Verner Møller

The Doping Devil

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PREFACE TO THE ENGLISH EDITION

Almost ten years have passed since this book was first published. The occasion was the widespread revelations of doping during the Tour de France in 1998. In the media there was a deluge of articles, commentary and letters to editors, the great majority of which shared a common sense of outrage and condemnation. A few contributors adopted a contrary view and took the opportunity to propose a legalisation of doping. The far-out views of this minority could have been countered by solid arguments, but none of sport's leading figures, whether they were managers or politicians – not even those from the world of cycle sport – had the least desire to entertain that possibility. The time was not right for unprejudiced debate. Least of all in Denmark.

In 1996 the proud son of the nation, Bjarne Riis, had achieved the unthinkable by winning the world's most arduous cycling race. On his homecoming he was greeted like a king. His victory had raised patriotic sentiments to euphoric heights. Two years later it became clear that victory laurels had been borne home from a world that was far from ideal, and suspicions began to fester that Riis' victory had been won using unsavoury methods. In the wake of the exposure by the French authorities of the Festina team, muck began to be raked up about other teams, but Team Telekom, which Riis was riding with, was not one of them. That did not stop him, however, being caught up in the media machine and being called to account. In a relaxed and straight-talking interview on the race's rest day, he was confronted with the question: 'Have you yourself ever used doping?' Riis thought for a moment. Then he gave his famous reply. 'I have never been tested positive… and I believe in a clean sport.' It was an honest answer, but one that was less than clear. Things could hardly

have been otherwise. If he had admitted it straight out, as he did nine years later on 25th May 2007, it would have been the end of him as far as cycling sport was concerned. But if he had hoped that the media would understand his situation and be satisfied with a partial admission, he was wrong. The ingenuousness of a reply so open to interpretation did him no favours. The media demanded that he came clean. Hot with the foaming anticipation of a kill, a fresh interview demanded that he answer a straight question: 'Have you ever used doping. Yes or no, Bjarne?' Forced into a corner and clearly ill at ease, he now took an aggressive line and chose to lie his way out of trouble: 'No… Do I look like some kind of junkie?' This unambiguous denial came too late, and the national hero of 1996 became the scapegoat to be blamed for cycling sport's doping habit and, as such, the target of a media witch-hunt without precedent in Danish sporting journalism.

This witch-hunt against Riis was, however, only a symptom. His victory in the Tour de France had made him into the great Danish star of cycling sport. For that reason it went without saying that he took centre stage in Danish coverage of the doping scandal. What motivated the book was, however, neither an interest in nor sympathy for our Danish hero but rather a sense of wonder that the doping scandal could give rise to such monumental repercussions. The scandal could hardly be said to have come entirely out of the blue. Everyone with an interest in sport knew that doping was taking place. The extent to which this was going on had perhaps been underestimated, but sufficiently large numbers of athletes had tested positive prior to 1998 to do away with any illusion that doping was something only indulged in by a handful of athletes with a degenerate sense of morals. People may have been caught up in a delusion that the system for testing was geared to cleanse sport of doping cheats. If so, then it was a question of a deliberate denial of reality. For despite all the talk about the code of silence being the rule in

cycling sport, its history was rife with evidence that this was no new phenomenon. And during the 1990s the tempo of cycling sport had been driven upwards at a rate that could scarcely be explained otherwise than by an effective and systematic use of doping. What was more, this had taken place without the star riders being caught in droves by doping controls. Prior to 1998 no one had really given a damn about this fairytale improvement in performance. It was as though the media silently accepted that things were going on behind the scenes that it was best not to probe too closely. That changed overnight. After customs and the police exposed the use of doping as an integral part of the professional sport of cycling, the phenomenon – which had saturated cycling sport from its very beginnings – was presented as a threat to the future of sport. It was this abrupt alteration in attitude in the direction of moral panic that called for consideration and analysis.

The idea was not to write a contribution to the debate for or against doping. My interest was from the viewpoint of cultural analysis. I wanted to attempt to understand the discrepancy between the self-evident use of the performance-enhancing substances by cycling sport and the outrage the revelations engendered among the public calling the shots. Although the book was not intended to have any particular brief, it was nevertheless read as though it were advocating the liberalization of doping. No one had apparently paid attention to the explicit statement contained in the very first lines of the book to the effect that it was not written as a defence of doping. Either that or the words were not taken at face value. One reviewer, therefore, wrote of the book that although its 'viewpoints are in many ways a breath of fresh air, it is nonetheless a matter of concern that one of the country's most prominent sports researchers argues in favour of liberalizing doping'. Another worked herself up to such a pitch that she felt that the book's reasoning would 'overturn all the foundations of society'. This was quite some claim. And quite

some misunderstanding. The book was, by contrast, an attempt – in accordance with the enlightenment tradition – to grasp the temptation presented by doping and to give the public an insight into what lies behind the athlete's inducement. My ambition was in other words, to create the conditions for a more reasoned and finely balanced understanding of the use of doping than that which was currently dominant, whose typical explanations were a) that athletes were either immature of weak-willed characters who were exploited by unscrupulous employers, or b) that they were immoral egoists who, in total disrespect for the values of sport, were in the process of undermining it. This is, I think, easier to see today when the shock of the real has abated – which, it has to be said, is not tantamount to claiming that understanding for athletes who use doping has increased.

If *The Doping Devil* were being published for the first time today, it would scarcely have had such a provocative effect. But in 1999 the literature on doping was limited, and the great majority of the relatively few books in existence distanced themselves clearly from the phenomenon. What occasioned people to attack the book was that it did not come down on one side or the other. The book demonstrates that denunciation of the phenomenon was not accompanied by a single argument against doping that was not implicitly an argument against elite sport as a whole. It dares to take issue with the illusion that elite sport is a healthy and character-building force for good. And it dares to argue that doping does not run counter to the essence of sport but is, on the contrary, a consequence of it. Since the book's publication the literature on doping has grown markedly. It is, therefore, likely that portions of its contents will be familiar, which increases the chances of it being read and assessed more level-headedly.

The Doping Devil carries clear indications that it was originally intended for Danish readers. Although it draws on the international discussion, the Danish debate takes up considerable

space, and the individuals and organisations whose attitudes and pronouncements are referred to will in all probability be unfamiliar to an international readership. Nevertheless in international circles Denmark has – as will be shown – made so much of itself in the fight against doping that an insight into the discussions of sports politics that brought that about may be interesting for those outside Danish-speaking areas. To prepare the ground, however, it might be appropriate to make a few remarks about some of these specifically Danish agents.

Bjarne Riis and anti-doping

During the period since 1999 some of the actors who appear in the book have grown into new and significant roles. This is not least true of the Danish Tour de France winner, Bjarne Riis who, having retired from his career, took on the role of sports director for a small Danish cycling team. He took over the team in 2000, and on that occasion he did something that was quite contrary to the Danish temperament by proclaiming that he would make it into the best team in the world. This sounded rather far-out. Denmark had never previously had a professional team capable of competing on the international stage. Now it exists. It is called Team CSC and is owned by Riis' Cycling. In this way Riis has achieved his ambition to create the world's best cycling team. At any rate it has won the international cycling union (UCI's) Pro-Tour for the last three years. In the light of the continuing problems of doping in cycle sport, this is something on which the Danish media take an extremely ambivalent view. Unlike other powerful teams such as Phonak, Cofidis, T-Mobile and Astana, CSC has not been hit by ruinous doping scandals. On the other hand they have come frighteningly close. The team's star rider, Tyler Hamilton, had left the team when he was caught in the doping trap. It has emerged since, however, in conjunction with a

still unresolved doping case, Operaçion Puerto, that he was a client of the doping doctor, Eufemiano Fuentes, while he was riding for CSC. This ongoing Spanish doping case also hit the CSC team's biggest star so far, the Italian favourite to win the Tour de France, Ivan Basso. The case exploded at the worst conceivable moment (or with perfect timing according to one's viewpoint) immediately before the Tour de France 2006. Lance Armstrong had chosen to abdicate after his unbroken run of wins in the race since 1999. The showdown that had been looked forward to with such anticipation between his eternal challenger, the German Jan Ullrich and Basso, who had just given a premonition of his readiness to take his place on the Tour throne by winning a crushing victory in the Giro d'Italia, had to be cancelled. The Spanish authorities had come into possession of evidence against both men. During the raid on Fuentes' clinic in Madrid, the police had found bags with blood with various code names stuck onto them, among them 'Birillo', which was allegedly the name of Ivan Basso's dog. Prompted by the management of the Tour de France, the teams undertook to keep riders who were suspects in the case out of the race. Subsequently Riis chose to break off his collaboration with Basso without waiting for judgement in the case, and in doing so resolutely signalled that he would not tolerate doping cases on his team. Nevertheless Basso and Hamilton's relations to Fuentes took another chink out of Riis' credibility, and his name was once again slung through the media machine. On Danish TV's equivalent to BBC's *Hardtalk* programme, he was once again called to account. The interview was about the degree – or lack of – 'cleanness' in his team, but questions were also yet again asked about whether he himself had ever taken doping. When the question came, he proved to have learnt with time the art of denial. 'I have never taken doping,' he said without blinking and without adding comments along the lines of 'Do I look like some kind of junkie?', which when he made use of them in 1998

sounded like an attempt to push the lie away from himself. To underline his commitment to the fight against doping, he announced during the course of the interview that he would contact one of his worst critics (and for that reason perhaps one of the Danish media's most frequently used doping experts), the doctor Rasmus Damsgaard from Bispebjerg Hospital, and would offer to give him free rein to test his riders for doping whenever and as often as he wished. Riis would even pay out of his own pocket whatever it would cost. The offer clearly came as a surprise to Damsgaard. He had made it clear that he felt the established system for doping control was too liberal and too easy to cheat, in the same way as he had publicly made it known that if there was the will to do so, a control programme could be created which made cheating impossible. All that was needed was to allow other test parameters to decide. This he was now given leave to prove, and he took up the challenge. Over a number of years he had built up considerable credibility as a firm and incorruptible campaigner against doping. Why he should choose to risk his good reputation by, metaphorically speaking, going to bed with the enemy can be hard to understand. His own explanation runs like this:

> After the Basso incident I was approached by Bjarne Riis. He wanted to set me straight after some comments I had made in the press; but even more – or even better – he asked me to implement the ultimate and most rigorous anti-doping program the world had ever seen! I decided overnight that this was the chance to change the paradigm of anti-doping work. Personally, I had no objections against it being done within a professional cycling team, as long as it followed every single golden rule of the WADA [World Anti-Doping Agency] Code and on condition that it would be totally transparent by publishing the riders' blood profiles for anyone interested to access.[1]

Damsgaard's anti-doping programme has been recognised by UCI. The methods for testing and analysis comply to the standards of WADA but are more extensive and more sensitive. For that reason the programme has almost achieved the status of best practice. It speaks volumes, therefore, that – after it was forced to withdraw from the Tour de France in 2007 as a result of the team captain, Alexander Vinoukorov, testing positive for blood-doping – the Kazakhstani Astana team, which have been dogged by doping scandals, tried to restore the team's credibility by writing a contract with Damsgaard to implement his anti-doping programme.

The Danish Minister of Culture

Denmark has also played a prominent role in official anti-doping work since 1998. In the wake of the Festina scandal, the then minister of culture, Elsebeth Gerner Nielsen, who is discussed in Chapter V 'Sacred health', commissioned a working party to write a white paper with a view to mapping out the background of the problem and its prevalence in Denmark. The following year the committee delivered the white paper, which showed that the problem was of negligible proportions in Denmark. The largest group with experience of doping was to be found among users of exercise and fitness centres. Here 3% stated that they had experience with anabolic steroids (5% of males), while 4% had experience of doping substances as a whole. By comparison the number of respondents taken from elite sports people who stated that they had previously used muscle-enhancing hormones was only 1.3%, and none of them said they had used blood-doping or EPO. Since the statistical margin for error is 2%, it is, in fact, impossible to know whether there were any Danish elite sports people at all using illegal substances at the time. The most alarming figure mentioned in the white paper originates from an independent consultant's report made for the Danish Cycling

Federation about the extent of doping in Danish cycle sport. The firm behind the report, PLS Consult, found that 10% of cycle riders had experience of doping substances, primarily stimulants. If we consider that at the time caffeine was on the doping list and that caffeine tablets are likely to have made up a substantial part of that experience, that figure does not appear to give particular cause for disquiet either. Nevertheless the white paper was given as the basis for the establishment of Anti-Doping Denmark in 2000. The minister united Danish sporting organisations around this initiative. In Denmark there has been a tradition for the state to support the main organisations with funds but to allow sport otherwise to be self-governing. The minister had, however, seen that the fight against doping would be a political goldmine in so far as no one could oppose it – not even the sporting organisations. They might wish to be free of political interference, but they could not insist on the autonomy of sport without making it sound as though they did not believe that the doping problem should be confronted at any price. They were forced to support the minister's fight against doping. The political mileage for the minister was self-evident. In establishing Anti-Doping Denmark, she could show at one and the same time her ability to take forceful action, her interest in fair play and her concern for public health – and without meeting any resistance. An opportunity to promote herself like this could not be allowed to pass. So even though the white paper could not establish that there was a significant doping problem in Denmark, doping was made into a problem, which is something that, increasingly, it has since become.

No more than a year after the setting up of Anti-Doping Denmark, the country elected a new government. The centrist-liberal coalition lost the election and a conservative government based on support from the extreme right came to power. The new minister of culture, Brian Mikkelsen, was not seen by culturally creative sections of Denmark as their cup of tea. As an eager foot

soldier in the front line of the prime minister's cultural war – a war that was launched as a confrontation with the alleged hegemonic liberal centrist ideology of the cultural elite – his first steps were to make cuts in funds to authors from public lending rights and to starve small theatres of funding, actions which, it goes without saying, increased his unpopularity. Fortunately for him, sport also belonged under his remit, and here he opportunely found refuge in the line on doping prepared for him by his predecessor. As I have said, anti-doping was an area without political opposition. Every time there was a doping case, he could present himself in front of the cameras and take an uncompromising line towards cheats and enjoy a brief moment without opposition. But not only that. He could also see the political gains that were to be harvested from international doping work. WADA was established in 1999 but had yet to achieve a consensus for their work on the international stage. Since there were significant national interests at stake, none of the larger countries were keen to take the lead. This paved the way for the Danish ministry of culture to take upon itself a role as leader. In 2002 Brian Mikkelsen joined WADA's board. He became involved in the development of 'The World Anti-Doping Code' and in that context was able to ensure that Copenhagen was allowed to host 'The World Conference on Doping in Sport' that took place on 3-5th March 2003. Here the world was to unite in the fight against doping with the signing of the WADA Code by governments and international sports organisations. The year after that successful conference, Mikkelsen was elected vice-president of WADA, a post he occupied until 2006. He was even in the frame as a successor to Dick Pound, but instead of following that ambition – which would have meant him having to give up his career on the national political stage – he chose to take a step backwards and become a member of the WADA's executive committee as representative of European governments. There he sits to this day, while at the same time continuing to

show his deep commitment to sport on the home front. The doping problem has not, as it happens, made him less enthusiastic about elite sport – and the PR opportunities it affords.

Sporting organisations

In the great majority of countries, sporting interests are gathered under one organisation. In Denmark there are several such. There are historical reasons for this which it would be irrelevant to describe here. However, in preparation for Chapter VII 'The spirit and essence of sport' it would be appropriate to make a couple of comments about the two principal organisations discussed in the chapter, namely the Danish Gymnastics and Sports Association (DGI) and the National Olympic and Sports Confederation of Denmark (DIF). Both organisations cover a wide range both in terms of membership and of range of activities. The main difference between them is that national and international elite sport takes place under the auspices of DIF, while DGI is associated with broad-based popular sport, emphasising play, exercise, community and personal development. Since it was elite sport that was hit by the scandal in France, DGI could wash its hands and use the opportunity to go on the offensive, promoting the broad, popular version of sport that they represented as the healthy alternative to the corrupting world of elite sport. But only for a while. Prior to 1998, doping control in the world of DGI was an unknown phenomenon. But suddenly there was an insistence on the part of politicians that sporting organisations should play a positive role in anti-doping work. DGI strained at the leash. The organisation was not keen on the mistrust of members that was signalled by the doping test. It was regarded as unnecessary. In their ball park it was not a matter of winning but of taking part. Their athletes were nothing but amateurs. Unfortunately the white paper had demonstrated that the doping problem was

more serious in recreational sport than it was in elite sport. More serious, it is true, did not mean that it was serious. In addition there were reasonable grounds for suspecting that the more widespread use of doping in centres for fitness and recreational sport primarily took place in relation to private body-building centres that had no relation to DGI. Nevertheless the organisation judged that to maintain its opposition to controls was a politically risky strategy, and they toed the line. The situation today is that elderly men and women who play badminton for exercise once a week in their local association should, in principle, be available for a doping test and risk being banned if they test positive for, for example, heart medication without having a Therapeutic Use Exemption certificate. And this is only one of a range of bizarre consequences that the Danish policy on anti-doping has given rise to.

Anti-doping fundamentalism

Bizarre consequences for the man in the street are, however, not the most serious results of this hard line on doping. The worst thing is that an arbitrary and irrational anti-doping fundamentalism has spread among key figures in sport – politicians, managers and journalists – which occasionally finds expression in initiatives that go directly counter to the notion of the 'level playing field' in which the fight against doping has its origins. *The Doping Devil* concludes as follows:

> The storm over doping has turned out to be a defence of sport itself. It may be, however, that the greatest threat to sport is the public's desire to help a sport whose essence it does not want to understand. The dogma that the value of sport inheres in its moral qualities and character-building aspects has encouraged the belief that doping is a danger to sport. It may soon be apparent, however, that the greatest danger to sport

> are the many people of good will who do not seem to understand that their helping hands have sport in a stranglehold that will eventually choke the life out of it.

At least as regards the Tour de France, this final premonition now appears to have been fulfilled. The exclusion of, among others, the three pre-Tour favourites, Ullrich, Basso and Vinokourov in 2006 was devastating. Operaçion Puerto had, it is true, provided evidence, but there were no proofs in the form of positive tests, no confessions made and no sentence passed. From the point of view of sporting law, the exclusion of the men in question was unfounded. Previously the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) had even established that there was no basis for excluding the Astana/Würth team, despite the team's sports director standing accused in the case and several of the team's riders being allegedly involved. But this was a decision that the organisers refused to respect. They managed to force through a decision that the teams would 'voluntarily' suspend their suspected riders. In doing so, they took the first serious step towards changing the event from a sporting competition into a purely commercial circus. It was as though Hercules, the god of sport, were wishing to revenge himself or to warn of the danger of this new departure, when the outsider Floyd Landis won, only to scandalize the racing fraternity by being the first rider ever to fall from the dizzy heights of victory after a positive doping test. The organisers, however, appeared not to understand Hercules' message. The following year it only got worse. Here efforts by Danish doping crusaders gave rise to an attack of panic that made the Tour management relinquish the last remnants of its faith in the sporting foundations of a race so rich in tradition in the hope of avoiding yet another scandal.

Eleven years after Riis' triumph, here was a Dane once again wearing the yellow jersey of the leader. Michael Rasmussen – a typical mountain specialist who had won the polka dot jersey the

two previous years – had made a prolonged burst in mountainous terrain to take the rest of the field by surprise. What the favourites thought was a burst in order to gain points to once again win the mountain competition proved to be an assault with a more elevated goal in mind. Rasmussen was trying to win the Tour. With his courageous efforts he had just put himself in a position to do it, when the avalanche began to slide that ended with his ambition in ruins. The avalanche was set in motion by the Danish press. UCI's Anne Gripper had made it clear before the Tour that there were certain riders whom the organisation kept a special eye on because they were in the habit of training in unmarked clothes and had been difficult to get hold of during the period leading up to the Tour to conduct out-of-competition controls. She named Rasmussen as one of these 'men in black'. Since he had now, by dint of his spectacular solo ride across several mountains, put himself in the lead in the general classification, the press took advantage of an anonymous tip to investigate how many warnings Rasmussen had been given for not being present for his tests. From any sporting vantage point the question was without interest. The rules say that if a rider has been given three warnings over a particular period of time, then it counts as a case of positive doping and a ban is imposed. If, according to the authority administering the rules, namely UCI, he had accumulated three warnings over 1½ years, he would not have been allowed to start the race. His presence in the race was, therefore, tantamount to proof that the number of warnings was irrelevant. If the press felt that it was nevertheless worth their while to ask questions about his warnings, it was because they could use it to cast suspicion about him manipulating the warning system. In other words, they could suggest that he kept himself hidden at times when he was tuning his form with the aid of medication. We cannot say whether it was the Riis trauma that drove journalists to undermine Rasmussen's credibility or whether they were just turned on by a good story about the man

possibly having hidden from the doping controls. Whatever their motives, the fact of the matter is that Rasmussen's whereabouts were of no interest as far as the sport was concerned, since UCI had allowed him to enter the race. When asked whether he had been given warnings, Rasmussen replied that he had had one. Unfortunately for him, Danish Radio broadcasted the same day that according to anonymous sources he had been given several. Subsequently the director of Denmark's Cycling Union, Jesper Worre, was asked. He knew. Now it just so happens that information about an athlete's whereabouts is confidential. According to the chairman of Anti-Doping Danmark, the professor of law Jens Evald, this also applies to any warnings that might have resulted from failure to comply with the obligation to provide information. Confidentiality was an aspect that DCU (for moral reasons?) chose to ignore. Worre revealed on TV for the world at large that Rasmussen had, in fact, received four warnings. This revelation dealt a death blow to Rasmussen's credibility, and he was subsequently bombarded with questions about where he had been while the controller was knocking on his door in vain. He said he had been in Mexico and that he had posted a letter that had arrived too late. Unfortunately the former rider, David Cassani, now a commentator, reported on Italian television that he had met Rasmussen on a training run in pouring rain and had lent him a cape. This was heard by Niels Christian Jung (who appears in chapter VI 'Objections to the use of doping drugs'). Jung immediately arranged an interview with Cassani to get him to confirm that he had met Rasmussen in Italy at time when he claimed to have been in Mexico. That was the end of the road for Rasmussen. His team, Rabobank, pulled him out of the race on the pretext that he had lied to them. Which was itself a lie. It has since transpired that both the leading sports director, Theo van Rooij, and sports director, Eric Breukink, had been informed as to his actual whereabouts. His former team mate, Max van Heeswijk, has admitted since his move to the

Willems Veranda team that even the Rabobank riders knew that he was not in Mexico. Rasmussen's exit was not warranted by any breach of the rules. In contrast to competitors such as Patrick Sinkewitz, Alexandre Vinokourov, Christian Moreni and Iban Mayo, all Rasmussen's doping tests during the Tour were negative and, regardless of the suspicions and rumours of doping that have stuck to his name, he has to date never submitted a positive doping test. The only thing that led to his fall was his false claim to have been in Mexico. But deceit is 'only' a moral problem, not a sporting one. Whether athletes are unfaithful to their wives, cheat the taxman, have convictions for violent behaviour or are congenital liars has nothing whatsoever to do with sporting competition. Here only infringements of written rules can be punished. In reality, therefore, the decision to force Rasmussen out of the race dealt a death blow to the Tour de France as sport. His involuntary exit marked in its way the end of the history of the legendary race in so far as the 2007 event found itself without a winner but with a runner-up, Alberto Contador, whom TV viewers all over the world had seen lose the race in a classic contest on the last great mountain stage. The fact that the Tour management declared the runner-up to be the winner did not, of course, make him a winner in the sporting sense of the word. On the contrary, it underlined the fact that the management of the Tour has sacrificed sport in order to fawn to the media, who can apparently not cope with it being what it is – an imperfect world. The attempt made by the Tour de France president, Patrice Clerc, to present himself as the standard-bearer of morality by proclaiming pathetically that, 'Michael Rasmussen's name is not worthy to be mentioned in the same breath as Tour de France's yellow jersey', becomes, of course, the more absurd in that the person to whom the jersey passed had been implicated in Operaçion Puerto the year before. It is true that the Spanish authorities had removed Contador's name from the list but that was *after* a copy had fallen into the hands of the

German doping expert, Werner Francke, who subsequently stood up and declared that Contador's 'victory' was the greatest con in the history of sport. In an action that further emphasises that they have decided to allow sporting considerations to give way to commercial interest, they have now banned Contador from defending his 'victory' in 2008. This was despite his having been invited and having willingly shown up to promote the circus, as tradition demanded, by publicly unveiling the route. After his switch to the Astana team, however, he was no longer a welcome guest. Astana had, as I have said, withdrawn from the race in 2007 after Vinokourov had tested positive but had then replaced their management and showed a willingness to clean up their act by buying Rasmus Damsgaard's doping programme. Such initiatives, however, did not make a sufficiently deep impression on the Tour de France, who would under no circumstances allow Astana to enter the race simply because the team's *name* was too tarnished. Rabobank on the other hand were allowed to enter despite the fact that the team had lied at least as much as Rasmussen, whose lies had made him *persona non grata*.

There arose, of course, a storm of protest in Denmark at the injustice which had laid Rasmussen low. Frustration found expression in virulent diatribes in the newspapers and on the internet against the Danish journalists who had caused the fracas. Such reactions were coloured by nationalism but that in itself can scarcely give grounds to ignore them. The persecution of Riis from 1998 onwards did not give rise to protests among the general public. It was as though the media's presentation of him as a common cheat was taken on trust. But a constant stream of doping cases and the apparent arbitrariness that characterises both revelations and sanctions have visibly tipped the attitude of the public in the direction of greater level-headedness and tolerance. It becomes clearer by the day that the crusade against doping has not given sport the helping hand that we were so often told it would. That is the message of the Rasmussen case

among others. By pursuing the story about Rasmussen's warnings, which from the point of view of sport was irrelevant, journalists ended up by influencing the result of the race. With hindsight we can, therefore, conclude that it was unsporting. This presumably was what gave rise to the fury. Sports enthusiasts have begun to see that anti-doping fundamentalism is destructive. For that reason, too, *The Doping Devil* will doubtless be read with a greater measure of understanding today. In the meantime, allow me with the benefit of experience to emphasise that I am not advocating doping. My viewpoint is, that the rules should be followed by *both* sports practitioners *and* administrators. I believe, therefore, that there is no defence for claiming to further the cause by rushing to impose sanctions, which are not warranted by the rules. This, however, is not a pro-doping standpoint, but one that is anti-fundamentalist and pro-sport. It is born of a wish to see competition flourish within a relevant set of rules, well aware of the fact that no set of rules is so perfect that athletes cannot now and again get away with circumventing them.

In 2000 I was invited to the conference *Play the Game* that took place in Copenhagen. Here for the first time I met John Hoberman, whose book *Mortal Engines* had been an important source of inspiration for me. That meeting laid the foundations for what will soon be ten years of friendship and collaboration. *The Doping Devil* would never have appeared in an English version had it not been for John. The many weeks that over the years he has put aside to devote to this translation bear witness to a man of exceptional generosity; and the result pays tribute to an equally exceptional gift for language. I cannot thank him enough.

Verner Møller
Odense, Denmark, 28 February 2008.

PROLOGUE

Let me make one thing clear at the outset: This book was not written to promote the legalization of doping. Nor was it written as a defense of doping. It is certainly true that I am fascinated by what cultural critics like to call the spectacle of sport or commercial sport. But my mission is not to defend sport in its time of distress, but rather to contribute to our understanding of its essence. What really drives this book is my surprise at the intensity of the doping debate that erupted in the wake of the doping revelations that came to light during the 1998 Tour de France. While this debate shows once again that sport can provoke intensely emotional reactions, this cannot be the only explanation of what happened. This book thus originated in my amazement at the striking difference of perspective which separates those who experience doping first hand, either as users or as those who compete against users, from what we call public opinion and from the perspective of sports officials who operate outside of the competition itself. It is a striking fact that autonomous and informed athletes, who pay more attention to their bodies than most other people, are willing to undergo treatments (to put it euphemistically) that involve both short- and long-term health risks. The standard responses to this situation – that "the victims of doping" are naïve, passive and of flawed character, or simply immoral and lacking in talent – seem, not only unsatisfactory, but downright misleading. It was, after all, not least their willpower and strength of character that got them to the top in the first place. And considering which riders admitted to doping during the Tour de France, it is just as difficult to characterize them all as unsportsmanlike. If anything, their past conduct has given them the reputation of being

particularly fair riders. While the standard explanations are thus unsatisfactory, the principal questions that remain are as follows:

1. What is doping, and what are the factors that account for the use of doping techniques?
2. What are the arguments against doping, and what are they based on?
3. What is the essence of sport, its power of attraction and its future prospects?

Chapter 1 looks at doping in its historical context. Chapter 2 attempts an investigation of sport's power to fascinate, with special reference to aspects of the (now somewhat stigmatized) sport of professional cycling. Chapter 3 presents an insider's account of doping by the former rider Paul Kimmage. Chapter 4 applies the thinking of the French philosopher Georges Bataille to the problem of understanding the attractions of excess and self-sacrifice. Given the role the idea of health plays in today's world, Chapter 5 offers a theoretical framework for understanding the change in attitude toward doping that occurred over the past century, from the relative equanimity that characterized the view of doping up to the 1950s to the widespread condemnation of doping that is characteristic of our own era.

Chapter 6 analyzes a number of the typical arguments against doping that have appeared in the doping debate both at home and abroad. Chapter 7 discusses the sports organizations' treatment of the problem and offers some ideas about the essence of sport and its future prospects.

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I. DOPING IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

The current status of the concept of doping

The very concept of ”doping” is an obstacle that must be overcome if we are to have any hope of understanding the core issue of the doping problem, and here etymology is of little use. Nearly every book on the subject points out that the word originated in the South African word ”dop” – a ceremonial drink that produced a stimulant effect. But that does not tell us much about the current status of the term. Today it ranks with words like rape and murder rather than more neutral terms like sex and homicide. It has a distinctly negative connotation and can be condemned without any further reflection. Even a passing familiarity with the journalistic coverage of the great doping controversy of 1998 makes it clear that the very concept is regarded as an argument in itself. Endowing the argument against doping with any sort of profundity is, for that reason, a rare achievement.

At a conference on ”Doping and the Press,” held in Copenhagen on 21 October 1998, one session was devoted to the controversial question: ”Shall we legalize doping?” The subtext, however, revealed that this question was not really being taken seriously. It read: ”Shall we divide sport up into legalized ’doping-entertainment’ and serious sport?” An equally tendentious version of this ancillary question, but with precisely the opposite meaning, might be formulated as follows: ”Shall we divide sport up into serious competition and doping-free play?” Not one person present on this occasion expressed either surprise or dissatisfaction with the question as it had been formulated.

When one of the presenters made a point of emphasizing that he was not endorsing the legalization of doping, there was the

sort of laughter one might have expected; this statement produced the same comic effect as if someone had said: "I do not support the legalization of rape." Such a remark is amusing because it plays on the idea of indecency. It creates the impression that there is even a remote possibility of affirming something that everyone who is listening knows perfectly well cannot possibly be true.

But those present did not smile at all when a physiologist, Professor Michael Kjær, solemnly rejected the legalization of doping on the grounds that it contained an element of cheating. Still, this argument is somewhat puzzling, since it could just as well be used to argue for the opposite point of view, since legalizing doping would eliminate the element of cheating. The other argument he offered was that doping is unhealthy. While this argument sounds transparently correct, it too presents its own perils. For if we were to accept it at face value, this would open the door to banning many of life's pleasures: creamcakes, gorgonzola, Campari, cognac ... the list could go on indefinitely. But while the health argument is worth pursuing, no one took the trouble to do so. As long as the practice of doping is simply condemned, there is no point in examining the cogency of the arguments which condemn it.

The most prominent characteristics of the doping debate – facile argumentation and moral indignation – create the impression that there has been almost universal opposition to the use of performance-enhancing substances. But this is not the case. The fact is that opposition to doping is relatively recent. Efforts to oppose doping do not begin until around 1960. And that was not because the phenomenon first appeared at this time, but rather because it was at this time that doping came to be seen as a serious problem.

Aspects of the history of doping

Sport has always impelled athletes to attempt the greatest feats of strength while discounting the risks involved. At the same time, they have tried to get better by means of training and by ingesting performance-enhancing substances.

The earliest examples of this practice are known from antiquity, when athletes competing in the Olympic Games tried to fortify themselves by drinking various mixtures of wine and spirits and by eating mushrooms and plants that induced euphoric states of mind. Even alkaloids were being used at that time.

To boost their physical abilities the ancient Egyptians drank mixtures of pulverized donkey hooves boiled in oil, to which they added flower petals and rosebuds. The Roman gladiators also used stimulants, both in order to fight more effectively and – when injuries would otherwise have made it impossible – to be able to keep fighting at all. Even medieval knights, whose exemplary behavior give rise to the idea of chivalry, availed themselves of similar methods.[2]

In modern times doping has been used since the second half of the nineteenth century. Let us disregard the cynical drug treatments that prepared helpless dogs and horses for races and concentrate on human subjects.

