

CHAPTER

6

Philosophy of Sport

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This chapter is about the evolution of sport philosophy in North America during the twentieth century. It includes an analysis of three periods of academic development, a history of the Philosophic Society for the Study of Sport, an assessment of the current status of the subdiscipline in relationship to its parent disciplines (primarily philosophy and education), and speculation about its future.

Early Foundations

Since 1900 sport philosophy has progressed through three periods. The first one was dominated by an eclectic, philosophy-of-education approach, the second by an interest in the relative strengths of competing philosophic systems or schools of thought, and the third by the categories and methods of a parent discipline. Each new philosophic stage of development was a reaction to and, in some ways, an improvement upon its predecessor. Even so, this development did not assure consistent growth for this area of research and study. Ironically in recent years, the youthful and relatively sophisticated brand of sport philosophy has turned out to be less visible and influential than its less capable parents. Now as the end of the twentieth century approaches, faint signs suggest that yet another period is about to begin.

Period 1: (The Eclectic, Philosophy-of-Education Approach) 1875–1950

The intellectual heritage of contemporary sport philosophy in North America can be traced most directly to the progressive education movement, a period of educational ferment and experimentation that lasted

A Chronology of Philosophy of Sport

Early Foundations

Year	Event
1875	Dawn of progressive education and foundation for activity, play, and health curricula in the schools
1890–1910	Publication of seminal texts for progressive education by such scholars as J. Dewey, G. Stanley Hall, W. James, and E.L. Thorndike
1910	Development of the "New Physical Education" by T.D. Wood
1927	Publication of J.F. Williams' <i>The Principles of Physical Education</i> , the dominant text of the period
1950	Rise of the comparative systems approach following works by J.S. Brubaker and J.D. Butler
1961–1964	Publication of major "systems" volumes in physical education by such authors as E.C. Davis and E.F. Zeigler

Organization of the Subdiscipline

Year	Event
1965	Emergence of Illinois (Zeigler), Ohio State (Kleinman), and the University of Southern California (Metheny & Slusher) as dominant graduate centers, and Brockport (Fraleigh) as a visible undergraduate institution involved in promoting the philosophy of sport
1972	First meeting of the Philosophic Society for the Study of Sport (Boston)
1973	First independent meeting of the Philosophic Society for the Study of Sport; constitution ratified (Brockport)
1974	Volume 1 of the <i>Journal of the Philosophy of Sport</i> published; R. Osterhoudt, editor

Development of the Philosophy of Sport

Year	Event
1965–1968	Publication of early discipline oriented literature by E. Metheny, H. Slusher, and P. Weiss
1972	Publication of the most popular discipline-oriented anthology by E. Gerber

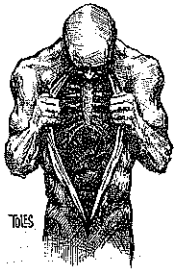
1972–1982	Period of rich contributions to the literature, considerable progress on a variety of activity-related philosophic topics
1990	Concerns emerge about isolation of the discipline, the inability to attract and retain parent-discipline philosophers, and the small number of contributors to the literature
1996	Indication of possible move to a post-disciplinary period

from approximately 1875 to the mid-1950s (Cremin, 1961). At the start of this period, progressive reformers took aim at a 19th-century educational system that emphasized rote memorization, required the same learning experiences for all, and focused on the three R's to the near exclusion of everything else. In an age of growing social problems brought on, in part, by industrialization and urbanization, and at a time when scientific advancement began to provide evidence about the importance of individual differences, personal motivation, and satisfaction, the biological roots of all life and learning, stimulus-response bonds, the emotions, and psychophysical holism,¹ this rigid brand of pedagogy came under ever-increasing fire. People like William James in *The Principles of Psychology* (1897) and *Talks to Teachers on Psychology* (1899), Edward L. Thorndike in *Animal Intelligence* (1898), and John Dewey in *The School and Society* (1899) attacked pedagogical traditions that placed order over freedom, work over play, effort over interest, prescription over election, and intellectual content over a broader range of subjects that prepared human beings for what Herbert Spencer (1860) had earlier called "complete living" (p. 31).

With G. Stanley Hall's (1900) insistence that the school be made to fit the child rather than the other way around (a form of naturalism that elevated the status of play, dance, and games), and Thorndike's redefinition of mind as the "total response of the organism to its environment" (Cremin, 1961, p. 112), the way was cleared for the rise of physical education in the schools. Even though physical activity had long been thought to have some health-related instrumental value, very few educators appreciated the ways in which sport, games, play, and exercise might dramatically improve the entirety of human life—both instrumentally and, more importantly, intrinsically. Physical education philosophers were needed to analyze and articulate the possibilities of something that would be called "The New Physical Education." Thomas D. Wood (*Health and Education*, 1910), Clark Hetherington (*School Programs in Physical Education*, 1922), Jesse Feiring Williams (*The Principles of Physical Education*, 1927), Wood and Rosalind Cassidy (*The New Physical Education*, 1927), Charles McCloy (*Philosophical Bases for Physical Education*, 1940), and J. B. Nash (*Physical Education: Interpretation and Objectives*, 1948) answered the call.

