

SPORT, AESTHETICS, AND AESTHETIC EDUCATION

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Abstract. In parallel with the rational and technological tendencies of our age, sport has increasingly taken on a formal and mechanical structure, leading to the loss of its intrinsic values and limiting the individual's ability to express themselves through physical activity. This situation necessitates a renewed evaluation and reinterpretation of physical education and sport. In this study, the concept of aesthetics in sport-an idea that has only recently begun to be discussed in sports education and instruction-is examined, along with the aesthetic dimensions of sport and its relationship with art.

Keywords: Sport, Aesthetics, Aesthetic Education, Art.

Introduction

The purpose of this paper, presented under the title "Sport, Aesthetics, and Aesthetic Education," is to offer several explanations regarding the connection between sport-an inherently historical and social phenomenon-and philosophy, particularly its classical subfield, aesthetics. In this context, the study aims to clarify a number of concepts and expressions that emerge from the intersection of these fields. By doing so, I hope to initiate, perhaps for the first time in our country, an exchange of ideas on sport and aesthetic education-topics that have only recently begun to be discussed within contemporary sports education and instruction [1].

There are several important reasons for choosing such a subject. The first is that contemporary sports practices, in keeping with the rational and technological orientation of our age, are becoming increasingly formalized and mechanized. In this process, the intrinsic and subjective values that constitute the essence of sport-such as naturalness, wholeness, style, and creativity-are disappearing. In other words, the individual who engages in sporting activity becomes fragmented, drifting away from freely expressing themselves, which represents a serious problem today.

The second reason is to elucidate fundamental aesthetic concepts relevant to movement and sporting action-such as wholeness (unity in multiplicity), naturalness, expression, representation, and rhythm-as a matter of education, pedagogy, and methodology. The third reason is to establish, in light of these explanations and analyses, a bridge between movement education-currently a central topic in physical education-and the reality of contemporary sport. Put differently, is not the aim of movement and sports education to perform the beautiful and to create the beautiful?

I am well aware of the difficulty of addressing such a subject. With today's level of academic knowledge-especially in the sport sciences, which remain dominated by medical and natural sciences-it is quite challenging to view sport through the lens of philosophy. When the focus turns to aesthetics, the difficulties become even greater, for aesthetics is a highly heterogeneous area that draws upon concepts from many classical fields of philosophy, including metaphysics, anthropology, epistemology, ethics, and logic. For a field of knowledge or thought to be meaningfully linked with a concrete phenomenon, the culture must possess a certain intellectual accumulation and conceptual clarity. As far as I can observe, even in the West, reflections on sport and aesthetics do not extend very far back. At first glance, it may not even

appear that aesthetics, a classical subfield of philosophy, has a close relationship with the phenomenon of sport [2].

This is partly because modern sport-at least as it is portrayed through mass media-seems saturated with violence, aggression, conflict, cheating, and doping, all of which appear contrary to humane values. Of course, this situation does not apply to every sport or every context. However, when one begins with the very nature of sport, rooted in movement and play, it becomes possible to identify many connections and shared aspects between sport and aesthetics. Movement, as a sign of vitality and life, is more than play and sport. Human movement is a fundamental dimension of being human-like language, thought, and emotion. Human beings communicate with their natural and social environment through movement; they actualize themselves and their bodies through movement. The innate impulse to move can be developed or hindered by environmental conditions and education. Enhancing and refining movement is, in essence, enhancing one's humanity.

Sport is a symbolic manifestation of playful and agonistic (competitive) movement and a form of outward cultural performance. Movement becomes embodied and structured in play and sport. The human impulse to move becomes technical and transforms into art within sport and play. The movement that becomes artistic in games and sports acquires value through qualitative judgments such as beautiful, pleasant, rhythmic, fluid, graceful, and smooth. In sport, movement-which unites sensation, perception, and action-becomes an aesthetic phenomenon, related both to the beauty of nature and the beauty of art [3].

Aesthetic judgments in sport manifest most clearly in activities such as dance, artistic and rhythmic gymnastics, synchronized swimming, ice dancing, and ski ballet-sports often performed to music. Due to the sensory and perceptual effects created in the individual, these types of sports fall within the scope of aesthetics as the art of contemplating the beautiful or as the logic of sensible knowledge.

In today's world, where individuals have largely lost their sense of peace and inner balance, people have increasingly shifted their attention away from the outcomes of production toward the experiential and process-oriented dimensions of human activity. A similar tendency can clearly be observed in the evaluation of sporting actions, where there is a growing inclination toward aesthetic categories. In sports performance, aesthetic elements such as wholeness, creativity, expression, representation, bodily awareness, rhythm, and harmony are becoming increasingly significant.