Around 1850 a Corsican chemist, Angelo Mariani, became known for introducing a drink that consisted among other things of coca leaves mixed with wine. This was called ”wine for athletes” and was used by French cyclists in particular.[3]

In addition to cycling there are reports that canal swimmers used caffeine during competitions in Amsterdam during the 1860s. But it was cyclists who pioneered the use of doping. The debilitating six-day cycle races gave new urgency to the search for methods to increase endurance.[4] In this context it was discovered that the so-called ”speedball,” a mixture consisting of

heroin and cocaine, was quite effective. Other substances were also used. The Belgians were known for using lumps of sugar soaked in ether, the French were believed to be using caffeine tablets, and the English were supposedly inhaling pure oxygen as well as taking strychnine, heroin and cocaine which they washed down with brandy.[5]

Experiences with effective mixtures and medications became widespread as road cycling became popular. The classic Bourdeax-Paris race appears to have claimed road cycling's first doping casualty in 1896. What we do know is that the Englishman Arthur Linton died in mysterious circumstances after crossing the finish-line in fourth place. It was reported later that his coach, the famous and notorious "Choppy" Warburton, had given him a "magic potion" so that, despite his state of total exhaustion, he could complete the race.[6]

Since then cycling has experienced a series of doping-related deaths. By 1970 the president of the association of French sports physicians, Professor Chailley-Bert, estimated that more than a hundred cyclists had died as a result of doping.[7] During the period 1987-88 alone, eighteen Dutch and Belgian cyclists died of unknown causes. The fact that there did not seem to be anything wrong with them led to a widespread assumption that these deaths were due to overdoses of erythropoietin (EPO).[8]

But performance-enhancing substances have not been monopolized by cyclists. The use of stimulants spread to the rest of the sports world quite early. The modern Olympic Games themselves – true to their ancient model – encouraged doping. A dramatic example of the relation between doping and the Olympic Games occurred in St. Louis in 1904, when the American marathoner Thomas Hicks had to be revived after the race, during which he had consumed large doses of strychnine mixed into raw egg-whites.[9]

Four years later, in London, as the runners first competed in the now classic marathon distance of 42.195 kilometers, doping

may have led for the first time to a disqualification. While doping was certainly not forbidden at this time, getting any sort of help was against the rules. Out on the road, Dorando Pietri had for some time been playing a waiting game behind the leader, the South African Hefferon. Despite the heat and high humidity, he now set a very fast pace, overhauled Hefferon, and kept up the fast pace to hold him off. But he had overestimated his own capacities. When he arrived at the stadium, he was so exhausted that he had difficulty finding his way. At first he began to run in the wrong direction, but was turned around by helpful officials and staggered toward the finish line. Several times he fell, and when it happened again a few meters in front of the finish he was assisted over the last remaining steps by the physician and author Arthur Conan Doyle (the originator of the opium-smoking detective Sherlock Holmes). This was the assistance that was regarded as unfair and led to his disqualification. Pietri was alleged to have taken the drug strychnine, which affects the regulation of body temperature, and it is possible that he had taken too large a dose for the heat conditions that prevailed. Doping may thus have played a role in his collapse. But it is just as likely that it was the forced pace of the final kilometers that exhausted his last reserves of energy. Many will certainly remember how the Swiss runner Gabriele Anderson-Schiess entered the stadium in Los Angeles in 1984 in a similar condition that was due, not to doping, but to dehydration. It therefore says a lot about the view of doping in our time that, in his description of Pietri's feat, Hans Peter Rolfsen does not hesitate to ascribe his collapse to the strychnine.[10]

This sort of prejudice did not exist in Pietri's time. If he were competing today, he would be hung out to dry as a cheater. But in 1908 his heroic deed won him fame and celebrity status. After the race he was taken unconscious to the hospital, but he quickly recovered. In recognition of his bravery he was presented with a gold cup by Queen Alexandra. He was later brought to the

United States to run in a series of professional races, and he won a revenge match in Madison Square Garden against the Olympic champion John Hayes, who had also passed Hefferon during the final stage of the dramatic race in London.

Following Pietri's disqualification, Hefferon was urged by his handlers to file a protest against Hayes, since he too had received unauthorized assistance out on the race course. But the South African refused to do this. It is said that he justified this magnanimous position in the following way: "You win that sort of race by being the first over the line. Otherwise you don't win".[11]

It was not until 1960 that the European Council passed a resolution against doping – the same year that the Danish cyclist Knud Enemark Jensen died at the Rome Olympic Games during the 100-kilometer team race apparently after taking amphetamines.[12] And it was not until 1967, after Tom Simpson's death on Mont Ventoux during the Tour de France, that the International Olympic Committee (IOC) published a list of banned substances that formed the basis of the systematic drug-testing that was introduced at the Mexico City Games in 1968. Up until that point a rather liberal attitude toward the use of performance-enhancing substances had prevailed.

Rational health factors

The major two-volume work *Sport: The Great Popular Educator of Our Age* (1943) can point us toward an explanation of the striking shift that now becomes apparent. To this volume the physician Ove Bøje has contributed an article about the hygienic aspect of sport, one section of which he devotes to the question of doping. His thinking is characterized by a thought-provoking realism that puts our own doping hysteria into a new perspective. Bøje focuses first on the concept itself and begins by stating that:

> The hard athletic competitions of our age often cause people to look for any possible way of achieving the best possible performance. For that reason it is not surprising that they have thought it might be possible to boost athletic performances by taking some kind of tonic. Boosting athletic performance by taking a drug shortly before or during a competition, is called doping. Let us point out at the start that it is obvious that one should not use any drug to improve records *that has a harmful effect on the organism*, and there is nothing that indicates Danish amateur athletes are using such drugs. Still, this problem is so interesting that it requires closer examination.
>
> While the word doping originally meant the stimulation of athletes by means of powerful medications, today the word is used to refer to all drugs and means, including harmless ones, which are used to boost performance during training or competition. For this reason the use of sugar, vitamins, ultraviolet radiation and oxygen can be called doping. Whether one wishes to place these drugs and means in this category is a question of semantics. Sugar and vitamins are normal nutrients which, if given in their pure state and at the right time, can benefit athletic performances without any harmful effect (my emphasis VM).[13]

In today's context, this passage conveys a rather conciliatory attitude toward the use of fortifying substances. It is clear that the ominous resonance that doping has today is absent from Bøje's treatment of the subject. It goes without saying that athletes will attempt to optimize their performances in athletic competitions. As a sports physician, he can sympathize with that attitude. His only concern is health. Bøje opposes doping to the extent that it damages the human organism. In the italicized passage he takes the same position as that adopted by Juan Antonio Samaranch during the 1998 Tour de France, one that caused much consternation and protest, when he suggested that the IOC's list of banned substances be revised and that non-harmful drugs be

allowed. The quotation above suggests that Bøje would not have joined in this chorus of disapproval. His article even offers advice about how to dope. If he is skeptical about ”high-altitude sunlamps” as a doping technique, this is not just because it is artificial, but because ”one ought to use real sunlight which is more effective and less expensive.” Otherwise, his advice is that, whether one uses ”sunlight or artificial light, one should begin gradually so as not to get too tired or damage the skin”.[14] Nor is the use of (artificial) sunlight the only technique he can accept. While he certainly takes exception to the use of cocaine, this is due to rational health concerns. Having praised cocaine’s ability to counteract fatigue, he points out that ”it is a very toxic drug. Ingesting a large dose can bring about death in a short period of time.” Even smaller doses can be dangerous, since they can produce ”a chronic toxic effect associated with complete mental and physical breakdown, a poisoned state that is all too familiar in the large towns where cocaine is used as an intoxicant”.[15]

In a similar vein, he opposes the use of Benzedrine (”speed”). This drug ”is often used by people who need to perform mental work in a state of fatigue and impaired mood. Its purpose is to counteract fatigue and drowsiness”, and this is fine with him. Still, he feels that this drug ought to be banned, because speed has a number of side-effects, and it is therefore ”possible that it impairs performance more than it boosts it”. Chronic use may also ”damage one’s health”. But he also implies that, if speed did not create dependency and damage health, there would be no reason to ban it. For the same reason, he adopts a rather positive attitude toward caffeine. To be sure, it is a toxic substance,

> but it is not certain that it has any harmful effects when it is used in small quantities. There is nothing to suggest that people who drink a lot of coffee throughout their lives are unhealthier or die earlier than other people. At the same time, there is some risk involved in using a substance like caffeine

> that incites the organism to push itself beyond the limit set by normal feelings of fatigue. For that reason caffeine should not be used in its pure state for the purpose of doping, since it is easy to administer too high a dose. But this is no reason to impose a total ban on coffee, tea and chocolate on account of overzealousness.[16]

Caffeine is then, according to Bøje, an acceptable doping drug where it occurs naturally, or in mixtures which do not present the risk of administering too high a dose. His sole concern is the danger of an overdose, not the drug itself. His level-headed attitude toward overzealousness points to the culturally determined status and fundamentally arbitrary nature of the doping ban. It is clear he understands that a rational culture must justify a doping ban in a rational way.

Confidence in science

Bøje's ability to discuss the doping issue in such a level-headed and moderate tone is due to several factors. For one thing, the doping drugs of that period were not as potent as they are today. Overdoses of drugs like cocaine, strychnine and amphetamines could indeed be fatal, but apart from the risk of dependency the hazard presented by these drugs was direct and immediate. They did not have the same longterm side-effects as, for example, the anabolic steroids that play such a major role in defining the doping issue today.

Nor had sports science developed to any significant degree. Investigations of human physical capacity all the way up to the 1920s can be characterized as premodern, light-years behind today's standards. Bøje was writing at a time when advanced sports science was just coming into existence. He refers to "the hard athletic competitions of our age" without any apparent

premonition of the explosive development sport would soon undergo.

Finally, confidence in science was still intact. The great achievements of the 19th century: cell biology, bacteriology, parasitology, antisepsis and anesthesia, were followed in the 20th century by x-rays, immunology, the discovery of the significance of hormones and vitamins, chemotherapy and psychoanalysis.[17] These advances naturally gave rise to optimism. In Bøje's time the Janus-face of science was still not so conspicuous. The excitement about the future of medical science lasted well into the 1960s. It was not until the 1970s that the critique of medical science really took off. This was paradoxical in that optimism about progress seemed to have obscured the biological nature of the human being. As if the doctor, looking through the lense of the natural sciences, saw the human being as a machine and sickness, consequently, as a defect in the apparatus that could be repaired by means of a scalpel or pills. This method did, in fact, become increasingly effective. But the more effective the drugs became, the harsher the side-effects turned out to be. The medicalization of life[18] has led to a radical transformation. The body is now regarded as a weak vessel, as is evident in the saying: "The only healthy person is the one who has not been properly examined." The Thalidomide catastrophe was particularly effective in making clear the latent perils of medicine and the vulnerability of the body. The triumphs of medicine thus put an end to the idea of the robust character of the healthy body. For this reason medicine is no longer regarded as an unambiguous benefit but rather as a necessary evil. This development has left an unmistakable stamp on our current attitude toward doping and given the concept its special resonance.

Science's interest in human potential

Interest in human potential has developed over the past century. The experiments scientists carried out demonstrated a considerable degree of confidence in the robusticity of this biological material. The French physiologist Charles-Edouard Brown-Séquard did endo-crinological research, focusing especially on the function of the testicles, that anticipated the later development of anabolic steroids. In 1889, at the age of seventy-two, Brown-Séquard told an astonished audience at the Société de Biologie in 1889 about experiments he had performed on himself. By injecting himself with testicular extracts from dogs and guinea pigs, he had succeeded in arresting the physical degeneration he had been experiencing during the previous twenty-five years, and in several respects he had regained the vitality of his younger years after only three days of this self-administered therapy. His digestion and bowel functions were considerably improved. His ability to do mental work was also better than it had been in many years.

All of this attracted considerable attention. There were, to be sure, some sharply divided opinions about what he had accomplished, and the medical establishment dismissed his findings shortly after his death in 1894. Still, it was Brown-Séquard who gave rise to what became known as "organotherapy". As late as the 1920s, the Russian surgeon Serge Voronoff was treating patients by implanting monkey testicles, while in the United States John R. Brinkley specialized in the implanting of goat testicles. This was a treatment that promised his clients both sexual rejuvenation and relief from high blood pressure.[19]

These examples document the scientific optimism that prevailed around the turn of the century and gave rise to an ambitious modern medicine. They also point to this period's fascination with human potential and the search for ways to

improve its ability to perform. The focus was on opportunities rather than risks.

At the same time science began to cast an eye on sport and, in particular, cycling, which was especially well suited to investigations of human capacity. One early investigation was undertaken by the French physician and sports enthusiast Phillippe Tissié. His experimental subject was the cyclist Stéphane, who in November 1892 had ridden 651 kilometers in twenty-four hours. A year later, on 24 June, he attempted to break this record, and on this occasion Tissié was on hand to examine the physiological consequences of such a strenuous type of physical exertion. But this record attempt failed. Due perhaps to his decision to drink nothing but milk during the ride, he fell short by about fifty kilometers. In any case, Tissié remarked afterwards that this diet was a sign of Stéphane's physiological naiveté. Still, despite a weight loss loss of thirteen pounds, this performance did not appear to have done any damage. His liver, kidneys, heart and lungs were in fine condition. The only noticeable effect was that a hundred milliliters of his urine were sufficient to kill the two-pound rabbit into which they were injected. The critical factor was that this urine was provided right after his time-trial. After a day's rest, however, it took twice as much of his urine to kill a rabbit of the same size. Tissié interpreted the toxicity of the urine taken after the time-trial as a sign that extreme muscular exertion produces a state in which the body poisons itself.

Tissié therefore recommends that athletes who are thinking about entering this biological grey zone first undergo a thorough physical examination.[20] He is concerned about the risks to which athletes expose themselves, because their exertions are taking them into unknown and dangerous territory. In 1896, the same year that the Olympic Games are inaugurated on the initiative of Pierre de Coubertin, Tissié warns that intensive training can produce a number of psychopathological symptoms, such as

hysteria, hallucinations, memory loss and phobias. Despite his general enthusiasm for sport, his attitude toward elite sport gradually becomes more and more critical. In 1919 he calls high-performance sport a kind of sickness and warns that it is literally life-threatening.[21] Today we can confirm that that his assessment was uncannily correct.

Tissié anticipated in his own way our own critique of sport. One might therefore expect him to share the view of performance-enhancing drugs in sport that prevails today. Yet his views on this point are rather equivocal. Following Stéphane's attempt at the record, as we have already noted, he points to the physiological naiveté that was evident in Stéphane's self-imposed diet. But this did not prevent him using Stéphane's ordeal to test the physiological effects of several stimulants. So Tissié gave Stéphane tea mixed with milk, a peppermint drink, lemonade, rum, milk and rum and champagne as energy boosters. He recorded when the various drinks were consumed, their effects, and how long these effects seemed to last.[22] It goes without saying, of course, that, measured by today's scientific standards, the results of this experiment were very dubious. And there is reason to believe that his conclusion – that alcoholic drinks were less effective than non-alcoholic ones – derived from his general view of alcohol rather than any solid scientific foundation.

What interests us here, however, is that he did not object to stimulants as such, but rather shared the interest of his contemporaries in improving human performance capacity. For Tissié there was no fundamental difference between athletic performance enhancement and the pathological state. He advises great caution when treating fatigue patients with alcohol, quinine, cola nuts, cocoa, strychnine and similar substances, because he believes that overdosing the nervous system will cause it to be damaged like an overcharged battery. He is even more critical toward the new and unhealthy drinks known as *apéritifs*, which had become popular because they provided an

illusion of strength to people suffering from fatigue. But Tissié argues that the nervous systems of these people will just oscillate between depression and an artificial euphoria.

In the same spirit, he argues against athletes' use of similar drinks to boost their energy levels. They create a false sense of physical strength, and when exertion crosses a certain threshold the stimulants cause the nervous system to become exhausted, which triggers a dangerous pathological condition. Cocoa, coffee, tea, coca, quinine and similar stimulants can, he says, be used by athletes with caution. But he also argues that alcoholic drinks should be banned. The so-called "water of life" that we know as aquavit and whisky (of Latin and Irish origin, respectively) are actually the water of death. Alcohol does not counteract fatigue any more than morphine or hashish do. On the contrary, it causes fatigue. It is, therefore, correct to maintain, as John Hoberman does, that Tissié's observations about alcohol's harmful effects do not really address its effects on athletes, but are rather aimed at the social problems alcohol was causing at that time. And it is clear that this has nothing to do with any sort of ethically-based refusal to use energy-boosting and performance-enhancing stimulants in sport. His reservations are based strictly on medical considerations. The similarity with Ove Bøje's viewpoint is unmistakable.

While Tissié rejects alcohol as harmful and ineffective, he does recommend sugar water as an effective performance-enhancing technique. Nor does he refrain from reporting Brown-Squard's insights into the vital significance of the "organic juices" for human performance.[23] Even if he does not propose injections of testicular extracts – a direct antecedent of anabolic steroid use – he does claim that long-distance cyclists should be sexually abstinent during training periods so as to retain their vital juices. This idea still exists as a kind of athletic superstition.

Sport as a political instrument

A century ago science did not find sport to be very interesting. On those occasions when it was made an object of scientific investigation, as in the case of Stéphane's attempt to break the cycling record, athletes were regarded as little more than experimental animals. The scientific goal was to gain an understanding of human physiology on a basic level. The idea of pursuing research for the purpose of optimizing athletic performance lay far in the future. Doping was primarily something that athletes and their coaches pursued as casually as they did training techniques. The scientizing of sport that would eventually take the form of biomechanical analysis, sports psychology, laboratory tests of the effectiveness of different training techniques, etc., did not yet exist.

This situation underwent a radical change after the Second World War. An essential requirement of this shift was the increasing popularity, or popularizing process, that accompanied the development of the broadcast media, and especially television. This, along with the agonal nature of sport, made it well-suited as an instrument of political propaganda during the Cold War. The collapse of communism in Eastern Europe produced copious documentation of a political mobilization that aimed at making thousands of people athletically, and therefore politically, productive. A powerful contributing factor to East Germany's becoming, on a per capita basis, the most successful sporting nation in history was the unscrupulous manner in which the state pursued this policy. Sports physicians who were unwilling to take part in the realization of this program were excluded from the sports councils and organizations to which they had belonged. And when some physicians at the University of Leipzig issued a public protest against this special form of state-sponsored sports medicine, the chairman of the State Committee, Hans Schuster, declared that coaches and athletes

should not take such protests seriously, but should rather overcome any obstacle to the correct understanding of sport's political importance.[24]

In 1960 the East German state intensified its sports program. This initiative promoted research on various sports disciplines, with an eye to developing advanced training equipment and techniques as well as diagnostic methods such as muscle biopsies to investigate the effectiveness of different approaches to training. Among the more remarkable developments was an underground chamber for training at subnormal oxygen levels. This room made it possible to simulate high-altitude training and thus produce a competitive advantage without the use of doping. At the same time, it is not particularly surprising that doping was used for the same purpose. The virilized female swimmers and throwers who represented the nation so successfully at the 1972 Munich Olympic Games encouraged suspicions that they were doped. The only surprise to be found in the doping documents that emerged following the dissolution of the DDR was the sheer scope of the program.

Before the collapse of the DDR a standard explanation of the East Germans' success was that they were able to select talented children at a young age. It was known that large sums were being invested in the care and training of these young talents at special sports schools. But few could have imagined that the program included a centrally administered doping program for pre-adolescent children. That young athletes were being developed with doping drugs, and that neither they nor their parents were aware of what was happening, was a particularly ominous development in the context of the overall doping problem.[25]

The economic incentive

This systematic exploitation of human material, which also took place in the former Soviet Union, is no longer practiced in Europe. Whether this is still happening in other societies is a matter of speculation. What is certain is that, even with the end of the Cold War, more effective doping controls, and the passing of the totalitarian Eastern European countries' cynical pursuit of medals, doping remains widespread in the sports world. While the popularity of sport remains an essential factor in this context, there have to be precipitating causes other than politics per se, and here it is natural to focus on the economic dimension. Commercialization has made elite sport so lucrative that athletes are tempted to dope themselves so as to make the transition from honorable participation to the top of the victory stand and the financial rewards this entails. Here the economic incentive is all too evident. In this sense Hoberman's description of the fatal doping scenario that led to the death of the 27-year-old West German heptathlete Birgit Dressel sounds credible. Dressel died at the Mainz University Hospital on 9 April 1987 suffering from terrible pain caused by an inflammation of the spinal cord. It was later revealed that over a period of years she had allowed the notorious sports physician Armin Klümper to give her four hundred or more injections of various substances, including proteins that can lead to an impairment of the immune system. She had also given herself a number of doping drugs, among them anabolic steroids, in the form of pills or injections. We do not know why her consumption of banned substances produced such drastic consequences, but, Hoberman writes:

> The Birgit Dressel affair offers a comprehensive portrait of modern high-performance sport in miniature. The cast of characters is complete: the ambitious athlete and her trainer-companion, both hoping to escape from their cramped attic apartment into the brightly illuminated world of international

> stardom, the sports officials who take the necessity of illicit drug use for granted and therefore tolerate or even encourage the use of performance-enhancing drugs, and the physician whose need to associate with famous athletes rendered him unfit to distinguish between maintaining the body's health and boosting its performance with medically reckless procedures.[26]

This scenario sounds entirely plausible, and the problem is the unholy alliance between sport and greed. Professionalism, which was disdained before it became generally accepted, is tied to fatal doping cases – just as it was in the heyday of amateurism – as the decisive threat to the purity and nobility of sport. This portrayal is convenient in that the athletes can be presented as victims of their own greed and of a whole series of cynical experts, sponsors and officials. The problem is that buying into the idea that commercialization explains everything disregards the significance of athletic ambition. Although Hoberman's scenario begins by pointing to the athlete's ambition as a driving force, the emphasis is then shifted to the world outside of sport, and we are now prepared for yet another version of a well-known conspiracy theory. The real problem is supposedly a collaborative arrangement of interests lurking outside the sports world. But this explanation leaves two riddles unsolved. First, it does not help us to understand why doping has, to one degree or another, always been a part of sport. And it does not explain why there is a lot of doping going on in recreational sport. We can find the answers to these questions if we seek them inside the realm of sport itself and treat athletic ambition as the key to an explanation of what is going on. The point is that athletic ambition can prevail at any level of competition and is not dependent on economic incentives. The economic factor is relevant only in that it can reinforce what is already there.

Doping – use, abuse, and compulsion

Anyone who hopes to understand the core issues of the current doping debate must come to terms with the concept of doping itself. The first step is to distinguish between *use*, *abuse*, and *compulsion*, and up to this point no one has done this. Doping has instead been subjected to general condemnation. This means that the judgment is reflexive rather than reflective, which is already evident in that doping is always referred to as a form of *abuse*. The very concept of abuse contains a moral condemnation as well as an assertion that this is something that must be opposed. The concept is also tied to the idea that the abusers need help. These are unhappy creatures who are unable to take care of themselves, just as abusers of drugs and alcohol need therapy to put their lives back in order. It is this sort of individual who, perhaps rightly, comes to mind as we listen to Hoberman's account of Birgit Dressel.

But talking about the doping phenomenon as if all cases were examples of abuse conveys an authoritarian attitude that comes uncomfortably close to turning athletes into minors. The typical defense mounted on behalf of the athletes has been that they are forced to (ab)use drugs. In other words, even if some take EPO voluntarily, this is not something they can freely choose.

By not making this distinction, one can write about doping as if people were being *compelled* to dope. And this is, indeed, convenient, since it allows us to excuse the behavior of our idols by portraying them as children. We can direct our anger against the system, the sponsors, the sports directors, the doctors, the whole commercial circus that forces our poor heroes out onto a slippery slope where they are exploited against their will.

This was the story the press told during the 1998 Tour de France. And it was an effective tactic: the star quality of the athletes was kept alive by artificial means even as the event itself

was torn to pieces to feed the flames of moral indignation. The problem is that this narrative is far from credible.

The primary difficulty here is the incompatibility of two opposing perspectives. On the one hand, there are the riders who pursue their profession with great resolution and who could never have reached the elite level without self-discipline and an iron will. At the same time, these people are supposed to be passive, weak-willed and compliant the minute they are dealing with sports directors, doctors, and sponsors. There is something about this claim that doesn't make sense.

As soon as we leave sheer condemnation behind and insist on distinguishing between forced doping, doping abuse, and voluntary doping, we will be able to look for more plausible explanations of the doping phenomenon.

Forced doping, which inflicts doping regimens on unwitting children and adolescents, is obviously reprehensible. Our real topic is voluntary doping practices, which are fundamentally different from this sort of abuse. Voluntary doping means that the athlete, either alone or in consultation with others, such as a doctor or sports director, decides to make use of (banned) performance-enhancing substances. This can in some cases lead to doping abuse, where drug use goes too far and becomes inappropriate and dangerous. Doping abuse is thus one possible consequence of voluntary doping. It is comparable to, for example, anorexia, which sometimes results from voluntary dieting, and it is just as deplorable as drug- and alcohol-abuse. We will not, however, be focusing on these degenerate forms of doping. We shall instead focus exclusively on that voluntary and controlled use of drugs that continues to provoke indignation.

While doping is a widely practiced in a large number of sports, we will concentrate on cycling. It was, after all, the 1998 Tour de France scandal that did so much to define the opposing factions and attitudes and broadcast the standard arguments against doping to an enormous public. These are the divisions,

attitudes and arguments which point to the purity and character-building qualities of sport. Yet we should also consider the possibility that doping originates in something other than political and economic factors. There is no reason to assume that doping must *necessarily* be ascribed to such external conditions. Let us now investigate the possibility that there is something inherent in sport itself that encourages athletes to dope. If this turns out to be the case, then the entire doping debate will have to be seen in a very different light.

II. ASPECTS OF THE HISTORY OF CYCLING

Cycling – A modern stepchild

Cycling has a special status in the world of sport. Even though it became an object of fantasy and hero worship early on, it was in fact a prosaic activity. From the very beginning, during the second half of the nineteenth century, it was both promoted and shaped by commercial interests. While athletes in other sports long honored the amateur ideals, cyclists soon turned their sport into a way to make a living. They were happy to ride for cash prizes, and they called themselves professionals without shame. And there were other ways in which cycling distinguished itself from other kinds of sport. It was promoted as entertainment and, unlike gymnastics or the sports of English gentlemen, it has never been associated with higher purposes.

Nor, in contrast to soccer, tennis and athletics, does cycling have pre-modern roots. Its prerequisite was, instead, the construction of a machine. The first velocipede was made during the late 1860s, and the first major race was run in 1869 from Rouen to Paris.

Cycling is, therefore, genuinely modern. It has developed in line with industrial capitalism and at the same spirit. The improvements that separate the velocipede from the advanced aerodynamic machines of our era are not the only evidence of this relationship. Cycling's striking affinity for what is new makes the same point. Although cycling is very conscious of its traditions, adhering to a calendar that makes little room for new competitions, it is not afraid of innovating.

In old photographs from the Tour de France you can see riders with inner tubes slung over their shoulders. The rules prescribed that the riders themselves had to carry out any necessary repairs

on the road. Today you raise an arm to signal a problem and help is usually on the way within seconds. Whatever needs to be done is taken care of quickly and effectively.

In keeping with the computer age, the riders are equipped with heart rate monitors so they can keep track of their heart rates and, perhaps, let go of a strong group or a breakaway rider before they reach the point of irrecoverable exhaustion. The computer makes it easier to use energy *economically*. In keeping with the information society, a number of teams stay in direct telephone contact with their sports directors. In this way they can stay informed about how the race is developing and develop strategy while the race is underway. There are still the stars and their helpers, but while an earlier period put more emphasis on individual performance, teamwork has become the new focus in professional cycling competitions.

The intimate relationship that ties cycling to modernity is also evident in the media coverage. During the earliest road races it was difficult to follow what was happening out on the course. This information gap gave rise to all kinds of rumors, poems, and fanciful stories. Later on radio broadcasts provided more reliable information about what was happening. Yet there were always opportunities to give races patriotic interpretations that did not necessarily accord with what was actually happening among the riders.

The advent of television made it possible for the spectator to be present at a distance in the middle of a race, so the oral narrative is combined with a visual presentation. Efforts that would once have been described as heroic feats are now subject to scrutiny and evaluation by those who are watching the competition. This makes possible a more sober, better informed, but also a more mundane reading of the event.

When bad weather makes it impossible to follow the event and allows us only a still photograph of the finish-line, we are relegated to the uncertainty that characterized the cycling events

of the past. Who will be the first to emerge from the fog? Has something decisive happened? At these frustrating moments we experience a unique aspect of long-distance cycling. Although it is modern, it cannot be fully domesticated and subjected to the standardization that is otherwise typical of modern sport. In addition to the riders' competition with each other, cycling is always a struggle against nature, as well. This is what gives cycling its indomitable and unpredictable quality.

The early phase of professional cycling

After the first major cycling race in 1869, ten years would pass before races were held at regular intervals. The first velocipedes were both very expensive and dangerous to ride. For this reason it was typically young men from prosperous families who were looking for excitement who were first attracted to cycling and rode in the first races.

"A cyclist is an independent and financially self-sufficient gentleman – a young man from a good family who possesses a substantial income and who enjoys participating in races in many countries." That is how one of the pioneers of the 1880s, the Englishman H.O. Duncan, defined the ideal cyclist. He was himself the grandson of a landowner and had inherited a considerable sum of money, which enabled him to compete in France. The other competitors also tended to match this description. Frédéric Charron, one of the best French riders of this time, had inherited a large grocery store and later became one of France's first automobile racers.[27]

In the beginning cycle racing in France consisted almost entirely of short sprints. There were very few competitors and public interest was largely absent. The major transformation occurred with the invention of the safety bicycle at the end of the 1880s, with its chain-driven mechanism, wheels of equal size, and

the pneumatic tires introduced in 1890.[28] This meant a change in the significance of the bicycle, once a prestigious "toy," that now became an effective means of transportation. The new bicycle presented itself as a comfortable opportunity to increase one's mobility and lead a more expansive life. These new possibilities were soon demonstrated to the public by means of races that covered enormous distances.

This transformation of the bicycle made it a more salable product. To be sure, the new bicycle was at first expensive and thus reserved for the affluent. But in the course of a decade prices fell dramatically, thanks to mass production and fierce competition between the manufacturers. By the turn of the century the price of a bicycle had fallen to a quarter of what it had been. Overproduction in the United States put prices in free fall once again, thereby making bicycles affordable for ordinary people. As prices fell cycling's popularity took off. The small profit margin contributed to this development in that manufacturers were now dependent on a large turnover. The staging of cycle races now presented itself as an obvious strategy to promote sales. During the 1890s cycling established itself as a spectator sport in France, and velodromes (cycling tracks) were built all over the country. At the same time, the number of road races increased, and from the turn of the century it was these competitions which proliferated while the appeal of the velodromes decreased.

Many of the early races were arranged and sponsored by bicycle manufacturers, for whom success in these competitions was of great economic importance. At cycle tracks or standing along the side of the road during races, the public could get a sense of the bicycles' quality and speed. A race from Paris to Clermont-Ferrand held in 1892 may serve as an example of this promotional strategy. This event was organized by Michelin for the purpose of demonstrating the superiority of its pneumatic tires over those made by Dunlop. That is why thumbtacks had

been strewn across certain sections of the road, while repair teams from Michelin situated themselves within a convenient distance in order to help those riders who were riding on their tires. It was, therefore, not surprising that it was a Michelin rider who won, and from that point on the company could point to this race as evidence that its product was invincible.[29]

The combination of sport and commercialism was more the rule than the exception. Lucrative offers and technical support lured successful riders to represent certain companies, and before long it was absolutely necessary for riders to sign up with one of the leading manufacturers in order to have any chance at all of winning the big races. Manufacturers began to sign contracts with the best riders, who in turn found trainers and managers to take care of the practical aspects of racing. Within a few years the commercialization of the sport was a reality, and by the turn of the century the professional sport of cycling had become for all practical purposes the sport we know today.

Warnings from bicycle dealer Hviid

Not everyone was favorably inclined toward cycling, and there were skeptics even among cycling enthusiasts. Here in Denmark the bicycle dealer Sylvester Hviid had this to say about commercialization in his otherwise laudatory *Cycling Handbook* (1893):

> The competitive cycle races are being exploited to promote the bicycle business that only sees value in advertising that is full of victories and records. That is why the bicycle dealers often provide their favorite riders with machines at little or no cost, and the result is a cozy collaboration between capital and labor.
>
> It is my conviction that the cycle races being organized today are just a passing fad. I do not think that the bicycle will

> lose its importance as a sports machine; on the contrary, these are excellent products. But it has become quite clear that quite a few riders do not regard themselves as sportsmen but are simply using the bicycle for practical or recreational purposes. In this respect the machine has reached such a state of perfection that we can confidently predict that this will be its most important role from now on.[30]

If Hviid was right to assume that the bicycle would achieve its greatest significance as a practical and recreational device, he was wrong to assert that commercial cycling was just a fad. His comment that the bicycle would always serve as a fine sports machine suggests that the idea these demanding competitions would eventually end was more of a hope than a real conviction on his part. He does not conceal the fact that he has little regard for the competitions made possible by these excellent machines. This concern is due in part to the moral and educational hazards these races present:

> In theory it sounds quite plausible that these races develop youthful strength of will, and that the training compels young people to be energetic and persistent and to refrain from the usual pleasures and temptations. There is, of course, some truth in that. But would it not have been even better for them to develop abilities that are of greater value for the task of living? Experience shows that those who have been celebrated as competitive racers have not crossed the finish line ahead of other people, later in life, when it came to the more serious struggle for existence; on the contrary.[31]

Perhaps worse, cycling was also a risk to one's health. In Hviid's estimation, competitive cycling involved a considerable "danger of overexertion":

> *Especially long road-racing competitions* are to be condemned. The riders start out by day or by night, in heat and cold, often on terrible roads, facing unknown obstacles along the way, their bodies contorted into the unhealthy crab-position, and wearing next to nothing. At one race on Seeland only one of the 24 riders actually completed the course, and many of them suffered mental disorders, injuries, and other illnesses.
>
> It may be the case that the organization of this race was particularly incompetent. But it should not be forgotten that every road race involves a particular danger that the exertion required will be too demanding, and that the rider will be *compelled* to disregard the usual concerns about safety, especially when he is going downhill or going around turns or when the road is crowded with people or other vehicles. Often he goes into a kind of riding delirium which causes him to crash into obstacles (like railroad-crossing gates) that he should have been able to easily avoid. If something happens to him he may be lying there helpless for some time ….
>
> My dislike of cycling competitions does not apply to artistic or quadrille riding, which do not overexert the riders, but rather make them agile and quick and are enjoyable to watch, especially in connection with gymnastics performances, which is the category to which artistic riding really belongs. At the present time, however, this kind of riding, the only attractive form of riding we have, has few adherents.[32]

It is not just curiosity that has prompted this look at Hviid's old-fashioned observations and warnings. On the contrary, it is because it presents a fine contrast to our own era's concerns about a type of professional cycling that pursues extremes, even as this tendency toward the extreme fascinates us, attracts us, entertains and enchants us. Indeed, the sport would not find itself in its current dilemma if it were not for the fact that both the athletes and the public that follows them are drawn to and fascinated by what is both extreme and charged with risk.