PROGRAM

**ANNUAL MEETING
OF THE
PHILOSOPHICAL SOCIETY
FOR THE
STUDY OF SPORT**



**Brockport, New York
November 1-3, 1973**

1973 program for
the Annual Meeting
of the Philosophical
Society for the Study
of Sport



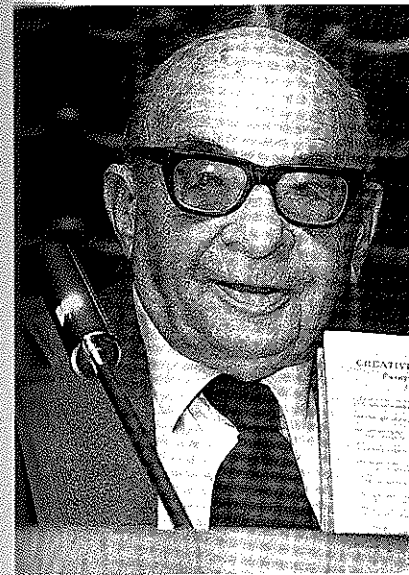
Thomas D. Wood



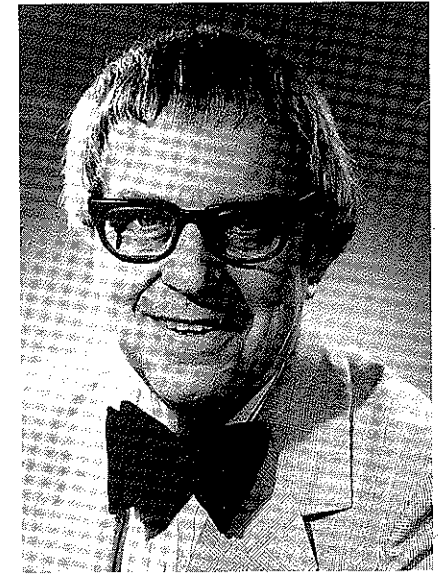
Warren P. Fraleigh



Jesse F. Williams



Paul Weiss



Earle Zeigler



Shenobu Abe

The most original thinker of these progressive era educators was undoubtedly Wood, even though he received less credit than others who later were to use many of his ideas.² While it was Hetherington who gave the new physical education its name, Wood was the first to sketch its outlines. Nevertheless a third individual, Jesse Feiring Williams, was probably the most influential sport philosopher of this period. His *Principles of Physical Education* endured for eight editions and affected physical education thinking and practice for at least two generations. Williams's optimistic and ambitious educational agenda attracted legions of followers. Hetherington, Wood, Nash, and McCloy, however, were not among them. In fact none of these individuals much liked one another and well-publicized disagreements came to characterize this period. For example, many practitioners were compelled to pick sides between McCloy's "education of the physical" (a position that focused on health and other biological objectives) and Williams's "education through the physical" (a philosophy of effecting positive social change and personal growth in movement "laboratories").

In truth, the positions of the dominant philosophers of this period differed only marginally. While each maintained distinctive emphases—Hetherington: mind-body wholeness, balance among physical education objectives, and play; Williams: social responsibility and moral values; Wood and Cassidy: natural interests and inclinations, activity in the out-of-doors, and the integration of physical education with other subjects; McCloy: organic objectives, strength, and vigor; and Nash: recreation, and a balanced and full life—they were more nearly alike than different. They all saw human beings as wholly biological organisms and regarded themselves as nondualists. Aware of the pressing societal needs of their time, each of them promoted education for responsible citizenship. They all honored individual differences. They all distrusted rote exercise and saw great value in sport, dance, play, and games. Every one of them viewed physical activity settings as powerful laboratories for learning. Most importantly, however, they were all engaged in the same project—an attempt to describe physical education as an integral part of overall human education from elementary school through postsecondary education.

In order to bring physical education into the early 20th-century educational mainstream, they all had to produce some philosophy. Implicitly or explicitly, they had to make claims about the nature of humankind (e.g., the role played by competition or play in the development of children), features of the good life (e.g., the importance of winning, of health, of friendship among teammates and opponents), and the rights and wrongs of ethics (e.g., proper behavior toward officials, the virtues that might be taught through sport, play, and games). But these individuals were more educationists than philosophers; their passion was the improvement of teaching and learning, not the acquisition of philosophic insight, and the stimulus for their work came more from the discoveries

of science than any philosophic advances. Predictably, they left themselves open to a number of philosophic criticisms. Their subject matter was narrow. They were more interested in sport, dance, exercise, play, and games as vehicles for education than as phenomena in their own right. Accordingly, they produced little knowledge about the nature and promise of these activities apart from their role in schooling.

