

# The Concept of Sport in Olympism

Jim Parry

Faculty of Physical Education and Sport, Charles University (Czech Republic)

*s.j.parry@leeds.ac.uk*

## Abstract

This paper provides an account of the values of sport in the idea of Olympism. It develops a concept of ‘Olympic sports’, as *institutionalised rule-governed contests of human physical skill*, and these six criteria form the basis of a normative account.

The conceptual account provides both a definition of sport and a demarcation criterion, and it also suggests a specification of the internal values of sport. Just as an example, take just two of these criteria, ‘rule-governed’ and ‘contest’, and it can readily be seen that they require adherence to certain values. There is no contest without an implicit contract – a kind of promising to accept and obey the rules, which, in turn, are there to ensure the equal treatment of competitors, and fairness of contest. Without agreement on rule-adherence, the authority of the referee, and the central shared values of the activity, there could be no sport.

Because it is difficult even to state the characteristics of sport without relying on terms that carry ethical import, such universalisable meanings apply across the world of sports participation. This paper examines the concept of sport for its internal values, and its relation to Olympism, by following our six-criteria outline definition.

## Keywords

Sport, values, Olympism, concepts, athlete.

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## Introduction

Chess is a board game. Now, you can call chess a sport, if you like – nobody can stop you. But why would you want to do that? What could be the motivation for attempting to rename chess as a kind of sport? Usually, when people try to ‘re-brand’ something, they have deep reasons for doing so. We used to do ‘cookery’ at school – now it’s ‘domestic science’. We also had RI (religious instruction) – now it’s called RE (religious education). Our teachers had all been to TT (teacher training) institutions – now they all go for TE (teacher education). In these three cases, cookery sought to rebrand itself with a high-sounding science label, but this was justified by greater theoretical content and less actual cookery. RI and TT wished to cast off the implications of ‘instruction’ and ‘training’, and so re-branded themselves as ‘educational’ enterprises.

However, for this kind of re-naming to be successful, something really has to change. Instead of training, or instructing, you really have to change your curriculum and pedagogy in order to evidence your move to some idea of what it is to ‘educate’ (which itself requires specification). Otherwise, it is merely a name-change, without any implications or consequences.

And why would anyone want to do that? Again, the answer would seem to be that a change to a higher-sounding name seeks to elevate the activity by association. If you call it ‘education’, when you give your volunteers some information and instruction, it looks as though you want to imply that you’re doing something ‘better’ than merely informing and instructing – otherwise, why not just call it information, instruction, training, or induction? Obviously, the use of the word ‘education’ is meant to carry with it a range of deep connotations as to the status, meaning and significance of the activity. We can (and should) always ask: is this really ‘education’? Such claims require justification; and for this we require a concept of education, against which to test (false) claims.

Similarly, if you really want to re-brand chess as a sport, you will need some justification for doing so. There should be some test for this claim, to see whether chess really has a good claim to be seen as a sport. But for this, we will need a concept of sport, against which to test it.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> There are several candidates, one of the earliest analyses being that of Hirst and Peters (1970)

In history and geography, in a thousand different contexts, people have used the word ‘sport’<sup>2</sup> to refer to all sorts of things. Hunting, shooting and fishing are ‘field sports’; bull-fighting is a ‘blood sport’; jogging is a ‘recreational sport’; chess and bridge are ‘mind sports’; dance wants to be dance-sport; yoga wants to be yoga-sport. Our question is: are all these activities really sports? Does anything count as a sport, if someone wants to *call* it a sport?

To address this question, we need a methodology, and I shall employ the philosophical technique of conceptual analysis, which involves the search for ‘logically necessary conditions’ for the use of a word.<sup>3</sup> I shall concentrate only on ‘Olympic sports’, and I shall try to provide six logically necessary conditions for ‘Olympic sports’.