We may lament the fact that sportive exercises like artistic and quadrille riding have not been able to capture the interest of the public and become its preferred form of entertainment. But there is really nothing to be done about this. What makes sport more than a simple display of skill for both athletes and spectators are the moments of drama, daring, and sacrifice that occur during a competition. The dilemma of sport in this sense may be described most precisely as its ability to *swallow* us. This is what Hviid, in his calmly sensible way, points out to his audience. In its best moments sport dissolves the categories of time and space in favor of a "delirious" now, where caution is thrown to the wind and safety measures are overridden by the "instinct" of the athlete.

According to Hviid, it was "capital" that corrupted the morals and the health of the athletes, and he was right. There is no doubt that commercial interests, manufacturers and race promoters alike, exploited the riders with reckless abandon. The earliest six-day races, which were not as strenuous as today's well-produced winter-arena shows, demonstrates this clearly. But they also make it clear that the exploitation theory does not explain the riders' willingness to subject themselves to this kind of stress.

Six-day races

The first six-day races were run in 1875. The idea came from a manufacturer in Birmingham who wanted to test his penny-farthing velocipedes. They rode for twelve hours a day for the sole purpose of covering as many kilometers as possible. These events were, however, a real success, and a year later a similar competition was put on in London, although this time the duration of the race was extended to eighteen hours.[33]

From this point on eighteen hours a day became common. Other six-day races observed no time-limit at all, an innovation which clearly made inhuman demands on the physiques of the

riders and their ability to endure such prolonged exertion. These events became especially popular in the United States. The usual arrangement had the riders in the saddle for a minimum of twenty hours a day. A race of this kind run in New York in 1896 saw 80 riders start while only six finished the competition. The winner, the Englishman Teddy Hale, rode a total of 3073.8 kilometers, a distance almost equal to that covered by the Tour de France over a period of three weeks. This record was beaten on the same site a year later, when the winner, the celebrated Charlie Miller of Chicago, covered 3367.6 kilometers.

There was significant prize money waiting for the best riders. It is still surprising, however, that the races in New York were able to attract as many European riders as they did. The prize money for the 1897 race amounted to $4200 with $1300 going to the winner and the rest distributed on a sliding scale with $75 awarded to the last-place finisher. Those unable to put 2172 kilometers behind them got nothing at all.[34]

The fact that ten thousand spectators were on hand for the start demonstrates how much interest there was in the event, seeing as how this was not a particularly exciting stage of the race. For good reason the riders started out at a very moderate pace, the size of the crowd varying in the course of the day. The largest crowds were present during the evening, the crowd thinning out after midnight and then growing in the course of the morning. A couple of hundred hardy souls stuck it out all night to watch the drowsy riders circle the track.

A third of the way into the race some riders began to manifest their exhaustion in amusing ways. One began to complain loudly that the lap-counters were cheating him, and he threatened to run them down if he were not awarded additional laps. Another, who a year earlier, tired and frustrated, had tried to throw his bicycle into the stands, suffered a mental breakdown on the fifth day and refused to continue after a rest period. There is, in fact, nothing particularly strange about such episodes. What *is* remarkable is

that he chose to participate in the race at all, given what he had been through the previous year. Not to mention the fact that he was actually persuaded to keep going following his collapse. On the same day the police showed up with a team of doctors to assess the riders' health. The doctors found that, considering the ordeal they had been through, the riders were in acceptable condition, and the race was allowed to continue.

Quite apart from the wear and tear that was being inflicted on the human physique, the cycles were undergoing hardships of their own. One hardy rider lost a wheel on a turn, at which point the front fork of the cycle slammed into the road, the cycle came to a dead stop and the rider kept going until his head collided with the upper portion of a barrier set up alongside the road. Three hours later, having been patched up in the hospital, the rider was back on the track to finish the race.

By the end of the race Charlie Miller had spent only ten hours on the bicycle and had slept only four. His total prize money of $3550 came from several sources: his appearance fees, the factory that had assembled the bicycle, the saddle-maker, the tire company and the manufacturer that had produced the handlebars.

The next year he won again, and the crowd that came to see him was even larger. But so was the damage inflicted on the riders. From this point on races in the United States were limited to twelve hours a day. This development in turn changed the configuration of the race and two-man races became the norm. Since that time the six-day races have developed into the events with which we are familiar today.

Endurance as entertainment

There is no denying that the commercial side of cycling played a very considerable role in connection with the six-day races. The

organizers appear to have no scruples whatsoever so far as the riders were concerned. As if six days of uninterrupted competition were not hard enough already, the race-organizers insisted on sprints whenever the pace became too slow and the event began to lose its drama. They were not at all concerned when after several days the clouds of cigar smoke became so dense that the riders could hardly see where they were going. Nor was there anyone who was concerned about how and by what means the riders were able to handle this sort of exertion. The only thing the race promoters cared about was that the public had a good time and got the entertainment it had expected.

In light of these conditions it is something of a mystery why the riders would have subjected themselves to these stresses in the first place. Given that most of them were making peanuts, it is hardly plausible that the economic benefits constituted the real attraction for them. The dream of winning the big first-place prize cannot have been a sufficient motivation. A cadre of elite riders would quickly separate themselves from the rest of the field, yet many of those left behind pedaled on, undaunted by the gap between them and the leaders. It is, therefore, more credible to assume that the riders, like the public, were interested in finding out what human beings could endure and achieve, to investigate their own powers of endurance and their abilities in accordance with the general interest in human potential that became evident during the latter part of the nineteenth century (see Chapter 1). The fascination thus appears to have been fundamentally the same in both groups. At the same time, there is no question that the races answered a need for entertainment and escape from urban life that the promoters could profit from.

This explanation, which assigns the role of second fiddle to the commercial dimension, is made more credible by the fact that the bicycle at this time inspired others to embark upon "unorganized" tests of strength.

Charles Terront – France's first cycling star

If it was a need for entertainment that drew the public to cycling events in the United States and Europe around the turn of the century, there was still the question of what kind of entertainments were going to be presented. Concerned that the public would grow tired of the standard velodrome races, promoters in France tried to give these events a broader appeal by adding to the program a wide variety of vaudeville-style amusements. These experiments included cycle acrobatics, cycle races featuring scantily clad actresses, comedians and animals. Yet the fact is that these circus stunts did not catch on. As the historian Richard Holt points out, the public did indeed want to be entertained, but the real attraction was the element of competition, the speed of the machines and the endurance of the riders.[35] The tests of endurance allowed the spectators to identify with and to admire the exhausted riders on the track. On one level, cycling could provide stimulating entertainment; but on another level it could feed idol worship and the formation of new myths.

France's first legendary sports star was Charles Terront, born in 1857 in Saint-Ouen, a suburb of Paris. Cycling had attracted him from the time he was a lad. As a messenger-boy he had rented a wooden cycle so that he could participate in races. He began to win only after he persuaded his employer to give him a delivery cycle so that he could complete his errands faster. At the age of nineteen he won his first big road race, from Paris to Pontoise, and the same year he won the Grand Prix d'Angers.[36] These victories got him an invitation from England, where he participated in the London six-day race that was, as we have noted, the first race that required riders to keep going for eighteen hours a day. He did not, however, win, but saw himself relegated to second place by the German-born rider Frank Waller,

who in 1891 would set a record by covering 585 kilometers within 24 hours.

The trip to Paris cost Terront his job as a messenger, and at this point he opted for life as a full-time professional. By this time it had become common for top riders to employ trainers, and competition for the relatively modest purses was hard. His superiority on the cycle made him one of the few who were able to live quite well on their earnings, but it was also a hard life. In 1885 he rode in 65 races, of which he won 55, an accomplishment that netted him the tidy sum of 6000 francs.

More than anything else, what made him a legend was his victory in 1891 in the first Paris-Brest-Paris race, a brutal event covering 1196 kilometers that has been called the beginning of the road-racing era.[37] Riding a specially built cycle weighing 21.5 kilograms, Terront covered this distance at an impressive average speed of 17 kilometers per hour despite a series of delays due to accidents. He was on the road for 71 hours and 16 minutes. His longest rest stop lasted 45 minutes – the time it took to have a punctured tire repaired. At the turn-around point in Brest Terront allowed himself only five minutes' rest to eat a pear and drink a little beef tea, at which point he resumed his pursuit of the leader Jiel-Laval. Terront's eventual victory was made possible by his extraordinarily robust constitution. In contrast to his most dangerous competitor, he was able to carry on for three days without any sleep at all. This victory alone earned him what was then the staggering sum of 25000 francs. As an added bonus he was awarded a lifetime honorary seat at the Paris Opera.[38]

Two years later in 1893 he published his memoirs, a practice which eventually became a standard practice in the sports world. That *Les mémoires de Terront* was a great success suggests that sport made it possible to satisfy a desire or perhaps even a need for celebrity worship and myths that gave life meaning.

This was also the year that saw a direct confrontation between Terront and a tough rival named Corré. The occasion was a non-

stop track race covering 1500 kilometers that was held at the Vélodrome d'Hivert in Paris and attended by several thousand spectators. Many others who had placed bets on the competition but could not get tickets stood outside and waited for the result. For this race Terront had attached a rubber hose to the frame of the cycle, which allowed him to empty his bladder without having to get off the machine. I point this out, not for the sake of providing bizarre details, but rather because it tells us something important about the world of sport. On the one hand, it illustrates the seriousness and the sheer focus on winning that is characteristic of the best riders. On the other hand, it illustrates the value of the sport as popular entertainment. Even if this was not his intention, the situation was a juicy tidbit for the press, which could add something colorful to the myth of the indomitable winner Terront.

Twenty years later the organizer of the race, Paul Meyen, looked back on this event and declared that it could be seen as the beginning of cycling as a popular spectator sport.[39]

Tour de France

As cycling became better established around the turn of the century, interest in the velodrome events that had been so popular during the 1890s was declining. Many of the velodromes outside of the larger cities were closing. Public interest was now concentrated primarily on the road races. The first decade of the new century featured the Tour de France, held for the first time in 1903, and some out-and-back, one-day events such as the Paris-Roubaix race as the great public attractions. During the winter season, six-day races continued to attract significant numbers of spectators.

This period also saw a change in who actually rode in these races. Once a status symbol for the well-to-do, who were now

being attracted to motor-driven vehicles, cycling now became an affordable investment for people from the lower social classes. This affected recruitment to the sport, and although amateurs still rode in these races, this transformation gradually eliminated the last remnants of amateur idealism from cycling.

With Charles Terront serving as their role-model, a number of riders attempted to establish professional careers. But the competition was becoming increasingly difficult, the salaries were generally quite low, and only a limited number of riders were capable of earning a decent living. The great majority had to hold other jobs to support themselves. Yet despite all of this, cycling had an almost magical appeal for both the riders and the public.

The history of the Tour de France is particularly rich and worthy of a book in itself. For that reason it would be foolish to attempt a history of the Tour in these pages. What we can say is that the Tour illustrates the appeal of cycling in many ways. The account that follows will, therefore, concentrate on this event at the expense of other important stage races such as the Giro d'Italia, the Vuelta d'España and the many races for which the Tour has served as the model.

The origin of the Tour de France is actually rather banal in its way. The race came into existence in the context of a rivalry between two major sports newspapers, *L'Auto* and *Le Velo*. The fact that two newspapers specializing in cycling were publishing at that time shows how quickly interest in the sport had spread. *L'Auto* was established by the conservative nationalist Baron de Dion after he was angered by the fact that *Le Velo* – a newspaper in which he as an automobile manufacturer and sportsman had a considerable interest – had written critically about an anti-Dreyfusard demonstration in which he had been involved. Baron de Dion allied himself with Henri Desgrange, himself a former rider, who as the editor of *L'Auto* created the Tour de France. The idea was that this race would serve as a vehicle to drive up the

circulation of the paper, and in this respect it surpassed all expectations. By the first year of the Tour its circulation already exceeded that of *Le Velo*, selling 65,000 copies a day. The alliance between capital, the press and cycling had once again shown itself to be a fruitful one.[40] An event was staged and, as the passage of time would show, a modern myth came into being.

Without the active participation of the press the Tour de France would never have become a success for the simple reason that it would have been impossible for the public to keep up with what was happening. But this is not to say that its success can simply be ascribed to the press and the commercial interests that financed the event. The receptiveness of the public was a crucial prerequisite. If the press could get away with portraying this event as an heroic epic, this was due largely to the seriousness, the energy and the passion that the riders invested in the race.

To subject oneself to as exhausting trial of strength as the Tour de France demands an abnormal degree of ambition and indomitable willpower. When one thinks about the roads and the primitive cycles of that era – as essential a device as the gearshift was introduced as late as 1937 – the whole thing appears to have been an inhuman enterprise from the beginning. Indeed, the entire event can appear somewhat absurd. But it was precisely the inhuman character of the race that made it possible to worship the riders as superhuman beings. What the uncomprehending eye saw as a long and senseless march to exhaustion could be experienced by those taking part as an heroic and meaningful struggle against the absurd. The race thereby dramatized essential existential themes such as loss, suffering, misfortune and triumph. Here was much of its public appeal and how to account for the fact that the postwar race of 1919 was watched along the roads by something like a quarter or a third of the French population. It was an accessible experience. The decisive factor was the hardiness and determination of the riders which became the stuff of legend. Take, for example, what

happened in 1913 when the leading rider Eugene Christophe broke the front fork of his cycle on a downhill run. Since it was against the rules to receive help of any kind, he put the cycle on his shoulders and ran ten kilometers to the nearest blacksmith. Here he made himself a new front fork out of a piece of iron, whereupon he continued in order to finish the race, only to be informed that he had incurred a time penalty due to the fact that a boy had given him a hand with the bellows. There are many examples from the history of cycling that show how many riders regarded cycling as an existential matter and not just as a hobby they had made into an occupation. This has been well expressed by Felice Gimondi, one of the top Italian riders of the 1960s and 1970s:

> I regret that I am no longer taking part in cycle races, because it was a very healthy life – more genuine than the one we have now. So often in life we have to say "yes" even when we mean "no." But that is not how it is in cycling. When you are a rider a "yes" is a "yes" and a "no" is a "no".[41]

That this does not only apply to the major riders is clear from a story about Brambilla – one of the competent riders of the 1940s – who had completed his third Tour de France without success. One day, when some of his friends arrived on an unannounced visit, they found him digging a hole in his garden. He was about to bury the cycle he no longer found himself worthy of riding.[42]

Doping in cycling

The demands that cycling has made on the human body from the very beginning made it natural for riders to try out fortifying substances. Stimulating mixtures of various substances were already being used by those taking part in the first six-day races (see Chapter 1). Increased public interest, professionalization, and

tougher competition are undoubtedly factors that can increase the temptation to use drugs that may boost endurance and performance. But it is as mistaken as it is common to regard these external factors as causes. Given that doping also occurs outside the professional ranks and in sports where commercial interests are absent, it seems more appropriate to look for the explanation within the phenomenon of sport itself and, more precisely, in the will to victory. The will to compete and to perform at the highest possible level. Here we find several concurrent factors which express themselves in this manifestation of willpower.

As early as the First World War independent riders in the Tour de France, the so-called *touristes-routiers*, were complaining, not only about teams fixing races, but also about riders who were doping themselves. Yet no one paid any attention to these complaints. On the one hand, riders were strictly required to rely entirely upon themselves during races; at the same time, the attitude toward how the riders prepared themselves and how they fortified themselves in order to survive their ordeals was extremely liberal. It was not uncommon to see riders fortifying themselves with wine or cognac. The fact that there is nothing to document the doping accusations of the *touristes-routiers* does not mean that their assertions were groundless; on the contrary, they suggest that sport at that time was not ruled by the paternalism that is typified by today's anti-doping activists. The heroes were monarchs in their own kingdom, and caught up in their own rivalries they used whichever substances they thought were necessary. Their stubbornness finds its symbolic counterpart in the fact that it was an honor for a baker or a bar to be invaded and robbed by hungry and thirsty riders.

It is more than likely that many of the riders who took part in the early Tour de France races, had they been subjected to today's doping controls, would have turned up positive. Yet it is equally certain that doping since then has been on the increase. This is due in part to the fact that the riders soon discovered the boosting

effects of the available substances. Another factor has been progress in physiology, which has made it possible to produce more effective drugs. This acceleration in the growth of knowledge is evident in the relationship between the two great Italian rivals Gino Bartali and Fausto Coppi, who in their own ways represent the transition from romantic to rational cycling.

Bartali, a deeply religious man, became enormously popular during the 1930s. In 1938 he won both the Giro d'Italia and the Tour de France and thus became a symbol of national unity who was loved by the entire population, rich and poor. "Don't touch him, he is a god," declared the sports minister, General Antonelli, as he accompanied Bartali through the jubilant masses after he had won the Tour de France.

Bartali's career lasted more than twenty years. During the Mussolini regime he incarnated Italian strength, and after the war he was the pride of a humiliated Italian people. His significance for the nation was underlined when he was granted private audiences with popes John XXIII and Paul VI, who welcomed him as a hero and an icon for all good Catholics.[43]

Bartali met Coppi for the first time in 1939 during a race in Piedmont. Bartali then hired Coppi as a support rider for his team with an eye on the Giro, which he was favored to win. Unfortunately, he took a bad spill when he ran over a dog on the road. (Miguel Indurain, the great champion of the 1990s and a five-time winner of the Tour de France, mentioned this story when journalists pointed to his apparent invincibility as King of the Tour, a feat of memory indicating that sportive competitions can be of more than passing significance although they, in fact, develop and change over time.) Bartali injured his knee in the fall and could not ride at his usual level. From that point on Coppi was the team's strongest rider, but Bartali carried on in the race and assisted him to his eventual victory. But now Coppi had grown out from under Bartali's shadow, and from this point on they were rivals as well as teammates.

After the war this rivalry was out in the open. During the Milan-San Remo race in 1946 Coppi won a stage by more than fifteen minutes over the second-place finisher, and it was more than ten minutes before Bartali sprinted in for third place. This crushing defeat came as a shock to Bartali. Coppi's strength seemed mysterious to him. Bartali had taken up smoking on the advice of his doctor, since smoking, according to the physician, was necessary for driving up his alarmingly slow heart rate. Bartali could not help but suspect that Coppi was getting his strength from more effective drugs, and so, with a persistence worthy of a compulsive neurotic, he set out to discover the secret.

It was well known that, while Bartali swore by traditional Italian cuisine, appreciated hearty bowls of minestrone and pasta, and happily consumed large quantities of grappa, Coppi was interested in more scientific procedures. He took vitamins and generally held himself to a strict diet. His training, too, deviated from the usual routine of one long ride after another. He adopted the new technique of interval training. These methods made their own contribution to Coppi's aura of mystery. For Bartali, however, Coppi's training methods and diet could not be the whole story; there had to be a less scrupulous, and therefore more plausible, explanation. When Coppi left his hotel room, Bartali would sneak in to examine the medicine bottles, tubes, jars and anything else in his waste basket that might provide a hint of what he was up to. When he found out that Coppi had had a medical laboratory in Genoa make him a suppository, he forced one of his support riders to test it. And when he saw Coppi drink something from a special bottle during a stage of the Giro, he recorded the spot by the road where Coppi had discarded it. Following the completion of this stage he rode an extra 150 kilometers to recover the bottle and have the remaining drops of liquid tested. The analysis, however, was something of a disappointment when the mysterious substance turned out to be nothing more than bicarbonate of soda.[44]

Although Bartali was not alone in assuming that Coppi's incomparable riding was being promoted by more effective nutrients than a strict diet and baking soda, this did absolutely nothing to diminish admiration for his fantastic performances. Doping was simply not something people did much talking about. It was still generally accepted that the riders had a variety of ways to prepare themselves for races.

This situation changed a generation later, however, when a comparable rivalry developed between two French riders, the phenomenal Jacques Anquetil and the very popular Raymond Poulidor who, despite his achievements, is still remembered as the eternally unfortunate runner-up.

Anquetil has gone down in history as one of the truly great champions. His stature is evident in the fact that he was the first to win the Tour de France five times. This achievement has never been surpassed and has been equaled only by Eddy Merckx, Bernard Hinault and Miguel Indurain. At the age of nineteen he had already won his first important victory, the Grand Prix des Nations, a race he went on to win a total of nine times. There followed an impressive series of victories which is even more remarkable when one considers the style in which he conducted himself. In contrast to Coppi, he was not a follower of diets or moderation in any sense, and he clearly preferred whisky to juice. He paid little attention to sleep and was always ready for a good party or a game of cards before a big race. In fact, he was entirely unconcerned about his health. He was hedonist who lived for the moment. His cycle was the means by which he was able to sustain an extravagant way of life.

In 1956 he broke Coppi's 14-year-old record for the one-hour event (45.870 kilometers) by covering 46.159. Eleven years later, in 1967, he improved on his own record but it was not ratified because he had refused to take a drug test. Anquetil never concealed his view of doping. His attitude was clear: riders were free and autonomous people, and whether or not they doped was

their own business. The paternalism represented by drug testing had no business interfering in professional cycling.

Despite all of his victories Anquetil was not particularly popular; even most of the French public that followed cycling was against him. The many colorful accounts of his escapades that appeared in the press did nothing for his popularity. The public preferred instead the moderate and uncontroversial and always gentle Poulidor for whom extravagance was an alien way of life. The public's preference for Poulidor was hard on Anquetil's vanity and did nothing to mitigate the relationship between the rivals. Anquetil did not take part in the 1967 Tour de France, the year the English rider Tom Simpson died of overexertion and amphetamine abuse on the slopes of Mont Ventoux. Anquetil used the occasion instead to inflict some damage on Poulidor's image as a paragon. Simpson's death, not surprisingly, led to a number of critical newspaper articles about ethics in cycling, and Anquetil now declared that Poulidor, the nation's darling, was doped as well, and he went on to assert that all the riders were doping themselves. Some months later he said the same thing to the French minister for youth and sport, François Misoffe, in the form of a rhetorical question: "How would you like to race Bordeaux-Paris with mineral water. You begin by taking a sugar cube, then coffee, then some chocolate and from then it's like a frenzy. You are drugged!"[45] When he was later asked about this categorical and shocking pronouncement, he replied laconically: "In the jungle, small trees never grow."

One might think that such statements would further have damaged Anquetil's reputation, but in certain circles at least they won him respect for his honesty and level-headedness.

These statements were factual rather than accusatory, and Anquetil never hid the fact that he himself was as involved as anyone else. The fact that he could get away with this sort of candor without "getting cut off at the knees" shows that the

doping issue had not yet reached the point where it overshadowed all kinds of nuances. Following Simpson's famous collapse the doping rules were tightened, and the public's view of doping became increasingly negative. At the same time it seemed that the doping issue was being forgotten, that it was becoming taboo.

Anquetil retired in 1969. In 1976 he suffered a blood clot in one of his lungs that caused breathing problems. Two years later he was hit by another clot which made things even worse. In 1987 he was diagnosed with stomach cancer and died later that year. Toward the end of his career he had reconciled with Poulidor, and their rivalry turned into a close friendship. Poulidor was with him just before he died, at which point a drawn and tired Anquetil said to him: "Sorry Raymond… but once again you will finish second".[46]

It is only natural to speculate about a possible connection between Anquetil's use of doping drugs and his later health problems. One might also guess about a connection between his illness and his uninhibited way of life. This kind of speculation is, however, irrelevant, unless one's purpose is to wage an anti-doping campaign by means of horror stories. What is really interesting is that the eventual victim was a person who recognized the risks and knew what he was doing. Anquetil lived according to the motto: I'll mind my own business and take the consequences. One can wonder about how he chose to live his life and either admire or reject his style. But one can in no way remove the responsibility from the man and place it elsewhere. What he said and how he said it make that impossible. The fact that doping was made illegal while he was still riding means that he can always be accused of ethical shortcomings. But the way he competed suggests that this was not, in fact, the case.

Ethics in cycling

Despite their use of doping drugs, it is clear that professional cyclists adhere to a high ethical standard. Without such standards, competing in a field of a hundred riders would be next to impossible. It takes almost no effort to "somehow" collide with another rider. Indeed, those who assert that riders don't have any ethical standards must find themselves wondering why the dominant riders are so seldom involved in falls. The favorites do, after all, have their support riders, and collisions could easily be arranged. But not even Eddy Merckx, whose ambition left little room for victories by other professional riders, was targeted for unfair treatment. You could say that he rode the bread out of his competitors' mouths, and that is why they called him the cannibal. But they left it at that.

Professional cycling has an elaborate moral code. There are strict, if unwritten, rules for what one must, shall or shall not do. It all comes down to making sure that the race comes off in a fair and orderly way and without the riders taking too much out of each other. For this reason it is a custom in the Tour de France that, when the peloton is passing through the home town of a particular rider, he is allowed to take off into the lead so he can get a lot of applause from his own people. Sometimes the rider will even dismount from his bike, exchange some words with his family and friends, and then rejoin the field in the place he had earned when it passes by. But he will always wait for the right time to rejoin the group. To exploit the temporary advantage he had been conceded by making a longer break-out that would put pressure on the field would be a violation of the unwritten rules. Similarly, it is an unwritten rule that you do not open up a race too early. New and ambitious riders learn quickly that a certain order is necessary, and that they are obliged to submit to it. One does not attack, for example, when riders are picking up supplies or when it is too "convenient," such as when a leading rider is

having a problem with his equipment. Breaking these rules is taken for a lack of ethics, and presumptuous riders will get some very nasty looks from their peers.

At one point in 1968, when Poulidor was favored to win the Tour de France and he seemed to have the race under control, he was involved in a disastrous fall. He had gained a promising lead and had passed the eventual winner, Jan Janssen, and a couple of other big names when a motorcycle drove right in front of the group and caused the accident. The top riders in back rode by those who had fallen and were in the process of recovering from their state of shock. Poulidor sat there with blood pouring out of his broken nose. When he found out on the following downhill run that Janssen's group had taken advantage of his fall to move into a comfortable lead, he cried out in a rage: "we don't attack when a man is on the ground. Jacques himself would never do that".[47] What Poulidor was expressing here was not simply disappointment, but a disappointment rooted in ethical values. We may also take note of his positive reference to Anquetil's character, the year after the latter had accused Poulidor of being a doper.

A few such examples should suffice to show that ethics is not foreign to cycling. When it comes to the doping issue, however, cycling ethics seems to depart from societal ethics, in that cycling seems to exist as a world unto itself. During the doping tumult of 1998 the difference between the moral codes of the cycling world and the rest of the world was particularly striking. The riders stuck together and presented a united front against a public sphere they regarded as both alien and hostile. A breakdown in communication led to a lack of mutual understanding for which both sides can be blamed. Critical public voices confronted the riders in the same way that other missionaries have confronted the natives of far-off continents. It was clear that, based on their own moral criteria, they saw what was obviously wrong with doping in the same way that the other missionaries once judged it

wrong for certain members of another race to chew coca leaves. This analogy can be extended by noting that the accused riders gave their accusers the same kind of unsympathetic attention once accorded the other missionaries by the natives they were preaching to. When the riders talk about the need to clean up while insisting at the same time on the need for medical support, this can easily sound like defensive doubletalk. In the grudging statements that riders have made, one can detect a fear that the cycling culture is in danger of being crushed by forces beyond their control. Both the confessions and the remarks that offend public opinion must be seen in that light. What the riders do not feel is some deep need to squeeze the life out of "doping".

There is an instinctive understanding on the part of the public as to why a rider is not supposed to just sit there during a break-out and never take the lead, only to sprint ahead of the others at the very end. There is no comparable understanding, however, when it comes to doping, which in a literal sense is a kind of cheating. That may be why it required firm action on the part of the French authorities to get the press and the sporting public to discuss the doping issue, even though there had been no shortage of opportunities in the past to do so.

How are we to judge, for example, the gesture made by Eddy Merckx' in 1970, when he was leading the Tour stage up Mont Ventoux? Despite the ordeal of this strenuous climb, he made a point of taking off his cap as he rode past the memorial marking the spot, a kilometer and a half from the top, where Tom Simpson died. On this monument Simpson is hailed as ambassador for British Sport. For the outsider who knows that doping was forbidden at that time, this monument seems to pay homage to an unethical cheater. It can also be seen as an insult directed at efforts to control doping. (The only time Merckx ever tested positive was during the previous year's Giro d'Italia.) For Merckx, Simpson was not a cheater but a hero and a friend who had sacrificed himself for the same goal that Merckx himself was

now striving to achieve for the second time. It was this striving that was the absolutely essential and wholly honorable point of the entire endeavor.

In what follows I will propose a framework for understanding, on the one hand, the contradiction between the striving that prompts cyclists and other athletes to engage in risky doping practices and, on the other hand, the pervasive health worship that is so prevalent today. First, however, let us listen to an insider's account of doping in the world of professional cycling.

III. THE HARD REALITIES OF CYCLING

Rough Ride

The shock occasioned by the fact that it was the police and not the press corps that had produced the sensational revelations about comprehensive doping within professional cycling has resulted in much soul-searching among sports journalists. One argument for their hesitant approach to doping rumors has been that they do not have the same powers the police have to produce real proof of misbehavior. But the fact is that such powers have not been necessary. Not all riders have allowed themselves to be intimidated by "the law of silence." In 1990, for example, the Irish rider Paul Kimmage published an indispensable insider's account of the hard realities of cycling. His book *Rough Ride* provides essential background for the situation we are dealing with today, and not least on account of the author's spontaneous indignation. Although the book is strong stuff, it provoked no discussion at all here in Denmark. In Ireland, where in the years preceding its publication the population had been treated to the triumphs of Sean Kelly and Stephen Roche – the latter having won, in 1987, the Tour de France, the Giro d'Italia and the world championship – it received very limited attention. Despite winning "The William Hill Sports Book of the Year" award, it was quickly dismissed as just another bitter attack from one of the many riders whose careers had not amounted to anything. Reading the book one gets the impression that it is a response to an act of collective repression. The book's clear and sober tone, along with the author's sometimes painful candor, make it extremely difficult to simply dismiss. The presentation is so even and convincing that the idea it is based on lies and slander seems totally implausible.

Kimmage's four years as a professional rider are the core of his autobiography. His professional career began after he took sixth place in the 1985 amateur world championships, and he left cycling after dropping out of the twelfth stage of the 1989 Tour de France. In the course of those four years he experienced things that upset him and even disgusted him, as well as things he went along with despite his own objections to what he was doing. He does not hide the fact that his original notion of what life as a professional was like turned out to have little to do with reality. There was not much in the way of luxury associated with his role as a so-called domestique. The salary was low, and he had to ride many races to make ends meet. The experiences and ruminations he shares with the reader depart sharply from the romantic picture that is usually served up by the media. In so doing he enables us to better understand what is going on today.

During his teenage years professional cycling was a dreamworld for him. His goal was to someday ride in the Tour de France. But even when he became at nineteen the youngest Irish champion ever, he was already having doubts about whether cycling was a desirable way of life. It made an impression on him when he rode the "Tour of Scotland" a month later, and he heard the strong amateur rider Mark Bell bluntly reject the idea of turning professional after a convincing stage victory:

> No way! It looks great on the telly, seeing them pulling faces on the climbs, throwing themselves all over the place, but it's not like that in real life. It's pain. No fuckin' way.[48]

Nevertheless, Kimmage persisted in his resolve and slogged on for another four years as an amateur before he was finally rewarded with a professional contract, at which point his body began to teach him the truth of Bell's words.

The moment of discovery

At no point in Kimmage's career was he unaware that doping was a part of professional cycling. He had already been hearing rumors as an amateur. Still, he was shocked when he saw for himself what was going on. His attitude had always been that he would never get involved in that sort of thing. He would not risk his health in that way. In retrospect, however, he is unsure about his motives. He cannot say for sure that he was acting on principle. His own view is rather that he was afraid – afraid of being discovered and of what this would lead to. His best attempt at an explanation is that he lacked the courage to do otherwise.

He had experienced how a number of riders with whom he began his professional "adventure" had given up within the first year, simply because the conditions were so awful they could not justify the effort required to begin the long journey toward honor and glory. Kimmage did not give up so easily. His ambition was strong enough to drag him through the first difficult years, but it was not strong enough to make him risk his health for the purpose of escaping anonymity. This, along with his fear of the disgrace a positive test would bring, motivated him to draw the line at doping.

The only problem was that it was not so easy to figure out where doping began. When he rode in his first Tour de France in 1986, he was doing very well until the ninth stage, which was a time trial**.** He was his team's leading rider, and although his sports director, Bernard Thevenet, told him to take it easy and save his strength for the upcoming mountain stages, he could not resist the temptation to seize the opportunity to go all out. Now, after some 61 kilometers, he was on the verge of collapse. He could scarcely turn the pedals as he coasted back to the hotel. It was all he could do to fall into bed and turn on the television. And there on the screen was Bernard Hinault, who had not only

beaten him by eight minutes but was able to stand there, without even having taken a break, and give an interview completely unaffected by his recent exertions. In this disillusioning moment it occurred to him that he had been utterly naive to believe that it was possible to ride the Tour on a couple of daily multivitamin pills. He realized that he would simply be unable to finish the race on those terms. He expressed his concern to Thevenet, who asked him whether he had been taking proper care of himself. The sports director was visibly surprised that Kimmage had not received a single injection of vitamins, and he brought him over to the team's soigneur, who promptly administered an injection of vitamin B12. He found no reason to object, because this was certainly not doping. He was just leveling the playing field so he could compete with the others.

