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## Results or Participation?: Reconsidering Olympism's Approach to Competition

Cesar R. Torres

In spite of the privileged position that Olympism arguably occupies within the Olympic Movement, its understanding and implementation have been a challenging task. This is due to a lack of specificity, conceptual lacunas, and inconsistencies in the interpretation and elucidation of Olympism. One inconsistency pertains to the meaning and emphasis of results in Olympic contests. In this regard, the Olympic creed and the Olympic motto seem to send contradictory messages. This paper investigates the role that results should have in Olympic contests and, more broadly, in an enlightened sporting life. It argues that the most developed approach to the sporting and Olympic life is one in which the process of contesting and its ensuing results come together to form a meaningful unity.

At the core of the Olympic Games resides competitive sports. Although this characteristic is not exclusive of the Olympic Games, no other sporting event in the world holds the same allure as they do. Surprisingly, this is the case even when the quality of competition in some sporting events such as the football World Cup or the track and field World Championship is equal, or even superior, to the Olympic Games. Clearly, something more than competitive sport is what draws so much attention to the Olympic Games. Arguably, this *more* is to be found in the vision inspiring and framing the Olympic Games, which seems to cast a wide net by reaching people of diverse national, ethnic, cultural, socioeconomic, and religious backgrounds. Pierre de Coubertin, the *rénovateur* of the modern international Olympic Games, called this vision *Olympism*.

In spite of the fact that Olympism occupied a privileged position and was a recurring theme in his extensive writings, Coubertin never articulated a concise and clear definition. But when considering Coubertin's writings and the International Olympic Committee's (IOC) definition, it becomes obvious that the distinguishing feature of Olympism is the explicit pursuit of moral values through the practice of sport.<sup>1</sup> Although the specific content of Olympism is often the object of analysis and disagreement, values such as holistic human development, excellence, peace, fairness, equality, mutual respect, justice, and nondiscrimination among others are repeatedly emphasized.

Clearly, when informed by the principles of Olympism, sport contests, specifically those that are part of the Olympic Games, are shaped by an educational

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rationality, which aspires to advance and materialize a set of moral values. As a formulation for moral improvement, Olympism seems a worthy philosophy. However, the lack of specificity regarding the moral values advocated by Olympism has challenged its understanding and implementation. Consider the issue of fair play. What does it require? Mere compliance to the rules of a sport? Adherence to the letter and spirit of the rules? Observance of the *ethos*, the conventions commonly accepted in a sport, even when they might contradict the rules? In addition to these conceptual lacunas, Coubertin's ideas were marred by inconsistencies, which were bequeathed to his notion of Olympism and further challenge its understanding and implementation.

One of Coubertin's inconsistencies relates to the role and significance of the results of Olympic contests. Frequently cited Olympic phraseology appears to be contradictory in this regard. Consider the Olympic creed and the Olympic motto, both of which were adopted by Coubertin.<sup>2</sup> On the one hand, the Olympic creed proposes that in the Olympic Games, "the important thing is not winning, but taking part" (Coubertin, 2000h, p. 589).<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, the Olympic motto reads "Citius, altius, fortius" (faster, higher, stronger; International Olympic Committee, 2004, p. 18). Arguably, both dictums are evocative of Olympism. Yet, their connotations regarding Olympic results appear to be contentious. It could be argued that by stressing participation, the Olympic creed primarily values the process of contesting. More importantly, it explicitly diminishes the significance of results. Conversely, it could be argued that the Olympic motto highlights not only the results of contests, but the perpetual pursuit of records.

Coubertin's own words are not very helpful in making sense of this inconsistency. For example, he emphasized the process rather than the results of contests arguing that the Olympic creed speaks to the fact that "What counts in life is not the victory, but the struggle; the essential thing is not to conquer, but to fight well" (Coubertin, 2000h, p. 589). For Coubertin "These are the ideas that prevail within our organization" (Coubertin, 2000h, p. 589). Despite this assertion, after a few years focusing on the process of contesting, Coubertin asked "not [to] forget that the Olympic Games are not parades of physical exercises, but aim to raise, or at least maintain, records" and underscored that "Citius, altius, fortius . . . [is] the fundamental reason for the existence of any form of Olympism" (Coubertin, 2000i, p. 711). This focus on records necessarily points to the end product of competition.