To compound problems created by the selection of a narrow subject matter, they proceeded to do relatively little of any philosophic significance with it. For example, typical analyses of holism often read like introductions to physiological psychology, not thoughtful discussions of the philosophic errors committed by the likes of Plato, who elevated contemplation over nonsedentary activity and believed in the immortality of the soul, or Descartes, who radically separated persons into two irreconcilable parts—an immaterial mind and a material body. In Nash's (1931) edited work, *Interpretations of Physical Education: Mind-Body Relationships*, only 2 of 17 chapters were even marginally philosophic in nature. And Williams, for all his clever verbiage about the hand being as much brain as body, and thinking being as surely physical as mental, never (to this writer's knowledge) provided a philosophic analysis of holism; such an investigation would have taken him into a discussion of how performers' thinking in sport does not so much precede movement or otherwise patch itself onto activity, as become an inherent part of it. He did not even engage the insightful nondualistic writings of his primary philosophic mentor, John Dewey (see, e.g., *Soul and Body*, 1886). In short, these writers did not appear comfortable with the philosophic writings and methods of their day. While they did some philosophy, they did a great deal else.

The soundness of their reasoning can be questioned on many fronts. It is not at all clear that they overcame the limits and errors of mind-body dualism. While abandoning an outdated notion of an eternal soul in a material body and touting the biological interrelatedness of the human organism and its functions, these writers remained solidly within the language and some of the traditions of dualism (Gerber, 1966). For example, the previously noted phrase used by Williams, "education through the physical," raised questions for later nondualists. Is the physical aspect of students in a gymnasium to be used as a means to get at something more important, such as mental or moral capacities of these youngsters? If movement professionals are responsible for education somehow related uniquely to the physical, are there others who focus on something called "education through the mental"? Some answers to the first question portrayed the physical active life as a mere means to other more valuable experiences; answers to the second issue suggested that some educators tend to the (inferior) body, while others take care of the more intellectual (and more important) aspects of students.

A number of the progressive education philosophers' conclusions about what should and should not stand as the prime objectives of physical

education had a doctrinaire flavor to them, due in large measure to their unwillingness to examine initial assumptions about the nature of the good life—about what values should take priority over other values, about the highest ends of humankind—that is, to do what most trained, careful philosophers would have attempted to accomplish. The goodness of America, democracy, capitalism, and competition were, for these writers, largely givens. If readers happened to agree with these and other unexamined assumptions, subsequent deductions about the role of physical education would be seen as acceptable, perhaps even inspiring. For instance, if fun and individuality (values embraced by several of these writers) are two of the highest ends of life, then certain emphases on spontaneous play, the freedom to pursue personal interests, and flexible learning sequences generally make sense. However, as noncontroversial as some of this reasoning may appear, the granting of initial assumptions, philosophically speaking, is asking a great deal. Examining the assumptions led to a realization that many conclusions in this literature were reached more by conscious or unconscious stipulation than by careful argument.

A common contemporary criticism of these writers is that they promised too much; they raised expectations about the benefits of physical activity far beyond the profession's ability to produce and document them. While there is surely more than an element of truth to such a charge, this problem arose largely from an empirical miscalculation, not a philosophic one. From a philosophic standpoint, the complaint about these writers is more fundamental. It is not that they promised too much, but that they did not argue skillfully for what they were promising. Thus, they may have been promising the wrong things.

For all of these difficulties, however, the work of Wood and Cassidy, Hetherington, Williams, McCloy, and Nash did much to inspire physical educators for over 40 years. Their writings and presentations were comprehensible, optimistic, and practical, based on some of the best scientific insights of the period and compatible with the pragmatic, scientific spirit of that age. Importantly, they helped to generate a golden era of physical education during which physical activity was required in most programs at most levels of education, and was also integrated with intramurals and athletics. But their partial successes were not enough to prevent a new group of philosophers from emerging on the scene and taking the philosophy of sport in a very different direction.

Period 2: (The Systems Approach) 1950–1965

Some might argue that this is actually a later phase of the previous eclectic, philosophy-of-education period because the themes, categories, and interests of this time, as then, were dominated by the concerns of education, not philosophy. The systems approach could be seen simply as a variation

on the same theme, as another way to identify physical education as an important element in general schooling.

However, the two most important systems philosophers, Elwood Craig Davis³ (*The Philosophic Process in Physical Education*, 1961; *Philosophies Fashion Physical Education*, 1963) and Earle F. Zeigler (*Philosophical Foundations for Physical, Health, and Recreation Education*, 1964), broke with the procedures of the educationist era in significant ways, and their products were unmistakably different.