To his great satisfaction he finished the race. Looking back at this event he says:

> The Tour de France was no ordinary race. It made superhuman demands on the human body. Riding six hours a day for twenty-three days was not possible without vitamin supplements, mineral supplements, chemicals to clean out a tired liver, medication to take the hardness out of rock-hard leg muscles. Taken in tablet form the medication passed through the stomach and liver. This was extra work for already overworked organs and the result was that much of the benefit of the product was lost. Injections avoided this and were therefore much more efficient. A syringe did not always mean doping. In a perfect world it would be possible to ride the Tour without taking any medication, so long as everyone else did the same. But this was not a perfect world. We were not doping, we were taking care of ourselves, replacing what was being sweated daily out of our bodies. The substances taken were not on the proscribed list, so how could we be doping? And yet, one thing was becoming clear to me: as soon

> as you started playing, as soon as you accepted the taking of medication, the line between what was legal and what was illegal, between taking care of yourself and doping grew very, very thin. Most fellows cross it without ever realising they have. They just follow the advice of a team-mate or soigneur.[49]

Here Kimmage points to the heart of the problem, which includes the arbitrary nature of the rules against doping. One might as well have forbidden injections of any kind, since vitamin injections too are performance-enhancing. You could have a fine competition without them if everybody agreed to abstain. You could agree on two daily Multitabs – the limit set by Kimmage in his perfect world. And if you wanted to take an even more puritanical position, you could argue that even vitamin tablets are unnecessary. What Kimmage points out (but does not pursue) is the question of why cycling does not represent a ”perfect world.” The problem is that competition ends either with victory or defeat. The goal of every athlete is to win. Victory is the object of desire, and it does not simply happen. Someone must have the *will* to win. And among those of comparable ability the winner in endurance events will usually be the one who is ready to put out, to suffer and risk the most. How conscientious are you about maintaining peak physical condition in difficult circumstances? How strict are you about your diet? Despite the fact that he is by no means overweight, Kimmage is confronted on several occasions with the objection that he is carrying around five extra kilograms of body weight. This is a serious handicap he is advised to do something about. But he cannot work up the resolution to do it. As far as he is concerned, the riders are already pathologically thin. The decisive factor is how hard you are willing to drive yourself during competition. Kimmage offers a picturesque description of what separates him from the will-power possessed by the three-time Tour de France winner Greg Lemond:

> Lemond was in trouble today. He had a bout of diarrhoea. He rode by me with thirty kilometers to go, surrounded by his domestiques bringing him to the front. God, the smell was terrible. It was rolling down his legs. I know if it was me I would have stopped. I mean, it's only a bike race. But then again I'm not capable of winning it. He is and I suppose that's the difference.[50]

What a striking expression – it's just a bike race. He is observing it all from a distance, which means he is not thinking from inside what is happening. If he were he would not have finished the race. When he gives up his career three years later, the situation is different. He rides among them like a stranger. What occupies him now is his new passion, journalism. He has managed to get a position as a columnist at an Irish newspaper. He writes engagingly and is offered a steady job that he enjoys and sees as a way out. At the moment his ambitions turn toward journalism he takes mental leave of cycling. At the same time, it is likely that Kimmage would have chosen to leave had he suffered the same torments as Lemond. This accords with the other limits he has set. He would have liked to take cycling further. He would have liked to be able to give his father, who had been a good amateur rider in his own day, something to be proud of. He dreamed of a glorious career, but cycling never became an existential priority for him. For that reason he would have seen an opportunity to quit in a situation where Lemond saw only a way to press on. What Lemond was going through on that stage was not just an athlete's problem, it was also an existential crisis. He *had to* reach the finish line.

Obsession

Kimmage made it further than many of the riders he started out with. Many gave up the moment they discovered the transition to the ranks of the professionals did not mean that their status as talented amateurs would be enhanced. On the contrary, this transition meant starting all over again from zero and showing once again that you could assert yourself. Kimmage was prepared to do this. He was willing to show what he could do. The obstacle, however, was his concern about what would happen next. The broader perspective. He talks about it as a survival instinct and justifies his caution on the grounds that he doesn't want to risk the health on which his future plans depend. When he was not on the bike his thoughts focused more on the uncertain future that would follow his career than on how he could shape and improve his future as a rider. And when he realized his health was at risk, he sometimes tuned out even when he was riding. This happened during a risky descent during the Tour in 1987. A number of riders, himself included, had crashed. Like most of the others he got back on his bike and resumed the chase. He was riding in a pack with Miguel Indurain and Kim Andersen when he was overtaken by a team car that hit Indurain's handlebars. Even though the Spaniard managed to save himself, this made an impression on Kimmage. He stood up on the bike, then leaned back and decided not to take any more chances on the descent. Within a fraction of a second he sized up his competitors: "These people are all insane. For God's sake, it's only a bike race." He dropped out during a subsequent stage of the race.

It is tempting for an outsider to regard these breakneck descents as sheer madness. Yet it is also clear that the riders who make these brilliant runs through hairpin turns are not thinking of the obvious risk as they race down the mountain. The idea that "It's just a bike race" is irrelevant to them. Its meaning is this

moment, and the moment is the only thing that exists at that point. Kimmage's assessment of the competitors as insane is accurate in the sense that they are absorbed in their sport to the point where common sense has ceased to function. They are instead making use of another kind of sense that aims only at producing the best possible performance. At this moment cycling is all that exists. This state of mind is summed up in the last words Tommy Simpson is claimed to have uttered in this world: "Put me back on my bike".[51] These words testify to sport as an obsession. And they are not unique. The great sprinter from Uzbekistan, Abdoujaparov, is said to have expressed himself in a similar way after he regained consciousness following a fall in 1996: "Who am I? Where am I? Oh yes, I'm at the Tour, so I should get on my bike and go. Where is my bike?"[52] The Danish journalist and cycling expert Henrik Jul Hansen's description of Johan Bruyneel going over a cliff during the descent from Cormet de Roselend during the 1996 Tour renders this state of mind very effectively:

> Everyone is in a panic, the motorcade of cars and motorcycles stops, the race doctor's car rushes to the scene and, along with the cameraman from Danish Radio, he can see the Belgian emerge, bruised and filthy, from the underbrush 10 or 15 meters down that saved him from death or disability, with the cycle slung over his shoulder. Bruyneel refuses medical attention, mounts a reserve bike and reenters the race.[53]

These examples of obsession are typical of great athletes, but they are not unique. They can also occur outside of sports competitions. People can suddenly set goals for themselves that are unrelated to the purposive rationality of sport. Jean Meiffret, a gardener from Nice, illustrates this syndrome very nicely. He had gotten it into his head that he would reach the speed of 200 kilometers an hour on a bicycle. He thought this would be

possible if he were to sit behind a big windscreen mounted on a car. The apparatus required its own gear wheel and was so big he could not get it moving by himself. Finally he got it built. Although there was no money in it for him – on the contrary, it cost him a considerable sum – he made a number of attempts over several years. In 1951 he got it up to 175.609 kilometers an hour. On another occasion he crashed while going over a hundred. The accident fractured his skull and caused a number of other injuries, but by some miracle he survived. In 1962 he tried again and reached 186.625 k/h. By that point Meiffret was forty-eight years old, but he refused to give up and six months later he succeeded in attaining the unbelievable speed of 204.770 k/h.[54] On this occasion he carried in his pocket a piece of paper on which it was written:

> In case of fatal accident, I beg of the spectators not to feel sorry for me. I am a poor man, an orphan since the age of eleven, and I have suffered much. Death holds no terror for me. The record attempt is my way of expressing myself. If the doctors can do no more for me, please bury me by the side of the road where I have fallen.[55]

Apart from demonstrating the depth of his obsession, this anecdote also shows that money is not the decisive factor in the willingness to sacrifice that characterizes people who set themselves athletic or comparable goals. When Kimmage's former good friend Stephen Roche burns out and quits cycling, he does so with the comment that, whereas he can see a hundred reasons to stop, he can see only one reason to continue: money. And that is not enough.

In this sense Kimmage and Roche are different types. This is due not so much to the fact that they ride at different levels, but rather because Roche is one of those athletes who give themselves up to sport with total abandon. For him cycling is not

merely significant; it is instead about the only thing in life that means anything to him. His description of this condition is almost frightening:

> Your bike is your wife, your master, it's your best friend and all you want to do is succeed. And you don't think you are getting older and you don't think about what happens at home or with your family or who pays the bills. You don't mature because, on the road, life is going at 110 miles an hour and you don't have time to think how the world actually moves.[56]

It is the depth of this passion that divides them and breaks their friendship. The final straw is the publication of *Rough Ride*. Kimmage had thought that Roche would understand the book. He appears on a television show and evades a question about whether Kelly and Roche were involved in doping. That is not, he says, what the book is about. This is when he learns that Roche does not, in fact, understand. On the contrary, Roche threatens to sue on account of what Kimmage has left hanging in the air. The conclusions readers might draw, he says, are of a very serious nature. In another interview he ridicules the book. He maintains that Kimmage must have drawn his conclusions on the basis of one, maybe two experiences from minor races. He had never tested positive despite having been tested far more often than Paul had been.

Lost innocence

Rough Ride presents several episodes of special interest. One such aneddote is the one-day Grand Prix de Plumelec. Kimmage is in next-to-last place as the field thunders along at a murderous pace. Behind him is another member of his team, André Chappuis. He knows that André is having a hard time, so he

turns around to see how bad it really is. At that moment he sees his teammate sitting there with a syringe between his teeth and in the process of preparing to give himself an injection of what is presumably amphetamine. Kimmage falls behind him and gives him a push so that he can get it over with quickly and without being seen. Immediately afterwards Kimmage quits the race, shaken and filled with disgust. But his anger is directed at the system itself rather than at Chappuis - at the officials, the sports directors and the sponsors who close their eyes to doping and, according to Kimmage, even encourage it. These races, known as Grand Prix de Chaudières, do not have any doping controls, despite the fact that they count in the riders' point totals. This means that they are important for both teams and individual riders who want to qualify for participation in the major prestigious stage-races. Chappuis had simply chosen to follow the rules of the game.

This episode occurred after Kimmage himself had lost his innocence. This had happened during one of the criterium races that are run right after the Tour de France. He had not touched his bike for nine days after quitting the Tour when he got an offer to ride in a hard criterium called the Chateau Chinon. There was a lot of money in it for him, so he accepted. Afterwards, however, he regretted it. He knew that the other competitors would be doped so they could put on a good show, and he could not bear the thought of yet another humiliation in front of a large audience. He was afraid that he wouldn't be able to keep up. So, as they prepared, he accepted.

> A glance is thrown in my direction. My "chastity" is well known within the team but it is only polite to offer.... I nod in acceptance.
>
> My syringe is prepared. As it's my first time it is decided that 7 milliliters will be enough. Ten to fifteen is the average dose, but the real hard men often use double or treble this.

> Amphetamines work strongly for about two or three hours, after which the effects diminish. The criterium will last just two hours, which means we can take them in the privacy of the hotel room before going out to the start. I roll back the sleeve of my jersey. No turning back now. The needle is slipped under the skin of my left shoulder. I'm charged.[57]

After the race he offered to pay.

> Amphetamines are hard to come by and very expensive. An average charge costs about fifty pounds, but I'm not surprised when the offer is refused. It is rare that money passes hands between the riders. It's a case of "See me right today, and I'll see you right tomorrow." I have joined the club, and it feels almost satisfying to have done so.[58]

Kimmage gave in. Over a period of four years it was his own choice whether to say yes or no. He was never pressured or threatened, except indirectly in the sense that he felt he needed the drug. He was afraid that his contract would not be extended if he did not deliver the goods. It is clear, however, that he did not agree to dope for sportive reasons. One may also wonder why, given that the whole situation revolted him, he did not simply choose to leave the sport once he understood what was going on. By his own account, he had been strangely indecisive throughout his career and had thus placed himself in a kind of no-man's-land. Although he was well received by his peers, it would be more accurate to say that he was living as a stranger among the professionals.

A question of morality?

The drugs he was offered, whether vitamins or amphetamines, always helped. If we are daring enough to disregard the trivial

sportive ideals that are customarily invoked in such situations, it is difficult to find anything strictly immoral in what Kimmage describes. No one prevents him from knowing how things stand. As long as he chooses to place himself on the outside, that too is accepted. He is not looked down on for that reason. Although his attitude toward drugs is well known, he always gets offers. And no one ever tries to persuade him to behave differently. When he finally gives in, he is provided with the necessary assistance. There is a certain amount of amusement but no gloating over his ”fall”. And, on top of everything else, the costly injection had been free of charge.

It is apparent that this was something other than a purely negative experience. He experienced it as something more like a ritual of initiation, and he feels a certain pleasure at being a member of the club. But the transition had come too late for him to be assimilated into the culture he was now supposed to join. And he clearly did not understand why.

In the preface to the 1998 edition of the book he tells what it was like to be in France covering the Tour the year after he had stopped. To his surprise he discovered that even riders he had considered his close friends would not even talk to him. He was a traitor. When he appealed to them to read the book before judging it he got nowhere. He had been condemned. For even if his intention was not to betray his comrades, but rather to attack the system, the fact remained that it was *their* system he was attacking. When all was said and done, the book was jeopardizing their livelihoods. No one had asked him to work in their shop. He was always free to leave if he didn’t like the smell of it. But it was disloyal to say derogatory things about their world once he had left it.

It is not easy to reach a moral judgment about a case like this. How you see it clearly depends on your perspective. Once again it is necessary to point out that there is an essential difference between the morality that prevails inside of cycling and the

morality that reigns outside its special domain. It is as though we were talking about two cultures with radically different value systems. While Kimmage has done much to produce a more nuanced picture of the culture of cycling, he has done little to help us understand its system of values.

IV. AMBITION, SELF-SACRIFICE, EXCESS

The root of the evil

Kimmage's portrait of this subculture is striking in that it is both wrenchingly honest and yet oddly uncomprehending. What it provides is glimpses rather than penetrating insights. Kimmage does little to provide an insider's perspective on his sport, despite the fact that he was in a good position to do so. For even if he was not fully integrated into the cycling culture, he was in his way on intimate terms with this milieu. Still, like those idealists who want to put an end to doping, he maintains that the root of this evil is to be found outside of the sports world. The athletes are exonerated, for it is "the system" that is to blame. His failure to consider possible motivational factors that affect athletes is not due to any sort of conscious censorship favoring an idealistic rejection of drugs. It is more like an inhibition that is meant to protect the dream of "a perfect world." This inhibition may be widespread indeed, judging from the hysterical renunciations of drugs that were heard when the doping revelations from the 1998 Tour spread through the media. For those revelations cannot have taken the public entirely unawares. There were plenty of rumors and reports making the rounds. Kimmage's book is simply one of the more reliable sources we have.[59]

The sports journalists' claim that they gave the accused the benefit of the doubt rings hollow. This sort of consideration is not, after all, a standard feature of journalistic practice. But there are also good reasons for asking whether doubt was even a realistic option. Denial yes, but doubt? Half a century ago, before the doping issue had become a problem, Gino Bartali was wondering whether Coppi's phenomenal performances might be due to more effective means than new training methods and a

strict diet (see Chapter 2). Since that time the riders' speeds have increased every year. Time trials over fifty kilometers are nowadays covered in less than an hour. Although large sums of money have been invested in developing the racing cycle in such as way as to maximize power conversion and minimize wind resistance, Coppi's Bianchi in this respect still counts as an advanced machine. To imagine that the increased speeds are simply due to better frames and gearshifts is an exercise in self-delusion.

We must also keep in mind that many less capable riders have been caught by the doping controls. What is more, the fact that these riders, despite their documented use of doping drugs, have not stood a chance in competitions against "clean" stars has simply been explained away. Somehow these minor and morally compromised riders, despite the documented effects of doping drugs, have not developed an ability to threaten the big names. Rather than cast doubt on the heroes, these doping cases have, in violation of all common sense, contributed to the myth of their superhuman status.

Even when as prominent a rider as Dietrich Thurau made compromising statements in the magazine *Sport-Bild* after leaving cycling in 1989, it was he alone who was held to account. He claimed that he was relieved to have stopped and stated: "My closets now will be empty of syringes and prohibited substances. The majority of racers have resorted to drug product, and those who refuse to admit it, are liars".[60] No one showed any interest in whether this statement might actually be true. In fact, Thurau had already made himself thoroughly unpopular in cycling circles. Identified early in his career as a possible successor to Merckx – as early as 1976 he won six stages of the Vuelta – he had since become known as a rider who was devoid of ambition and only in it for the money. Although the successful French sports director Cyrille Guimard thought he had the talent and the body-type to win the Tour de France, he never achieved more than a

modest series of minor victories. And as his parting words more than suggest, it was not because he, like Kimmage, held a puritanical view of doping.

The public has clearly found it much easier to buy the flimsy explanation that these have all been isolated cases. These were the exceptions that proved the rule that what we were watching when the big boys were in action was noble competition in accordance with our prevailing ideals about purity and fair play. Every single doping case was attributed to the character defects of the riders who got caught.

When the big names have been involved, massive resistance to recognizing what was going on has set in. Anquetil's public confessions are not the only statements that have been explained away. The same thing occurred in connection with Merckx's doping conviction in 1969 and the bizarre doping case involving Pedro Delgado in 1988, when this splendid rider won the Tour de France after having been caught doping. He got away with it only because the drug that implicated him had not yet appeared on the list of banned substances that was recognized by the International Cycling Union (UCI). The fact that it was on the International Olympic Committee's banned list had no relevance for the professionals riding in the Tour.

Anquetil was an eccentric who followed his own drummer. Merckx issued denials and was perhaps a victim of Italian patriotism. This habit of using alibis to explain away the facts was only encouraged by the official Belgian demand for a more thorough investigation of the case by the Italian authorities. The Belgian government went as far as threatening to break off diplomatic relations with Italy.[61] In Delgado's case no doping in a legal sense had occurred, despite the fact that he *had* doped himself, which is one more example of how arbitrary the enforcement of the doping concept can be.

At a crossroads

After the revelations of 1998 many of the sport's devotees must have realized that they had been dreamers who had refused to look reality in the face. This realization produces in turn three possible reactions. Having given up the dream of purity, one may choose to reject the sport as rotten and corrupt and simply lose interest in it. But one can also try to understand and come to terms with the reality.

Alternatively, one can attempt to *exorcise* the evil. People put their confidence in tightened control schemes and punitive sanctions and work to expose the monster in its full dimensions. One forces the doping sinners to run the gauntlet, to show repentance and beg the public for forgiveness. This seems to be the option of choice. It is based on the idea that it is possible to carry out a moral renovation of the sport in accordance with the ideals of fair play and sportsmanship. The French minister for youth and sport who sent the French legal system into action in 1998, Marie-George Buffet, told *Le Monde*:

> I noticed today that a bit of reflection on the matter has prompted several riders and sports directors to say they want the police investigation to be carried through to completion. This search for the truth and for the responsible parties is inexorable. Let us not forget that these transactions are connected with known risks of heart disease, cancer, depression, and hepatitis. The primary dimension of the struggle against doping is ethical in nature. (*Le Monde*, 4 August 1998)

The stricter and more punitive course of action thus involves political initiative as well as an ethical requirement. Inside the IOC, which has been accused of pursuing a hypocritical policy on doping, there is a growing consensus that favors taking a harder line. One example of this change of heart came from Prince

Alexandre de Merode, a member of the IOC and the head of its Medical Commission, who criticized Spanish sport after the entire Spanish team left the Tour de France as a protest against the crackdown on doping. Merode stated that: "Some Spanish doctors are disregarding the ethical standards of their profession. We should keep in mind that Spanish sport has long had a tendency to engage in doping." (*Le Figaro*, 17 August 1998). In the outer circles of the Olympic movement, where there is a lot more room for maneuver, more drastic proposals are heard. The president of the Romanian Olympic Committee, Ion Tiriac, has been working for the criminalization of doping in Romania.

> Now all of the [Romanian] sports federations agree with me, because they don't want to be associated with the cheaters. We have agreed that anyone who administers, ignores, or uses doping drugs will be banned from the sport for life. This also applies to coaches and doctors. Whether we can get it passed in the senate I don't know, but we're going to do our best. (*The Sunday Times*, 24 January 1999)

The chairman of the The National Olympic Committee and Sports Confederation of Denmark, Kai Holm, was singing the same tune. He expressed his disappointment about the influence of money in the world of sport and said that "the time has come to establish strict ethical and moral rules for international sport." It is important, he said,

> that we give up the romantic idea of sport. Instead we must come up with a realistic approach to how we want sport to develop and realize that what has happened over the past century is that sport has become the most essential culture we have.... Sport can exert its influence on virtually everyone, and for that reason we must think about the ethical significance of being a sports leader. There are plenty of people who are just

> waiting to take over and establish an agenda that has nothing to do with ethics. You can see that clearly in professional sport. (*Weekend-avisen*, 22-29 December 1998)

Motivated by equally noble feelings, the journalists Olav Skaaning Andersen and Niels Christian Jung made their TV-documentary about doping in cycling, "The Price of Silence." The result of this film was that the summer's doping storm reached hurricane force in Denmark during a couple of cold weeks in January. Skaaning Andersen and Jung had apparently come to the conclusion that the means justify the ends. Part of their documentation was based on questionable spying tactics – later reconstructed with a camera – directed against the riders' hotel rooms along with inspections of the contents of their waste baskets. Another essential element was an anonymous piece of paper, allegedly from an internal source, whom they did not want to identify. There were insinuations, but otherwise no corroborating information, and it seems doubtful whether this method would have been acceptable in a pjece of serious reporting about criminal activity. Jung stated that his conscience was clean and justified his point of view as follows: "It is my opinion that some riders are destroying the sport, destroying themselves, destroying their bodies, and that this is amoral and frightening." (*Fyens Stiftstidende*, 15 January 1999). It is obvious that this viewpoint amounts to a license to use any sort of underhanded documentary technique that can serve the cause. Skaaning Andersen proclaimed his good intentions on television. When the interviewer, Eva Jørgensen, posed the straightforward question: "Are you out to ruin Danish cycling?" the reply was:

> No, on the contrary, because the fact is that cycling cannot simply overlook its problems. People have to step forward so that Danish cycling can make progress in this area. So the situation is actually just the opposite of what you suggested. If

> they don't clean up, they will be digging their own grave. ("TV-Avisen", 13 January 1999)

The logic of this response is by no means obvious, and its argument is very thin. The salvational nature of his mission is so predominant that his thought process seems totally rigid. The ethical problem that is inherent in his own methodology does not concern him in the least. What he regards as evil *is* evil, and it is to be driven out at any cost.[62]

The exorcism strategy as fiasco

There are many examples of exorcism being used as a strategy in doping cases. Judging from the Ben Johnson scandal of 1988, this strategy does not appear to be very promising. After being caught using anabolic steroids, the Canadian 100-meter runner had both his Olympic victory and his world record of 9.79 seconds taken away from him. This had an immediate effect. Judging by the sharply reduced number of records and doping penalties that followed, the exposure of Johnson's doping put some real fear into athletes, their coaches, and their doctors. But this effect did not last long.

It was not long before the record-setting and the snaring of doping offenders reached a level comparable to what had prevailed before the Johnson scandal. As fewer and fewer athletes repented their doping offenses, more and more of them filed appeals. To an increasing degree, athletes accused of doping challenge and express their contempt for a system that sees itself as protecting the athletes from themselves.[63]

Athletes are now taking legal advantage of any and every uncertainty or discrepancy. Take, for example, the American sprinter Dennis Mitchell, who won a bronze medal in the 100-meters at the 1992 Barcelona Olympic Games and went on to make himself conspicuous as an active opponent of doping. In

April 1998 he was subjected to out-of-competition testing and tested positive for testosterone. This prompted his immediate suspension, and he faced a likely ban of two years' duration. During his appeal he stated without any apparent remorse that his high testosterone level must have resulted from his having had sex six times and from consuming five beers the night before he was tested. Although this was the first time sex had been used as an excuse in a doping case, the strategy itself is not unusual, pointing to the growing gap in understanding that separates elite professional athletes from the ordinary people who watch them.[64]

On Jung and Skaaning Andersen's program, 1996 Tour de France-winner Bjarne Riis was interviewed and confronted with numbers that were supposedly his hematocrit values measured in January 1995 and July of the same year, respectively. In January the figure was 41.1. During the Tour, where he rode the time trial on a par with Indurain, this number had allegedly shot up to 56.3. Even if the UCI at that time had not introduced an upper limit for hematocrit values, it is still surprising that Riis gave the interview at all. According to Skaaning Andersen, Riis knew perfectly well what the topic would be, suggesting that Riis is being sincere when he says he would like to contribute to solving cycling's problems. But, as his subsequent threats about suing Danish Radio make clear, he does not agree on the strategy for accomplishing this goal. The profound difference between their value systems was sharply defined during the broadcast when Skaaning Andersen – after Riis denied they were his hematocrit numbers – asked: "If we talk now about the 1995 Tour de France, what do you think your numbers were?" "I don't know. I don't know… And if I did know, I'm not sure I'd say," Riis defiantly replied. Skaaning Andersen followed up by asking: "What is normal for you when you're in peak condition?" One corner of Riis' mouth twitched, at which point he broke out into his broadest and most cheerful smile: "Well, I'm not going to tell you. Because you're just going to exploit it!"

That was by no means an embarrassed smile. It rather expressed an inner jubilation at the very moment Skaaning Andersen was sitting there expecting to see him overcome by a crushing, peasant-like remorse.

This broadcast had the unintended effect of demonstrating that there is a world of difference between elite athletes and other people. This in turn suggests that in the future a productive critical engagement with sport will require a new understanding of what it is and who its practitioners are. But the prerequisite for understanding the gulf that separates elite professional athletes from the public will be a willingness to replace the customary patronizing attitude toward doping athletes with a more modest point of view. We must resist the temptation to privilege our own value systems and not succumb to the idea that we live in the best of all possible worlds.

Sport's different kind of ideal – the performance

The numbers Skaaning Andersen presented may be valid, and maybe they are not. What he did not present was the kind of proof that can stand up in court. But the general attitude in the media has been that *if* Riis used EPO while preparing for competition, then he achieved his performances in an immoral fashion. He cheated his way to success.

If one can manage to restrain one's indignation about doping, then it seems more accurate to claim that in this case he reached this level of performance in a non-ideal manner. And that is perhaps the first thing a newly unprejudiced public must learn to accept, namely, that the world of sport is *non-ideal*.

People who, like Kimmage, have entered the ranks of elite athletes with romantic notions about what they would find there have abruptly discovered that they were cherishing an illusion. And now the public has made the same discovery. But saying

that sport is unideal is not the same thing as saying that it is without ideals. The point is that the ideality of sport is different from what people have been wont to assume given the tradition that has prescribed our ideological investment in sport since the time when Coubertin formulated it. The public has been encouraged to embrace the idea that the ideologically-driven idealizing of sport – its character-building qualities and concepts like *sporting* and *fair* – are absolutely essential. The problem is that in doing so the public has been relating to a kind of phantom.

Cleansed of all its external decorations, the essence of sport finally becomes visible. *The result* is what it is all about. This is reflected in the sportspages of the newspapers, where the fan can spend hours going through all the lists and tables that show the results of sports competitions. It is sport's ideological superstructure that underplays the significance of the result pure and simple. For this reason there has been a tendency to construe the performance as the essentially trivial product of an ennobling competition. The performance is seen as being somehow inadequate in and of itself. An essential prerequisite for bridging the abyss that has developed between a reform-minded pack of commissioners, politicians, sports officials and media types on the one hand, and the athletes who want to concentrate on their occupations on the other, is that it be understood that the performances are what give meaning to the whole project. Good performances are existentially significant. And a botched performance is not insignificant. It is always disappointing. In some cases it can stimulate the athlete in a positive way, but it can also be devastating.

Just think of the French rider Laurent Fignon. When he was very young in the early 1980s he won the Tour de France two years in a row. In 1989 he managed a breathtaking comeback after having been plagued for years by injuries. He won the Giro, wore the leader's yellow jersey in the Tour and held onto the lead

until the final stage – a time-trial to Paris – only to lose at the end to Greg Lemond by a margin of only eight seconds, the narrowest margin ever. This made the blow that much harder to take. Fignon the rider was never himself again. For someone who had been an excellent time-trial rider, this important discipline was now a source of suffering in more than one sense of the word.

To understand athletes' willingness to take risks it is essential that one understand the nature of the performance. The outcome is more than the result of the competition. It is also a goal toward which one works. And even if the performance has been achieved, when the event is over it is frequently not identical with the athlete's ranking in the competition. While the ranking has a fixed status, the value of the performance has a more indeterminate status. A third place can be a surprisingly good result in a competition, whereas a second-place performance can be experienced as a disappointing result. This is due to the fact that performances are active creations. They are not just something that *is* created. To take one example, Fausto Coppi would not be Coppi without his performances, he would be forgotten. On the basis of his accomplishments, he lives on as a reference point in the list of the great champions. He worked in a purposive way at creating his performances and thereby created himself.

For that reason a first place in the Tour is not decisive, either. The performance will be evaluated in relation to earlier first places, as well. In 1975 Merckx set out to win his sixth Tour de France, a feat that would have made him unique in the annals of the sport. But on the next-to-last stage to Pra-Loup he launched what appeared to be a unnecessary attack on the penultimate mountain, whereas a strict sports logic would have prompted him to ride defensively and simply hold on to his leader's position in the race. An obvious explanation of this breakaway is that he was riding against an opponent who was not there – Coppi. The crowning achievement of his life was going to be

performed in style. And that is what finished him. But his initiative served to honor both him and the sport.

The will to create performances and thus to make oneself a sportsman – in a word, ambition – is the driving force in elite sport. This ambition must be a kind of obsession that demands satisfaction. This satisfaction is achieved at the cost of rivals who are driven by the same force of will. The competition is thus a serious matter. Although it includes elements of play, there is no room for an attitude such as: ”It’s just a game.” If you don’t treat it as a serious matter, then you don’t have a chance. You must prepare and hone yourself for the battle.

All other things being equal, he who trains best, is most strict about his diet, takes the best care of his equipment and makes sure that he recovers from training will have the best chance of winning. This does not of course mean that the prize will go to the one who trains the most or eats the least. That would be a pointless kind of excess. The goal is rather to hone oneself in an optimal manner.

An essential part of the fascination of sport is bound up with this striving within the increasingly narrow gap that separates what is *too much* from what is *too little*. How can you maximize training without taking it too far? How can you minimize your weight without producing negative consequences for muscle strength and the resistance of the immune system to illness? How can you optimize the ability of the blood to transport oxygen without making the blood too viscuous (and thus prone to blood clots) and without reducing the intensity of training? For many years altitude training was a favored method for preparing oneself for competition, because being at altitude caused the body to increase its production of hemoglobin to counteract the diminished intake of oxygen. The hormone that makes this adaptation possible is erythropoietin (EPO). The problem with altitude training, however, is that the oxygen-deficient air makes it impossible to train as effectively as if one were at sea level. One

way of overcoming this problem is live or spend nights at lower altitude in houses that are set up to produce artificially low oxygen levels (”altitude chambers”). Another way to get this effect is to make use of the notorious EPO treatment.

These conditions are essential parameters of high-performance, and the most ambitious athletes will always strive to hit exactly the right level within these margins – peak condition – at those times when the most important events take place. After such events it is inevitable that fitness will decline. It is not possible to stay at peak condition for an extended period of time. Even attempting to do this would be a kind of excess and would lower one’s level of fitness in the long run. This is sport’s inherent demand for moderation, and it is a rule worth following. It is at any rate a more promising option than moderating the conditions in which competitions take place, which has been suggested as a way to combat doping. Ride fewer stages and have the riders circumvent the highest mountains. Humanizing the race in this way is the only way to save the Tour de France, some said, when the debate about the future of the event was raging. And this proposal, which may also be taken as a major step toward burying the Tour, has won a responsive hearing from worried sports officials.[65]

How would that affect the use of doping drugs or, for that matter, the more extreme efforts to keep one’s weight under control? As long as athletes are going to ride, the greatest possible oxygen uptake is going to be an advantage. And as long as riders are going to do climbs, the least possible deadweight will provide an edge. The rider who wants to get results in cycling will, therefore, make these requirements the center of his existence.

Georges Bataille – a key to understanding

Even if one finds the current condemnation of doping unsatisfactory, it is still difficult for an outsider to understand how natural it is for athletes to put their health at risk to fulfill their ambitions. The whole idea contradicts the conventional idea of sport as a healthy recreational activity. But if one does want to try to comprehend this mindset, it will be necessary to open ourselves to perspectives that differ from those to which we are accustomed. This, however, is no easy task. For this reason, it can be rewarding to seek inspiration in a kind of thinking that challenges the common sense of everyday life in its striving to reveal to us the tangled paths along which human beings seek the meaning of life. An encounter with the French philosopher Georges Bataille can be a very rewarding challenge of this kind.

Bataille's thought is an attempt to achieve an understanding of that part of human nature that lies beyond the rationality that prevails in so much of our lives; what interests him is something that manifests itself in phenomena such as extravagance, excess and ecstasy. In *La notion de dépense* (1933) he takes on the idea that utility is the culture-creating principle. This notion is bound up with the rise of the bourgeoisie. It was promoted as a virtue of necessity by an inferior class that developed in the shadow of an extravagant nobility.[66] But this fixation on utility – and its close relatives parsimoniousness and accumulation – leads to what Bataille calls "universal shabbiness." The truth is that it is expenditure –extravagance, loss, and excessive pleasure – that really creates culture. We have gotten used to thinking that material gain serves human happiness. But that, according to Bataille, means only that human beings limit themselves to an "attenuated pleasure." The ecstatic squandering that allows consumption to take precedence over production is something the bourgeoisie has taught us to regard as diseased. Pleasure is contained and excluded, so there is no room for the intoxication

of happiness. Self-limitation and moderation are idealized at the expense of generosity. Even where extravagance, despite everything, is able to express itself in the form of bourgeois culture, in art, in the theater, in permitted excesses or in games, it remains a matter of secondary importance which is enjoyed in moderation without ever being permitting to attain dimensions that might threaten productive social action, which is supposedly what most of life involves.

> It is true that personal experience – if it is a question of a youthful man, capable of wasting and destroying without reason – each time gives the lie to this miserable conception. But even when he does not spare himself and destroys himself while making allowance for nothing, the most lucid man will understand nothing, or imagine himself sick.[67]

Despite the fact that making a sacrifice has been an especially meaningful act in all previous societies, the unnecessary and unproductive act of dissipation has fallen into disrepute in the modern epoch. Confidence in scientific solutions has gradually displaced the irrational and rendered it irrelevant. Invoking the history of language, Bataille argues that the act of dissipation, the sacrifice (Fr. *sacrifice*) is a production of sacred things (Lat. *sacer* = sacred, and *ficere* = to make). The sacrifice is an act of sanctification, and this prompts him to conclude that the creation of meaning exceeds the loss and what is squandered. Bataille refers, for example, to Jesus, who sacrifices himself on the cross, the sacrifice of Christ.