Even if Coubertin envisioned the Olympic creed and the Olympic motto as compatible, the lack of articulation of this vision and the focus on either the process of contesting or the outcome of this process belied their reconciliation. Given this ambivalence, it is not surprising that the value of results in Olympic competition has been a contested issue. Thus, in the remainder of this paper I will investigate the role that results should have in Olympic matters and, more broadly, in an enlightened sporting life. To do so I will first briefly discuss the nature of competitive sport as well as its central purpose. It is important to articulate an enlightened view of sport so that it can be appreciated, as well as its results, in its full complexity and subtlety. I will then evaluate the Olympic creed and Olympic motto approaches to Olympic results. I will argue that they represent Apollonian and Dionysian tendencies and that neither one is sufficient to live sport to its fullest. I will finish by arguing that an approach to the sporting and Olympic worlds worth accepting is one in which the process of contesting and its ensuing results come together to

form a meaningful unity. This approach honors the values inherent in competitive sport and makes room for a richer and more genuine experience.

## The Nature of Competitive Sport

Sports are a species of games. Thus, to describe the former, one has first to do so with the latter. Games are peculiar activities, different from all other human activities. Bernard Suits and other sport philosophers have said that games are artificial tests (see Kretchmar 1995, 2004; Morgan, 1994; Suits 1978, 1979). That is, games provide people with problems they do not need. These artificial tests are established by rules, which lay out the goal to be achieved, the spatio-temporal conditions and equipment allotted to pursue the goal, and the means allowed to do so. Interestingly, the means restrict use of more efficient means in favor of less efficient means. To put it differently, by restricting the means permitted to solve the goal of games, the rules make accomplishing the goal more difficult than it would be if there were no restrictions.

In spite of the multiple problems life itself presents (from making ends meet to getting along with relatives and coworkers to deciding career paths to cleaning the house and doing the dishes), people are still interested in creating and partaking in artificial problems.<sup>4</sup> Think about football. Who *needs* to make a rounded bouncing object cross a line painted under a crossbar and between goalposts? Who *needs* to refrain from using a device that would make it easier to accomplish such a thing? No one. However, accepting this symbiotic relationship between the goals and means stipulated by the rules for the sake of the problem it creates is what make a game what it is. As Suits (1978) aptly has put it, “playing a game is the voluntary attempt to overcome unnecessary obstacles” (p. 41). To sum up, this artificiality, also known as gratuitous logic, is the distinguishing feature of games, their uniqueness.

Having discussed the basic nature of all games, it is timely to address what is distinctive of the kind of games known as sports. What sets sports apart from other games is that their rules primarily limit the means available to achieve their respective goals to specifically test certain physical skills and prowess (see Meier, 1995). This is not to say that proficiency in sports do not demand non-physical skills such as the so-called mental skills. However, it is unmistakable that sports put a premium on the implementation of physical skills. For instance, even when coolness under pressure or restraint are usually advantageous in achieving football success, football intends to essentially test different kicking skills needed to better negotiate the artificial problem inherent in it. In short, sports are tests of physical skills and each sport differentiates itself precisely by the set of particular and specialized physical skills it sets out to test.<sup>5</sup>

If sports involve testing one’s physical skills against the challenge provided by a set of rules, what does competitive sport require? This question can be properly dealt with by discussing the central purpose of competitive sport, which in turn focuses on the relationship between test and contests. Within the sport philosophy literature, the central purpose of competitive sport is largely uncontroversial. R. Scott Kretchmar (1995) defines a contest as “doing the same kind of thing in an attempt to show difference in the direction of superiority” (p. 39). It is important to

highlight that the two important elements of his definition are that individuals are engaged in the same activity (testing) and attempting to determine relative abilities (contesting). In other words, a contest is a shared test through which one not only learns whether or not the test was successfully passed but also how one's testing skills compare with those of a fellow test taker.