The terms "systems" refers to schools of philosophic thought, the so-called "isms," such as idealism, realism, and naturalism. The most common procedure used by systems philosophers was to describe and compare schools of thought, for example, to put idealism up against realism. Yet, there were other ways in which systems philosophy proceeded. The focus could be placed on recurring problems (e.g., the mind-body debate), great philosophers (e.g., Plato, Aristotle, Kant), the history of philosophy (e.g., the transition from idealism to existentialism in twentieth-century Europe), and the branches of philosophy (e.g., axiology, epistemology, and metaphysics). While all of these approaches, singly and in combination, were utilized in the literature of this period, it was the method of examining comparative schools of thought that was most popular. Both Davis and Zeigler devoted large portions of their texts to juxtaposing and evaluating such systems as naive naturalism, experimentalism, realism, and idealism.

The procedure used for systems comparisons was straightforward. First, the main elements of the positions themselves were described. The key philosophers who belonged to these schools of thought were identified and their central ideas laid out. Second, the basic concepts and positions of the systems were related to education in general. Third, deductions were drawn relative to the field of physical education. In this process, recommendations regarding such practical concerns as staffing, curriculum, and teaching methodology were deduced. Finally, the strengths and weaknesses of the systems were compared, particularly as they related to the vested interests of physical education. For example, a strength of naive naturalism for activity teachers was its simplicity, its emphasis on taking play cues from children in developing a curriculum. Some realistic philosophers, however, highlighted the complexity of life and doubted the capacity of children's natural impulses to lead them into sufficient learning activities. They concluded the physical education curricula should not be developed on models of youthful play, or at least not solely on such criteria.

This systems-comparison approach signaled an advance over the efforts of writers from the philosophy-of-education period for several reasons. It focused on philosophy—from start to finish the comparative systems books were about philosophers, philosophic ideas, and philosophic methods—and it incorporated a broad range of philosophic insights and speculations. These books mentioned nearly all the major philosophers from

the parent discipline of philosophy (not education) and their positions, and they allowed readers to pick and choose from among them. Such volumes were to include samples from the "best philosophy that has been thought and written" (Davis, 1961, p. 18). This approach reflected a degree of philosophic sophistication. Unexamined assumptions, faulty reasoning, unsubstantiated speculations—many of the potential pitfalls of philosophy—were, to a degree, avoided in these books.

This period, however, was short-lived, and the quick demise of systems philosophy was related to its shortcomings. Both the validity and utility of the schools-of-thought approach were questioned. If philosophers categorized as existentialists, for example, disagree with one another on important matters, and their points of differences are as significant as their points of agreement, how valid (it was asked) is it to place them all in the same school of thought? Indeed, some existentialists were atheists and described an arbitrary sporting world populated by absurd heroes; others were theists and painted sport in the colors of courageous joy. Some feared human relationships and thus favored individual sports or lonely exercise; others saw human community as the source of much that is good in life and consequently supported group play.

The quality of scholarship that produced this work was questioned for at least two reasons. First, the physical education literature mimicked previous works in educational philosophy. For example, Brubaker's (1950) *Modern Philosophies of Education* and Butler's (1957) *Four Philosophies* appeared around the middle of the century and were heavily utilized by physical education philosophers to formulate the content and style of their own later works. Second, the fact that preexisting categories were superimposed on physical education led to questions about whether or not the right questions were being asked. Some suggested that a complex field like physical education and the unique practices of sport, dance, exercise, games, and play that comprised much of its content should have more influence on the philosophic approaches used to unravel its mysteries. The emerging disciplinary philosophers, for example, wanted to cut more directly to the hunt by asking, "Are competition and play compatible and, if so, how?" They saw the systems question (e.g., "What is a realist's attitude toward play and competition?") as unnecessarily circuitous.

The systems approach was also experienced by some as too encyclopedic and thus, overwhelming. (How many philosophers and systems could one keep track of at the same time?) For others it was tedious. (Were there no more lively ways to do philosophy than trudge through one system after another?) For yet others it was frustrating. (How does one make progress by reviewing systems, each with its own similar list of strengths and weaknesses? Whose answers are better? How is anyone to come to closure on important questions like the value of sport?) On all

of these counts, the comparative systems literature often left the reader wondering.

Finally, the frame of reference during this period was still education. Sport philosophers had not yet broken loose to look at human beings as people, not primarily students, or examine sport, exercise, games, play, dance, human movement, competition, and the like on their own terms, not primarily as means to educational ends. In sum, the comparative systems approach provided limited returns on its investment. It would be replaced quickly by another stage in sport philosophy.

Organization of the Subdiscipline

In 1970, at the end of the systems period, no organization existed for philosophers of sport and no specialized journal stood ready to publish their research. Talk about forming a society and founding a publication, by necessity, began at a variety of other professional meetings, among them, the American Association for the Advancement of Science Conference (Texas, 1968), the Meeting of the National College Physical Education Association for Men (Portland, Oregon, 1970), the Olympic Scientific Congress (Munich, Germany, August 1972), and the Sport and Ethics Symposium (Brockport, New York, October 1972).