To begin with, they are all *human* activities. Secondly, they are *physical* activities – by which I mean that the physical element is crucial to direct engagement in the activity, and to its outcome, and thirdly it is physical *skill* that is at issue. Fourthly, all sports are *contests* (competitions) and, fifthly, they are governed by *rules*. Finally, sports are *institutionalised*, with national and international federations administering their affairs. If we put these six ‘criteria’ together, we arrive at a simple definition of sports, as: *institutionalised rule-governed contests of human physical skill*.

## Olympic Sport

In order to justify these six criteria, I shall now offer ‘construals’ of my six logically necessary conditions for the use of the word ‘sport’ (understood as ‘Olympic sport’), giving reasons to support each criterion.<sup>4</sup>

### *Human*

Sport is a human enterprise. Whilst it is true that many animals frolic, gambol and play, non-human animals do not organise sports for themselves. And whilst it is true that animals sometimes participate in sport, they do so always and only at the behest of

<sup>2</sup> Or a similar word in another language (and we should not underestimate the difficulties sometimes involved in translation).

<sup>3</sup> For an explanation and a justification of this philosophical methodology, and its product, this concept of Olympic sport, I refer the reader to the article ‘E-sports are not Sports’ (Parry 2019, 5-7), where they were first outlined and defended in detail. Earlier formulations of such a concept of sport are to be found in Parry 1998 and Parry 2006.

<sup>4</sup> A more detailed version of this section is to be found in Parry 2019, 7-11.

humans. The same is true of machines: where they are part of sport, they are always and only under the control of humans.

There is also an issue regarding the degree of human control, or the *significant contribution* of animal or machine involvement. Equestrian events are part of Olympic sport, but not greyhound racing or hare coursing. One reason for this is that in equestrian events the horse is always under the direction of the human, whereas in the latter events the animal is 'let off the leash'.

Olympic sport does not include motor sport. It includes sailing, but not motor-boating. Amongst other reasons, this is because the 'motor' element might be seen as making too significant a contribution to the result, whereas sailing (even though it does include technologies to enhance wind assistance) remains to a greater extent in the hands of the human. This observation is reinforced by the practice, in Formula 1 car racing, of showing separately the outcomes of two competitions: the drivers' championship and the constructors' championship. This is an admission of equally important contributions, which detracts from the human, as illustrated by the inevitable debates about whether the champion driver is the best driver, or merely the driver of the best car. This is motor sport, not (Olympic) sport.

Later, I will consider the contribution of the concept of the 'athlete' to the idea of sport, but we can already see its emergence in this required sense of 'human'.

### *Physical*

Just as we had to construe the idea of the human, in order to explain its significance for our concept of sport, so we must construe the idea of the 'physical'. In what sense is sport physical? If I say that chess is not a sport, because it is not physical, an objection might run as follows: when I move a chess piece, I must make a physical movement, and the physical movement might be more extended (or more gross) than that required for squeezing a rifle's trigger. My response would be, firstly, that the physical movement is not necessary (since I might alternatively simply tell someone else where to move a piece on my behalf) and, secondly, that even if I moved it myself, the actual movement is irrelevant to the outcome of the game.<sup>5 6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Another way in which chess can be played remotely is, for example, by mobile phone connected to a smart chessboard which moves the pieces on command. (see BBC News 2018).

<sup>6</sup> This point is considered by Paddick (1975, 14).

Sport is physical just in the sense that the actual physical movement produces the outcome, as in shooting<sup>7</sup>. Furthermore, in regard to shooting, it is false that the required movement involves merely squeezing a trigger. This fails to take into account the whole-body control required of a shooter, including balance, stance, rifle hold, controlled breathing, etc, all of which contribute directly to the outcome.

Let us briefly consider an intensely ‘physical’ competitive event: the speed-eating contest<sup>8</sup>, in which (for example) contestants consume as many hamburgers as they can in a specified time period, under rules that regulate chip-munking (holding food in the mouth in the final moments of an event), dunking (softening food in liquid), debris (requiring a clean eating surface) and vomiting. Is this a sport? Speed-eating might be seen to meet the *human, institutionalised, rule-governed* and *contest* criteria of sport, but the spirit quails at the acceptance of the *physical* and *skill* elements. As intensely (even disgustingly) ‘physical’ as it might seem, this is not physicality in the required sporting sense, because speed-eating is not a physical movement activity - its primary aim is consumption. And the capacity to consume cannot be seen as a sporting skill.