For Kretchmar, the primacy of the test for the contest is undeniable. The contest depends on the test for its meaning and relevancy. While often attention is focused on the results of contests, it is vitally important to remember that all contests are based on a test that demands the implementation of a particular set of skills (testing abilities). Because people have an interest in the common set of skills that constitute a given sport, they join together to form testing families. In doing so, people recognize themselves as footballers, swimmers, gymnasts, etc. This move from singularity to plurality is the first of two steps proposed by Kretchmar to transform a test into a contest. The second step is the commitment to improve one's performance as well as the performance of one's fellow contestant. After all, as Edwin J. Delattre (1995) has forcefully argued, athletic success depends upon finding worthy contestants and, of course, being one. For him, "We must be able mutually to discover worthy opponents, opponents who are capable of generating with us the intensity of competition" (p. 189). That is, the quality of one's opposition is of utmost importance if the relative comparison of skill is to have any genuine meaning. Properly honoring athletic superiority requires the cultivation of the test as well as caring about those whose dedication to the same test make the contest possible.

## The Olympic Approaches to Results

The Apollonian and Dionysian modes of being-in-the-world, so forcefully used by Friedrich Nietzsche in relation to art, are suitable to characterize and analyze the different approaches to results, and consequently competitive sport, represented by the Olympic creed and the Olympic motto. This is so because, as Sam Keen (1969) has argued, the Apollonian-Dionysian typology "reflects the radical alternatives that *seem* to confront the young: . . . either work or ecstasy, either discipline or freedom, either abiding commitments or spontaneity" (p. 152). The Olympic creed and the Olympic motto, basically Dionysian and Apollonian, respectively, seem to confront sportspeople with a similar dichotomy: either participation or winning, either contesting or results.

In classical Greek thought, Apollo and Dionysus are nearly opposite but complementary gods. Apollo is the god incarnating the ego, order, discipline, control, reason, and beauty. For Nietzsche, Apollonian creativity requires that people discern between the possible and the impossible, which implies an evaluation of one's potentialities and limitations. That is why self-knowledge occupies such a crucial role in an Apollonian mode of being-in-the-world. Nietzsche (1979a) wrote that along with "the esthetic necessity for beauty, there occur the demands 'know thyself' and 'nothing in excess'" (p. 99). Only those who know themselves can accomplish their goals. Apollonian consciousness therefore glorifies individual responsibility and presumed obligations to manipulate, discipline, and repress tendencies that might divert people from their goals. The Apollonian "gives us the

power of vision” (Nietzsche, 1979b, p. 102), what one considers worth pursuing and from which one is not to deviate. According to Keen (1969, pp. 153-154), modern culture is dominated by an Apollonian consciousness, most conspicuously through science and technology. These human realms focus on progress and utility and are fascinated with measure and quantification.

The Apollonian consciousness is quite visible in the Olympic motto, which captures the “modern obsession with quantification in sport” (Guttman, 1978, p. 85). Its adoption by Coubertin represents the consolidation of the scientific worldview in Western sport. “Citius, altius, fortius” illustrates an immutable faith in systematic increases in human performance and ultimately athletic progress. This attitude, which emphasizes the ideology of *homo faber* and its resultant embrace of utility as well as dismissal of activities pursued for their own sake, demands what Keen has called the Apollonian alternative to life: work, discipline, and abiding commitments. Coubertin lauded the Olympic motto on Apollonian terms. Late in his life, he wrote that

It [the Olympic Motto] is surrounded by successive records for speed, endurance, and strength, braving the vain protests of worried coaches but applauded by the crowd that feels that records are essential in athletic life, and that exceptional prowess is key for any general activity. (2000b, p. 592)

For Coubertin, it was records that give contestants “the power of vision,” a goal to aim at for which one needs the discipline to work hard. The successive records Coubertin referred to also highlight Apollo’s faith in the surpassing power of the individual—the *principium individuationis*. Pursuing records requires order, self-control, dedication, and a reasoned plan. This complicated pursuit calls for, or even demands, self-knowledge, probably one of the main Apollonian characteristics. The latter was so important to Coubertin (2000c) that for him the ancient ideal *know thyself* was “the be-all and end-all of physical culture, summarizing its requirements and objectives” (p. 163). This Apollonian principle was extremely important to materialize excellence in terms of records.