At the Munich congress, Warren Fraleigh and Paul Weiss agreed to form a steering committee for the formation of a scholarly society, a group that would include two philosophers (Weiss and Richard Zaner) and two physical educators (Fraleigh and Ellen Gerber). It was determined that the recommendations of this group would be discussed at the ethics symposium later that fall in Brockport.

Support from conferees at Brockport led to the first official meeting of the newly formed Philosophic Society for the Study of Sport (PSSS) in Boston, Massachusetts, on December 28, 1972, at the Eastern Division conference of the American Philosophic Association. Weiss was elected first president of the PSSS, Fraleigh the president-elect, Frances Keenan the secretary-treasurer, and Michel Bouet, Scott Kretchmar, Hans Lenk, and Earle Zeigler members-at-large. Fraleigh was named chair of a constitution committee that also included Pat Gallasso, Gerber, James Keating, and Seymour Kleinman. The first full conference of the PSSS took place in Brockport, November 1-3, 1973, and, at that time, the new constitution was ratified. This initial meeting was cosponsored by the Center for Philosophic Exchange, a nonprofit organization that provided administrative and financial, if not also important moral, support during the early years of the Society.⁴

The Society immediately founded a scholarly publication, the *Journal of the Philosophy of Sport*. The first issue was published in 1974 under the editorship of Robert Osterhoudt; he was succeeded by Harold VanderZwaag

in 1976, who in turn was replaced two years later by Klaus Meier, who would hold this position for over 16 years.

The mission of the Philosophic Society for the Study of Sport was printed on the inside cover of its first program and read as follows: "The primary purpose of the Society is to foster interchange and scholarship among those interested in the scholarly study of sport. The Society is conceived as international in its membership and program." The term "sport" was interpreted broadly to include many forms of human movement, but to focus on dance, exercise, play, and games, as well as competitive sport. The term "scholarly study" in the mission statement proved more contentious. Some wanted scholarship to be defined broadly and hoped that the Society would sponsor contributions related to pedagogy and a variety of practical concerns. Others, and these turned out to be in the majority, favored a brand of scholarship that lay closer to the discipline of philosophy itself, that was to be of the highest quality, and that would pass muster on standards traditionally used by the parent discipline. Consequently, most of the papers delivered at Society meetings, and the vast majority of articles included in the *Journal*, were focused on basic research, with relatively little attention paid to practical application. Papers on teaching and learning in educational settings were virtually nonexistent.

Most of the scholarly activity in North America after 1970 can be traced to four spheres of influence, three of them graduate centers and the fourth an undergraduate mecca for early employment, curricular growth, and professional dialogue. Most philosophers of sport at this time were graduates of one of three institutions: the University of Illinois (Zeigler), the University of Southern California (Metheny & Slusher), and The Ohio State University (Kleinman). These programs so dominated the field that it is difficult today to find a practicing American sport philosopher who had not studied at one of these institutions or with an individual who had been there.

The fourth sphere of influence was the State University of New York—College at Brockport. In the early 1970s, under the deanship of Fraleigh, this institution hired at different times a remarkable total of ten discipline-oriented philosophers of sport.⁵ At one time the Brockport curriculum included six different courses devoted exclusively to philosophic content and inquiry. Perhaps most importantly, this college served as a center for stimulation, dialogue, and (as noted above) organizational work that culminated in the founding of the PSSS.

The efforts of the Society and its journal produced, or at least contributed to, a number of successes. The PSSS attracted a membership approaching 200 at its peak. A high-quality refereed journal served to communicate philosophic sport research around the globe. A substantial body of knowledge on such topics as the nature of sport, sport aesthetics, and ethical behavior in sport was produced in little over 25 years.⁶ Considerable

progress—arguably to the point of reaching near consensus—was achieved on such questions as the following: Is sport art? What is the relationship between competition and cooperation? Is competitive activity, *per se*, good? Can people cheat and still be playing the same game, let alone win it? Does playing a game well require the use of intelligence and, if so, in what specific ways? What does a person know when he or she plays a game, and how is that knowledge like and unlike insights encountered in the so-called academic fields of study? What are the relationships among sport, games, and play? Is sport more valuable when it is conducted in the spirit of play than when it is not? Are games trivial activities? Many other questions on which considerable research progress has been made could be added to the list.

In addition, a number of philosophers, some of them highly respected in the parent discipline, became members of the Society and contributed journal articles or conference papers. International membership grew with strong representation from such countries as England, Germany, Norway, Australia, Canada, and Japan. If never a large organization, the Society has enjoyed a dedicated core membership. It has held annual meetings since 1972 in five different countries and on three continents, and the *Journal* recently published its 20th anniversary issue.