Particularly today, in the emerging field of movement education-a relatively new concept-subjective values are often preferred over objective and measurable ones. It appears likely that in the future, gymnastic and dance-based movement forms performed with musical accompaniment will gain even greater importance. From this perspective, aesthetics, with its theoretical framework, can serve as a guiding discipline for movement, play, and sporting actions. The following schema (Diagram 1) provides a general overview of the relationship between sport and aesthetics [4].

After this preliminary discussion, I would now like to briefly address the definition of aesthetics-understood broadly as the reflection of beauty in nature and art, and narrowly as the theory of art-and outline the scope of knowledge encompassed by this field.

The origin, usage, and scope of the concept of aesthetics

The word aesthetics derives from the Greek terms *aisthanesthai* (to perceive, to feel) or *aisthēsis* (sensation, perception). In this sense, aesthetics has been understood as the discipline concerned with sensory perception and the knowledge derived from sensuous experience. Although issues related to aesthetics can be traced back to ancient philosophers, the term

aesthetics as the name of a distinct field of study is relatively recent. The discipline was established and named by the 18th-century German philosopher Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten. With his work *Aesthetica*, Baumgarten was the first to systematically ground this science, define its subject, and delineate its boundaries.

Since Baumgarten, the concept has undergone numerous semantic transformations-its scope being alternately broadened or narrowed-and has been regarded at times as a branch of philosophy, at other times as an independent scientific field. Providing a single, definitive, and universally applicable definition of aesthetics is impossible; hence, it is not feasible to speak of an aesthetic concept valid in all times and contexts [5].

“Aesthetics is like a weather vane. With every philosophical, cultural, and scientific wind that strikes it, it shifts direction-metaphysical one moment, empirical the next, normative at one time, descriptive at another. It proceeds at times from the subject who experiences aesthetic pleasure, and at times from the object from which that pleasure is derived.”

In general contemporary understanding, aesthetics in the broad sense is the science of beauty as manifested in nature and art; in the narrow sense, it is the theory and philosophy of art. Regardless of how it is defined, when human movement-considered a natural domain of existence-and play or sporting performance-considered a cultural domain-attains artistic mastery, it becomes the subject of aesthetics. It is therefore related to aesthetic value, judgment, and evaluation.

To examine the relationship between sport, aesthetics, and aesthetic education, it is necessary to briefly address the structural elements that constitute aesthetics. As in the case of epistemology, every aesthetic phenomenon necessarily involves a subject. This subject, as a being capable of adopting an aesthetic stance and engaging in aesthetic perception, participates in and contributes to the unity of the aesthetic experience. The aesthetic subject is the conscious being who apprehends the aesthetic object-whether a natural entity or a work of art-without any utilitarian purpose, purely for the pleasure it evokes. Thus, the aesthetic subject is the “I” who perceives, comprehends, and derives aesthetic satisfaction from an aesthetic object.

Some aestheticians argue that the aesthetic phenomenon is grounded primarily in the emotions and excitations occurring within the subject’s mind. This approach, which investigates the aesthetic subject, is known as subjectivist aesthetics. Subjectivist aesthetics examines the formation and validity of value judgments, the effect of beauty on the observer, the processes of artistic creation, and the modes and conditions of aesthetic perception.

However, the aesthetic phenomenon does not depend solely on the subject. Opposite the subject, there is a material domain toward which the subject is directed and with which the subject establishes an aesthetic relationship: the aesthetic object. Just as the subject is essential to the aesthetic phenomenon, so is the aesthetic object. In a broad sense, the aesthetic object may be a natural entity; in a narrower sense, it may be a work of art. From this perspective, as previously noted, the human impulse to move-as well as play and sporting actions-may be seen both as natural events and as cultural performances, thus acquiring the qualities of artistic creation.

Objectivist aesthetics is concerned with issues such as the properties and functions of beauty, the relationship between natural and artistic beauty, and the structural analysis of the work of art. The qualities of the object, its modes of existence, and the connections between the natural object and the artistic work constitute the research field of objectivist aesthetics. What we call the aesthetic object is not an ordinary object; rather, it is one that embodies the qualities we describe as beautiful. Thus, the central concept of aesthetics is beauty, which is expressed as a value [6].