### ***Skill***

All sports require the development and exercise of human physical skill. This rules out those many activities that exercise human physicality, without demanding any significant level of skill learning from the participant. Examples would include walking (not race-walking, which does require the learning of a prescribed and very specific set of skills), jogging, exercise-cycling, speed-eating, basic training routines, etc. Some might like to say that their daily dog-walking, or thrice-weekly jogging are their ‘sport’ – but I think most of them could be persuaded that this is more like their exercise than their Olympic-type ‘sport’, since a mere exercise routine does not require a significant skill component, and neither does it require the next component – contest.

<sup>7</sup> Shooting is often (and I think erroneously) mentioned as an example of a relatively non-‘physical’ sport, e.g. Jenny et al, 2017, 10; Llorens & Mariona 2017, 468.

<sup>8</sup> E.g., see: <http://www.majorleagueeating.com/>. Their events have many resemblances to sporting events. For example, like e-sports events, they are attended by thousands of spectators.

### *Contest*

All sports are contests. They are constructed as essentially contested activities. In sport, there is no pong without ping<sup>9</sup>. This rules out activities such as mountaineering, which is a challenge (or test<sup>10</sup>), rather than a contest. There is no answer to the question: if I make this or that move, what will the mountain do next? It is not contesting with me. 'It' (or, rather, possibly, the weather conditions) may set challenges for me, but that's different. I think that this rules out not just mountaineering, but many other 'Outdoor Activities' or 'Outdoor Pursuits'. In fact, they are so called just because many participants wish explicitly to deny that they are 'sports', given their ethos which rejects competitiveness, regulation and institutionalisation. As Krein (2015) remarks, regarding 'nature sports':

*"...I argue that adapting nature sports to fit into formal competitive frameworks is problematic because, when we do so, the focus shifts from athletes interacting with natural features to athletes using natural features to outdo other athletes."*

(Krein, 2015, p. 271)

It also rules out dance, which is not an essentially contested activity. A tango might be performed as a ritual, a display, a celebration, or as part of a social event, without its being compared to, or judged against, any other performance (indeed, this is most usually the case). Such a non-contest instance of dance might be performed identically to a competition performance, when various performances are judged one against another in a dance contest. This shows that dance is not an essentially contested activity.

Of course, you can make a contest out of anything, including climbing (as in 'sport climbing', or dance. Piano playing is not essentially contested, but the famous Leeds International Piano Competition<sup>11</sup> has demonstrated that music competitions are both possible and desirable. However, despite the high levels of human physical skill (of a kind) being contested, no-one

<sup>9</sup> This is a joke. It trades on the name of the first computer game, which was called Pong. "It was as simple a game can be: just two paddles and a virtual ball that can be hit across a two-dimensional screen. ... one could see in this game the simulation of table-tennis." (van Hilvoorde, 2016, 1). Pong is a computer game, but not a sport. Ping-pong is a sport.

<sup>10</sup> For the test/contest distinction, see Kretchmar 1975.

<sup>11</sup> See: <https://www.leedspiano.com/2018-competition/>. This year, it provides live free-to-view international streaming.

would dream of calling this ‘sport’<sup>12</sup>. The International Olympic Committee held art competitions at the Olympic Games between 1912 and 1948, awarding gold, silver and bronze medals<sup>13</sup>. This does not mean that art was considered to be sport. There was a programme of sporting events and separate art competitions, consisting of 5 disciplines: architecture, literature, music, painting and sculpture. Art was recognised as an important cultural companion to sport, but the two were not confused.