Due to the differences in their emanating source, Apollonian tendencies are in opposition to Dionysian ones. Dionysus was the god of wine, fertility, and agriculture. He was a god that did not give people visions, but pleasure. Dionysus’ world was ruled by fascination, joy, pleasant sensations, and even intoxication. Nietzsche (1979a) described the disparate nature of the Dionysian and Apollonian worlds stating that in the former, “The individual, with all his restraint and proportion, succumbed to the self-oblivion of the Dionysian states, forgetting the precepts of Apollo. *Excess* revealed itself as truth” (p. 100). This license for excess expresses and embodies the Dionysian exaltation of “ecstasy over order, the id over the ego, being possessed over a possessive orientation” (Keen, 1969, p. 154). In short, a Dionysian mode of being-in-the-world requires openness and impels people to passionately embrace experience and cavort in its nuances. Nietzsche’s characterization of dance as an emblematic Dionysian activity and Keen’s emphasis of direct participation in this way of being illustrates that for Dionysus, the key was to forget one’s personality, merge with the doing, and become “a member of a higher community” (Nietzsche, 1979a, p. 94).

The Dionysian consciousness clearly reverberates in the Olympic creed. Coubertin’s adoption of the phrase “the most important thing is not winning, but

taking part” indicates the primacy of participation and the process of contesting at the Olympic Games. Moreover, the Olympic creed explicitly suggests that results are neither the most relevant factor in the Olympic Games nor a primary value of Olympism. Coubertin himself reinforced these Dionysian elements in several passages of his writings. In vivid Dionysian language, he asserted the following:

Sport produces physical enjoyment, i.e., intense physical pleasure. Many sportsmen will attest that under certain circumstances, this pleasure takes on the imperative and disturbing character of sensual passion. Clearly, not everyone experiences this. It requires certain a sense of equanimity, and the ardor and absence of cares or self-control issues at the heart of any sensual exhilaration. But some swimmers, riders, fencers, and gymnasts will tell you that they know that exhilaration well. The intoxication of the wave, the gallop, the struggle, or the trapeze is just as strong as conventional drunkenness. (2000a, p. 190)

Coubertin, who is usually portrayed as an advocate of moderation, tranquility, and order, valued Dionysian tendencies. The passage quoted above highlights the passion, ardor, self-indulgence, exhilaration, intoxication, and sense of drunkenness brought about by letting oneself be captured by sport. Only those who give themselves up to sport can experience this. There is no doubt that in some respect, what was attractive for Coubertin was not the outcome or consequences of participating in sport but the doing itself, the experience of participation. He also stressed the idea of sport as an end in itself. In 1935, Coubertin (2000f) celebrated the idea “of effort opposing effort for the love of the effort itself” (p. 581). Years before he had explained “that the first prerequisite [for ‘becoming Olympic’] is to be joyful” (Coubertin, 2000g, p. 549). In another graphic passage, Coubertin (2000e) despised moderation in sport affirming that sport “cannot be made fearful and prudent without compromising its vitality. It needs freedom of excess” (p. 556).

It is evident that Dionysus found his way not only into the Olympic creed but also into Olympism. Indeed, one of the fundamental principles of the Olympic movement articulated in the *Olympic Charter* establishes that “Olympism seeks to create a way of life based on the joy of effort” (International Olympic Committee, 2004, p. 9). It is, however, one of the very few identifiable Dionysian elements in the largely Apollonian governing document of the IOC. The Dionysian invitation is one to love sport for what it is, to appreciate its uniqueness, to explore its depths without concern for its results or effects.