Development of the Philosophy of Sport

The intellectual energy that undergirded the organization of the Philosophic Society for the Study of Sport in the early 1970s, spawned its journal, and led to the development of graduate programs was already on the rise at the end of the systems period, producing a new style of philosophic thinking that persists to the present day.

Period 3: (The Disciplinary Approach) 1965–Present

Two major shifts occurred at the start of what is called the disciplinary period. First, philosophers of sport began to produce new philosophic research, using the tools of philosophy, generating insights about such topics as sport and games and their relationship to human development, liberation, achievement, and happiness. In contrast to the eclectic philosophers of education, they took their primary cues from the discipline of philosophy, not science. In contrast to the philosophers of the comparative systems approach, they attempted to do actual research much like many scholars in the parent discipline. To copy, borrow, translate, apply, or deduce from already completed analyses of "real philosophers," while often a good starting place, was no longer sufficient.

Second, these writers made a relatively clean break from pedagogical concerns. Attention shifted from movement in an education setting to, simply, movement itself, opening new vistas of inquiry. The relatively narrow preoccupation with how sport fit the schools was now broadened to thoughts about how sport fit human life.

Early progress was decidedly uneven. The groundbreaking analyses of Metheny (*Connotations of Movement in Sport and Dance*, 1965; and *Movement and Meaning*, 1968), Slusher (*Man, Sport, and Existence*, 1967) and Weiss (*Sport: A Philosophic Inquiry*, 1969) were about as different as they possibly could be. Metheny, interested primarily in movement as a way of knowing and expressing human intelligence, focused on the individual, on personal idiosyncratic experience, and on a variety of movement forms, but particularly dance. Weiss, the first modern philosopher to write a book-length work on sport and the only one of the three who would play a significant role in the later development of the sub-discipline,⁷ was nearly the opposite. He was interested in excellence, not knowledge; in universal conceptions of success, not personal experience; and in sport, not dance. Metheny was a radical holist; Weiss something of a Platonic dualist. Metheny was interested in describing intentional human movement as a form of insightful and meaningful activity for all people; Weiss saw sport as a realm where primarily youth and males might achieve excellence. Weiss engaged easily in speculative metaphysics; Metheny avoided them.

Metheny received criticism for leaning too heavily on the philosophers of symbolic thinking, specifically Cassirer (1944) and Langer (1942) and their dubious epistemological theories.⁸ She also adopted a curious and confusing terminology to describe the workings of intelligence in human movement. Her discussions of kinescepts, kinestructs, and kinesymbols proved, for many, more mystifying than enlightening. While a number of lay professionals in teacher education and other movement vocations felt she was onto something important, they were unable to negotiate successfully her language and analyses. This difficulty foreshadowed a problem that plagues sport philosophy even to the present day.

Weiss, a well-known philosopher already in his sixties when he wrote *Sport: A Philosophic Inquiry*, was an idealist and thus not in the mainstream of research in the parent discipline. While his analysis of sport turned out to be fairly straightforward and not overly speculative, it still generated considerable criticism. Some wondered about his singular emphasis on excellence as the prime value in sport, his seemingly dualistic recommendation that mind was needed to guide the body in skillful performance, and his tendency to focus primarily on male capabilities in sport.

Slusher, influenced by certain brands of European existential philosophy, provided a third book-length analysis of physical activity, and a markedly distinctive one at that. He examined sport for its capacity to promote personal authenticity, freedom, responsibility, and other values championed in the existential literature. His ambitious volume included

insights from Heidegger to Marcel and from Sartre to Jaspers. Yet, this book probably received the heaviest criticism of any—both from inside and outside the profession. Concerns ranged from the accuracy of Slusher's interpretations of the existential literature to his writing style.

Nevertheless, whatever the philosophic merits of their work, Metheny, Weiss, Slusher, and a host of others who played pioneering roles stimulated a new generation of scholars and a new way of thinking and writing philosophically about sport. Research was no longer limited to educational philosophy, the content of human movement was regarded as legitimate and interesting subject matter for serious philosophic inquiry, some philosophers from the parent discipline began to write about sport, and the quality of work from inside physical education reached ever higher levels. Whether for better, worse, or some of each, the new disciplinary approach was underway.

Problems During the Disciplinary Period. During this time all has not gone well with the sport philosophy generally or the Philosophic Society and its journal specifically. Perhaps most disturbing is the fact that philosophy courses have disappeared from many undergraduate physical education curriculums, and just under 90 percent of those that remain are taught by individuals with little interest or training in sport philosophy (Edwards, 1987). Some attribute this decline to the esoteric turn taken by sport philosophers during the disciplinary period, and the resultant difficulty among lay persons in understanding their work. Others say that it is due to the expansion of scientific content and the lesser perceived importance of philosophy. Still others think that it is due to increasing fiscal pressures experienced during the 1970s and 1980s and the inability of departments to afford sport philosophers in a profession that generally sees physiology and biomechanics as more essential. Fraleigh (1989) summarized the current state of affairs when he wrote that the profession "lacks comprehension and respect of the need for competent, rigorous courses and research in philosophy of physical education and sport" (p. 10).