### *Rule-governed*

I assume that it is uncontroversial that all sports are rule-governed (although this is of the first importance both for the concept of sport and for the normative status of sport). If so, this rules out all those activities which do not require rule specifications to determine the outcomes. Field sports, for example, are a matter of going out of the house and killing animals. How you do that is up to you<sup>14</sup>. Jogging can be done as and when the spirit takes you – no rules apply. Resisting the imposition of rule structures upon surfing is at the heart of the ‘soul surfing’ versus ‘competitive surfing’ debate.

*“The (counterculture discourse) holds on to an ethos of informality, and even an anti-establishment ‘rebel’ identity ... the ocean and its ecology forge a spiritual experience. Others refer to surfing as creative expression, an art. Others still just see it as something fun to do. The vast majority of surfers have no interest in surfing as sport”*

(Evers, 2016)

In thus rejecting the idea of surfing as a sport, surfers had to deny one or more of the logically necessary conditions suggested in this article. Many surfers reject rules, and also those institutions that claim to represent surfers and surfing.

<sup>12</sup> Papineau (2015, 2017) stresses that the primary purpose of sport is the exercise of physical skills, whilst the primary purpose of music, dance and other arts lies elsewhere. Indeed, Papineau takes the extreme view that sport is “any activity whose primary purpose is the exercise of physical skills”.

<sup>13</sup> The Baron Pierre de Coubertin, the reviver of the modern Olympic Games, anonymously won gold for literature (poetry) in 1912.

<sup>14</sup> What I mean by ‘field sports’ is something pretty informal. Of course, when, for example, fishing becomes more formalised, angling contests might qualify as sport. Clay-pigeon shooting (a sport) uses a shotgun, but wild boar hunters (field sport) can use anything they like.

### *Institutionalised*

Sports are those rule-governed contests of human physical skill that have achieved institutionalised status. Again, of course, we have to construe this term – to say more about what kind and level of institutionalisation is required for our concept of sport. A sport has achieved institutionalisation if it has managed to provide a coherent representation of itself to its national and international constituencies, evidenced by national and international federations. In the case of surfing, the jury is still out, despite its recent acceptance as an Olympic sport. Many surfers argue that the various organisations with competing claims to represent them are only representing their own commercial interests, and not the activity of surfing.

To conclude this section, let me re-emphasise that my suggestion of these six logically necessary conditions is just that: a suggestion for discussion. It is just my attempt to map the logical geography of ‘Olympic’ sport, and of course this is open to criticism and improvement<sup>15</sup>.

### **Demarcation Issues**

If we put these six ‘criteria’ together, we arrive at a simple definition of sports, as: *institutionalised rule-governed contests of human physical skill*. As well as providing defining features (characteristics) of sport, they also provide a ‘demarcation criterion’ (that is, they also tell you what sport is not). This is illustrated as follows:

human	(not animals, not machines)
physical	(not chess)
skill	(not jogging)
contest	(not mountaineering)
rule-governed	(not ‘field sports’)
institutionalized	(not hula-hooping)

Some critics maintain that this kind of conceptual approach is of no use. In reply, I would ask why then do people employ this kind of tactic? Why does e-sport want to be ‘sport’? Why does e-sport want to associate itself with the Olympics? In order to be accepted into the Olympic fold, which is a major ambition of e-sport, it has

<sup>15</sup> For example, there may well be other putative logically necessary conditions worthy of discussion – such as ‘shared values and commitments’. At present I think that, while this is an important feature of sport, it is an outcome of criteria 5. and 6. rather than another and separate criterion.

had to adopt a concept of (Olympic) sports which is just like the one I have provided, and then to try to argue that they fit into it. The discussion is mostly about the construal of one or another of the six criteria<sup>16</sup>. (It is also additionally about the moral basis of computer games – the moral values presented and exhibited by them.)

The same is true of all other ‘pretenders’ to Olympic sport status. Board and card games have sought recognition (e.g. chess, bridge), but always the argument has begun from the presupposition of the validity of the concept of Olympic sport, and the pretender has tried to live up to it. The IOC has relented, in a way, and has included some of them in the category on ‘Mind Sports’. However, we should note that this may be regarded as a ‘negating category’, similar to the categories of Motor Sports, or Nature Sports, or Field Sports. That is to say, the category of Mind Sports makes it clear that they are not seen as Olympic-style sports – and that they will never be included on the Olympic Programme.