## Evaluating the Olympic Approaches to Results

The Olympic motto can be criticized because in emphasizing the quest for results, most conspicuously records and winning, it does not properly stress *how* athletic challenges are met and solved. The process of contesting tends to get lost when results occupy a primary position. This criticism suggests that the Olympic motto fails to properly highlight the process of contesting and how it makes winning and the setting of records intelligible and meaningful. That is, the testing and contesting of skills so central to the definition of each sport and, consequently, to the establishment of results are seen as secondary to the process of contesting itself. Lists of records and results do not necessarily speak to or at minimum fall short of exposing the vibrant stories behind them.

In response to this argument, it can be pointed out that since Coubertin's adoption, the Olympic motto has been articulated and defended as a call to strive for athletic excellence. Under this interpretation, records are conceived as the archetypical manifestation of such excellence and, therefore, the ultimate expression of a commitment to the defining skills of a sport. One criticism to this position is that whether the Olympic motto intends it or not, conceiving of records in this way leads to an unwarranted focus on winning and the end product of competition.<sup>6</sup> Those who set records are the same ones that win. The underlying logic is that results give the sporting world an objective and reliable way to establish and compare athletic excellence and progress. Even if understood as a call for self-perfection rather than absolute athletic excellence, the Olympic motto inevitably highlights results. One way or the other, the end product is emphasized over the values found in the process of establishing records, personal bests, or simply taking part in competition.

A second criticism is that excellence is neither the prerogative of record-setters nor of winners. That is, failing to set records or losing are not necessarily signs of athletic mediocrity. For example, a swimmer may achieve excellence without setting a new Olympic record or even without making it to the victory stand. On the other hand, not all winners display athletic excellence: A swimmer can do poorly and still win (if the other swimmers fair even more poorly). Given these scenarios, critics would argue that if the Olympic motto is a metaphor for athletic excellence, the overemphasis on records and winners is unwarranted. For them, there is more to athletic excellence than the results of competition. More important, and here resides the core of the criticism, in the sporting world, results do not necessarily correlate with excellence.

On the other hand, the Olympic creed has not met the criticism of the Olympic motto. This is the case because the Olympic creed is usually understood as a principle that moderates the overemphasis on competitiveness, winning, and results. Olympic gold medalist and sport philosopher Hans Lenk (1984) has exemplified this view explaining that "in the Olympic movement, the harsh ideal norm of being the only victor is mitigated . . . as Coubertin's well-known phrase 'The most important thing in the Olympic Games is not to win but to take part' shows" (p. 13). It could be argued, however, that by stressing participation over winning, the Olympic creed disregards not just results but also concerns for excellence, which also insinuates a failure to take seriously the move from test to contest. Indeed, participation per se does not necessarily lead to excellence. Moreover, contestants may have a wide array of reasons to participate in the Olympic Games other than achieving excellence. For instance, political, social, or commercial agendas to name only a few possibilities, may be the driving force of such participation.

Despite the criticisms assessed to the Olympic motto and the Olympic creed individually, there is a more fundamental critique that cuts across both Olympic principles. By emphasizing one or the other, the Olympic motto and the Olympic creed detach results from participation. Olympic phraseology places these two elements as opposites and in so doing at best implies and at worst establishes a rigid and damaging dichotomy. An important element of Olympism becomes an either-or affair. It is *either* the results of contests, specifically records and winning, *or* participation, the process of contesting. Whatever side of the binary scheme comes to enjoy the prevalent position, it relegates, by virtue of the nature of the phrases, the counterpart to peripheral status. This separation between results and the process by which they are established is perplexing to say the least.



For one, lived experiences of sport suggest that the end product of competition is inextricably tied to the process of contesting. Most athletes are aware of the connection between arriving at an end point and the necessary steps involved in—and in a sense permitting, conditioning, and determining—such arrival. That is, results and performance are usually not perceived as divorced. To put it in common sporting parlance, both how one played the game and its result form an indissoluble whole. The connection between results and performance is not a claim based only on the experiences of athletes. Rather, when the central purpose of competitive sport is taken into account, it is fundamental in a logical sense. What I am going to argue in my concluding remarks is that to live sport to its fullest, sport enthusiasts have to understand the complexity and subtlety of the structure and purpose of sporting contests, which neither the Apollonian Olympic motto nor the Dionysian Olympic creed approaches to sport accomplish independently.