Related to the invisibility of philosophy in the undergraduate curriculum, and the practice of using unqualified and disinterested faculty to teach the existing courses, is the lack of production of new scholars. Because there is little demand, very few graduate programs support philosophy concentrations, and very few graduates emerge each year (King & Bandy, 1987). Currently to this writer's knowledge, the only North American programs that currently accept philosophy of sport PhD students are University of Idaho, The Ohio State University, the University of Western Ontario, The Pennsylvania State University, Purdue University, and The University of Tennessee. The only graduate programs that have at least two specialists active in the discipline are Western Ontario (Meier and Angela Schneider) and Tennessee (Morgan and Joy DeSensi).

The number of different scholars actively involved in producing research during the disciplinary period has been relatively small. Meier (1984) showed that only 46 North American authors published two or more scholarly articles in the philosophy of sport from 1963 to 1983. More shocking is the fact that almost 50 percent of all the scholarly journal literature during this period was produced by only ten authors.

The small number of specialists in this area is due not only to the weak demand for them, or the reluctance of graduate programs to produce them, but also to the inability of early Society members to attract and retain philosophers from the parent discipline. While philosophers like Weiss, Zaner, and Kuntz were instrumental in founding the PSSS, their involvement, and that of others who followed, was generally short-lived and erratic. Most of the sustaining work of the Society was provided by individuals from physical education, even though seven presidents of PSSS have been philosophers, and in spite of the fact that some philosophers have made notable and consistent contributions to the disciplinary movement.⁹

This uneven participation may be due in part to the reluctance of traditional philosophers to approach subjects that are seen as too mundane or problems that are thought to be too applied. For example, one leading philosopher in the United States, upon being asked to provide support for a joint philosophy/physical education conference, responded spontaneously, "There are absolutely no interesting problems in the philosophy of sport." While this reaction is extreme, it may point to an historic unwillingness among philosophers to deal with what they may see as trivial matters like sport, games, and play. This view would help to explain the complaints of some previous sport philosophers that their department heads were unwilling to provide travel support to PSSS conferences, or award any credit for research published in the *Journal of the Philosophy of Sport*.

While some of this history is disturbing, a final verdict regarding the disciplinary movement in sport philosophy is still difficult to reach. In spite of the relatively small numbers of scholars involved and the low demand for its pedagogical and research products, the philosophic subdiscipline has maintained a strong refereed journal along with a steady and dedicated membership. As noted earlier, considerable progress has been made on a number of research problems, and while only modest inroads have been made in the parent discipline, the fact remains that since 1969 over ten texts have been written by disciplinary philosophers on such topics as sport, games, and play.¹⁰

The Present and Future of the Philosophy of Sport

Earlier in this chapter I traced three evolutionary phases in the philosophy of sport—the eclectic philosophy-of-education, systems, and disciplinary

approaches. It is possible that sport philosophy is on the verge of another shift, one that is being driven by changes in philosophy, physical education, and society at large. These changes include new attitudes toward science, skepticism, and philosophy as a commodity of the marketplace.

In some ways the promise of science, and the unrealistic optimism that accompanied its early phases, has run its course. Science will not solve all the world's problems—some of its harsher critics would say that it may not even be able to solve many of them—not because science or scientists are inept, but rather because the traditional reductionistic model on which science has operated cannot, in principle, produce a complete understanding of human behavior or fully predict it (see, e.g., MacIntyre, 1984). Worse yet, science done in the absence of moral research and reflection is dangerous. What can be done is not always what should be done, and a growing realization is emerging that "should" questions need the attention of specialists in philosophy and nonspecialists alike (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, & Tipton, 1991).

A growing disenchantment with the skeptical spirit that typifies much scientific inquiry also seems to be on the horizon. Oversimplified, the hard-nosed empirical attitude that is the target of some ire can be portrayed as follows: If it cannot be logically demonstrated, measured, or otherwise physically observed, it is not worth talking about. In physical education, some think that this attitude led to a curriculum top-heavy in courses like physiology, biomechanics, experimental psychology, motor learning, and other scientific bases of movement, but far too light in philosophy, ethics, history, and literature.

This science-adulating perspective affected philosophy, too. It heavily influenced John Dewey and his pragmatic, test-it-first orientation to truth and falsity. Dewey in turn heavily influenced early twentieth-century philosophers of physical education, and we are still the bearers of much of that heritage. In the parent discipline of philosophy, the skepticism of science helped to produce logical positivism and language analysis, two exceedingly dry, overly careful, and often difficult-to-read philosophic approaches. It became apparent to some that these ways of doing philosophy produced limited returns (see, e.g., MacIntyre, 1984; Bloom, 1987) and turned the parent discipline into a narrow field of study dominated by philosophical technologists.