However, consider the consequences, if chess and bridge were to be granted recognition. As we said above, no-one can stop you from calling them sports, if you want to – but you will have to accept the consequences. Because, if one board game is acceptable, why not all of them? On what grounds might we deny any board or card game the same status?

This raises a second level of discussion. As well as the demarcation of sport from non-sport, here we see the demarcation of some card or board games from others. If chess is a sport, can we also include draughts? What about Scrabble, Monopoly, Risk, Cluedo? Presuming that some board game might be excluded, for what reason should it be excluded? We find ourselves in precisely the same position as before – we need to seek ‘criteria’ for (non-) admission – we stand in need of a conceptual argument.

As another example, consider the case of free-running, or parkour. Is this one activity, or two? Is it a purposive or an aesthetic sport? FIG (the Federation Internationale de Gymnastique) was quick to lay claim to parkour<sup>17</sup>, (which it now calls ‘obstacle gymnastics’, or ‘obstacle course’), but critics argue that the sport is not formalisable, and that FIG has had to ‘domesticate’ the activity in order to turn it into a sport. Or consider the case of paddleboarding – is it a kind of surfing, or a kind of canoeing? The two

<sup>16</sup> See more in Parry 2019.

<sup>17</sup> See BBC Sport 2018: Gymnastics chiefs accused of stealing parkour.

federations are still arguing about that<sup>18</sup>. These are demarcation disputes and, as such, are conceptual.

My point here is that such conceptual disputes are inevitable; and, further, that we should embrace them as a challenge to the clarity and precision of our own image of what sport (or a particular sport) is, and should be. Furthermore, demarcation is a foundational responsibility of nation's Sports Ministry, since it needs to identify those activities for which it is responsible; and also of the IOC, which must determine what counts as an Olympic sport.

### **The Values of Olympic Sport**

In providing such an account of 'Olympic sports', as *institutionalised rule-governed contests of human physical skill*, I was of course providing an account of *just this* kind of sport. In so doing, I had something specific in mind when starting the enquiry: namely, actually existing Olympic sports. I had an idea already in mind, and I tried to provide an analysis of it - a perspicuous representation of *just that* idea - of *just this* kind of sport.

Since this is an investigation of not just an abstract logical construct, but of actually existing Olympic sports, I might be asked: why these? Why have you chosen to investigate (only) Olympic sports? One answer might be that this kind of sport is highly valued - that it has a normative appeal. So when we examine the idea we have in mind, we must expect it to carry a normative dimension, so that, as well as identifying conceptual criteria, we might also go on to enquire as to the values of Olympic sport.

The conceptual account, as we have seen, provides both a definition of sport and a demarcation criterion. But I want to argue further that it also begins to suggest a specification of the internal values of sport. Just as an example, take just two of these criteria, 'rule-governed' and 'contest', and it can readily be seen that they require adherence to certain values. There is no contest without an implicit contract - a kind of promising to accept and obey the rules, which, in turn, are there to ensure the equal treatment of competitors, and fairness of contest. Without agreement on rule-adherence, the authority of the referee, and the central shared values of the activity, there could be no sport. The first task of an International Federation, for example, is

18 The Court of Arbitration of Sport was asked to mediate the dispute between the two federations, ICF and ISA (see Thorpe 2017).

to clarify the rules and to harmonize understandings so as to facilitate the universal practice of its sport.

So it appears to be difficult even to state the characteristics of sport without relying on terms that carry ethical import, and such meanings must be universalisable, if they are to apply across the world of sports participation. Let me pursue the idea that we might examine sport for its internal values, by following our six-criteria outline.

### *Human*

The construal of the first criterion, sport is 'human', did not insist that animals, machines or technologies had *no* place in sport – but that they should remain under the control and direction of the human participant, and should not make too large a contribution to the outcome. Thus, our concept of the human is central to the idea of sport, and is reflected in the ideal of the Olympic athlete as portrayed in ancient times.