## **Reconsidering Olympism and Its Approach to Sport Contests**

It should be clear that the Olympic motto's and the Olympic creed's distortion of the complexity and richness of the practice at the core of the Olympic Games indicates that the issue at stake supersedes that of results versus participation. The relevant issue is what view should prevail in Olympic and sport competition. Of course, such a view requires much more than simply arguing that both results and process are equally relevant. Although this shortens the distance between results and process, it still reproduces the dichotomy and a misrepresented perspective on sporting contests. I believe that a reasonable and principled view has to "take seriously the move from test to contest by adhering to the logic of sport's central purpose" (Torres & McLaughlin, 2003, p. 148). In other words, competitive sport has to be kept at the center of the analysis.

It was argued above, following the writings of Kretchmar, that the logic of competitive sport (the move from test to contest) requires that, and is achieved when contestants engage in the same artificial problem in order to determine their relative abilities. While keeping the test at the forefront, the move from its basic test to contest requires not only a shift from singularity to plurality but also a commitment to improve the performance of everyone involved in the competition. This means that a contest is a competition of the particular set of skills (testing abilities) constitutive of a sport and that contestants share a primary interest in this set of skills. Genuine contestants are devoted to the defining skills of their sport and to comparing and evaluating their proficiency in these skills. Torres and McLaughlin (2003) have called this group of contestants "resolution seekers" precisely because they "do not merely hunt for favorable results regardless of athletic merit. Rather, they consider sporting contests as the sites in which athletic superiority is determined through testing excellences" (p. 148). Resolution seekers understand and live out the significance of the move from test to contest.

This line of reasoning allows for the identification of the key elements in the view that should prevail in Olympic and sport competition. Genuine contestants should understand in theory and honor in practice how the basic test of each sport informs the contest. To accomplish this, a number of commitments based on the logic of competitive sport have to be met. Genuine contestants should be interested

not only in how competition reveals their abilities as test takers but also in how their abilities compare with that of a fellow test taker. Genuine contestants should be devoted to the cultivation of the set of skills that make their sport what it is. Excellence in those skills is of paramount importance. Using Delattre's terminology, contestants should "respect the game utterly" (1995, p. 189). Since genuine contestants should be concerned about creating and promoting excellence in their sport as well as establishing valid athletic comparisons, they should also be concerned, as Delattre has pointed out, about the performance of their fellow contestants. The Olympic creed seems to be particularly oblivious to the evaluative and comparative purposes of contests. Contesting with worthy opponents, those who challenge the opposition to perform to the best of their ability, makes excellence possible.

This leads to the issue of winning and, therefore, results. Genuine contestants do not argue for competition while disregarding concerns for winning and results. Rather, they value winning and results by keeping them in proper perspective. This perspective requires that contestants and sport enthusiasts "do not appreciate a victory for its own sake but as a reflection of a process by which contestants find worthy opponents, agree to create the best possible test, and attempt to overcome the challenge faced" (Torres & McLaughlin, 2003, p. 149). There is a healthy circularity at play here; results (including winning) are meaningful in so far as they embody athletic excellence, which in turn refers to proficiency in the set of skills that define a sport. Genuine contestants are concerned with *how* sport is played. In this sense, results are not detached from but are intimately connected with the quality of the contest and, therefore, of the contestants as well. The degree of athletic excellence displayed in a contest appears then not to be just the product of the efforts of a single individual but the manifestation of collective effort. Once again, Delattre's analysis of success in athletics is instructive for, as he has said, "In rubbing against a worthy opponent, against his skill, dedication and preparation, the quality of a competitor's mettle is tested" (1995, p. 189). There is a sense in which winning, results, and records are only made possible by testing families. This runs counter to the Apollonian *principium individuationis* expressed in the Olympic motto. In different but persuasive language, Delattre has diagnosed the same problem indicating that "Exclusive emphasis on winning has particularly tended to obscure the importance of the quality of the opposition and of the thrill of the competition itself" (p. 189). Genuine contestants keep this in mind.