Throughout the modern period leisure activities, not least among them sport, have served as a special sanctuary for excesses of this kind. In his general assessment of why competitive games are so attractive, Bataille says:

> In various competitive games, loss in general is produced under complex conditions. Considerable sums of money are spent for maintenance of quarters, animals, equipment or men. As much energy as possible is squandered in order to produce a feeling of stupefaction – in any case with an intensity infinitely greater than in productive enterprises. The danger of death is not avoided; on the contrary, it is the object of a strong unconscious attraction. Besides, competitions are sometimes the occasion for the public distribution of prizes. Immense crowds are present; their passions most often burst forth beyond any restraint, and the loss of insane sums of money is set in motion in the form of wagers. It is true that this circulation of money profits a small number of professional bettors, but it is no less true that this circulation can be considered to be a real *charge* of the passions unleashed by competition and that, among a large number of bettors, it leads to losses disproportionate to their means; these even attain such a level of madness that often the only way out for gamblers are prison or death.[68]

With an event like the Tour de France in mind, what Bataille is saying here comes vividly to life. The spectators squander their leisure time. They take their places by the side of the road hours before the field rides by so as to get a glimpse of their heroes. The steepest ascents on the sides of mountains are popular places to stand. These sites allow not only the longest periods of proximity to the riders, but it is here too that the suffering, the sacrifice, and the desolation reach their greatest intensity. At the decisive moments it is the leaders who are the fittest. The astonishing ease with which they move upwards inspires enthusiasm and acclaim. At those historic moments when a champion becomes his real self, resolute, vulnerable and straining to the utmost, the public senses this and enters a kind of euphoria. Sometimes the riders in front are opportunistic escape-artists who, once they confront the

imposing ascents, have to swallow the fact that they have overestimated their abilities. Ambition, their own expectations and false hopes have tempted them to try a breakaway that is now seen to be a hopeless enterprise. The desperation occasioned by the fatal consequences of this move can be read in their faces. One by one they fall away, well aware that they will soon be swallowed up – overtaken and left behind in the less glorious struggle to finish inside of the time-limit for that day's stage. These riders are driven to push themselves beyond the limits of good sense, at which point their exit from the race is a fait accompli. In the end the public feels a special sympathy for the support riders who, as the faithful esquires of the great combatants, sacrifice themselves to the limits of their ability. When the day's support work is over, the next hurdle is the struggle against exhaustion and the effort to get to the finish in time, so the team can continue the next day. These Sisyphus-like workers, who on the hardest stages often cross the line long after the major dramatis personae have done so, do not toil unnoticed. There are spectators waiting who will literally push them to the finish.

The public that follows the spectacle with such enthusiasm knows how the riders suffer. They live through the ritual year after year, they have found meaning in its squandering of energy and learned to appreciate great sacrifices. For this reason one does not find much support among such people for the requirement that the riders wear helmets. Not even following Fabio Casartelli's fatal accident in 1995, and despite the fact that he would have presumably been saved by a helmet. It may seem cynical to propose it, but one sober assessment of this case is that Casartelli became a greater rider without a helmet than he ever would have become had he worn one. His name lives on in memory. He gave the race significance, and he became significant himself.

The initiated public shows a respect for this spectacle that is alien to outsiders. For that reason it is not from these people that one hears condemnations of riders who have used banned substances. Perhaps drug use is seen as only one more extravagance and as a sign of the riders' willingness to accept risks and to sacrifice themselves. The tolerance for doping-sinners that one finds among the most informed and sympathetic segment of the public can thus be interpreted as an understanding of the alien logic that inheres in transgression and self-sacrifice as a way of life. It may be that the tribute that was paid to the accused riders following the revelations was not a provocation but rather a natural gesture extended to a group of heroes who had been caught doing what Bataille calls "sacred things".

Transgression and longing for continuity

Bataille has put us on the track of the ecstatic emotion that accompanies what are essentially useless athletic performances. There is a deeper motive behind what appears (to the superficial eye) to be the perverse pleasure the spectators demonstrate at the sight of the riders' sacrifices and sufferings. And yet we still do not understand why these performers are willing to assume the role of the victim, even when it comes to ingesting drugs (such as amphetamines) that *may* damage health in the long term but *are* literally life-threatening when they are taken to prolong endurance.

If we accept that human beings are endowed with a longing for "the sacred," then one part of the explanation we seek has to do with the public's fascination with transgression itself. In his book *L'Erotisme* (1957), Bataille points to a close connection between what is holy and what is forbidden – evil itself. He

maintains that taboos exist to be broken and explains this as follows:

> Transgression in pre-Christian religions was relatively lawful; piety demanded it. Against transgression stood the taboo, but it could always be suspended as long as limits were observed. In the Christian world the taboo was absolute. Transgression would have made clear what Christianity concealed, that the sacred and the forbidden are one, that the sacred can be rattained through the violence involved in breaking a taboo.[69]

If the context Bataille portrays is real – and he is not shy about providing evidence – then it is easy enough to understand the athletes' being drawn to concealed preparations in their striving to lift existence out of the realm of the trivial. In our culture the use of doping has fallen under a taboo. By violating this taboo within certain limits, the athletes open a portal to that which is "sacred." It is in doping that one finds a worthy analogy to the myth of the titan Prometheus, who stole fire from the gods and gave it to men, thereby reducing the distance between the human and the divine. The punishment Prometheus had to endure for his crime corresponds to the torments with which admonishing doctors threaten the doping sinners, namely, damage to the heart, kidney, and liver. Prometheus was lashed to a cliff as an eagle tore out his liver. During the night it grew back so that he could endure his torture day after day.

On the threshold of a new millenium, our part of the world is characterized by a lack of interest in what is holy. For that reason it is no longer possible to justify human actions by invoking the desire to give existence an element of transcendance. There are many examples of such actions outside of our own cultural sphere, but we are accustomed to seeing them as expressions of lower stages of civilization that we have left behind. When comparable justifications assert themselves in our own lives, this

causes a profound discomfort. It is much easier to handle emotionally if we insist that profane motivations, such as greed, are the issue, thereby allowing us to identify utilitarian motives as the force that drives bourgeois culture. It is easy enough to become reconciled to utilitarian motives, whereby the professional athlete piles up money from sponsors and prizes by putting his health at risk. And yet it is difficult to understand that excesses within sport can be justified by self-sacrifice, the impulse to squander, and the sacred significance of transgression. In our culture this can easily be seen as a forced and implausible logic. But if we follow Bataille's fundamental idea, this kind of thinking does in fact make a great deal of sense.

Bataille's new perspective causes a kind of vertigo in the reader. A human being is the product of continuous being, he argues, which means life in all of its lack of clarity and definition. The religious impulse is a result of our problematic relationship to this continuity. As an individual, a person exists within this discontinuity. It is a fact that the human being is born and dies alone, and this is acknowledged to be a tragic condition. Seen from a thoroughly sober-minded perspective, life is no more than a constant process of reproduction and death. But in death and sexuality one finds the connection to the continuity. Continuity is achieved when the individual transgresses his own limits. Still, it is difficult to accept that the ultimate transgression, death itself, does not make a difference. Death is the primary catastrophe – the confirmation that we are ultimately empty. This tragic and unbearable condition of our existence is something people have always attempted to overcome. The Christian solution was to invent the idea of the immortality of the soul and the resurrection of the flesh. The heathen solution was to violate taboos and transgress limits to establish a connection to the sacred. Bataille describes the situation in the following way:

> We want to get across without taking the final step, while remaining cautiously on the hither side. We can conceive of nothing except in terms of our own life, and beyond that, it seems to us everything is wiped out. Beyond death, in fact, begins the inconceivable which we are usually not brave enough to face. Yet the inconceivable is the expression of our own impotence. We know that death destroys nothing, leaves the totality of existence intact, but we still cannot imagine the continuity of being as a whole beyond our death, or whatever it is that dies in us. We cannot accept the fact that this has limits. At all costs we need to transcend them, but we should like to transcend them and maintain them simultaneously.[70]

Our immediate attraction to sport in this context is precisely the fact that it makes possible a transcendence even as the athlete stays on "this side" simply by remaining alive. This certainly applies to those sports which require endurance. Athletes talk about hitting and going through the wall, about getting a second wind, about the runner's high where the athlete literally runs into another state of consciousness, as if in a state of intoxication, where one's sense of time disappears and the body feels light and moves effortlessly despite the exertion. These phenomena are accessible to all athletes and are experienced as infinite moments of excess. That is why they are so enticing.

But sport also entices by offering a further possibility of fulfillment that is reserved for only a few: individual immortality.[71] With his Tour victory in 1998, Marco Pantani added his name to an exclusive roster that goes all the way back to the first winner, Maurice Garin. Through their performances the riders inscribe themselves in an historical continuity. Without his performances, Coppi would not have been Coppi. A victory in the Tour de France confers immortality, and this alone makes it a goal worth striving for.

V. SACRED HEALTH

Oblivion and meaning

According to the Polish-born sociologist Zygmunt Bauman, culture arose as a consequence of humanity's need to forget what it knows all too well – that we all must die. Culture would not exist, he argues, if human beings were not aware of their own mortality. If people had no need to forget, culture would not matter.[72] This means that the search for forgetfulness and the search for meaning are two sides of the same coin. Sport opens up possibilities for pursuing both, since both the spectator and the performer can experience their own forms of intoxication through the sporting performance. And both can remain engaged with this performance over time, even if the possibility of achieving individual "immortality" is, of course, reserved to the performer. The establishment of a sports "Hall of Fame" in 1992 in Denmark's national stadium (Parken) is only one example of the fact that the worship of the heroes of the past and their performances continues and is even growing.

Not many years ago it was common to hear people who had made sport the center of their lives described as "sports idiots." While that attitude is on the decline, the traditional view of sport as a pastime and as a useful form of recreation still prevents people from engaging in a full-blown submission to sport. Making sport an existential priority is still a less than fully respectable commitment. Whereas heroic courage and a willingness to sacrifice are celebrated in the context of statecraft and social advancement, we hear condemnation when someone resolves of his own free will to put his life and health on the line to achieve something meritorious in sport.

When, for example, people engage in a hunger strike for political reasons, this is usually met with understanding, even when there is disagreement about their goals. It is understood that they are serving a cause. In a similar vein, it is accepted when soldiers who are at war take amphetamines to promote endurance or when they are treated with hormones to promote the healing of war wounds.[73] For these are exceptional situations. These young men are fighting in the service of a cause that is greater than themselves. They are fighting for their countrymen and fatherland, and the ends justify any means. In stark contrast to such cases it is regarded as unacceptable and meaningless if athletes in pursuit of fulfilling their own goals undertake painful regimens to lose weight or use drugs to maximize their abilities. Indeed, the resistance to such practices is greater than ever, as evidenced by the strategies of rejection and exorcism that are directed at doping.

Some may regard this as a far-fetched and irrelevant comparison. For, as a familiar slogan has it, we must not mix sport and politics. And there is a world of difference between war and sport. The problem is that an immediate rejection of this comparison disregards the fact that the use of doping drugs accelerated during the Cold War, at a time when the sports that played out on the grand political stage took on the status of "war by other means." The documented use of doping in the GDR (see Chapter 1) was undertaken for the purpose of demonstrating the superiority of communism. Children and young people were abused by the state as if they were child soldiers. The use of doping drugs was inflicted on them as a kind of forced enhancement. Their health was sacrificed on the altar of national ambition.

The cliché that says sport and politics do not mix was a popular and idealistic position at that time. There are also indications that a more sober political and pragmatic attitude existed in the West, as well. It was not only those behind the Iron

Curtain who discovered that sport could serve propaganda purposes by demonstrating the vitality and *health* of nations and their political systems. In the West institutions to promote elite sport were established as alternatives to the hated state amateurism of the East, and they were regarded as significant investments. The Olympic Games were a battlefield first and foremost. Officials in the East and the West expressed their disapproval of doping. We have already noted that there is indisputable evidence that, behind the official disapproval of doping in Eastern Europe, an entirely different policy prevailed. Similar revelations have not appeared in the West, and it may be that official declarations and the sports policies actually followed were in better harmony with each other.

In retrospect, one can only acknowledge with a kind of wonder that a number of western countries were able to do reasonably well in competition against the "specially designed" athletes of Eastern Europe. Even if one goes so far as to assume that western athletes were doping themselves without official support, there is still room for a measure of wonderment. For the idea that these individuals were able to guestimate their way to competitive performances is unlikely. And if there were personal or team-affiliated doctors, coaches, and officials who managed this sort of preparation by western athletes, then it was possible to procede in this fashion without the knowledge of the official federations. Our natural skepticism suggests two possible solutions. Either there was, in the West as well as in the East, an official pro-doping policy behind a façade, or there was an unofficial willingness to turn a blind eye to more sophisticated private doping initiatives. The latter possibility makes sense in that the results-oriented supportive measures of elite institutions are in themselves conducive to the use of doping, just as the demanding Olympic qualifying norms enforced by national federations have had the same effect.

Despite the antidoping campaign undertaken by the IOC, the organization has often been the target of criticism in the doping debate, suspected of not really wanting to do much about doping.[74] In this connection it may be worth recalling that it was not the IOC that introduced doping into sport, whereas eagerness to identify the root of the evil has effectively obscured this fact.

If the use of doping during the Cold War was significant as a way to win propaganda battles, then the end of the Cold War has essentially devalued it, or at least from the point of view of Western politics. Perhaps this is a part of the explanation for the fact that the Cold War was a time when a real political effort against doping was actually been made.

Doping as a health hazard

The increasing resistance to doping is often explained as a consequence of the expanding scope of the problem. The use of doping drugs is increasing, and the drugs themselves are becoming more dangerous. The struggle against this plague is, therefore, becoming more urgent, or so one is often told. While this argument seems both obvious and valid, this is because it is firmly anchored in the worship of health that characterizes our era. On further reflection, however, two things become clear. The first is that the commonly used doping drugs are legitimate medications. They are produced for the purpose of ameliorating health problems. The second point is that doping controls make their own contribution to increasing the dangers of doping.

If a drug an athlete is accustomed to using is banned, it is likely that he or she will begin to experiment with new drugs, thereby increasing the risk of improper dosing and unexpected physical reactions to what is being taken. As long as people practice sport, one must assume that they will be interested in finding new and better doping methods. Indeed, an unintended

consequence of the antidoping campaign is that the hunt for new and undetectable substances is intensifying. In this sense it is worth noting that, at the beginning of the EPO era during the 1980s, cycling experienced a series of unexplained deaths, while comparable deaths have not recurred since that time. This suggests that the athletes have learned how to use this drug, and that the risk has consequently gone down. The UCI's introduction of a hematocrit level of 50% in 1997 made it more difficult for riders to profit from its use. Soon afterwards the new and supposedly much more dangerous drug known as PFC appeared as an effective alternative to EPO. For this reason the antidoping campaign presents its own kind of hazard to the health of the athletes it claims to serve.

Another justification for the current antidoping campaign is the notion that sport must be saved, since it is unable to survive its own progressive development toward higher performances. The logic behind this idea is that sport and its practitioners must be saved from themselves. In this area, then, the idealists who for years insisted on not mixing sport and politics have now adopted the opposite position.

In Denmark the minister of culture, Elsebeth Gerner Nielsen, established a committee to investigate the relationship between lifestyle and doping. Her concern was directed above all at the 13-15 year olds who want to imitate their role models and who believe that doping drugs are the way to acquire big muscles. Her view is that there is an absence of "*healthy* role models who can put an end to warped thinking about body ideals" (*Der Nordschleswiger*, 15 January 1999, my emphasis). Although she was clearly targeting the body-building fitness culture, this initiative was catalyzed by the doping revelations coming out of the cycling milieu. For this reason the confident claim about a lack of healthy role models is puzzling. Even if one concedes that doping does not promote good health, it is difficult to see (if we take her words at face value) what she actually means. For

regardless of their actual health status, it is difficult to argue that the Tour de France riders appear to be in bad health. For one thing they are anything but overweight, which happens to be one of our era's most ominous signs of bad health.[75] In a negative sense one may say that they are lean, but they are certainly not anorexic. In this sense they fall far short of two of our culture's most characteristic signs of ill health. However one judges their practices, at least they *look* healthy. And the situation is not much different for the muscle-bound types in the fitness centers. Even if one may feel that some of them look unnaturally bulked up, one would have to look hard for signs of ill health. (Antidoping campaign literature claims that skin blemishes and female facial hair may be signs of doping and thus, according to the minister of culture, signs of poor health.) But these people do not play a particularly significant role as sports role models. The gigantic and idolized body-builders – Sylvester Stallone, Arnold Schwarzenegger and others – are film stars, and regardless of whether one may have suspected them of boosting their growth by means of steroids, they generally appear on the screen without pimples, as society's protectors, as moral guardians, and as virtuous defenders of "true" values. In this sense they look like healthy role models.[76]

Gerner Nielsen is certainly not using the concept of health in accordance with the culturally constructed *image* of health. She is rather using it for a moral purpose. The point is to have the right attitude, which means an attitude that agrees with social norms. The healthy is the good. And the healthy role model is the one that stands up and declares itself to be against evil and its stigma. "'We want people to say that they will have absolutely nothing to do with doping', the minister of culture demanded" (*Der Nordschleswiger*, 15 January 1999).

Health as an absolute value

The remarkably strong determination to put an end to doping that exists outside the sports world – despite the risk of exacerbating the problem, and despite the risks associated with inviting political intervention – can be explained within the same framework in which doping is practiced. Whereas sport can be an existential priority, an assertive way to come to grips with the tragic conditions of a transitory life, the worship of health can be in turn a way to belie the reality of death. By concentrating on the protection of our health, we can evade awareness of our own finitude. If we stay healthy, then we stay alive, and that is what is most important. From this perspective living is identical to the meaning of life. But the use of doping drugs introduces an entirely different set of possibilities and therefore constitutes a dangerous threat. It scorns both the sacred status of health and the significance of health itself.

When Kimmage suddenly found himself plunging downhill at breakneck speed and saw Indurain barely manage to save himself from a fall, he simply detached himself mentally from the race and decided not to take any more chances. By deciding that it was, after all, only a cycling race, he instantly devalued the significance of the race for himself. And his explanation itself is interesting. His decision, he writes, derived from "the knowledge that at the end of the day I will have to stop and find a job, and that good health is really the only wealth that we have".[77] In this situation he must decide whether to live in the moment or live for the future, to choose between pursuing his passion or giving it up in favor of a different kind of existence. He makes it clear that, from the very beginning of his career as a cyclist, he had doubted whether cycling was the right kind of life for him. He gave it a chance but did not choose it wholeheartedly. By choosing to cling to what he had, rather than relying on what he was doing, he chose nothing less than his perspective on life. We cannot object

to this choice. But the transformation of "I" into "we" is striking. Good health, health itself, is not just *his* only value, it is *everyone's* only value. This transformation shows that Kimmage has resigned himself to the idea that health is the absolute and only value. This is remarkable in that this idea reveals itself to him when he is together with riders whose way of riding contradicts this very idea. Two profoundly different attitudes towards life are apparent here. Labeling the others as crazy enables him to make the contradiction go away. He is untroubled by the fact that it is the others who live up to the ethos of the cycling culture. Indeed, one might even assert that it is Kimmage who is the abnormal one in this context.

Having proclaimed health to be an absolute value, Kimmage can now label the willingness to take risks as unhealthy. Years later, as he sits before his keyboard assessing his experiences, the crucial difference between *risk* and *caution* is not accorded a second thought. The various kinds of stress associated with the cycling life are all that he understands about the risks his fellow cyclists choose to take.

Kimmage's book is unique in that it marks the first time a rider has written about the more questionable aspects of the sport. Yet it is also typical of its time, in that it continues the search for the meaning of health that began around the middle of the twentieth century and has been accelerating since the late 1960s. There is no doubt that this search is playing an important role in the current doping debate. Nor can there be any doubt that it has encouraged an increasing number of riders to acknowledge their use of doping drugs, a development that amounts to a new kind of confessional apologetics.

Searching for the meaning of health

The first thing one notices about the current worship of health is the vague way in which the concept of health is used. The shared understanding of health, understood as the natural background against which disease appears, has been lost. The more one talks about health, the more it reveals itself to be incomprehensible. Responding to the minister of culture's lamentations over the lack of healthy role models, we might point out that she offered no clear idea regarding what is healthy. On the contrary, we found it paradoxical that apparently healthy people were being characterized as unhealthy. The reason for this was that what they were doing stood in opposition to what is good and morally right. If the worship of health is not based on a specific definition of health, that is because there is no unambiguous and satisfactory definition in the first place. On the contrary, the doctors, whose viewpoint once took precedence, now argue with philosophers, psychologists, sports educators, alternative caregivers and many others about the proper interpretation of this concept. Health is praised as a form of *common sense*. This is the basis of Kimmage's critique of his competitors and his way of situating their contrary practices beyond the pale.

In fact, if the others are careening down the sides of mountains, this is because they have set themselves a different goal. Their objective is a good performance. Their way of thinking tells them to go fast, and that is why they take chances and calculated risks. But the very idea of common sense implies that there is an opposed and unhealthy kind of sense, a sense that is *deformed*. And it is as mentally ill or as crazy that Kimmage describes his goal-oriented adversaries.

The intellectual historian Lars-Henrik Schmidt has described this type of thinking as follows:

> When a phenomenon appears to be crazy, this is because it defies *common sense*. If something associated with physical

> culture appears to be crazy, this too must be because it stands in opposition to that which is healthy. The provocative aspect here is that the violation of common sense can be fascinating and it can be discussed, that is, it can be accorded an aesthetic dimension; at the same time, however, a *violation*, despite its aesthetic qualities, will always appear to be a morally offensive *exaggeration*. The use of anabolic steroids, for example, can in certain circumstances produce aesthetic qualities, but the user is nevertheless condemned for his lack of morality.[78]

He also asserts that once upon a time a crucial aspect of common sense presupposed a compatibility between the aesthetic and the moral. The medical-scientific aspect is the crucial element of this trinity. "The argument on behalf of the *good* and the *beautiful* is based on its coinciding with what is *true*." One characteristic of modernity has been a concept of truth that coincides with what is scientifically correct. "At the present time that which is *healthy* is in the process of replacing that which is correct".[79]

Today the reference point for what is healthy is not disease but rather unhealthiness, and this is not just problematic for the doctor who, as a consequence of this shift, has lost his authority. This situation constitutes a more general problem, because it means that health has been made *unnatural*. Healthy is no longer something one is until something else – a disease – appears. Health is now something you must protect, something that is always threatening to leave you if you do not adopt the right health behaviors; and this opens the door to a brand new catalogue of sins.

This is not, however, just a problem; it is also a solution. If if were not, then the worship of health would never have succeeded to the extent that it has. For despite the apparently irrational elements in our era's preference for and worship of

health, there is still reason to believe that it serves a purpose. This is reflected in Schmidt's meditations on the promotion of health:

> If the pedagogy of health currently prescribes that the agents of the regime are *to promote health,* this is really just a new variation on the genealogy of morals; the purpose of this arrangement is as usual to be able *to condemn* a certain type of behavior. The awareness of sin is used to point out the sinner, who must confess to having made himself a miserable sinner, indeed.[80]

This passage addresses the problem we are dealing with in a most direct way. In the absence of a better alternative, health is made the basis for making moral judgments. The doping sinners are condemned (like smokers, drunks, the obese, etc.). Their behavior is labeled immoral. Yet there is still room for hope. These deviants have been misled by the market that has turned them into poor sinners. If, however, they undergo a conversion in accordance with the prevailing regime of health, if they repent and proclaim their adherence to clean sport, then there will be hope of forgiveness.

If the riders' careless attitude toward their health is now regarded as a reprehensible offense, this is due to the fact that health itself has been made into something unnatural. The offense consists in taking one's health for granted. For the riders health is the natural context in which they act. If they weren't healthy, they couldn't ride. What makes them guilty is that they *consume* their health, whereas they ought to keep it sacrosanct as the highest possible good. They act as if it were their own business, which it is but only in a limited way. To be sure, they will eventually have to pay for their sins, but their example might lead others into temptation and send them on the road to perdition.

As Schmidt points out, once health replaces truth as the basis for making judgments, health becomes everyone's concern. When

athletes put it at risk so that forgetfulness and meaning can fuse in the intoxication and joy that accompany a good performance, they challenge the faith of the health disciples and make themselves guilty of heresy.

Body and health

Health is the greatest good for those who *believe* in it. And there seem to be more and more people who do just that. At the same time, one can notice a tendency in the opposite direction. The conflict between the worship of health and, on the other hand, confidence in the body, reflects an uncertainty regarding how to manage the finite nature of our existence. It may be appropriate here to point out that this interest in health is by no means new.[81]

The new factor in our own era is that health has become a goal in and of itself. Whereas health was once a concept that was subordinate to the regime of scientific reason, today it has been largely detached from this subordination. There is much interest in alternative as well as medical recommendations and cautionary advice, but the more cautious people attempt to protect themselves by adopting correct health behaviors.

Despite our absorption in the problem solving that belongs to the age of science, it has become increasingly evident that reason has been unable to create the kind of order that would assure us happiness and significance in the terrestrial domain in which we dwell.

If there is no basis for *creating* order one can at least try to preserve the status quo. That is the strategic shift that prevailed during the second half of the twentieth century, as demonstrated by the jogging craze of the 1970s and the fitness industry of the 1980s.

The passage of time that will one day put an end to all of us is denied. Miles are run and weights are lifted to stay in shape.

Wrinkles and bags under the eyes are removed. Buttocks and thighs are subjected to liposuction. Hair loss is remedied with Rogaine, and if that doesn't work hair transplantation make it possible to camouflage the wear and tear of aging.

The idea that health is the only value – as convincing as it may seem at first – is actually quite pitiful. It demands asceticism, moderation and mortification of the flesh, but without the prospect of pleasures to come that is promised by all other religions. The worship of health is, therefore, unsatisfying and meaningless, and for that reason it has stimulated the growth of an entirely different body culture in which risk is sought out and lives are put at risk. Mountain ascents, rock climbing, bungee jumping, base-jumping, white-water rafting, extreme surfing and skiing and similar activities – all of these ventures defy the cautionary strategies prescribed by common sense.[82] Rather than worship health, they take it for granted. The athletes put their faith in the body as their court of last resort, and at the moment it shows itself to be inadequate, it's all over. Rather than pursue the hopeless task of simply trying to stay alive, these athletes seek out the experience of taking risks. In so doing they demonstrate a will to shake themselves free of a sense of powerlessness in favor of replacing impotence with a feeling of omnipotence that is built on their rejection of passivity.[83]

Hanging by one's fingernails from a vertical cliff makes that vague anxiety about what may happen in the future totally irrelevant. The situation iat that moment demands the most intense concentration. The climber, totally absorbed in his endeavor, finds himself in that narrow margin between life and death. There is no room for ordinary worries. In that sense the climber is outside of himself and in an ecstatic state. This experience is related to the absorption that elite athletes sometimes experience when they are performing at the absolute limits of their abilities.

Both elite sport and risk sports defy the constant admonitions of the health enlighteners and can appear to be infinitely remote from the usual thinking about moderation. Yet the recreational athlete who runs in pursuit of health can also find himself wholly absorbed in what he is doing, at which point his original intention just fades away. Many a jogger has at some point redefined his training to aim at running a marathon, thereby subjecting the body to a kind of stress that, according to medical criteria, is unhealthy. The climber, on the other hand, may be very careful about what he eats for health reasons, just as he can be seized by anxiety regarding the inevitable decaying of his body. The climbing can be an escape from an encroaching knowledge of how unreliable health can be, and the fact that confidence in the body is but a momentary and defiant gesture.

The merging of body- and health-oriented perspectives also occurs in wholly paradoxical variations, as when a pale and ostensibly unhealthy complexion makes way for the healthy color acquired in a tanning salon, where the body is put at risk in order to achieve a symbolic state of health. Such paradoxes occur because health cannot be defined unambiguously, which means in turn that health advocacy has no limits; it has the status of an absolute good and is pursued like the holy grail. If we cannot know what health actually is, we can at least try to live up to the ideal images and give the impression of possessing it. A huge market has thus opened up in which one can try to buy one's way to a healthy aura, whether this means a shampoo that produces healthy and lustrous hair or Sanex products that "keep the skin healthy."

Paradoxes of health – a material example

Health has become a dominating ideal of our culture as a reference point and as a yardstick, just as it has become a

dominant concept in social debate. Discussions of health often end, however, by demonstrating its problematic nature. A striking example of this is the discussion in England about the legalization of cannabis. Research has shown that this substance is unsurpassed when it comes to treating certain kinds of pain. A powerful committee of the House of Lords has, therefore, recommended an easing of the law that regulates it. This constituted a challenge to the Ministry of Health that has always maintained that the beneficial effects from a medical standpoint have been too indefinite to justify a relaxation of the law. Nevertheless:

> The British Medical Association concluded last year that there was "good evidence" indicating that extracts of the substance had pain-relieving and inflammation-inhibiting properties. It asserted that particular cannabinoids have therapeutic potential in a number of cases where other treatments have proven to be unsatisfactory. (*The Independent*, 8 November 1998).

It is well known that many medications originate as plant extracts. If the British Ministry of Health is not interested in acknowledging the effects of the substance, this is because it is already known for its other effect, namely, as an intoxicant. In that context this substance is labeled as unhealthy and is banned. Although it may do good, it derives from evil. The risk associated with an easing of the law is that it opens the door to abuse, meaning recreational use. It is, therefore, significant that the committee, while proposing to amend the law, emphasizes that "it is outside (the committee's) competence to investigate the decriminalizing (of cannabis) for recreational purposes." The point is that such an investigation could wind up supporting the views of those who assert that this substance is less dangerous than tobacco or liquor and who are working toward total

leglaization so that, as an enjoyable intoxicant, it would acquire the same status as alcohol and cigarettes.[84] This would in turn endanger the efforts being made to preserve law and order in this domain, where the current tendency is to tighten regulations governing the sale of and use of such substances.

The same newspaper reported that the use of drugs by employees had become a topic of public discussion. More and more companies, with the government's blessing, are instituting drug testing in the workplace. The article begins as follows:

> If you are one of the millions of Britons who on Saturday evening takes Ecstasy or sniffs a line of cocaine or who just smokes the occasional joint, it is time for you to start worrying. A report published last week by the Forensic Science Service revealed that a million employees in this country are now being forced to undergo testing for the use of illegal drugs. And, according to the government's "Our Healthier Nation" initiative, this number is growing, as are the numbers of disciplinary penalties and firings.
>
> The FSS, a branch of the interior ministry, found that an average of one out of ten employees tested positive. It was also found, perhaps surprisingly, that the use of drugs was evenly represented throughout the various job classifications, from the shop floor up to the executive suites. (*The Independent*, 1 November 1998).

The surprisingly large numbers who tested positive have led to increased surveillance, and the article poses the rhetorical question as to whether every employee risks being tested for the use of drugs in the foreseeable future. This is hardly the case, we are told, and for two reasons. The first is purely practical. What are these companies going to do with the 10-15 percent who test positive? The second is economic. Compared to the alcohol test used by the police, which costs a good hundred crowns (USD 6)

every time someone blows up a balloon, a laboratory test for drugs costs ten times as much. London Transport, one of the firms that employs testing, estimates that their costs run to hundreds of thousands of pounds each year. Expenses of this magnitude are currently dampening companies' interest in surveilling their employees for drug use.

There is no question that the use of intoxicants has led to a growing puritanism. In the United States drug testing has become a lucrative industry. The SmithKline Beecham company alone tests up to five million people a year, and the industry as a whole is estimated to be worth 350 million dollars annually. Banks and a long list of companies, most of them American subsidiaries, whose work requirements are not directly threatened by their employees' use of intoxicants, have begun testing programs. It is important to recognize that, just as there are economic interests involved in the doping of athletes, economic interests are also involved in the campaign against drug use. From a puritanical standpoint, the doctrine behind the testing programs has an alarming aspect; the number of positive tests stays constant, suggesting that surveillance has little effect. This alone makes it difficult to believe that the attempts to exorcize doping within the sports world will ever succeed.

In addition, the arguments that have been offered on behalf of the testing of employees are quite remarkable. The International Petroleum Exchange in London, which recently began testing, has assured its employees that the purpose of its testing policy is "simply to improve performance." Nor are the counterarguments any less striking:

> Mike Goodman from Release, a nonprofit organization that provides information about the use of drugs, says that drug testing has become the witch-hunt of the twentieth century. We are very concerned about testing. It is a truly sinister form of lifestyle-control that has very little to do with the person's

> ability to do his job. It is a degrading and inhumane procedure. (*The Independent*, 1 November 1998).

It is worth asking why a viewpoint that is immediately invoked regarding the testing of employees – namely, that it is degrading and inhumane – has been virtually absent from the doping debate. In the sports world one encounters not only demands for more frequent tests and harsher penalties, but tougher procedures, as well, such as the mandatory blood testing that has already been introduced into cycling. This situation has come about because doping controls are regarded as being in the best interests of those who are tested, since its purpose is to eliminate cheating, which is one of the standard arguments against doping. An essential part of what explains the stricter policies that remind Goodman of the witch-hunts of the past is to be found in the sanctification of health in our own time. It is worth noting that the UCI calls its blood test, whose purpose is to limit the riders' use of EPO, a health test. Given the "sacred" status accorded to health, recreational drug (ab)use and doping are basically identical. These acts of excess, which are seen by recreational users as enticing paths to intoxication, threaten the paternalistic will to impose a strict social order. This authority tries in vain to make the vague concept of heath a basis for morality and finds that it has nothing with which to replace it. The inadequacy of the concept becomes evident as soon as it is not simply accepted as a vague but good thing, and when it is subjected to real scrutiny, as will become clear in the next chapter.

VI. OBJECTIONS TO THE USE OF DOPING DRUGS

Arguments against doping

During the tumultuous days during and immediately after the 1998 Tour, the media were filled with commentaries that condemned the use of doping. This massive wave of condemnation did not come primarily from the sport's traditional critics. It came instead from sports officials and others who otherwise declared they were sympathetic to the sport but who felt they had been betrayed.[85]

Given the enormous number of anti-doping articles that have been written since all hell broke loose, it is surprising to see how few real arguments the opponents of doping have at their disposal. This may be due to the fact that the use of doping has been regarded as so reprehensible that even debating the matter seems unnecessary. It may also be due to a lack of good arguments. Those that have been put forth have been presented in various wrappings; however, once they have been unpacked, one finds the five arguments below that are often woven together into a moral renunciation of sport's excessive aspects. Doping is:

1. cheating that creates unfair competition
2. unnatural
3. unhealthy
4. destructive of sport's role-modeling function
5. a way to turn sport into a trivial freak show

What these arguments have in common is a concern that doping conflict's with the *spirit* of sport, which on the one hand is

connected with virtues such as sportsmanship and fairness, and on the other with ideas about health, purity, and what is natural.