Paleologos (1982, 63-7) explains the mythical origins of the Ancient Games in the deeds of one of the great heroes of antiquity, Hercules, whose twelve labours were depicted by the bas-reliefs on the two metopes of the Temple of Zeus in Olympia. The idea was that the sculptures stood as role models, especially for the athletes who were there to train for the Games, of physical, moral and intellectual virtue – of '*kalos kagathos*'<sup>19</sup>.

As Nissiotis says (1984, 66):

*“The Olympic Idea is thus a permanent invitation to all sportsmen to transcend ... their own physical and intellectual limits ... for the sake of a continuously higher achievement in the physical, ethical and intellectual struggle of a human being towards perfection.”*

So we can see how our concept of Olympic sport carries within it a conception of the human as an athlete striving to realise moral and aesthetic values.

### *Physical*

The second criterion construed the 'physical' in terms of outcome – insisting that the actual physical movement should be what contributes most significantly to the result of the sporting event. Various sports differ as to the nature, degree and vigour of

<sup>19</sup> Kalokagathia is the ancient Greek ideal, that described the beauty and goodness of the human being. (see Martinková 2008).

the physical effort required - think of marathon running versus sprinting. But all of them value physical effort as an essential part of the activity; and the energy and effort of concentration on physical performance required for successful participation.

### *Skill*

Since sports are physical activities that are partly defined in terms of skill, then sports must value the development of skilled capacities. A mere exercise routine does not require a significant skill component, even when it asks us to master some relatively routinisable competencies, but any sport requires the mastery of some relatively demanding techniques or procedures. These first three criteria together announce a commitment to the development of human physical skills, so that practice, training and education become important values.

### *Contest*

Since sports are not simply contests, but rather are 'essentially contested activities', participation requires a commitment to the value of competition. I shall not here enter the perennial debate regarding the benefits and drawbacks of competition, but instead shall note a logical point. The very existence of competitive sport evidences a profound level of co-operation, without which competition could not be realised. It is akin to the level of promising and contract-keeping without which a 'society' could not exist. Anything we would call a society must rely on a certain level of shared understandings and trust. In sport, we (tacitly) agree to a '*contract to contest*' – to shared rules and acceptance of authority and sanction. This is also the reason why contest does not entail conflict – why competing with someone is more like contention or emulation than it is like war<sup>20</sup>. And it is also the basis of the respect that we owe to opponents, given their status as co-facilitators of a cooperative event. Without the opponent (who shares our commitment to our sport) there is no event.

### *Rule-governed*

We have established that sports are rule-governed competitions, whose constitutive rules prescribe modes of cooperation without which the activity cannot proceed. This is of the first importance both for the concept of sport and for the normative status of

<sup>20</sup> For a full explanation of this point, see Parry 2012, 1-3.

sport, because it suggests an account of sport which reveals both its nature and its ethical potential. The rule structures of sport enable fair competition and just outcomes. In addition, *good* competition arises out of the relative equality of participants, and is secured by the requirements of non-discrimination.

For sportspeople, there is a presumptive obligation to obey the sport's rules. Their free choice of an optional activity entails consent to the rules, and suggests a willing submission to the logic of the activity.

Furthermore, I have argued elsewhere for the role of the rule in sport as morally educative - that sports can function as laboratories for value experiments, in which we are:

*"... put in the position of having to act, time and time again, sometimes in haste, under pressure or provocation, either to prevent something or to achieve something, under a structure of rules."*

(Parry 1986, 144-145)

The questions are: how do we come to terms with the ethical challenges posed by our own behaviour and dispositions, motivations and propensities? How do we develop a morally better self? One way is through self-restraint and rule-observance. As Nissiotis said (1984, 74):