It should become evident that, for genuine contestants, results and participation are inextricably intertwined. When viewed from the logic of sport's central purpose, results are not a crass product and participation is not an end in itself. Rather, establishing valid athletic comparisons "involves a series of relationships where the excellences related to superiority can be (and usually are) shown by both teams on the way of the final verdict" (Kretchmar, 2003, p. 134). From this perspective, results and participation or the process of contesting come to form a meaningful whole. And this whole is intrinsically meaningful. Embodying a sport's skills and contesting them with a worthy opponent for evaluative and comparative purposes, through which results and records are established, is exhilarating in itself. Excellence can be appreciated in results but it is lived out, felt, embodied through the contest radically connected with them. Sport philosopher Douglas Hochstetler (2003) has said that "Sport viewed in this light becomes a dance whereby intricate moves, the companionship of a partner, and feelings of exhaustion and exhilaration are

appreciated as much as the outcome of a dance competition" (p. 241). This whole, this interconnectedness between one's own and one's opponents' performances, that entails the complexity and nuances of sport competition, is what makes it a project worth pursuing.

Another avenue to reconcile the tension between results and the process of contesting, and to reveal their interconnectedness, lies in Suits' aforementioned view of games. This avenue is compatible, and perhaps even continuous, with Kretchmar's distinction between athletic tests and contests. Suits (1979) has shown that games consist of accepting the rules that limit the permissible means of goal attainment for the sake of the activity they create. In his own words, "In games I obey the rules just because such obedience is a necessary condition for my engaging in the activity such obedience makes possible" (p. 16). Suits (1978) has called the obedience to the inseparability between the goal of a game and the means allowed to attain it, the "lusory attitude." This attitude necessarily implicates not only what is permissible in a game, but also what counts as success and failure within it. Therefore, it seems to follow from Suits' analysis that the outcome of a competitive game, such as a sport contest, cannot be logically divorced from the manner in which it was achieved. To do so is to fail to recognize the defining element, and allure, of creating and partaking in artificial problems.

Then, Suits' lusory attitude informs testing families in at least two crucial senses, constitutively and axiologically. On the one hand, the lusory attitude makes games possible and has, therefore, constitutive force. On the other hand, it radically connects the outcome of competitive games to the play that leads up to it. By virtue of this connective function, the lusory attitude requires that contestants value both the attempt to attain the goal of the game and the permissible means implemented to attain it, as a radical unity. As indicated, losing sight of their interconnectedness perpetuates the polarity between results and process. Consequently, while exclusively caring about the outcome of competition focuses on the goal of the game, doing so with participation centers on the permissible means. The requirement implied by the lusory attitude provides another source for a meaningful and unified account of competitive sports, one that captures its full significance. This might have been what Suits had in mind when he said that once the connection between the goal of a game and the permissible means to attain it is recognized, trying to win is equivalent to playing the game (1979, p. 17). Clearly, this is very similar to Kretchmar's move from test to contest, which adheres to and respects the logic of artificial problems.<sup>7</sup>

In summary, neither an Apollonian nor a Dionysian approach to Olympic and sporting competition is sufficient to properly account for the uniqueness of competitive sport. Although elements of both approaches can be distinguished in the view I have defended, an enlightened view of competitive sport is more complex than putting the two on equal levels. Indeed, I have argued that a reasonable and principled view of sport competition has to keep at its center the logic and central purpose of competitive sport. If Olympism, which proposes the teaching of moral values through sport, is to avoid falling into inconsistencies, it should attempt to free itself of inconsistencies. In a nutshell, properly honoring competitive sport, and therefore athletic superiority, requires the cultivation of the test as well as caring about those whose dedication to the same test make the contest possible. This, of course, demands that contestants focus on excellence by always trying their best.