When sports officials and those outside of the sports world express their concern about the use of doping, it is not least because they value sport as a character-building or edifying activity. Doping seems to undermine precisely this aspect of sport. What is at stake is the moral value of sport or, more precisely, the value of a sport which is bound up with morality itself. And that is why *use* (cf. Chapter 1) is consistently referred to as *abuse*, despite the fact that abuse is generally regarded as debilitating rather than fortifying. If it isn't possible to preserve (the idea of) sport's purity, then which meanings will the future ascribe to standard terms like "a real sportsman" and "sportsmanlike conduct"? If the moral, pedagogical and health-related justifications are undermined, then how will it be possible to argue that sport should be funded at all? It is quite possible that such motives play a role in the uncompromising positions taken by sports officials vis-à-vis doping. For if one takes a closer look at the anti-doping arguments, it quickly becomes clear that they are likely to cause these people considerable consternation.

Cheating and unfair competition

The opponents of doping had a very hard time digesting the fact that the revelations and scandal-mongering media coverage of 1998 did not cause the cycling public to turn its back on the event. Given that the whole thing had been revealed to be cheating and fraud, the Tour route should have been devoid of spectators when the riders passed by. Yet the actual situation was exactly the opposite; the public was eager to show its sympathy and support for the harried riders. It was obvious that they did not feel cheated, and this fact inspired the following meditation in the French newspaper *Libération*:

> It does not look as though the enthusiasm of the cycling public has been dampened by the revelations that have appeared. It may be that the casualty of this controversy has been the uneasy truce that has existed between two cultures, two world-views. On one side there is a romantic worship of the race, as hypocritical as that may be, while on the other there is a rather joyless attitude that demands an end to the cheating! (*Libération*, 3 August 1998)

This commentary points to the difference between the desire to use sport for the purpose of intoxicating oneself and the very different impulse that is the will to impose order. That the desire to impose order is regarded as joyless is both noteworthy and accurate. In fact, the problem is not joy per se but rather too much excitement. For it is improper and thus a grounds for disapproval that there is cheating going on and that order is being disregarded.

The next day the same newspaper presented Christian Prigent's attempt to explain the paradoxical nature of public opinion in this context:

> People want to have the right to dream. The public wants its little dose of something holy. People want to see the superhuman body overcome the laws of physics. And no one really cares how the merely human is transformed into the superhuman. Deep down one has this unmistakable feeling that the will to eradicate doping at any price is somehow tied into a will to eradicate the longing for the impossible (and thereby reduce sport to nothing more than physical education). (*Libération*, 4 August 1998)

This attempt at an explanation does address the major point here, which is that the argument that doping is cheating and unfair

cannot justify the hard measures that are taken against the use of doping drugs, or the demand in some quarters that these measures be made even harder than they already are. This argument encounters problems from the beginning in that it is clear the riders themselves do not consider doping to be cheating.[86]

There are, of course, rules against doping, and in that sense it is clearly cheating. But sport is subject to many rules that are constantly being broken. The rules establish limits, and they exist so that sport can function. There is a rule in soccer that the ball must be kept inside the lines. If you kick it out then the opponent gets the ball. The rule is there so that the players don't simply kick it wherever they want. There are times there would be an advantage in dribbling outside the lines, but that is easy for the line judge to see, and for that reason it is not often that a player seeks an advantage in this way. Other rules cause bigger problems for the referees and give the players better opportunities to cheat their way to an advantage. Players are not allowed to trip each. That leads to a free kick or a penalty kick if the violation occurs inside the penalty box.

The importance of the penalty kick constantly tempts players to try to act their way to getting one, as the sportswriters so generously put it. This is cheating in any circumstances, yet the players take no moral offense at all. The ones who get fouled protest, but they do the same thing when the referee's call is correct. The next thing one often sees is the team that has been taken advantage of falling down so as to cheat *their* way to a penalty kick, which can only mean that they accept these tactics.

These performances continue despite the fact that, this is not only cheating, but serious and sometimes decisive cheating. In that sense the comparison with doping is both quite valid and a good reason to compare the disparate penalties that are imposed.[87] Attempts to perform one's way to a penalty kick draw a warning or, in the worst case, a red card and two days'

suspension. Compared to these penalties, the two-year suspensions that are handed out for doping violations, and the lifetime bans that follow a second offense, are simply out of all proportion to the offence. In connection with the French sports minister's hard line one reads that: "Up to 14 years in prison is one way to scare athletes away from ampoules and injections" (*Berlingske Tidende*, 22 July 1998). Something other than a distaste for cheating is going on here. Keeping in mind the medieval Inquisition's brutal treatment of atheists and other dissidents, there is good reason to regard the renunciation of doping as a consequence of our own cult of health .

In soccer, cycling and all other sports it is agreed that the rules are there to be exploited, and that the opportunity to cheat enters into one's calculations about playing the game. Precisely because this is nothing new it is somewhat surprising to encounter viewpoints such as the following:

> Over the years there have been many revelations about the abuse of doping drugs in cycling. And these revelations have been accompanied by even more rumors and unconfirmed reports.
>
> We closed our eyes because we still believed in the spirit of sport and its core value, which is fair play. We might also call it competition on equal terms. (*Ekstra Bladet*, 2 August 1998)

As a commentary on the doping problem this remark is clear enough. Its basic position is one of spontaneous condemnation. Our sense of what is going on here is not one of eyes that have been brutally opened by doping fraud, but rather of a permanent blindness to *the essence of sport.* In any case, this commentary seems rather odd, given what the sports broadcasts serve up on a daily basis.

This quotation is one more example of the classic misconception that sport is equitable competition. In fact, it is not and never has been anything of the kind. It is true, of course, that we try to make sporting competitions reasonably equitable, because too much inequality makes them irrelevant. What makes sport exciting is that two opponents are able to face off against each other in a test of strength. Without a substantial test of this kind, the event lacks any real excitement. This is why children do not compete against adults and women (for the most part) do not line up against men. At the same time, however, it is important to keep in mind that sport is competition between more or less equal parties rather than true equals. Although one starts out with the ideal of equality, it can be realized only up to a certain point. When equals compete, it is not because they want to be equal but to get the upper hand. The fundamental objective in sport is to overcome the resistance put up by one's opponent. Preparation for competition is thus an attempt to seize the advantage from the very beginning. Equitable competition is an illusion that would reveal itself most perfectly at the very moment one insisted on realizing it.

First one would have to abolish professionalism as we know it today in order to even out the inequalities that result from different kinds of contracts. Since it is well known that trainers differ in ability (which is why the athlete with the best trainer will have an unfair advantage) we would then have to consider prohibiting trainers as well as any other form of support. Once professionalism is abolished the athletes will have to support themselves in some other way. One would then have to make sure that that the competitors put in the same number of work hours for equal wages, since any differences in this respect might lead to unfair differences in training opportunities. Finally, one would have to take their physical differences into account, since nature has already created what may be the most important differences between the competitors. For example, an exceptional

ability to absorb oxygen is a decisive advantage in endurance events. From this perspective, doping can be seen as a way for the physically less gifted to compensate for their handicaps. Here is an opportunity to turn the tables and argue for the use of doping drugs as a way of creating more equal conditions for athletic competition. And legalizing them would immediately neutralize the objection that their use amounts to cheating.

The argument that doping is unnatural

Any programmatic attempt to create perfectly fair competitions thus leads to an absurd situation. When doping is not accepted on the grounds that it makes for unfair competition, there is always something else going on. For what the critics object to is not the inequality, but the artificial creation of the inequality. In light of the smear campaign that resulted from the doping suspicions directed at Bjarne Riis, it is significant that, during and after his Tour de France victory in 1996, he was able to get away with talking on television shows about the help he had gotten from his acupuncturist John Boel. The whole nation could see how Boel put the needle into Riis, right under the knee, at a point that's called "thirty more kilometers." As the name suggests, this is supposed to produce greater endurance and the advantage that goes along with it. And nobody uttered a peep. This was an interesting way to account for Riis' mastery of the peloton. Acupuncture was a way to tune the body by allowing its own energy to achieve a better flow. If this kind of doping didn't produce a deafening hue and cry, even if it presumably made for an unfair competition, this was not due to the fact it was not forbidden. If, during this broadcast, he had displayed a wonder drug in the form of a pill with the same purported effect, it would have met with a lot less tolerance whether or not it was on the list of banned drugs. But pills are artificial, whereas acupuncture is

an ancient Chinese practice which falls under the category of alternative medicine. And alternative medicine is generally regarded as either ineffective or, more positively, as a harmless treatment that is in harmony with the body.

Acupuncture is considered a form of natural healing. As lack of faith in traditional medicine grows, people invest more hope in alternative medicine, and there is much rejoicing when reports about the effectiveness of alternative methods appear. Given the popularity of this procedure, it is understandable that there were no accusations directed against Riis in 1996. But the intention remains the same, whether he consults Boel or the sports doctor Cecchini, and that is to maximize his physical performance.

The tolerant attitude toward athletes' use of acupuncture and natural medicine is interesting, because it shows how two opposing ideals are being reconciled with each other: On one side there is the ideal of health and what is natural, and on the other the eternal dream of expanding the boundaries of human ability.

Sales of natural medicines have skyrocketed since the 1970s. Some of these natural products, such as concentrated fish oil, are advertised as a kind of life insurance, on the grounds that the omega-3 fatty acids it contains prevent cardiovascular diseases. Other products like ginseng are sold with the promise that they will increase energy and endurance. These natural products inspire hope in the same way that chemically manufactured medicines once did. It is probably no accident that the anti-doping campaign has gained momentum along with the ideology of purity and natural medicines. This accords with the fact that natural doping, e.g. ginseng, is now accepted just as various doping practices in sport were a century ago.

If, however, we take a closer look at the distinction between the natural and the artificial, we encounter a host of problems for the argument about what counts as unnatural. The accepted form of acupuncture treatment is not natural at all, but is rather a different cultural practice. And natural products like ginseng and

fish oil concentrate, like a number of other substances athletes use without raising anyone's eyebrows, are cultural creations. No one questions the use of sugar and chocolate, even if they can confer an advantage during a competition. And protein powders, which are used in conjunction with strength training in a number of sports, are currently regarded as entirely acceptable, just like the artificially produced vitamin C and iron supplements that are taken during periods of conditioning.

If we really want to insist on demanding what is natural, we would have to prohibit supplements like these and set the limit at soybeans, lemons and spinach. And even then we're not safe. Because the problem is that human beings are cultural beings who cultivate everything around them. Even "primitive" people behave in this way. They smoke, grind their grains, and bake their bread. In both smoking and baking bread we find the unbreakable connection between nature and culture that is a part of what it is to be human. There is no point in saying, for example, that smoking is unnatural while eating bread is natural.

EPO doping presents us with an acute version of this problem, in that EPO is a naturally occurring hormone for which there is no fixed level of production. Smokers and people who live at altitude produce more EPO than non-smokers and those who live at sea-level. EPO treatments work in the same way that smoking and altitude do, so that the number of red blood cells and oxygen uptake both increase. The objection that injected EPO is synthetically manufactured must reckon with the fact that this hormone is produced by means of genetic engineering, which means that, even if it is extracted from animals, the end product is a naturally occurring human material. Even if the production process is quite sophisticated, in the end the product is no less natural than refined sugar. It is, therefore, difficult to claim that altitude training or living in an altitude chamber – both of which are permitted for raising EPO production – are natural, while injecting the drug is unnatural.

Similar problems arise in relation to testosterone doping. The physiology textbooks say that there is a more or less constant level of testosterone in normal adult men.[88] But very strenuous physical labor causes the production of testosterone to fall. In this sense testosterone supplementation can be seen as a way to normalize the T level. Or, if we are willing to be so bold, as a way to maintain the body's natural balance under extreme conditions.

The argument that posits an unnatural state runs aground on the fact that human beings are cultural beings who have left behind the stage at which one can talk meaningfully about a natural bodily state. Hard physical labor like riding a Tour de France is itself an unnatural act that causes a whole series of biochemical changes in the body. Recognizing this prompted the French sports physician Dr. Bruno de Lignières to make the following comment:

> People think that sport is healthy and that medical problems are the result of doping. But they are wrong. Medical science knows that high-performance competitive sport is a physically destructive activity. On this point the experts agree. We must have the courage to say that the doping that is currently being practiced does not damage but rather improves the health of elite athletes. (*Le Monde*, 22 August 1998).

de Lignières bases his argument on the fact that female athletes undergoing hard training experience hormonal disturbances, stop menstruating, while their bones and blood vessels react as though they were back in adolescence. Why, he asks, should it be so shocking that these athletes want to be treated by doctors to preserve a kind of physiological balance. Treating these people with hormone drugs is the reasonable thing to do. Any doctor would say this is the only solution for these women. And if this sort of treatment has a positive effect on their performances – is this necessarily good or bad? The doctors will always argue that

medical considerations are more important than athletic priorities. In his opinion, prohibiting this sort of treatment is simply unrealistic.

The situation differs somewhat for men. Still, he adds, research shows that the natural production of testosterone falls sharply during increased physical exertion, as is the case during periods of intense training. The consequences of this exertion will affect the muscles, heart, blood vessels and the number of red blood cells – the hematocrit – which will have a tendency to fall.

> What is the honest doctor supposed to do? He should inform the athlete and keep a close watch on him. If something abnormal happens, if the testosterone level goes down sharply, he should get the rider to put the bike aside for a while and advise him to rest. And should he also refuse him a compensatory dose of testosterone? On which grounds, given that a corresponding treatment is permissable in the case of a female athlete? Because testosterone issupposed to be especially dangerous for a man? But it isn't. There is no risk associated with this treatment. (*Le Monde*, 22 August 1998)

In the case of EPO, according to de Lignières, we must distinguish between EPO, which is used in doses that maintain the red blood cells and the hematocrit at defensible levels, and doses that exceed the established limits, would harm the organism, and could only be detected by testing. This kind of maintenance is good for the health, undetectable by testing, and is identical to what is achieved by spending a period of time at altitude. Having demolished the argument about what is unnatural, he goes on to establish a traditional medical criterion for what is defensible. What he advocates is bringing some sort of order to the doping mess. The odds against his perspective gaining a hearing are long, because the traditional medical criteria no longer possess the authority they once did. There is

little confidence in the idea that it is even possible to create an order of this kind without side-effects. The argument about what is unnatural expresses a yearning for an earlier and utopian order. In fact, the argument about what is unnatural has nothing to do with an ecstatic confidence in nature. It is not because people think that only that which is natural is good. In that case the result would be that we would approve of doping in the form of, let us say, chewing coca leaves or similar practices that are engaged in by certain "primitive" peoples. In our civilized world such natural products are unacceptable both inside and outside the sports world. The argument about what is unnatural always employs nature as a metaphor for unsullied *purity* and *harmony*. In other words, what drives this argument is the dream of a paradisical *state of order.* But this dream is no longer rooted in the beyond. What we encounter here is not a divine paradise, but rather a terrestrial paradisical state of health. Health is to be preserved, and preferably without medical intervention. But there is no consistent renunciation by society of what is artificial. The testosterone treatment that is denied to athletes is currently being used to strengthen older people, even though the treatment of debilities in the elderly is done for the purpose of making people better than they naturally are.[89] In a similar fashion, the miracle pill Viagra that can abolish impotence is not condemned, even if it does not address a vital priority, and thereby resembles doping in that it carries with it possibly fatal side-effects and is used exclusively for the purpose of improving performance.

Nevertheless: All doping springs from diabolical temptations which entice athletes away from good health and set them on the road to ruin. The witch-hunt is justified in that doped athletes have consorted with the devil, and for that reason the penalties cannot be harsh enough.

The argument that doping is unhealthy

There is a close connection between the argument about what is unnatural and the argument that doping is unhealthy. Both are rooted in the wish for a pure and harmonious order. These arguments also resemble each other in that neither defines its terms very well or is particularly convincing. An analysis of definitions of health quickly leads to the conclusion that health is not easily defined and can, therefore, be assigned just about any meaning.[90] The Swedish intellectual historian Roger Qvarsell has presented a plausible concept of health which goes as follows:

> The concept of illness took shape within the parameters of medical thinking, while the concept of health has held onto its ancient association with religious, philosophical and ethical ideas. "Health" has been one of several concepts mankind has used to approach a definition of the dream of a good life. The concept of halth has a utopian character and describes an ideal condition rather than an existing reality.[91]

Still, this concept is used in debate, as if the consensus that survives despite everything were actually based on reality. As if health actually existed as a *something*. Given that health is presented (in public health campaigns and advertisements) as something that is good in and of itself, it is really difficult to respond to this (hollow) argument. It is obvious that we should not do things that are unhealthy. But when the concept of health that can mean whatever one wants it to mean is invoked in opposition to the reigning dogma that health is actually something and not just a notion that expresses the ideal of a good life, then things become complicated. At this point it becomes clear that the consensus has been built on *nothing at all*.

Indeed, when one thinks about the attention that athletes devote to monitoring the state of their health – a group that prominently includes the cyclists who are accused of doping –

the health-related condemnation of doping loses its self-evident character. Bjarne Riis' statement on TV 2 immediately after the turbulence of the 1998 Tour drove this point home very nicely. After describing the inhuman hardships of the stage race, he offered a comparison with the soccer World Championship and pointed to the different recovery periods that are significant both for the level of performance and the state of the athlete's health.

> We're supposed to be up on the cycle again the next day and ride two hundred kilometers, and maybe there are two or three mountains. The only problem is that we don't have six days to do it in. We have to … But I'm not saying that we have to dope. What we need is what you might call a kind of security. That's why we have doctors with us. That's why I have an acupuncturist with me. That's why for the past year I've taken along a special masseur. That's why our doctors make sure that we get the right food, the right vitamins, minerals, salt and sugar, whatever. Because I burn about four times as many calories as you do. You take a multi-tab every day. My kidneys and liver can't handle that, I'd just fall apart. I have to have some kind of assistance so I can meet my own standards and stay healthy. That's why we have doctors with us who can at some point give us a … let's just say an intravenous feed of salt and minerals, like the kind of thing you might see sick people getting in a hospital….
>
> I know perfectly well that for a lot of people that means an injection of doping drugs. You can talk about ethics and all sorts of things. Sure! But what is ethics? Smoking twenty cigarettes a day or drinking ten beers every Saturday and Sunday… That's healthy, too, right?
>
> That's why we have doctors to give us the extra things we need to stay healthy. Obviously there are some things we should have done something about, we all agree about that. But don't forget that the other thing that's important is that we get to Paris in good shape.[92]

This explanation opens up some truly challenging perspectives. The direct connection that is made between what is good and what is healthy – even if it is not beyond dispute – is thought-provoking in light of the fact that that doping is generally condemned as unethical and unhealthy. This connection makes the essential point by demonstrating that the fallacy is right in front of our noses: that doping is unethical *because* it is unhealthy. And this is especially true of our own era, which regards health as an absolute virtue.

It is also worth noting that Riis is concerned that an intervention into cycling could have negative effects on the riders' health. He says that insisting on the connection between health and ethics may well make it unethical to crack down too hard on current doping practices in cycling.

From the standpoint of the athlete, doping is ostensibly beneficial medicine he is not allowed to take. The team doctors' job is to help the riders – by using all permissable methods and medications – to handle the race as best they can and come through it all in good health. When Riis endorses intravenous nourishment along with massage and acupuncture, he is making a point about the preservation of health. The point of the supplementation is to prevent health problems from happening. He even scores a point by puncturing the argument about what is unnatural when he points out that vitamin pills – although they are artificial, and in his view harmful – are not prohibited; and when he points to the smoking and drinking habits of ordinary people as being perhaps more worthy of condemnation than the injections that are a part of cycling. His point of view *ought to* find some sympathy in a population that is glad to be informed about various health risks, from smoking to sunbathing, but at the same time is just as glad to embrace the individual's right to look after his own health. People are always free to dope their way through their days with coffee, booze and cigarettes. That this sympathy

is *not* extended to the athlete is due to the fact that the same population confers on sport a unique kind of ideal status.

The viewpoint expressed by Riis conflicts with the strategy of defensive vigilance that forms the basis of the current consensus regarding the concept of health. To be sure, ordinary people commit one sin after another against their own health, but they are also aware of their sins; and even if it seldom works, they keep trying exercise, dieting, smoking cessation programs and various other strategies as they attempt to mend their ways.

In the world of elite sport there is a completely different kind of acceptance of such risks, and this is evident in their conception of health. Health is understood here as what is required so that one can compete. The focus is on the state of one's health at this moment. Health is not seen in an abstract sense as something that must be protected so that it will be able to pay a bonus at some future time. So health will have different meanings in the context of this discussion. If Riis's health concept seems alien to the general public, it is nevertheless typical in the world where doping is practiced. Riis's statement almost sounds like an echo of the point of view expressed at about the same time in the cycling magazine Ciclismo a fondo by four prominent sports physicians: Javier Bilbao, Alfonso Angula, Inaka Inigo and Maria Calatauyd:

> One of sports medicine's well known dicta is that every high-performance athlete who does not have medical-biological support is a sick athlete. An athlete who puts in 6 hours of training every day needs medical-biological support, or he is going to turn into a sick athlete. A professional cyclist rides 4000 kilometers in 21 days in 104 degrees of heat at an average speed of 40 kilometers an hour. It is impossible to do this without medical help.
>
> We sports physicians are not out to justify doping for its own sake. What we want is a clear and realistic regulation of

> the doping that occurs in the society we live in. As professional sports physicians we can point to many examples of riders who suffer from serious deficiencies (minerals, ions, etc.) after a one-day race or a week-long stage-race. At the end of a season we see disease-like conditions involving serious anemia, loss of appetite, and profound fatigue that do occur in ordinary people.
>
> Given the enormous expenditure of calories that a professional cyclist experiences in the course of a 200-kilometer stage with three mountain passes in 104 degree heat, it is simply impossible to keep his body going day after day through a whole season from February to October without continuous medical-biological assistance. (*Ciclismo a fondo*, August 1998).

We are dealing here with a completely different logic, and one that will cause real problems for those who argue against doping on health grounds. The assertion here is that if the riders do not have medical help available – along with trainers, psychologists, masseurs, soigneurs, etc. – they risk getting sick fon account of their exertions. And this is not the only risk they run, since their future health is also at stake. Andreas Hartkopp, a doctor at Rigshospitalet in Copenhagen and the national coach of Denmark's triathletes, has investigated the immune system in an experiment where he had athletes cycling for two hours at 75% of their maximum capacity. Afterwards he was able to observe that the NK cells that destroy infected cells and cancer cells were impaired. These results made him

> sure that there is a connection between illness and the volume and intensity of the training … One often sees that the fast marathon runners get sick after a race. Generally speaking, elite athletes spend more time being sick than other people, as research has demonstrated. … No male or female athletes reaches the top without hard training and, therefore, putting

> the immune system at risk. (*Atletikken. Dansk Atletik Forbunds officielle blad*, December 1995).

Both in the short and the long term, then, there is a significant health risk associated with engaging in an endurance sport at the elite level. Should we, therefore, not allow athletes to exert themselves? If one argues against doping on account of its health risks, then consistency would seem to require that we strenuously oppose endurance sports altogether. And cycling would be the first discipline to go, if only because descents and mass sprints are downright dangerous. Indeed, if we continue on down this road we will quickly find ourselves condemning most of what we know of as elite sport. We could begin by banning boxing on account of the brain injuries it causes. But if health in the medical sense is extended beyond organ function to also include the mechanical functioning of the body, then we would have to exclude sports like soccer, handball and badminton, which result in countless joint, muscle and tendon injuries. Indeed, the sheer momentum of the argument will lead us to some rather unexpected conclusions. Recreational sport, too, would suddenly find itself in the line of fire. In summary, the health argument collapses under its own weight, since it ends up prescribing a kind of inactivity that is itself unhealthy.

When Hartkopp was confronted with the provocative statements from Dr. de Lignières that were quoted above, he replied as follows:

> It is true that it is difficult to argue against doping on health grounds. But doping is cheating. It is a distortion of sport that ought to be stopped. Sport is competition between athletes, not between doctors. The Tour de France, for example, is a competition about who recovers best in a natural way. It is not a showdown between doctors about who can do the best job of keeping the body going in some kind of artificial way. The

> doctor ought to stop an athlete who can't take anymore. He shouldn't dope him into continuing the race. (*Politiken*, 2 September 1998).

As a doctor Hartkopp has to admit that the health arguments are irrelevant to the anti-doping work he does as a counsellor on the Rigshospitalet's hotline. That is why he resorts to the arguments that doping is cheating and unnatural – claims we have already examined and found to be untenable. Saying that sport is a competition between athletes and not doctors sounds good, but it is really a rhetorical trick. We could talk in the same way about coaches, sports psychologists and all the others who help athletes achieve better performances than they could manage on their own. The fact that Hartkopp is himself a triathlon coach does gives his statement a certain piquancy. As a doctor he possesses knowledge that in his role as a coach, he can hardly disregard. Perhaps it is this knowledge that prompted him to suggest that Danish athletes have access to altitude chambers just like their counterparts in Norway and Sweden.

This suggestion illustrates once again how difficult it can be to keep one's footing in this discussion if the purpose is to preserve elite sport as we know it. In today's climate it comes as no surprise that Team Denmark has not endorsed the idea of using altitude chambers, despite the fact that they are not (yet) banned and despite the fact that the first priority of the organization is the promotion of elite sport.[93]

Destroying sport's role modeling value

We have now demonstrated that the arguments that employ concepts like fairness, equality, what is natural, and health are riddled with paradoxes that make them quite worthless. So now that the sports enthusiasts among the opponents of doping are

beginning to realize that the nature of sport will not support convincing arguments against doping, their new argument places the emphasis outside of sport itself.

Now they are casting their eyes back to "classic" ideas about sport as an exemplary and character-building activity. And it is thanks to the newly stigmatized Olympic movement in particular that these ideas have been so widely disseminated. We should also keep in mind that the development of sport here in Denmark around the turn of the century was opposed precisely because it represented a corrupt form of body culture. Sport was seen as a threat to the morally and hygienically edifying gymnastics that emphasized f*orm* and *harmony*, since in contrast to gymnastics sport focused on producing the best possible *result*. Since that time the popularity of sport has grown enormously, the old critique of sport has been forgotten, and the gymnastics values its adherents wanted to defend have been passed on to sport. Still, we cannot get around the fact that gymnastics possessed serious ideological content. The earliest critics of sport were right to point out that sport is indomitable. It thrives precisely when it is allowed to manage itself. That is when it can pay us back for this freedom by surprising us, by creating and by enchanting us. Its power to fascinate lies precisely in its unpredictability. And if there is one thing the doping revelations have shown, it is that the showcasing of sport for its alleged values, whether they be democratic or pedagogical, has been an illusion. Sport is first and foremost egotistical. If this is not clear from the very beginning, then it becomes clear enough as soon as we fasten our eyes on the pedagogical justification for the necessity of a hard and effective anti-doping struggle that is called for by sport's well-intentioned defenders.

The argument is that doping must be opposed *because* doped athletes destroy the role-modeling value of sport. The precondition for a discussion of this theme is a more precise sense of what role-modeling value actually means. It is hardly

possible to distinguish between the role-modeling value of sport and that of athletes, since it is the athletes who either create or destroy that value. The basic meaning of all this must be that the athletes' performances enable them to become role models who serve both sport and themselves. The athletes can capitalize on this value by, for example, signing advertising contracts.

It cannot be denied that athletes function as role models, and that their behavior has some contagious effects. Those who occupy the lower rungs in the sports world imitate their attitudes, gestures and techniques to the best of their ability. A goal that is scored in the kids league is celebrated just like the one that is scored in the Super League. A corporation that pays a sports star to eat, drink or wash his hair in a certain product does so with the expectation that consumers will follow their role models at least in this respect.

The behavior that is imitated is whatever is on display in the arena or in the advertisement. What goes on off the media's illuminated stage will have no effect at all. There is, therefore, reason enough to conclude that the responsibility for the destruction of sport's role-modeling value lies as much with the media that have trumpeted or denied the facts as with the role models themselves, who time and time again have said they are not doping and would never do such a thing. The assertion that doping destroys sport's role-modeling value can easily turn into a self-fulfilling prophecy. It is clear that when the athletes are presented as villains, the bloom is off the rose. And it is understandable that the riders may feel they are being deprived of their role-modeling value.

This is not to say that the media should have refused to deal with this issue. It goes without saying that good journalism must do whatever it can to uncover the illegitimate arrangements that arise in any society. But to assert that doping must be opposed in order to save sport's role-modeling function is a self-contradiction. It would be more consistent, and for the same

reason, to support the legalization of doping. Adopting this strategy would make doping as uninteresting for journalists as training and whatever else helps athletes prepare for competition. The stars would not be compromised, and their value as role models would not be affected.

If this logic does not make sense to those who promote the struggle against doping for the purpose of saving sport's role-modeling value, it is because they are using the concept in a different way. What they are actually concerned about is not sport's role-modeling value but rather its *moral* value. It is well knownhat, with or without doping, sport has a role-modeling function, and that is what has prompted the Danish minister of culture to appoint a committee to investigate the scope of the doping problem and to lament the lack of *healthy* role models (see Chapter 5). And that is what really set the scandal in motion. It is difficult to conclude otherwise when one reads what Marie-George Buffet, the French minister for youth and sport who started it all, has to say:

> I sometimes hear the objection that the cultic pursuit of the best possible performance is not limited to the sports world. But does that make it more acceptable? It is precisely because sport reflects society's deepest goals that doping must be rejected. Apart from its being a form of cheating, it is also a complete rejection of reason and values. For what we expect from sport is values we can live by along with social bonds and solidarity. These distortions are intensifying in professional sport on account of the pressure from commercial interests that is exerted on the sports that attract the most media coverage. And there is nothing particularly dogmatic about pointing out that the money that has poured into sport acts as an incentive to win at any price. (*Le Monde*, 4 August 1998)

What is to Madame Buffet's taste is as clear as what repels her. The problem, however, is that an argument that treats an issue as a matter of taste cannot convince us. It simply repeats its own premise so that it sounds something like this: (I think that) only doping-free sport has (role-modeling) value, and that is why doping in sport ruins its role-modeling value. Ergo, if sport is going to preserve its role-modeling value (for me), then doping must be rejected.

The justification for the anti-doping campaign offered by Finn Mikkelsen, an advisor to Team Danmark, is exemplary in this regard. In an interview that appeared in the magazine *Aktuelt* he responds as follows to the question: "If everyone is doping then why should we care?"

> But what about our children? Then they'll do it too, because even when you're only fourteen the point is to show that you're a star. And, furthermore, it really *is* careless for people to fall off their bicycles and die, because it *is* dangerous. (*Aktuelt*, 25 July 1998)

Let us disregard the fact that Mikkelsen is not really concerned about carelessness. If it really were the case that the cause-and-effect relationship was that simple, then we would have good reason to worry – about everything. Rock stars don't even bother to hide their abuse of alcohol and drugs. So there *must* be rampant abuse among the garage bands. And rock musicians should be banned from appearing in public if they are drunk or high on stage. And it's not just the rock musicians who should attract our critical attention. The lives of orchestral musicians are filled with physical and mental stress. Their life expectancy is 22% less than that of the general population. They suffer more often from inflammations of the tendons, muscle cramps, nervous stress and other mental problems, and on top of that they suffer more heart attacks. In order to relieve their symptoms

and improve their performances they often use the beta blockers that are on the IOC's list of doping substances.[94] The chidren who are enrolled in music schools also give concerts and suffer from stage fright. According to the logic we are examining, when they find out that the great orchestral musicians are using drugs to calm their nerves, they will want to use them, too.

The comic books children read should also make us worry. Popeye, who is strong only because he eats his spinach, teaches children that it's acceptable to take shortcuts to getting strong. Sure, spinach is healthy, but when the kids find out that it doesn't work the way it does in the comics, they'll find more effective drugs. And if they read Asterix things will really get out of control. Because what makes the Gauls invincible is the secret potion concocted by Miraculix the magician. What makes it even worse is that the Romans, who fight without miracle drugs, are the ones who are presented as idiots.

The premise here is that children and young people behave like simple-minded automatons that are unable to distinguish between what is serious and what is not.

There is certainly asubstantial risk that children might play at doping themselves. In fact, the candy manufacturer Bonbon was counting on it when they decided on the timely marketing campaign to promote their new product called *Dååping* in the wake of the Festina scandal. This experience shows that children holding toy pistols can see their heroes commit murder without automatically ending up committing murder in the service of the good. And it is very likely that the same principle applies to doping.

The unconvincing nature of the role-modeling argument is also clear when Mikkelsen writes as follows in the Team Danmark newsletter:

> The struggle against doping is one of sport's most noble endeavors. We want to prevent our children and young

> people from getting involved in the abuse of drugs, and we want to be spectators who can enjoy clean athletic performances that don't leave a sour taste because the performance has been achieved in a dishonest way. Hard measures should be taken against athletes, coaches and officials who think that it is acceptable to boost human abilities with drugs and thereby put human lives at risk.
>
> Because doping in sport is not just a health problem. It is an ethical problem that is bound up withfraud and a lack of credibility – with athletes who know how to cheat their way to being better than they actually are! (*td-Aktuelt*, August 1998)

The "we" who is talking must represent the perspective of Team Danmark. It is clearly an important statement. Yet despite the vigorous formulations and the bold type in which the first four lines appear, the actual argument makes a feeble impression. The threat to apply the power of the organization against those who do not share its views is typical. The easy solution – legitimizing the use of doping drugs so as to defang speculations about dishonesty and cheating – would hardly remove the "sour taste," because the organization would still regard the use of drugs as unclean.

