

Sport and Self-Knowledge

(Hyland)

KIN 161

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Athletics can be an “occasion for self-knowledge”

- Based on the structure of sporting contests
 - Involve the “whole” person both physical and mental
 - Intense
 - Passionate
 - Less likely to be reserved perhaps?
- Sporting contests (usually public) can illicit the good and the bad...
 - Courage, sportsmanship, cowardice, cheating



A test of ones mettle

- Sport, like other instances of intense and passionate activity, tend to bring “explicit revelations of what kind of people we are” (Hyland, p. 71).
- Due to the structure of sport perhaps, we are often exposed to facets of ourselves that had been previously unknown or unexamined (both bad and good)



Types of self-knowledge in sport

- Hyland introduces 3 types of self-knowledge
 - Self-Knowledge of Psychoanalysis
 - Zen and self-knowledge
 - Socratic self-knowledge



The self-knowledge of Psychoanalysis

- Prevalent on contemporary Western society
- By examining our sporting choices and the “mode” of involvement, we can know something about the participant
 - Golf example – compete but not have physical confrontation
 - Player that passes the ball off – fear of autonomy



The self-knowledge of Psychoanalysis

- But, according to Hyland, ones “sporting choice” is not based on psychology alone.
 - Numerous social and economic factors that play into that decision.
- On Hyland’s view, examining the sporting choices of a person does not supply answers per se, but perhaps questions since participation could be explained from opposite perspectives.



The self-knowledge of Psychoanalysis

- In what ways might you explain involvement in each of these instances according to Hyland's view
 - Case of team v. individual sports
 - Competitive v. non-competitive sport
 - Social status of one's sport choices
 - Contact v. non-contact sport
 - Coeducational sport



Mode of involvement says something perhaps?

- The "poor loser"
- The "gloater"
- The "clutch player"
- The "choker"
- The "agro"
- The "steely-calm"
- The "ball-hog"



Other Modes of Self-Knowledge...



Zen and self-knowledge

- Yet, the psychoanalytic mode of self-knowledge is not the lone avenue
- At the time, there were a host of "Zen and the art of....." books related to sport
- Simply another mode of self-awareness and self-knowledge
- Related to the art of "self-forgetfulness" and "letting go"
- Closely aligned to peak-experience notion (Ravizza article)
- "Zen" or versions of it, can perhaps, help to *facilitate* a kind of peak experience...



Zen and self-knowledge

- On this view, it is important to get to the state of "unconsciousness" where our thoughts no longer "interfere."
- Takes a lot of time to achieve this state according to practitioners
- Though it may sound "mystical" it does seem to correspond to Western notions of automatic athletic response that come with years of training (second-nature)
- Importantly, we must overcome ourselves to achieve a Zen-like transcendence



Socratic Self-knowledge

- Exploring your capabilities and your limits in order to have a better understanding of who you are
- Play "within your limits" implies that you have a good sense of what your limits are
- Always developing – striving for (unobtainable) perfection
- You create in a strong sense, the "athlete" you are by constantly pushing your limits.
- Has existential overtones (think Nietzsche)