Today some indicators suggest that philosophy is returning to Aristotle's marketplace, where educated people with inquiring minds, common sense, a thirst for truth, and normal language abilities can communicate fruitfully with one another and make philosophic progress on practical human problems. At recent PSSS meetings, for example, more talks addressed day-to-day concerns in simple terms, and fewer technical papers were in evidence.

All this may be signaling the arrival of a fourth historic period in modern sport philosophy, distinguished from its predecessors by its lesser

concern for the categories, terminology, and standards of the parent discipline. It would not be as serious or pretentious, nor would it be as interested in meeting external disciplinary criteria for success. It would be more interdisciplinary, more flexible, more interested in sport and other forms of human movement, still rigorous but more fun-loving. It would be more inclined to involve educationists and others with very practical interests in sport philosophy. In short, it would be more comfortable with its differences from the parent discipline. Perhaps this age will be called the post-disciplinary period.

The terminology of the present time implies dependency. As a so-called subdiscipline, the legitimacy of sport philosophy is more derived than inherent. Any glory it might display is more reflected than self-generated. The tendency, therefore, has been to think that good sport philosophy is nothing more than a variation on good philosophy!

If a post-disciplinary period comes about, this relationship of dependency will be lessened, not eliminated. To be sure, the insights of philosophers and the categories and methods of traditional philosophy will still have to be studied, respected, and utilized. But so will the analyses of a variety of scholars who use nontraditional methodologies ranging from literary interpretation to poetry, from dance to Olympic-level athletic participation. Scholars will be encouraged to take different roads toward a common destination—one of solving the fascinating philosophic questions posed by human involvement in sport, dance, exercise, games, and play.

Notes

1. Psycho-physical holism in this period was grounded in the scientific understanding that biology is the foundation of all. Thinking, in other words, is ultimately a product of biology, and no other-worldly "ghost in the machine" is required to account for human reflection.
2. This information came from personal letters written by Jesse F. Williams and Rosalind Cassidy to Bruce L. Bennett dated November 26, 1949, and July 25, 1951, respectively. Bennett (February 1983) graciously shared these letters with me. Williams wrote that "Wood was my source." Cassidy indicated that both Williams and Hetherington owed much of their early stimulation to Wood.
3. Davis's book, more than Zeigler's, anticipated the subsequent shift to the disciplinary period. When Harper revised the Davis text, it became even more focused on thinking philosophically and less oriented toward a mechanical application of preexisting systems (Harper, Miller, Park, & Davis, 1977).

4. Prior to the founding of the *Journal of the Philosophy of Sport*, a number of articles on sport and related topics were published in the Center's journal, *Philosophic Exchange*.
5. This group, all of whom received PhDs in the philosophy of sport, included Jan Fetters (Ohio State), Fraleigh (Ohio State), Meier (Illinois), Steven Mosher (Massachusetts), Keenan (Illinois), Kretchmar (USC), Osterhoudt (Illinois), Ken Ravizza (USC), Ginny Studer (Ohio State), and Carolyn Thomas (Ohio State).
6. The journal itself published over 125 articles from 1974 through 1993, and well over 20 books on sport philosophy were written during this time. Osterhoudt (1991) in his compendium on sport philosophy cites nearly 1,000 references, the vast majority of which were published in the disciplinary period.
7. Metheny was nearing retirement and was always suspicious of what she saw as the trickery of philosophers in the parent discipline. Slusher, in apparent response to the criticisms aimed at *Man, Sport, and Existence*, left philosophy altogether, earned a law degree, and became a successful sport agent. Ironically, given the fact that their works were often cited and some of their students became active in sport philosophy, neither Metheny nor Slusher ever spoke at a meeting of the Philosophic Society for the Study of Sport or published a single article in the *Journal of the Philosophy of Sport*.
8. A primary criticism focused on relationships between the two objects of consciousness that such a philosophy required—the thing-in-itself and the thing-as-symbol.
9. At the same time that Metheny, Slusher, and Weiss were publishing their book-length essays, physical educators like Warren Fraleigh, Sy Kleinman, and Ellen Gerber and philosophers like Bernard Suits, Richard Zaner, and James Keating were producing their own research. Gerber's (1972) anthology, in fact, proved to be the most widely used volume in the disciplinary period. Earle Zeigler, at the University of Illinois, was active both in continued writing and the mentoring of graduate students who would later assume important leadership roles in the disciplinary movement. Becky Seidel at Kent State University and VanderZwaag at the University of Massachusetts were also producing graduate students early in the disciplinary period.
10. This includes Drew Hyland (2), James Keating, Joe Mihalich, Michael Novak, Robert Simon (2), Bernard Suits, Paul Weiss, and Spencer Wertz (2), among others.

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THE HISTORY OF EXERCISE AND SPORT SCIENCE

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