the ideal of excellence simply valorises masculinity, since one must exhibit (paradigmatically) masculine qualities in order to be considered excellent. From this, it is concluded that all women-dominated or defined sports must be inferior on account of not being masculine. Masculine sport is defined in terms of masculine values (aggression, strength, dominance, violence), whereas women's sport is defined as not masculine (Burrow 2018, 2-3). This claim is difficult to sustain. It does not take much acquaintance with women's sport to see that these 'masculine' traits *are*, in fact, shared by women and displayed in the sports that women actually play (and are valued by them), and hence *either* these are not properly 'masculine' values at all *or* women's sports are 'masculine' in precisely the way that Burrow denies them to be. It is true that women are frequently disrespected for displaying so-called masculine traits, as well as for *not* displaying them, but this is a different issue than whether sporting excellence is 'masculine', not least since most humans are capable of all of these characteristics, even if not all of them display them to the same degree or effectiveness. To fail to appraise women according to the prevalent social values when they do fulfill them argues a different problem than whether excellence as such is a justifiable goal in sport.

Sport society frequently confuses the value of persons and of sport itself with technical achievement. This manifests in the 'winning-is-all' mentality, that is, how we sort excellence through an entire sport or in sport as an overall category. If only champions matter, and if the only champions worth recognition are those at the top of this entire pyramid, then (given the physiological advantages of biological males) only male sports champions matter. There might be occasional female champions as outliers, but these can be either discounted or tolerated, often for spurious reasons, on account of their exceptionality. Because sport society excludes women sportspersons as worthy of respect as excellent they can also be disregarded altogether (or at least as sportspersons). But this, as the first half of this paper makes clear, makes no sense, on at least three grounds: first, because it denies the recognition of personhood to *all* competitors by reserving excellence to technical achievement; second, that this is measured laterally across all competitors (the 'who is the greatest overall' model); and thirdly, because it inverts recognition to an assessment of one's labour rather than the person who labours.

¹⁶ There are a number of possible explanations for this; a possibility is that the characteristics required for success are thus 'hoarded'.

Recognition comes first; how one measures on the objective achievement scale is a consequence of what recognition enables. This is also why fairness is so important: fairness is that social principle that embodies our practical realisation of recognition of others as persons. To deny recognition to the other is to deny their (ethical) humanity and to deny fairness is to attempt a kind of erasure of the other as worthy of full consideration as our moral equal. The denial of this to sportswomen can be grasped in Sartre's terms as an attempt to retain control of one's own subjectness by reducing the other to an object and can be understood as generated by a fear of loss of control of meaning,¹⁷ but that explanation does not reduce the bleakness of the scenario for either the subject who engages in it or the one who is the object of it. So long as the champion model holds sway, the response from the dominant sport world is: *well, you didn't win in my ballpark, so it doesn't count*. No achievement then is taken to justify no recognition: *you aren't really my equal*. Seeking recognition in this way only repeats the mistake and fails to address the champion narrative that justifies the exclusion from recognition.

The only way to counter the championship model of excellence is with radical social change that is quite beyond the issues of desegregation and equal pay for women and, without that change, desegregation alone risks merely reinforcing the disrespect of female athletes. Short of offering the blueprint for a programme of radical social change in the present paper, perhaps we should at least think again about the value of sport in human lives. Sport need not be a zero-sum game, like Hegel's two self-consciousnesses squaring off to determine who will be lord and who superceded as bondsman or slave. The victor in that struggle does not actually get what he wants out of it. He needs recognition from an independent self-consciousness, an equal and, for Hegel, this only comes about in the development of a fully rational social existence. What I have tried to suggest here is that sport fulfills its human purpose best by developing the *relationship between* contestants, by concentrating on what each gets out of it in terms of the development of *their own excellence*. Thus, if I can attain the excellence of which I am capable, I have fulfilled in myself all that sport can offer. That I have failed to achieve victory over all the other competitors in my sport does not mean that I have failed in my sport. The converse of the championship-or-oblivion model is not the 'everyone gets a medal' approach. Not everyone will win and many will lose more often than not; there is a brutality in sport that is ineradicable. Inclusion is extremely important in expanding excellence in sport, but for this to be sport, inclusion is necessarily moderated by fairness, which means a levelling of the playing field—everyone has to have a chance, not a certainty—and that means that the same principle of fairness requires both inclusion at the social level, in terms of advancing participation, and exclusion at the competitive level: only those against whom each can compete fairly are permitted in any given contest. Fairness

¹⁷ Which seems a more plausible explanation given such historical examples as the English Football Association's ban on women's football; see, e.g., Edwards, Davis, and Forbes (2015, 390-392).

Recognition 16

means that you don't get to play every game, only the ones where you have a valid contest—where you *can* win *and* where you *can* lose.

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