The concern that the use of doping drugs might have a contagious effect and trickle down into the ranks of innocent children and naïve teenagers has a certain foundation in reality. But for those who do not share this concern, but who live off of or value sport's role-modeling function for practical reasons – the media, sponsors, etc. – the role-modeling argument just doesn't cut it. They can point out that the stars are still being cheered and will probably continue to be cheered until sport itself is abolished. They can also point out that, as long as the athletes don't do advertisements for doping products, but keep their use of drugs concealed from the public, it will be the voices of the indignant that do the most to convince children and adolescents

that taking drugs is the clever thing to do. The counter-argument – that the legalization of doping will clear the way for athletes to exploit their role-modeling status to do drug ads – can be countered in turn by a ban on such ads. The argument that one might just as well ban the use of doping drugs overlooks the fact that the difference between an advertising ban and the banning of doping corresponds to the difference between banning tobacco ads and banning smoking entirely. This objection simply emphasizes further that the argument really comes down to a matter of taste.

Sport as an irrelevant freak show

The last typical argument that comes up in the doping debate shifts the focus away from sport in its current form. We move forward in time from doping as we know it today into a horrifying future, where the world of sport is imagined to be populated by grotesque bodies. This scenario plays on anxieties about a scientific progress against which athletes are simply defenceless.

In the wake of the 1998 Tour scandal, Simon Eassom, a professor of philosophy at De Montfort University in Bedford, assumed the role of prophet in the *International Herald Tribune* by predicting a future in which elite athletes are no longer fully human. An Olympic marksman could could use a transplanted cornea to aim better as well as surgically enhanced nerve fibers in his hands to assure greater stability. And that is only one example. Runners who attempt to set new records will someday have artificial hearts with better circulation. Given the rapid progress in biotechnology, athletes will feel the temptation to experiment with new ways to enhance their performances. Pointing out that some athletes have undergone dialysis to cleanse their blood after doping themselves with steroids, he

speculates: "If athletes are prepared to go to those sort of lengths, it would kind of make sense that they would be prepared to go to the length of putting an artificial heart valve in them to make their blood pump better." And to the question of whether the public would tolerate this, he answers with a decisive yes:

> There will be an element of a circus atmosphere. 'Oh let's go see the freak play'. But that will soon become commonplace. It's mass entertainment, and provided there are still the elements of suspense, drama and excitement, people are still going to watch it. (*International Herald Tribune*, 20 August 1998)

In the same article the Norwegian sports philosopher Sigmund Loland follows suit by suggesting that the first athletes who will be interested in acquiring new body parts or enhanced biochemistry will be the ones who aim at setting Olympic records: "We foresee a genuinely grotesque scenario. The logic of record-breaking sport is that enough is never enough. When victory means hundreds of thousands of dollars, that is when the problems arise, because people will invest whatever it takes to win."

Futuristic scenarios of this kind attract a lot of attention, but it is surprising that Eassom would equate blood purification by dialysis with the replacing of heart valves without making a sharp distinction. Despite the hard thinking he has invested here, this comparison remains unphilosophical. And Loland's logic, which says that a huge amount of money will make people willing to do anything to win a prize, is just as dubious. Not because it implies a guarantee of victory, which it is not, if athletes are (automatically) willing to sacrifice anything if only the money is good enough. But either he is expressing an unreasonable prejudice to the effect that athletes are idiots, or he must mean that he as a philosopher is prepared to act in the same way. So if we imaginethat the brain of the bestselling philosopher

Michel Foucault had been rescued when he died at a young age, had been preserved and offered for donation, then Loland would have happily accepted it had it been offered to him, with the expectation that in the future he would be making a lot of money on his improved books and lectures. This thought-experiment presumes, of course, that Loland will be able to preserve his own personality in the context of such an arrangement. In reality this would be a very unwieldy scientific project, but in the world of the imagination it could be done, since the imagination has free reign when it comes to thinking up futuristic scenarios.

The fact that grotesque futuristic scenarios have such an appeal, and are not just met by remarks like "time will tell," must derive from a rather peculiar appetite for that shuddering dismay about what the future has to offer. This motif has been used often in literature up through the modern period, including classics such as Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, R.L. Stevenson's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, and Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*. Indeed, nostalgic defenders of sport's original purity have been all too happy to refer to this literature when they have wanted to convey the shape of sport's corruption. An illustration of this principle that is relevant to the anxiety we are talking about is Walter Umminger's work on the cultural history of sport from 1962, where he says:

> During the first centuries of modern sport, a record, or even a world record, was a completely independent performance by an individual. This is also possible today, but it is by no means the rule. On the contrary, the world record of our own era is normally the result of coordinated teamwork in which scientists, doctors, coaches, masseurs and sometimes pacemakers ("rabbits") all participate. This is a development that Aldous Huxley described in such an unsettling way in his novel *Brave New World*, and that the famous Danish soccer player and doctor Knud Lundberg described in a caustic satire

> titled The Olympic Hope. But reality shows us even darker prospects than literary satire. An American scientist has recommended in all seriousness that prominent male and female athletes should marry for the purpose of producing offspring who can guarantee records. What is more, artificial insemination is already floating around in some record-obsessed heads as a way to breed record-breakers.[95]

The untested possibilities of genetic technology have further inspired the modern imagination. In an interview in *Jyllands-Posten*, the molecular biologist Peter Scherling conjured up frightening scenarios about the possible genetic manipulation of athletes:

> I think that what will happen is that DNA will be injected directly into the muscle cells. DNA is a recipe for what the cells are supposed to make. If you have the right recipe and you can get it into the body, then you're on your way to producing a winner in the laboratory.In this way one could develop the various special talents – the sprinter, the climber – it's just a question of different genetic recipes. If – or rather when – we reach that brave new world, that will mean the end of oldfashioned problems like carrying banned drugs and being hassled by the police, and doping controls will be nothing more than a memory. (*Jyllands-Posten*, 2 August 1998)

This comment presents us with a serious challenge. Anyone with the right recipe can produce a winner in the laboratory. This suggests that sometime in the future the competition to come up with the best recipe will happen in the (sports) laboratories and doping control will be simply irrelevant. This can serve as an argument for those who think that doping ought to be legalized. It's impossible to enforce the prohibition, anyway. What science holds in store for the future has prompted some people to adopt

a cynical attitude and endorse the idea of an "open medical competition," where all drugs would be allowed. Others have felt it was it their solemn duty to discredit this idea as beyond the pale. Typical in this regard was a series of questions that appeared in *Jyllands-Posten* as the editors looked back on "Sport's annus horribilis":

> Will competitors in the professional sports world of the future compete in open medical competitions without any moral or ethical boundaries, among athletes who accord themselves the right to do whatever they want with their own bodies? Just think about what the new genetic technology and the theory of cloning may do to "create the perfect athlete" in that brave new world, producing unlimited numbers of identical copies. (*Jyllands-Posten*, 3 January 1999)

Indeed, just think about it! But isn't it strange how people are always inclined to think the worst? If we could just give the pessimism about the future a rest for one minute, we could just as plausibly regard the pursuit of the superathlete of the future as the pursuit of the superman of the future who will be stronger, healthier and live longer. This is long-term research that could prove to be beneficial for everyone. But that sort of optimism about the future sounds a dissonant note in the puritans' choir.

There is, then, no reason to oppose the suggestion for an open medically enhanced competition. Such opposition would result more from a tendency toward coyness than any real thinking through of the problem at hand. This kind of opposition is inspired by the alternative ideal of a "clean (organic) competition," this suggestion implies, where athletes with a healthier attitude can compete on a level playing field and in harmony with society's ideals. If we were to think about this kind of competition as the more interesting alternative, for the sports federations, the media, the sponsors and the public, this would

not promote a solution based on an "open medically enhanced competition." At the same time, no one would be tempted to stake his life on an uninteresting competition that offered neither prestige nor honour for winning. The athletes would instead exert themselves to the limit in the "organic" competition where doping would present itself as a tempting possibility. If we chose to be consistent and not just coyly cynical, we would resign ourselves to the inevitable and propose the legalization of doping without all the talk about "open medically enhanced competitions."

The most serious part of the scientific scenario is the great leap forward in the athletic "arms race" that DNA research makes possible. What this implies is the addition of even more personnel to the athlete's entourage. Alongside the coach, the sports psychologist, the masseur, the acupuncturist and the doctor there may well be the cutting-edge research scientist, as well. The first athlete who dares to have his body remodeled according to a new and promising "recipe" will acquire a competitive head start. While being on the leading edge of such developments will offer advantages, it will also be risky, and the effects will be permanent.

The preceding discussion has demonstrated why the expectations regarding sport's dreadful future amount to an inadequate argument against the legalization of doping. Now we will assess the prospects for this future by thinking about the spirit and essence of sport.

VII. THE SPIRIT AND ESSENCE OF SPORT

The danger of legalization

A series of contributors to the doping debate have argued that sport has reached a crossroads. Either there will be a truly serious struggle against doping, or sport will be allowed to take care of itself, meaning that it will turn into a freak show no one cares about and finally dig its own grave. Despite the fact that it is in the process of killing off sport itself, the stated purpose of this wholly uncompromising attitude, which is being propounded not just by sport's traditional critics but also by patrons and well-wishers such as sportswriters and sports officials, is to ensure the survival of sport over the long term.

In an interview in the Copenhagen newspaper *Politiken*, the editor of the Danish Gymnastics and Sport Federation's (DGI) magazine *Youth and Sport*, Jens Sejer Andersen, offers a justification for his pessimistic assessment of sport's future prospects. He takes the sobering view that the fruitless efforts to get a handle on the doping problem will bring about a change of attitude among sports leaders. A legalization of doping will cast light on dirty secrets, reduce hypocrisy and "possibly promote equality." The current concept of doping will disintegrate, and he draws a parallel with the consternation that erupted thirty years ago when it was the professionalizing of sport that was under fire. Whereas professionals at that time were regarded as moral reprobates, today "a pure amateur" is likely to be a target of derision.

The same thing, he says, could happen in the case of doping:

According to this line of thinking we will gradually come to accept what is today regarded as cheating. At some point, those

who do not use medical or technological aids will be seen as frivolous types who lack the winner's mentality. Our current doubts about where doping begins will also disappear. Is it, for example, acceptable that elite athletes sleep in pressure chambers and altitude houses with IV's hanging out of their arms so they can benefit from quick recovery from training?

But a legalization of doping will also mean the end of sport, Sejer Andersen maintains.

> Sport will lose its role-modeling function. One part of the magic and fascination of sport is the idea that it could be me, that these are ordinary people who are achieving their goals through hard work. Doping also opens the door to genetic manipulation, so if elite high jumpers have legs that are 50% longer than those of the rest of us, then sport will lose its ability to enchant us and offer us opportunities to identify with the athletes. (*Politiken*, 2 August 1998)

This interpretation is a kind of condensed version of the current debate. With great precision he points to the weaknesses of the anti-doping arguments that originate within the sports world. He calls attention to how relative the idea of cheating in sport actually is. Legalization would instantly remove the grounds for the moralistic qualms that are tied to the concept of doping as cheating and unfair competitive conditions. Such a step would also render irrelevant the defining of doping in terms of what is unnatural. Still, Sejer Andersen cannot reconcile himself to the consequences that would result from the absence of the familiar arguments against doping.

Despite his clear understanding of sport's ability to develop in accordance with its own logic in defiance of the skeptics' expectations – as evidenced by the growth of professional sport – he still cannot be anything other than skeptical regarding the idea that sport might be able to adapt to legalized doping. As

paradoxical as it is, this line of thinking is familiar to us. What people have learned to accept, in this case professional sport, can obviously no longer be regarded as an unacceptable hazard. Still, there is no acceptable future for what is still regarded as unacceptable. In a word, Sejer Andersen cannot see sport surviving what *he* feels *he* cannot accept; and he must find a reason to feel this way. Because his levelheaded attitude prevents him from making arguments that are tied directly to sport, he has recourse to a pair of arguments that originate outside of sport: the role-modeling argument and the nightmare vision of sport as a kind of freak show. His personal distaste is evident in the way he ties role-modeling to fascination, in that what makes sport fascinating is rooted in the idea that "it could be me." One could just as well argue, however, that what makes sport fascinating is that it could *not* be me. The fact that athletes do things that training would not appear to make possible is fascinating. For example, it was always more fascinating to watch ball-artists like George Best, Franz Beckenbauer and Michael Laudrup than plodders like Nobby Stiles, Berti Vogts or Søren Busk. In a similar vein, there is no obvious reason why we should not be able to identify with doped athletes simply because we know they are doped.

Children who have not been infected with prejudices or correct opinions are capable of identifying with a wide range of characters. They can identify themselves for days with figures like Lassie the dog or Flipper the dolphin without worrying about getting dog food oe fish for dinner. Why the situation should be fundamentally different for adult sports fans is something Sejer Andersen is unable to make us understand.

Let us put aside the fact that genetic manipulation, that would lengthen the legs of a high-jumper in a possible future where such techniques were operational, would have to be carried out before the growth plates close. This means that that manipulation in the real world would be carried out as a compulsory

procedure or would at least require the permission of underage individuals or their parents. This, however, gives the discussion an entirely different cast and makes it fundamentally distinct from the issue we are dealing with here.

Even if we entertain the possibility of genetically manipulating adults so as to lengthen their legs, it is still not clear that sport would lose its ability to enchant or to offer opportunities for identification. It is already the case that the world's best high-jumpers have unusually long legs and bodies that deviate from the norm. Even if it is nature that equips them with long limbs, this does not change the fact that there is no way the average person is going to be able to get close to clearing the heights these athletes can achieve. Yet this has not made their performances any less enchanting. Nor has it prevented people from identifying with them or learning from their technique as they attempt to improve personal records that remain far below world-class standards.

The fundamental principles of sport – between The National Olympic Committee and Sports Confederation of Denmark (DIF) and Danish Gymnastics and Sports Associations (DGI)

Understanding both aspects of Sejer Andersen's attitude requires us to look at the organizational background from which he comes. As the editor of Youth and Sport he represents DGI, which regards itself as ordinary people's alternative to the more elite-oriented Danish Sports Confederation (DIF). The DGI position thus resembles that of sport's critics, even as the appeal of sport prompted the DGI - and long before it grew to the size of the DIF – to incorporate sport into its activities along with gymnastics. The difference if one of emphasis, in that elite performers have had a low priority. Nevertheless, DGI's

involvement in sport has increased. The doping controversy has thus provided DGI with a convenient opportunity to defend sport in accordance with its own principles.

Sejer Andersen's statement contains a critique of the DIF. For it was the DIF that compromised the traditional amateur ideals and – in keeping with the connection between professionalism and doping that has come up over and over again in the doping debate – gave the green light to the development whose consequences have become all too clear. The revelations about doping have made the DIF vulnerable to accusations that it has directed no criticism at the inherent logic of sport, and that it has adopted a laissez-faire attitude that has left sport to be exploited by ruthless market forces that have deprived sport of its value. This vulnerability has in turn prompted chairman Kai Holm to occupy himself with defending the federation's credibility by embracing ethical concerns (see Chapter 4). In his attempt to wage a counter-offensive, he has put the onus on the international sports federations that remain unacquainted with the unique and wonderfully democratic Danish model. In *Politiken* he described the dangers lurking in the possibility "that the development we have seen in recent years is getting out of control":

> … there is a real danger that uncontrollable market forces are devouring sport from within and are destroying the fundamental principles of sport that are the alpha and omega of sport's ability to survive.
>
> There is no point in kidding ourselves any longer. For if there is anything that has become clear about professional sport over the past few months, it is that the financial interests in sport have become so ungovernable and so destructive of sport's fundamental principles that what we need now is much stricter regulation, rather than the customary genuflection before market forces.

> The summer's two major revelations about elite international sport – the Tour de France scandal and the secret meeting among the major European soccer clubs to establish a European super-league – make clear the degree to which such developments are now out of control. They also show, unfortunately, how little courage the international organizations have when it really counts. There is neither the ability nor the will to assume responsibility for defending the fundamental principles of sport by taking on the special interests such as powerful clubs, corporate-sponsored teams, television networks or sponsors, and that damage sport's development as a whole. (*Politiken*, 28 August 1998)

DIF clearly feels under pressure. This is evident not only in the dramatic description of an out-of-control development marked by ravenous market forces and ungovernable financial interests. We see it also in the uncertainty about ends and means that peeks through the virile announcement about tough enforcement. What this development threatens, we are told, is nothing less than those fundamental principles of sport which the author does not bother to define. Anyone with an interest in sport can agree that sport's fundamental principles are worth defending, but this is not very useful if no one knows what they are. When Holm presents the threat of a European soccer league as an example, predicting that the excitement provided by unpredictable results will diminish because it is too risky for the investors, this makes it sound as though the element of competition is itself an essential fundamental principle. This is supported by his nightmare scenario of soccer as a game of fixed results or as something staged like American professional wrestling. When, at the same time, he says that sport would thereby shoot itself in the foot by eliminating the suspense factor, he comes close to undoing his own argument, since investors could never live with such an arrangement.

If the fundamental principles of sport include, first and foremost, the principle of competition, then it would seem that sport possesses an immune response that enables it to resist harmful parasites. Destructive investors will in time end up weakening themselves, and sport will regain its equilibrium.

When Holm cites doping as another example of market forces' negative influence on sport, it becomes difficult to retain the idea of competition as a fundamental principle of sport..For doping is, like hard training and weight control, precisely one of the consequences of competition. Looking for a concrete sense of the concept of "sport's basic principles "is in vain. In Holm's text this concept sounds like nothing more than empty rhetoric. And it doesn't get any better when he offers advice to his clueless bureaucratic colleagues and turns "fundamental principles" into a "fundamental idea":

> Many sports officials have said they are not happy about this development, but what are they to do given the enormous economic forces they are up against? What can you do about substances that cannot be detected and that – when a method for detecting them is finally found – have already been replaced by substances that are undetectable?
>
> The answer is quite simple: You will administer, regulate, and keep up with developments by devising a policy that originates in and remains faithful to sport's fundamental idea! The basic purpose of international and national sports federations is to work on behalf of sport's overall development – not to cater to the whims and demands of powerful factions. (*Politiken*, 28 August 1998)

How is anyone supposed to govern the ungovernable and not only keep up with, but be a step ahead of, a development that is out of control? The answer may be quite simple, but putting it into effect looks like an impossible task.

If the DIF chairman feels he is under pressure, this is due to the fact that the principle the DIF, as Denmark's leading sports organization, has proposed is, in fact. the principle of competition. Competition has a broad popular appeal that has also infected the DIF, which happens to be a popular organization. But the doping revelations have illuminated the less popular side of sport. They have made it clear that, as soon as we clean up all the idealizing of sport, what remains in elite sport is the law of the jungle. Anquetil's pithy formulation from 1967, that "there are no small trees that grow in the jungle," made this point clear a long time ago. But his insight has been suppressed, because it is an unpopular point of view. Now that it is reasserting itself it is being repressed again, and Holm makes his own contribution by using concepts such as "fundamental principles" and "basic idea" like mantras. His purpose is clear enough, since if sport does not retain its popular appeal this will affect the reputation of the DIF, which would obviously be embarrassing for an organization that is wholly dependent on political good will. The problem is that, by genuflecting before the court of public opinion, the federation is betraying sport. Instead of explaining *the essence of sport* to the public and establishing a system of governance and regulation that corresponds to what sport really is, the chairman appears to be talking about an impossible kind of discipline: sport is reduced to being a pedagogical exercise for the purpose of promoting its health-enhancing and socializing functions.

What Holm is actually proposing is a transformation of sport in accordance with the ideals of popular gymnastics at the local level. The fact that he is poaching on DGI's preserves shows how deep his federation's crisis really is. Since the DIF will not stand up for what it stands for, the federation suddenly finds itself standing with its back to the wall while DGI has itself an enjoyable romp while occupying their territory. In the meantime,

it is no problem for DGI to practice sport in the same spirit as it does gymnastics and to come out smelling like a rose.

The Team Denmark Paradox

If the doping controversy puts the DIF under pressure, then there is at least as much pressure on its fraternal organization Team Denmark. This organization, which is devoted to promoting Danish elite sport, doesn't even have, as the DIF does, an engagement with the broader population to refer to when it is called upon to justify its continued existence in the wake of the doping revelations. In addition, given the relentless demands for performance that it imposes on its elite athletes, it comes very close to being a direct cause of the doping problem. Team Denmark has been spared scrutiny due only to the fact that the Tour scandal occurred outside of the country in a thoroughly commercialized sporting event in which it has no direct stake.

The distance that Team Denmark quickly put between itself and the Tour scandal shows that it has a sense of the dangers that are lurking in such controversies. As we saw in the previous chapter, the leading doping commentator Finn Mikkelsen has been preaching against the doping scourge in his own pietistic way. And chief advisor Niels-Christian Holmstrøm has also felt an urgent need to join the debate. His contribution is more than anything a demonstration of how much pressure the organization feels as a result of the reaction from the public. Even if he employs a pedagogical style to declare his opposition to doping, his logic is less than convincing:

> Why is it forbidden to dope oneself when practicing sport? There are two clear answers to this question. First, doping constitutes a serious violation against the intrinsic value of sport, because the use of performance-enhancing drugs is a

> kind of cheating that devalues the performance for oneself as well as others. (*Jyllands-Posten*, 4 October 1998)[96]

The weakness of this argument becomes quickly apparent as soon as one joins the game and poses the equally pedagogical question: Why is doping a form of cheating? And the answer comes back: It is for the obvious reason that it is forbidden. His premise is concealed in the concept of intrinsic value. For this reason, it is not immediately clear whether the argument is valid. Given the lack of content that is so evident in the quotation below, it appears that this concept functions best – and perhaps only – as a mantra. In this sense Holmstrøm follows the lead of Holm. He, too, uses "the intrinsic value of sport" as a mantra when he tries to finish off the idea of legalizing doping once and for all:

> There is another point of view that wants to legalize doping. This argument says that, if everyone has to use drugs then no one has cheated. What is more, elite sport is unhealthy to begin with, so the athletes know they are doing this at their own risk. This argument comes most often from people who do not know or who do not acknowledge the innermost essence of sport. It is a way of reducing the athletic performance to the status of a means – whether it is for the purpose of being with other people or making money for oneself is secondary. But this conflicts on a deep level with the idea of the athletic performance as an end in itself, which is often referred to as the intrinsic value of sport. This argumentt is thus devoid of content and meaningless when it is confronted with the intrinsic value of sport. (*Jyllands-Posten*, 4 October 1998)

Although this passage is less oracular than cryptic, this does not make it any less significant. For it demonstrates the difficulties

leading commentator Holmstrøm encounters when he employs an argument whose logic could very well be that of Team Denmark, but that also puts this organization's popular and political support at risk. So he faces a difficult task. First, he tries to derail the idea of legalizing doping by claiming that there is a secret about the essence of sport of which its proponents are unaware. The fact that these proponents include people who know elite sport inside out obviously complicates the matter. That is why he raises the possibility that, while they know the secret, they don't acknowledge its authority. So either they know better but talk otherwise -- and why should they do that? – or the intrinsic value of sport is a topic that can be discussed, at which point the concept can no longer be used as a mantra. Apparently realizing that this is the case, he tries his hand at finding significance in of all this, and this is where things begin to go seriously wrong.

It becomes immediately apparent that he has reversed the roles of means and ends and thereby short-circuited his own thought. For if there is any sense in this formulation it would more likely be the following: The argument for legalizing doping "is a way of reducing the athletic performance to an end in itself, as opposed to the idea of the athletic performance as a means." But the examples he gives show that the situation is not that simple. It is easy enough to imagine doping as a consequence of the doper's regarding sport as an end in itself, so that his only objective is a good performance. Yet it is obvious that one cannot regard doping as a result of the doper's having reduced sport to an end in itself, *at the same time that* the end is to spend time with other people or to make money for oneself. For in that case sport would have to be a means and not an end.

Further confusion results from his differing examples of how the doper reduces sport to the status of a means. Doping can be connected to egotism or the ambition that expresses itself as the will to win, regardless of whether this includes the motive of

making money out of the victory. But it is unlikely that anyone is going to dope him for social reasons, for the purpose of being with other people. His attempt to ascribe significance to the mantra winds up as a state of disorientation. It is, therefore, not surprising that, when he finally attempts to land a blow, he hits nothing but air. Why the proposal to legalize doping should conflict with the idea of sport as an end in itself is entirely unclear. Here, too, it would be more appropriate to talk about means. This claim would be understandable if it were proposed instead that doping is profoundly incompatible with the idea of sport as a means of achieving health in the traditional sense. But here we touch on a problem associated with Team Denmark, an organization that did not come into the world for the purpose of promoting health in a general sense. It is rather the case that elite sport puts health at risk. If sport could suddenly be promoted as nothing more than a way to promote good health, then the state's generous subventions would quickly come to an end. In today's climate of opinion this is a frightening perspective for Team Denmark. And this is what accounts for its strongly articulated, but wholly ineffectual, resistance to the doping devil.

In the context of sports policymaking, the DIF and Team Denmark occupy an ideologically vulnerable position vis-a-vis the DGI, in that the latter has always emphasized sport as a means to an end and not as an end in itself. The DGI must feel a combination of satisfaction and amazement as it watches its ideological opponent hoist a white flag inscribed with the DGI's basic idea, while at the same time becoming entangled in self-contradictions every time they try to draw a line between themselves and the DGI. Team Denmark's overriding problem is that all of the powerful weapons deployed in the debate wind up being pointed at the organization itself.

A first step toward getting rid of doping would be to emphasize the play element in sport rather than the serious aspect of competition that tempts athletes to dope in the first

place. Which raises the following question: Why, then, have a Team Denmark at all, the point of which is to support serious competition? The defensive answer to this question might be that Team Denmark wants to see an end to doping precisely because doping violates the seriousness of sport. But this sophistical recasting of the concept of seriousness simply raises the next uncomfortable question, which is: Why should we support Danish athletes' participation in elite international competitions when elite sport, given its countless doping episodes, cannot be taken seriously? Which brings us back to the original question, which is: Why have a Team Denmark at all? Even Kai Holm's identification of market forces as the villain puts Team Denmark in an embarrassing light. For if it is the ungovernable market forces that are destroying sport, why not just break off relations with the market? And one could begin by dismantling Team Denmark …

Truth, goodness and beauty

This is the discussion Team Denmark and the DIF want to avoid when they try to make us believe they are in possession of a secret knowledge of sport's innermost essence, while at the same time they are reciting their mantras. Indeed, this seems like a dangerous strategy, since it leaves the initiative to the unblemished DGI and its fine prospects for assuming responsibility for the development of sport in Denmark. If the minister of culture is looking for clean and healthy role models, she will find them in abundance at DGI's annual physical culture events. Here one finds people having a fine time in a traditional and unassuming way, and while there are all sorts of competitions, not a single drug test is required since the participants know that sport under the auspices of the DGI is a

means to something else rather than an end in itself, and winning is a lot less important than the spirit of play and sheer sociability.

DGI can see its day coming. They can take charge of the debate whenever they want, a prospect to which editor Jens Sejer Andersen alludes with some satisfaction when he writes after reading Holmstrøm's column:

> It is all so much easier if one simply proclaims the intrinsic value of sport. The views of people who are rooted in other conceptual worlds can be dismissed as "meaningless" with the stroke of a pen.
>
> But Holmstrøm has also touched on a central point. Because wherever sport's intrinsic value shows its head, it is used as a defense against everyone who wants to use sport as a *means* for another purpose.[97]

The great advantage enjoyed by DGI at the present time is that, without altering its positions or changing its image, it can proclaim its message about a *decent* sport culture. Sejer Andersen can articulate his opposition to doping in a statement about sport that draws on a thirty-year-old Marxist critique of sport, even as he transcends this critique by ascribing value to sport. Extending his vision of the future that is cited above he says:

> If we can still watch elite sport with a reasonably clear conscience, it is because it represents that which is "good." But without exemplary values it will represent only that which is "true" and reflect the pumped-up chemical reality we live in. (Politiken, 2 August 1998)

This comment draws on the classic distinction between the true, the good, and the beautiful. It has been customary in the sports-political tradition to see sport as a simple reflection of the function and exploitative mechanism of capitalist industrial

society. Competition on the field of sport was equated with competition in the workplace, and the production of sports records was regarded as a counterpart to industrial production. In both venues the goal was to optimize productivity by promoting effectiveness and rationalization. The result was a merciless wearing down of the work force, and in both venues technical and scientific progress was a contributing factor. This applied to assembly line production, which imposed monotony and a forced production tempo on the workers, and sports training, which was ratcheted up to accommodate sport's endless pursuit of record performances. The athletes were exploited by their sponsors, and in the stadiums the workers learned to cheer about the same mechanism that had brought about their own misery.

Critical commentary about sport continues to regard sport as a reflection of true industrial capitalism and, therefore, as an evil. If some of the "exploited" see things differently, this is explained as an expression of their "false consciousness." Nor has the fact that athletes today receive enormous salaries put a stop to this sort of Marxist sports criticism. The same argument has been used to explain the Tour riders' resistance to anti-doping measures. One could thus read the following in *Politiken* about the French minister who, with "true, uncompromising communist decisiveness" unleashed the French anti-doping action:

> Marie-George Buffet has some staunch principles, taken right out of the communist handbook, that account for her taking on the doping issue. She is acting on behalf of the riders themselves. She regards the cycling stars as workers who have fallen into the clutches of greedy sponsors and sports directors. The Tour de France has become an extension of this group in which the riders are victims of brutal contests and unrealistic expectations.

> "Of course, most of the riders are highly paid. But their careers are short, many of them remain uneducated for the rest of their lives, and they pay a price in terms of their health…
>
> "The cyclists are autonomous individuals who have a right to speak out and refuse to let themselves be drawn into an event that involves doping," Marie-George Buffet said.
>
> The problem is the riders' "false consciousness." On the two stages of the Tour de France where the riders went on strike, this had nothing to do with any pressure on them to use doping drugs. On the contrary, what the riders were demonstrating against was first the press and then the police. Marie-George Buffet's attitude could not be more different from theirs. (*Politiken*, 7 September 1998)

Like the sports organizations, the sports critics have their own comprehensive explanations. Sejer Andersen's designation of sport as a representative of "the good" makes a more nuanced point. This goes beyond the sports critique's idea of elite sport as an evil, even as it agrees with this critique on one particular point, namely, where he asserts that sport is not an exercise in role modeling – where sport is detached from the social value system in which it is practiced – and is just a value-free representative of the reality we inhabit.

The challenge represented by Sejer Andersen's position is the combination of social criticism and the conciliatory hand he extends to sport. By comparing the mainstream ideology of sport with that of the sports critics in a non-dogmatic way, he is able to achieve a notable shift of emphasis.

The reality is that we live in a society that is on dope. The pharmaceutical industry manufactures products that are supposed to relieve every sort of problem. And it turns out that very few people disapprove of this arrangement. Many people,

for example, appreciate a Panodil when they have headaches or menstrual pains, despite the fact that these are quite natural physical conditions. Similarly, it is regarded as a good thing that sleepless, nervous, depressed, impotent, and fatigued people, along with those suffering from kidney problems, can find relief in sleeping pills, Valium, Fontex, Viagra, amphetamine, EPO and other drugs. Yet these are also examples of our "pumped up chemical reality." Sejer Andersen thus directs his principal critical barbs against the general "use of doping" in everyday life that we have learned to regard as something good but that also provides grounds for skepticism. For example, this sort of "doping" includes the risk of abuse and the possibility of developing a destructive dependency. This is a risk society has chosen to accept, because it regards the advantages as obvious. In this context Sejer Andersen's reference to sport's role-modeling function is surprising, in that it points to the paradox that society is deeply affected by values (such as purity and what is natural) which depart from what people have learned to appreciate in the larger society.

Rather than seeing sport as a direct reflection of a social reality that needs to be revolutionized, in the manner of the traditional critique of sport, Sejer Andersen offers sport as a model for emulation. What enables us to watch sport with a clear conscience, what legitimates sport, is that it represents "the good." Sport is valuable because it offers ideals that we can emulate. By opening up this perspective he also makes possible an indispensable discussion of the essence of sport.

The idea of sport as a representative of "the good" touches on the mainstream ideology of sport that asserts its value through concepts like sportsmanship and fair play – virtues that fall under the heading of the more solemn idea known as *the spirit of sport.* Like sport's "fundamental principles," "basic idea," and "intrinsic value," the concept of "the spirit of sport" is, in the absence of a definition, well-suited to evoke a worshipful silence.

That Sejer Andersen manages to resist such clichés is due to the fact that he has no problem regarding sport as a means to other ends. At the same time, his statement is well-suited to showing why discussions of doping in sport have up to this point have been so consistently derailed.

Seeing sport as "the good" invests it with *moral* value. This, however, is a fanciful idea that has arisen by virtue of the fact that our ears have been filled with talk about sport's positive influence outside its own domain. A typical formulation holds that "sport keeps young people off the streets," meaning out of the hands of corrupting influences. Slogans of this kind have enmeshed us in a wonderful illusion that is hard to give up. Looked at from a more appropriate perspective, however, these potential benefits have nothing to do with the essence of sport. Morality is not a quality that is inherent in elite sport.

Various pedagogues have attempted to drag sport into the service of good intentions. They have done so because it is the essence of sport to pose challenges that promote the development of qualities some pedagogues have regarded as good. The best example is Coubertin, who saw sport as the royal road to the formation of the right sort of character. His salute to pioneers of gymnastics such as Johann F.C. Ludwig Jahn and Pehr Henrik Ling are well worth our attention:

> Jahn was exclusively preoccupied with the task of developing military strength for the purpose of uniting Germany, while Ling's goal was to enhance and spread health by means of physical activity based on scientific principles.
>
> It was left to the great Englishman Thomas Arnold to revive the work of the Greeks that had been interrupted by unfavorable developments, and to confer upon it a pedagogical elaboration that was suited to modern circumstances. The world had forgotten how organized sport

> can create moral and social strength and how it can thus play a direct role in the fate of a nation.[98]

Even as Coubertin was promoting sport as a form of pedagogy, he saw the essential difference between sport and gymnastics. Gymnastics is certainly useful if the goal is to produce a healthy population that is capable of bearing arms, but it departs from sport in its emphasis on submission to authority. As an activity it is marked from the beginning by supervision and control. Gymnasts are disciplined by learning to allow themselves to be supervised and controlled. Sport, too, exerts discipline, but in a different way. In fact, according to Coubertin, sport needs "the freedom to go to excess. That is its essence, its goal and the secret of its moral value".[99] It is up to the athletes themselves to do the supervising and controlling. Sport calls for critical evaluation, self-control, decisiveness and the taking on of responsibility. This is the character-building element in sport. Sport can also require a division of roles. There may be a captain, but there is no platoon commander. Sport may require us to adapt, but never to submit. There is always room for personal development.