*"[T]his is the ethical challenge that faces humanity ... Sport in Olympic practice is one of the most powerful events transforming aggressiveness to competition as emulation. ... Citius-altius-fortius is a dangerous enterprise on the threshold of power as aggression, violence and domination. But this is, precisely, the immense value of Olympic sports: they challenge people to react, to pass the test of power..."*

### ***Institutionalised***

Institutionalisation is a necessary requirement for any Olympic sport, and it carries with it the presumption of legitimacy. Olympic sports have international, national, and local federations, and sometimes continental or regional affiliations, too. The federations are the guardians of the sport, and are its lawful authority, even when they sometimes devolve responsibility. FIFA, for example, refers to a special 'laws of the game' committee for these purposes - the IFAB committee<sup>21</sup>.

<sup>21</sup> The International Football Association Board (IFAB), whose goal is "to protect the core values of the game" was established in 1886 (see <https://www.theifab.com/structure/decision>). FIFA joined the IFAB in 1913.

Referees, umpires and judges are the agents of the federation, and represent its lawful authority over the sporting event - FIFA referees carry a FIFA badge on their shirt, and they give decisions and render sanctions that are justified by their institutional status.

Some federations have taken on the language of the IOC (which often refers to 'the Olympic family'), in styling themselves in 'family' terms. Despite a reluctance to employ such mawkish expressions, we can nevertheless agree the point: federations (at their best) represent a rallying-point for all those who share a commitment to their sport – an institutional basis for the values of friendship, community, mutuality and solidarity that characterise aficionados of a particular sport.

### *Summary*

The above suggestions can be illustrated as follows:

human	<i>(development of the human, as athlete)</i>
physical	<i>(effort, energy)</i>
skill	<i>(development of human capacities - practice, training and 'education')</i>
contest	<i>(competition and excellence, co-operation, co-facilitation, respect, the 'contract to contest')</i>
rule-governed	<i>(obligation to the rules, fair play, equality, justice, non-discrimination)</i>
institutionalized	<i>(lawful authority, friendship, community, mutuality and solidarity)</i>

This section sought to show the connections between the definition of Olympic sport and the values entailed by its successful practice. Now we can see the genesis of the idea of Olympism.

## **The Concept of Sport in Olympism**

So this is where Olympism comes from – from the values that are already, necessarily, in sport. The logically necessary conditions that specify the six defining criteria of Olympic sport generate (or at least are consistent with) a set of values that are central to the values of Olympism.

Some people think that Olympism gives values to sport. I think it's the other way round: sport is the source of Olympic values<sup>22</sup>. De Coubertin saw what was already there – in everyday sport itself. Sport as an activity encapsulates and represents the everyday values that are present in any approach to civilised and well-organised communities anywhere in the world. That is why sport is universalisable, and that is what the Olympic Games is *for* – as a means to announce, exhibit and popularize this concept of ethical sport.

So we don't need to look to de Coubertin as a kind of inventor – as the inventor of 'Olympism'. For us he is more like a discoverer – one of the first to investigate and try to understand the logical basis of this newly emerging cultural form – modern sport. This analysis, of what sport is (what its intrinsic values are) and what it might become, is the major source of Olympism. What de Coubertin realised was that everyday sport in everyday life is full of its own value. All we need to do is to understand the logical basis of the practice of sports as institutionalised rule-governed contests of human physical skill, and to recognize and promote the values that flow from sport as a practical bodily expression of the values of liberal humanism. And this is the role of Olympic Education.

<sup>22</sup> This is not to deny that there are other sources, too - for example, the ethical and political values of liberal humanism, which I consider in detail in Parry 2006, 192-195. In the present paper, though, I am concerned with the values of sport in Olympism; and I do not explore the deeper issue of the relation between the emergence of modern sport in the late nineteenth century, and the liberal-humanistic values of 'late capitalism', including fin-de-siècle internationalism.

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## **Author**

**Jim Parry** is Visiting Professor at the Faculty of Physical Education and Sport, Charles University, Prague; and former Head of the Department of Philosophy, University of Leeds, UK. His academic interests are in sports ethics and social and political philosophy.