The concept of beauty has been a topic of philosophical inquiry from ancient times to the present. The first thinker to ask the question “What is beauty?” in a philosophical sense was

Plato (427–348 BCE). For Plato, beauty is an Idea-absolute and unchanging. The beautiful things we perceive in nature appear beautiful because they participate, to a certain degree, in the Idea of Beauty; they are copies of true beauty. Aristotle (384–322 BCE) sought to define beauty mathematically, arguing that beauty lies in proportion, order, and magnitude. Plotinus (205–270 CE) conceived beauty as the radiance of the divine intellect throughout the universe.

In ancient Greek thought, beauty, goodness, and truth were inseparable. This ideal of “Kalokagathia”-the unity of the beautiful and the good-dominated Western educational philosophy for centuries. As is well known, in ancient Greece, gymnastics was intended to cultivate the ideal human who embodied these virtues.

The relationship between sport and art, and the aesthetic dimensions of sport

When Analyzing the relationship between sport and aesthetics, the first question that naturally arises is whether sport can be considered an art form and how it relates to art. Such a question inevitably leads us back to the broader inquiry: “What is art?” Yet, throughout the history of art and aesthetics, it has proven impossible to formulate a complete and universally valid definition of the artistic phenomenon. Hundreds of definitions exist, such as “Art is humanity added to nature” or “Art consists of works and actions that symbolically, harmoniously, and gratuitously imitate and express reality, creating aesthetic pleasure and excitement in the listener or viewer.”

Historically, sport and art have always been intertwined. Striking examples of this can be found in ancient Greek, Persian, and Turkish–Ottoman artistic works and miniatures. In ancient Greece, it was believed that both the athlete and the artist drew their inspiration from the gods; the athlete’s achievements and the artist’s creations were celebrated with the same symbols and rituals. Of course, it is impossible to equate ancient Greek athletic activities-imbued with religious and artistic symbolism-with today’s modern sports, which aim at measurable results and competitive superiority [7].

Nevertheless, contemporary sporting actions still consist of a union of aesthetic qualities. On the one hand, they embody purposiveness, mastery, proportionality, intellectual and logical intentionality; on the other, they include perceptual and sensory qualities in which the end goal is inherent in the action itself. This fusion of rational and sensory dimensions constitutes a subjective aesthetic experience. Such experience is reflected in the wholeness and quality of athletic movement.

In general aesthetic terminology, the quality of movement is described through concepts such as wholeness, rhythm, naturalness, expression, form, imagination, style, and creativity. These concepts and aesthetic categories can be seen more explicitly in the following diagram.

Here, due to time limitations, I will briefly address only the concepts of wholeness (unity in multiplicity), naturalness, and rhythm.

Wholeness (Unity in Multiplicity)

In aesthetics, the concept of wholeness or unity in diversity is associated with the organic integrity and structure of artworks. In music, this corresponds to polyphony. In an artwork or in human movement, wholeness means that the unity displayed is more than the mere sum of its constituent parts. The directedness of all parts toward a unified whole is a fundamental source of aesthetic pleasure.

The idea of wholeness in human movement goes back a long way in physical education theory. For instance, Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi emphasized that a child’s abilities and capacities should be developed harmoniously and systematically-an understanding that can be interpreted within this context. In modern sports instruction and movement education, the aesthetic category of wholeness can be considered in two respects:

1. From an anthropological perspective, the unity inherent in the movement world of children and adolescents should not be disrupted pedagogically.

2. From an instructional perspective, holistic and transparent teaching methods should be applied in imparting knowledge and skills.

Naturalness and natural beauty

In general aesthetic theory, the concept of natural beauty carries multidimensional meaning. However, in the context of movement and sporting action, naturalness can be summarized as follows: at the center of education stands the child or young person who is to be educated. Every educational practice must correspond to the natural development, world, and life of the child. The naturalness of movements derives its value from their conformity to human anatomical, physiological, and psychological development and laws [8].

Conclusion

After discussing these abstract concepts and expressions, I would like to conclude with a few remarks on aesthetic education in sport and the pedagogical measures necessary for fostering children's creative abilities. Unfortunately, the prevailing tendency in contemporary sports instruction is directed toward objective outcomes and measurable evaluations. The subjective integrity and dispositions of children and adolescents—in other words, their world of movement—are often overlooked. As this sense of wholeness is lost, children's aesthetic perception, experience, and sensibility gradually deteriorate.

In current sports education, the body has become instrumentalized. As P. Röthig rightly observes, children and young people today are judged before a tribunal of athletic skills and techniques. The development and refinement of their creative powers and capacities has thus become a pedagogical problem.

For this reason, I view the emerging concept of movement education as a possible way forward. We must engage in meaningful discussion about this topic. The pedagogical principles, philosophical foundations, and practical methods of movement education, however, are subjects that warrant an entire symposium of their own.

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