This is very difficult to do if one distances results from performance, caring only about participation in detriment to results, or vice versa.

The understanding of competitive sport defended in this paper does not dismiss the Olympic creed and the Olympic motto altogether but rather redeems them. It does so by underlying the fact that participation in a sporting contest entails a concern for excellence, relative abilities, and therefore some result. In turn, striving for results is always moderated by rules and the challenge that determine each sport's test and requires a dedication to the set of skills that create excellence in each sport. Another way of saying this is that the lusory attitude is always already informing the pursuit of victories. The problem with the Olympic creed and the Olympic motto is that they are misinterpreted or misapplied because, as seen above, they have been typically disconnected from each other. My analysis demonstrates how to properly read, articulate, and possibly implement these popular Olympic phrases.

Seemingly incompatible aspects of Olympism turn out not to be so when understood in and through a principled theory of competitive sport. Perhaps Coubertin (2000d) had something like this in mind when he affirmed that "competition places you into a struggle, making you another living being's competitor" (p. 160).

The view proposed in this paper appears to be required in a sound formulation of Olympism. It also appears compatible with Olympism's educational mission. Indeed, keeping the logic and central purpose of competitive sport at the center of Olympism and Olympic practices seems in itself educational. Moreover, I would argue that all other aspects of Olympism have to be illuminated by and articulated in a way that does not contradict competitive sport's primary values. To do otherwise is to misunderstand what resides at the core of Olympism. Olympism's complexity and inconsistencies will continue to present challenges to its formulation and practice. Facing these challenges requires as much dedication as competitive sport demands. Whether successful or not, trying to meet these challenges makes the project attractive and meaningful. In the inquiring, one will hopefully make steps toward a better understanding. Olympism demands no more and no less than that.

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## End Notes

<sup>1</sup>This is apparently the same conclusion reached by scholars such as Fraleigh (1989), Lenk (1979, 1984), Loland (1995), Parry (2000), and Segrave (1988).

<sup>2</sup>The Olympic creed is also known as the Olympic credo. For a history of both the Olympic creed and the Olympic motto see Buchanan and Mallon (2001, pp. 181-183, 188-189); Young (1994, pp. 17-25; 1998, pp. 26-31); and Widlund (1983, pp. 294-295; 1994, pp. 7-14).

<sup>3</sup>Unlike the Olympic motto, the Olympic creed is not included in the *Olympic Charter*. However, its use is widespread within Olympic circles and beyond. For example, the British Olympic Association cites the Olympic creed in its web page. Retrieved April 15, 2005: <http://www.olympics.org.uk/olympicmovement/olympicmovement.asp>

<sup>4</sup>Space does not allow for an analysis of the reasons behind people's interest in artificial problems. Perhaps, as suggested by one reviewer, this interest lies in the fact that artificial problems lead to unambiguous results that are not typically characteristic of ordinary life. R. Scott Kretchmar (2005) has recently argued, however, that "the human tendency to care so much about mere games . . . has roots deep in our evolutionary history" (p. 181). See Kretchmar's essay for a complete analysis of the relationship between games and human evolution.

<sup>5</sup>I have borrowed the ideas and even some language in the following two paragraphs from previous work I have published with Douglas W. McLaughlin. See Torres and McLaughlin (2003) and McLaughlin and Torres (2005).

<sup>6</sup>It could be asked why the end product of competition would not be emphasized when this is what society at large appears to care about the most. First, the fact that something is largely emphasized does not necessarily indicate that the emphasis is warranted. That is, the extension and continuity of a practice or value is not to be confused with its validity. Second, it seems undeniable that the current overemphasis of the end product of competition leads quite often to questionable behaviors (cheating, bribery, recruiting violations, to mention only a few). Finally, and perhaps more importantly, as I will argue in the remainder of this paper, this overemphasis is not warranted from a logical point of view either when considering the nature and central purpose of competitive sport.

<sup>7</sup>I am grateful to an anonymous reviewer for suggesting the relevance that this aspect of Suits' analysis has in providing an integrated account of competitive sport.

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