What Coubertin wants, in other words, is not a sport that, like gymnastics, *represents* the good, but rather a sport that can *produce* it. What is so notable about Sejer Andersen's commentary is that it regards sport as though it were gymnastics. While various gymnastics traditions have grown out of ideas about what is (morally) good and (ideologically) expedient, sport ties itself more closely to *the aesthetic*.[100] Those who watch sport with a clear conscience because it represents *the good*, either deceive themselves or fail to understand the essence of sport. On the contrary, sport represents *the beautiful*. Coubertin understood this and praised what made it so distinctive: "willpower, endurance, intensity, the striving for continuous improvement and, finally, an element of risk".[101] He spoke enthusiastically about sport's tendency to go to excess and said: "Preserve us from a society in

which there is no place for excess".[102] He did what he could to make clear the close connection between sport and aesthetics. In this spirit he took the initiative to make music, literature and other fine arts a part of the Olympic program.

By now it should be clear that sport has not always had a problem because it was not, first and foremost, moral by nature. Nor is there any reason to assume that this should be the case today, at a time when it has become evident that sport is driven, not by an interest in the good, but rather by an interest in the aesthetic.

If it is difficult to find valid arguments against the voluntary use of doping drugs, this is due to the fact that sport, although it is an organized activity, is an independent activity. Even if it can be appropriated for pedagogical or public health purposes, it was not created for these reasons. It feeds off of the drive to joust and compete and is therefore fundamentally confrontational. Its purpose, in all of its simplicity, is to create performances by overcoming resistance.

When, for example, boxers touch each other's gloves before the beginning of a fight, they are expressing a mutual respect – as opponents. It is the sporting thing to do. One might also say that it expresses the spirit of sport, defined as a shared understanding of and respect for the world in which they are now meeting. The opponent is thereby reduced, in conformity with the essence of sport, to that which is to be overcome. Blows are exchanged without regard to the opponent's well-being. And if one of them is lucky enough to score a knock-out, he will not suppress his jubilation. The victorious boxer circles the ring triumphantly, while the loser staggers around trying to regain his balance. When the referee announces the result, the combatants embrace and thank each other for the match without bearing any sort of grudge – a gesture that can appear incomprehensible to anyone who does not understand the spirit and essence of sport. It is important to emphasize here that the concept of the spirit of sport

only has meaning within the world of sport itself. We can thus understand the spirit of sport as an expression of the respect that emanates from the unwritten rules that apply within the various sports disciplines. The spirit of sport that restrains the athletes makes them show consideration for each other even in hard competitions. This is why intentionally causing another rider to crash or causing intentional injury in soccer are violations of the spirit of sport and are always to be condemned. But standing outside the world of sport and asserting that doping violates the spirit of sport is just a way of disguising an impulse to moralize that is rooted in one's own personal distaste for the practice. On the deepest level, this is just a way of showing that one does not accept the essence of sport, the pithiest formulation of which is found in the Olympic motto: faster, higher, stronger, and that manifests itself in what at times can be a ravenous will to win.

Sport as aesthetics

What makes sport fascinating and spellbinding to its public is the drama that is inherent in the essence of sport. A sport that did not motivate athletes to make a maximum effort would be tame and uninteresting. It is no accident that it is sport that demonstrates so powerfully the sheer ambition and the will to win that attract spectators. The word *drama* is often used to describe sporting events. We take pleasure in the *creative* and *sublime* moves of the *ball-handling artists*, and in cycling it is the pedaling of the great *stylists*. The language we use always seems to be making the point that elite sport has its own place within the domain of the aesthetic, even including sports that – unlike ski-jumping, ice-skating, diving and equestrianism – do not award points for artistic qualities.

Two factors have obscured this essential point. On the one hand, there are the sports critics' ideologically motivated

comparisons between the world of sport and capitalist industrial society. The focus on the quantifying of results rather than on the activity itself, which is expressed in the concept of c-g-s (centimeter-gram-second) sport, has created the impression that sport belongs to the domain of the empirical sciences. This premise has enabled the sports critics to wage their campaign against an elite sport that is portrayed as being fundamentally hostile to human interests, as opposed to recreational sport for the masses, which is based on playing and having fun rather than the pursuit of top performances. In this way the sports critics have put pressure on sport's defenders, whose unimaginative response has been to hide behind the slogan: The elite creates the base, and the base creates the elite.

The organizations that defend the interests of sport have been almost defenseless in the face of this critique, because they have sought to legitimate sport in the traditional fashion as a character-building and educational project. It is Coubertin who is largely responsible for having created this dogma.

In the course of the second half of the twentieth century it has become increasingly clear that the idea of sport's close partnership with ethics is fading. It has become almost impossible to defend the funding of elite sport by referring to its moral significance for society at large. Although they are still relevant inside the sports world, the concepts of fair play and sportsmanship ring hollow in most situations, given that sport now has very little to do with prevailing social norms such as caution and moderation.

It is, therefore, worth recalling once again that sport, unlike gymnastics, is not rooted in an ideological or moral project. Sport, to the contrary, was originally received with suspicion for both religious and political reasons. It was the philanthropic doctrine inspired by Rousseau that prompted the English to combine physical and moral education. The occasion was the translation into English in 1800 of *Gymnastics for Youth*, by the German

philanthropic thinker Johann C. F. Gutsmuths. Building on Rousseau's edifying novel *Emile* (1762), Gutsmuths argued here for the close supervision of the physical education of youth for the purpose of preserving their moral virtue. This idea was taken up by several authors at the beginning of the nineteenth century, and in particular by those who were concerned about the living conditions in the rapidly growing industrial cities.[103] It was at this point that sport began to acquire an ideological wrapping, and previously unknown moralistic clichés entered the language, such as "You don't kick a man when he's down," "Go after the ball and not the man," and "That was a low blow."

It was the leading figures of German and Scandinavian gymnastics who saw most clearly that sport had not been created with moral education in mind. The Danish gymnastics instructor K. A. Knudsen, for example, had a hard time coming to terms with sport. He was an adherent of "Swedish gymnastics" and convinced that there was a correspondence between a straight back and upright character. In his book *On Sport – Impressions from a Visit to England* (1795), his fascination with sport is evident, yet at the same time he is critically inclined and entirely dissatisfied with its element of *disorde*r. He had noted with amazement how the competitive rowers sat hunched over in their boats without sitting up between strokes, and how they didn't even straighten themselves after they had passed the finish line, but rather collapsed as a result of their efforts. "(He) remembers one fellow in particular who, for several minutes after the race, was in such a state of collapse that his head was down between his knees".[104]

While at a high-jumping competition between the English and the Finns, he sees something similar. The Finns jump over the bar with their backs straight, and he has nothing but praise for their fine technique. On the other hand, he disapproves of the English, who jumped higher but "gave the impression that they relied on tricks to jump the highest. They placed themselves at an angle in

front of the bar, employed a curving run-up, doubled themselves up during the jump, and finished by landing on their hands and feet".[105] Knudsen is morally put off by the English style. He cannot accept the principle that sport accommodates every trick in the book. How he talks about their technique suggests that he regards it as a kind of cheating. It is just not to his taste. He finds it unaesthetic, which does not change the fact that sport belongs within the realm of the aesthetic. He simply does not feel that sport is beautiful in any way.

As sport advanced and resistance to it diminished, it became associated with gymnastics in schools and clubs. Yet the fact remains that sport and gymnastics are qualitatively different.

It is obvious that sport can provide exercise and promote team spirit and social responsibility. In this case sport is an opportunity or a means to an end. But engaging in sport for its own sake transcends what is edifying. Here the athlete's goal is to get as close as possible to the complete mastery of his or her discipline. To be sure, one can find edifying moments in elite sport. In cycling, for example, when a rider puts aside his own ambitions and lets another rider draft behind him to minimize his time loss. Or in soccer, when a player kicks the ball out of bounds so that an injured opponent can receive help. These are expressions of sportsmanship and fair play within the world of sport. But it would be a mistake to take this sort of gesture as what matters most in sport. Elite sport is not primarily good; on the contrary, it is primarily beautiful.

Here is where it makes sense to distinguish between elite sport and mass sport. Elite sport begins where sport stops being a means and becomes an end in itself. It becomes (something close to) an obsession for the athlete and the primary content of his or her life: the point where it turns into something that verges on being art.

As soon as we recognize that (professional) sport is comparable to (professional) art, the doping debate takes on an

entirely new cast. The practice of doping becomes, at the very least, understandable in the face of the cheap condemnations that depict doping as a form of common cheating. At the same time, it becomes possible to understand a whole series of "tragic" fates that elite sport has left in its wake.

An article in *Politiken* about the great English soccer star George Best – placed, one may note, in the newspaper's cultural section – offers a convincing description of the kinship between sport and art, between the mind of the star athlete and that of the artist. Given how sport is usually presented to the public, one has to wonder how a young man with a healthy interest in soccer winds up drowning himself and his magnificent career at the bottom of a vodka bottle. The world was at his feet. But rather than *exploiting* his fame, he *squandered* it all and wound up an alcoholic at the age of twenty-four.

> Yet, amidst the tragedy, there is also the triumphal march that made George Best soccer´s first superstar, who was celebrated in the same way as the greatest names in rock music.
>
> A tribute to a loner who dared to be himself and who wanted more than anything else to captivate his public. A man who was ignited by the roar from the stands and repaid his fans by trying to do everything in the best, most beautiful, and most impossible way. …
>
> It's that simple, One more story about a beautiful young person with a completely extraordinary talent whom we exalt to the skies, and who proceeds -- to our amazement -- to come crashing back to earth like an ancient ruin.
>
> He had everything and squandered it just like Maradona, Mike Tyson, Eric Cantona, Jimi Hendrix, Jim Morrison, Elvis Presley, Kurt Cobain, Jan Mølby (on a much smaller Danish scale) and all the other young geniuses we have worshiped and watched destroy themselves in acts of apparently inevitable self-destruction during a century when young

> people have been the divinities of an entire planet! (*Politiken*, 2 January 1999)

Those of us who watch at a distance can regret all of this and feel that it is just terrible. Because they are our role models, and because the way they live their lives is so remote from our own values, we tend to think we should study these problems and their causes. Because they are our heroes, we are not inclined to seek the explanation in them. If, however, it were to turn out that their deviant behavior resulted from a free choice, then the reasoning behind our own healthy caution would be called into question. On the other hand, if it were to turn out that a personal "flaw" was involved, then our conception of them as heroes would be called into doubt. That is why we prefer all of the other explanations, such as the idea that it is due to brutal market forces, the media, coaches, team officials, doctors or unbearable pressure from the public. All of which are partly plausible, but also only partly, since at most they may serve as contributing factors.

The question of whether our concern about and sympathy for these "tarnished" stars may be superfluous is illuminated by Best's assessment of his own life. Having passed the age of fifty, he now lives the life of a "controlled" alcoholic which means a daily consumption of "several bottles of white wine and drinks made with vodka." Looking back on his life, he does not see it as a tragedy:

> The only thing he regrets is that "all sorts of nobodies and B-list celebrities say they don't want to end up like me when they show up at the detox clinics. What a fine example to set!" Or as Elvis Presley said: "Before you judge my life, try to walk a mile in my shoes. I've gotten everything I dreamed about!" (*Politiken*, 2 January 1999)

It is tempting to dismiss this assessment as a rationalization, but there is no getting around the fact that sport, like rock music, appeals to people's Dionysian side. Nor can we overlook the fact that sport, like art, can incite talent to violate the limits set by a concern for the future in favor of devoting oneself to an intoxicating her and now where no costs seem too high. Perhaps this is due to our compassion or our indignation over the fact that we – despite an occasional bout of intoxication – have lost our sense of what intoxication is and have become blind to the attractions of obsession and oblivion. That we, in other words, have become estranged from the Dionysian, which may be the *real* tragedy. In any case, this thought asserts itself when we read the German philosopher Nietzsche as follows:

> There are those who, whether due to a lack of experience or foolishness, turn away from such phenomena as from "epidemic diseases," full of scorn or regret and with a feeling of their own health: these poor fools do not realize that it is precisely this "health" of theirs that looks as pale as a corpse and virtually ghost-like when the flaming lives of the Dionysian visionaries surge past them.[106]

The consequences of sport's kinship with art

Sports organizations could put an end to their troubles by giving up the dogma of the essential connection between sport and ethics and prioritize instead the clearly more apparent connection with aesthetics. This would provide them with a solid basis for participating in the debate. They could immediately drop the pious hypocrisy that has only prompted them to put sport at risk. Rather than claim knowledge of an essence of sport that is hidden behind mantras about sport's inherent value, its basic principles and conceptual basis, they could put forward a constructive defense of sport.

As soon as we dare to assert the kinship between sport and art, we can ensure that discussions of doping will have nothing to do with sport at all. One could still make the argument for mass sport on the grounds that it is a healthy and useful recreational activity. It would be equally legitimate to support public funding of a music school on the grounds that children and young people can derive benefits from developing their musical potential.

Many of the pupils at a music school have rock musicians as role models and are motivated to practice by the dream of themselves becoming stars. So what a music school does undoubtedly includes the risk that some of the pupils will wind up in rough music environments where they will be introduced to illicit drugs, while others will develop their own drug problems by pursuing careers within the world of classical music. Yet it is unthinkable that the public would suddenly question what music schools do on the grounds that there is a dangerous causal relationship between the drug problems of musical celebrities and the pupils' desire to emulate them. In the case of musical high culture, everyone understands the significance of social class and parental attitudes. In this milieu it seems to be accepted that some young people are going to wind up as sacrifices to their art. In any case, the fact that some orchestral musicians are not "clean" when they are playing has not kept the concert-going public away from the concert halls out of indignation about drugs, and this is because music is always regarded as beautiful.

If sport's defenders could get used to regarding sport as belonging within the realm of the aesthetic, this would not necessarily mean that they would change their attitudes toward doping. But it *would* mean that sport's doping problems could be debated as a separate issue. The sports organizations would be able to initiate a discussion of how to contain the doping problem instead of alternately condemning and invoking it in the familiar and sterile manner. Openly recognizing that doping cannot be

eliminated without doing away with sport itself does not have to be a sign of immorality or permissiveness. But this *would* put an end to the current double standard that now prevails. Only by proceeding in this way can we make unprejudiced assessments of how to formulate the most sensible doping regulations based upon a clear understanding of the essence of sport. Such a formulation lies beyond the purview of this book, which does not venture any opinions about how, for example, one might determine whether it is appropriate to ban substances which cannot be detected.

EPILOGUE

The motivation for writing this book, as noted earlier, has been my astonishment at the sheer intensity of the doping debate. It is as if we are living through a modern version of the Fall of Man. Horror scenarios raise their ugly heads, and condemnations are everywhere. We are told that we stand at a crossroads from which there are only two perspectives: Either we will all share in the salvation of a sport that has been cleansed of chemical substances. Or the bubble we took to be sport will simply burst into nothingness.

In the meantime, our exertions on behalf of renouncing evil have produced some grotesque points of view. Some people have seriously argued that, if Bjarne Riis *was* doped when he won the Tour de France in 1996, then his performance has lost all of its fascination for us.

As if fascination were something that could simply be withdrawn at will. As if experience could be pruned like a shrub retroactively.

It has been asserted that sport would lose its power to fascinate and its popularity if medically hazardous doping practices were not eliminated. But panicked pronouncements of this kind stand in direct contradiction to the attitude taken toward other forms of culture with which sport can be compared.

Consider, for example, how we look on with equanimity as ballet dancers submit their bodies to training regimens that turn some of them into invalids. For the dancers, the ethereal beauty of ballet is purchased at the price of compulsive dieting that can turn into anorexia.

Or think about how we continue to appreciate the music of Jimi Hendrix, Jim Morrison and Janis Joplin, despite the fact that

all of them died as a consequence of alcohol and drug abuse before they turned thirty. Who really believes that someone who has learned to appreciate their music might suddenly wake up one day and say it wasn't worth listening to, because he had just found out that this music was inspired by illicit drugs?

The smear campaign against the dopers is reminiscent of the rage provoked by John Lennon back in the 1960's, when he remarked in an interview that the Beatles were more popular than Jesus. God-fearing people around the world gathered together their Beatles records and threw them onto bonfires to demonstrate against this blasphemous utterance. Now it seems as though a similar feeling has taken hold of the public as a result of the recent doping revelations. It is as if the belief in the inviolability of health has somehow induced people to jettison their ability to think straight.

This book has had two purposes. One was to find out why the recent doping revelations have set off such an avalanche of indignation. The other has been to understand how the doping phenomenon looks from the athletes' perspective. Instead of accepting the assertion that the athletes are helpless victims of external forces and conspiracies, that they suffer from false consciousness, my goal has been to broaden the perspective and to encourage a different and more constructive debate.

The dark prospect that genetic manipulation might become the next form of doping is something we must reckon with. This development further intensifies the anxieties that doping has already provoked. There is no reason to assume that sport will allow itself to be intimidated by the sanctification of health. That would contradict its essence, and exorcisms are the last thing we need at this point. So there are two future scenarios to consider.

In the first case, sport will retain its composure out of fidelity to its own essence. It will continue to strive for the most outstanding performances. The scope of training will broaden to the extent that is still possible. Training techniques will be

improved, and doping drugs will continue to be used. But this will all happen within certain recognized boundaries. There will still be many athletes, and sport's power to fascinate and provide entertainment will survive intact. Over time the public will lose interest in the doping issue in the same way that it has accustomed itself to professionalism.

The alternative is a sport that will ignore all boundaries. It will develop far beyond the limits we can recognize today in accordance with what the prophets of doom have predicted. The end result may be a population of grotesque, genetically manipulated bodies, such as high-jumpers with legs that are two meters long, shrunken heads, and minimal chest cavities to provide oxygen. Although grotesque bodies have always exercised a temporary appeal, they have not been able to hold people's interest over time.

The great irony is that the standard villains of the doping debate, the commercial interests that drive sport and the market mechanism that is always portrayed as evil incarnate, may well turn out to be sport's salvation. There is a real possibility that market forces might push these developments in a positive direction. Because when interest in a sport declines, its commercial prospects decline along with it. It is very unlikely that business interests will invest in a sport that has taken on aspects of the absurd.

If this expectation should prove to be too optimistic, then sport may die, just as the opponents of doping predict. If this happens, there will be no reason to weep, because there is a logic at work here. If sport is sick, then it must die like other organisms that experience uncontrolled growth. Yet because sport is a world unto itself, where a different kind of order and morality apply, it is by no means certain that the 1998 Tour de France was an indication of sport's death agony.

The storm over doping has thus turned out to be a defense of sport itself. It may be, however, that the greatest threat to sport is

the public's desire to help a sport whose *essence* it does not want to understand. The dogma that the value of sport inheres in its moral qualities and character-building aspects has encouraged the belief that doping is a danger to sport. It may soon be apparent, however, that the greatest danger to sport are the many people of good will who do not seem to understand that their helping hands have sport in a stranglehold that will eventually choke the life out of it.

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ENDNOTES

[1]http://www.cyclingnews.com/features.php?id=riders/2008/interviews/rasmus_damsgaard_jan08

[2] Michele Verroken, "Drug use and abuse in sport," in David R, Mottram, ed., *Drugs in Sport*, London 1996.

[3] Cf., for example, Richard H. Strauss & Timothy J. Curry, "Magic, Science and Drugs," in Richard H. Strauss, ed., *Drugs & Performance in Sports*, Philadelphia 1987.

[4] The earliest six-day races were not as manageable as today's winter shows on indoor tracks. The first one took place in 1875. The idea came from a factory owner in Birmingham who wanted to test his so-called penny-farthing bicycles, with their over-sized front wheels and smaller rear wheels. The riders put in twelve hours a day, the only point being to ride as many kilometers as possible. (Nevertheless, this event attracted a good deal of attention, and a comparable show was staged the next year in London, although now the riders kept it up for eighteen hours at a time. This race included among others the legendary Frenchman Charles Terront. But instead of winning, Terront saw himself relegated to second place by the German-born Frank Waller, who in 1891 would set a 24-hour record by riding 585 kilometers – the same year that Terront won the first 1196-kilometer non-stop Paris-Brest-Paris race.) From this point on eighteen hours in the saddle was standard, even as six-day races with unlimited riding time also became popular, a development that obviously made enormous demands on physical strength and endurance. A race of this kind was staged in New York in 1896, where 80 riders showed up at the starting-line but only six finished. The winner, the Englishman Teddy Hale, rode a total of 3,073 kilometers, which is close to the distance riders have to cover in the course of the three-week-long Tour de France. The history of cycling offers a long series of examples that demonstrate a fascination with testing the limits of human physical capacity. See W. Gronen & W. Lemke, *Geschichte des Radsports + des Fahrades*, Hausham 1987.

[5] Cf. Robert Voy, *Drugs, Sports and Politics*, Illinois 1991

[6] Gronen & Lemke, op. cit, p. 191.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Cf. John M. Hoberman, *Mortal Engines: The Science of Performance and the Dehumanization of Sport*, New York 1992.
[9] Cf. Voy, op. cit.
[10] Cf. Hans Peter Rolfsen, *Doping. Sporten på sprøjten*, Copenhagen 1991, pp. 75f.
[11] Cf. Pea Nilsson, *Marathonboken*, Stockholm 1982.
[12] The death of Knud Enemark Jensen is one of the classic cases in the literature of doping. It has been described most recently by Barrie Houlihan: "At the 1960 Rome Olympic Games, the Danish cyclist Knut Jensen collapsed and died during the 175-kilometer team time-trial as a consequence of having consumed amphetamine and nicotinic acid. Jensen's two teammates, who had taken the same substances, also collapsed but made it to the hospital." Barrie Houlihan, *Dying to Win*, Strasbourg 1999, p. 36.
[13] Ove Bøje, "Idrætshygiejne," in Kr. Krogshede, ed., *Idræt. Vor Tids store Folkeopdrager*, Odense 1943, p. 49.
[14] Ibid., p. 50.
[15] Ibid., p. 52.
[16] Ibid., p. 53.
[17] Cf. Roy Porter, *The Illustrated History of Medicine*, Cambridge 1996.
[18] This is how Ivan Illich has described the modern medical project. See his *Medical Nemesis. The Expropriation of Health*, New York 1976.
[19] Cf. Roy Porter, The Greatest Benefit to Mankind. A Medical History of Humanity from Antiquity to the Present, London 1997, p. 568.
[20] Hoberman, op. cit., pp. 80f.
[21] Ibid., p. 8.
[22] Ibid., pp. 126f.
[23] Ibid., p. 128.
[24] Ibid., p. 221.
[25] See Brigitte Berendonk, *Doping-Dokumente. Von der Forschung zum Betrug*, Berlin 1991.
[26] Hoberman, op. cit., p. 2.
[27] Cf. Richard Holt, *Sport and Society in Modern France*, London 1981, p. 83.
[28] Cf. John Woodforde, *The Story of the Bicycle*, London 1970, p. 161.
[29] Holt, op. cit., pp. 85f.

[30] Sylvester Hviid, *Cycle-Handbog – for dem der kører paa Cycle, og dem, der endnu ikke er begyndt* (orig. 1893, cited here from the third revised edition printed in facsimile form in 1896, Copenhagen, Rhodos 1973, pp. 52f.).
[31] Ibid., p. 50.
[32] Ibid., pp. 51f.
[33] See W. Gronen & W. Lemke, op. cit.
[34] This and the following description of the six-day races in New York are based on Robert A. Schmidts, *A Social History of the Bicycle. Its Early Life and Times in America*, New York 1972.
[35] Holt, op. cit., pp. 88f.
[36] Ibid., p. 92.
[37] See, for example, Jean Durry, *Den sande historie om landevejenes helte*, Ringsted 1978, pp. 14ff. Gronen & Lemke, op. cit., p. 93 and Holt, op. cit., 92ff. Terront's achievements are also described in his autobiography, *Les Mémoires de Terront*, Paris 1893.
[38] This performance was an important source of inspiration for Alfred Jarry's absurd science-fiction novel *The Supermale*, Copenhagen 1966 (orig. 1902). The novel's major protagonist is an extraordinary human being. Not only does he have the energy and potency to satisfy a hundred women in the course of a single night, he is also capable of winning a 10,000-milr race against a train, and at a speed that makes it impossible for anyone to tell who the cyclist is. All that is known is that the unknown cyclist was riding a modern racing cycle with inflatable tires. The only sign of his victory is that the pole marking the finish-line is decorated with flowers one morning, indicating that the mysterious man has arrived. This episode in the novel clearly refers to Terront's remarkable night ride, when he passed by the control station in Montauban-de-Bretagne while the watchman still slept, blithely assuming that the first riders would arrive at his post much later. As a premonition of the later development of elite cycling, Jarry has his protagonist end his life by sacrificing himself on the altar of science.
[39] Holt, op. cit., p. 90.
[40] The profane alliance between capital, the press, and cycling has predominated everywhere in Europe and the United States where the new machines were manufactured. One finds a striking description of this arrangement as early as 1889 in the classic work *The Badminton Library of Sports and Pastimes*' thick volume on cycling, where we read:

"Those who have been involved with cycling from the beginning do not doubt that its very rapid development and wide popularity were due primarily to the fact that the nature of the sport and those who associate with it offered economic advantages to a number of newspapers and other publications that are solely concerned with cycling. It also prompted many other publications that covered related pastimes to set aside a considerable number of pages for the coverage of cycling. The reason for this is obvious: The success of a top journalistic enterprise depends on the advertisements that constitute the economic foundation of most newspapers. In this sense, cycling is better positioned than other sports. The manufacturers of running shoes or bathing suits seldom spend a lot on advertising, since it would require huge sales to pay the interest on the considerable expense involved in any serious advertising campaign.

"A "bi-cycle" or a "tri-cycle", however, brings in between 15 and 35-40 pounds, so that even if there are only a few buyers, the advertising has paid for itself. In this way, cycling receives inexpensive, widespread and very readable first-class press coverage that does much to popularize the sport and make its adherents into a community. The advantages of this sort of communication are clear: the names of the best-known track- and road-racers become familiar to cyclists all over the country; ideas are aired and discussed in the columns that publish letters from readers, and this promotes interest in the sport." Duke of Beaufort, ed. *The Badminton Library of Sports and Pastimes. Cycling*, London 1889, p. 317.

[41] Bill Strickland, ed., *The Quotable Cyclist*, New York 1997, p. 253.

[42] Holt, op. cit., p. 98.

[43] Philippe Brunel, *An Intimate Portrait of the Tour de France. Masters and Slaves of the Road*, Colorado 1996 (orig. Paris 1995), p. 30.

[44] Ibid.,, pp. 33ff.

[45] At 575 kilometers Bordeaux-Paris is the world's longest road race.

[46] Ibid., pp. 63ff.

[47] Ibid., p. 86.

[48] Paul Kimmage, *Rough Ride*, London 1998 (orig. 1990), p. 21.

[49] Ibid., pp. 93f.

[50] Ibid., p. 81.

[51] Strickland, op. cit., p. 168.

[52] Ibid.
[53] Lasse Ellegaard & Henrik Jul Hansen, *På den store klinge. Tour de France 1996*, p. 79.
[54] Walter Umminger, *Toppræstationer. En Idrættens Kulturhistorie*, Copenhagen 1963.
[55] Strickland, op. cit.
[56] Ibid., p. 250.
[57] Kimmage, op. cit., p. 143.
[58] Ibid., p. 147.
[59] Persuasive evidence from the sports world outside of cycling is Paul Hoch, *Rip Off the Big Game*, New York 1972. This early book documents the widespread use of amphetamines and narcotic drugs in American baseball and football during the 1960's.
[60] Brunel, op. cit., p. 131.
[61] Rik Vanwalleghem, Eddy Merckx. The Greatest Cyclist of the 20th Century, Boulder 1996 (orig. 1993).
[62] *Fyens Stiftstidende* has presented a thought-provoking account of how the same viewpoint has been adopted by Skaaning Andersen's co-producer Jung: "Niels Christian Jung felt like a lonely warrior in the service of a good cause, a kind of crusader for whom achieving his goal – that is, cleaning up a doping-soaked sport – justified anything that had to be done to accomplish it." (*Fyens Stiftstidende*, 15 January 1999). This is an interesting formulation, not only because it recalls the sinister persecutions of heretics from the distant past, but in particular because it expresses an obsession that is comparable to the one that underlies what he is struggling against, and where the problem is understood to be that the end justifies the means. The other problem, however, is that the moral free pass the opponents of doping award to themselves causes them to direct suspicion and contempt at others, whereas the dopers harm only themselves.
[63] In this context Merode expresses the attitude of the IOC as follows: "The problem is how to define doping. All of the scientific definitions have been contested by the lawyers, who cannot accept the lack of precision which results from the fact that scientific definitions are never absolute. Within the IOC we have built our system on three fundamental principles: protecting the athlete's health, the defense of

medical ethics and sportive ethics; and the preservation of a level playing field." (*Le Figaro*, 17 August 1998)

[64] This explanation got Mitchell off the hook at first. And this explanatory strategy seems to have been immediately accepted. In any case, *The Independent* of 31 January reported that a British boxer had escaped being sanctioned for the use of nandrolone. The boxer claimed that he must have ingested nandrolone inadvertently in the course of having oral sex with his partner the day before the test. This substance can occur in pregnant women.

[65] Here is how Kai Holm welcomed the doping revelations during the scandal-Tour: "From a cynical point of view this is the best thing that could have happened for the anti-doping forces. This is what was necessary so that everyone would know what was going on," he said, to which he added the following and rather odd comment: "If you look at a cyclist you will see that he is unnaturally thin so that he can get over the mountains. That is why it's encouraging to see that those planning next year's Tour have made the climbs less strenuous." (*Weekendavisen*, 22-29 December 1998)

[66] A commentary that endorses modern sport's affinity for the extravagant nobility and its ability to provoke religious feelings is the precise formulation of the French philosopher Luc Ferry: "If we refuse to succumb to the nostalgia that is associated with ancient times, where divine transcendence, as illusory as it may seem, could imbue even the humblest human achievement with a trace of the holy, then toward which heavenly horizon should we direct our eyes? By looking at those aspects of human life which escape the arbitrariness of taste and sensibility, perhaps we could find our way. And so it is with sport, which in one sense is democracy in action, but which also fascinates by virtue of its ability to recreate an aristocratic glory in a world that is the incarnation of its opposite." *Menneskeguden – eller livets mening*, Copenhagen 1997 (orig. 1996), p. 183.

[67] Georges Bataille, *La notion de dépense* (citations are from the Swedish edition which also includes *La part maudite* under the title of *Den fördömda delen*, Stockholm 1991, p. 12.

[68] Ibid., p. 17.

[69] Georges Bataille, *L'Erotisme* (citations are from the American edition, *Erotism: Death and Sensuality*, San Francisco 1986, p. 126.

[70] Ibid., p. 141.
[71] This is also confirmed by Bauman. He describes the requirements for the attractive idea of individual immortality as follows: "All human beings must physically die – but some (men who are described as 'great' for this reason) will live on as individuals in the memory of their descendants. This second posthumous life can in principle last for as long as there are human beings who remember. But one's achievements can have an impact on this memory, *individual* achievements, achievements that no other person has accomplished. On the whole, two kinds of exploits competed for this kind of immortality, for the right to occupy a permanent place in the memory of mankind. The first involved the achievements of conquerors and leaders – kings, lawmakers, generals; the second concerned the meritorious works of writers such as philosophers, poets, and belletristic artists. " Zygmunt Bauman, *Postmodernity and its Discontents*, Cambridge 1997, p. 154.
[72] Cf. Bauman 1992, op. cit., p. 31.
[73] According to Hoberman, op. cit., amphetamines were used both by the Germans and the Allies during the Second World War. He also notes that the respected journal *Science* reported the following in 1972: "The first use of male steroids to improve performance is said to have been in World War II, when German troops took them before battle to enhance aggressiveness" (p. 214). This report appeared again in modified form in the same journal in 1988, where it was now reported that Hitler had attempted to create an army of supermen by means of anabolic steroids. For what they are worth, these and similar rumors show that the concept of artificially produced supermen continues to fascinate. It is worth keeping this in mind when evaluating the imaginative futuristic scenarios opponents of doping are so fond of invoking to entertain us.
[74] See, for example, Vyv Simson & Andrew Jennings, *Ringenes Herrer. Magt penge og stoffer i De Olympiske Lege*, Copenhagen 1992.
[75] See, for example, Richard Klein, *Eat Fat*, London 1997 (orig. 1996). Here this American man of letters analyzes the crusade against obesity that is being waged on behalf of a rather vague concept of health: "After alcohol and tobacco, now fat has been proscribed. America, under the spur of its persistent Puritanism, cruelly medicalizes the matter of public health and social morality, of disease and compulsion. The health

industry has already deemed food to be medicine, and fat is poison. That industry, with its ally, the government, is about to turn fat into a drug, which will give it the absolute control it desires, not only over occasional pleasures, like tobacco or liquor, but over food itself, which has the peculiarly profitable quality, distinct from that of any other drug, of being indispensable to life." (p. 93) One notes here that the villain for Klein is the same one that often appears in the doping debate, namely, economic interests. One side profits at the expense of health, while the other profits by promoting health. This testifies to the complexity of the market and of economic interests, and it reinforces our doubts about invoking these interests as the cause of any particular process. Because before profit come needs, wishes or at least susceptibility, and these are what must interest us if we are not going to be content with the sterile postulate that is supposed to explain everything: It's the fault of the market.

[76] This is in other respects compatible with the historical origin of the health concept. The word, which derives from the Middle Low German "sunt," which in turn became "gesunt," is related to meanings such as active, lively, powerful, strong, brave and quick. And these are precisely the qualities these actors bring to life. This alone shows that the health concept is, in any case, not unambiguous, although there is a widespread tendency to use it as if everyone already knew what it meant. For a more detailed treatment of this theme, see Verner Møller, *Sundhed og idræt. Kulturanalyser til indkredsning af sundheds aspektet i idrætten*, Odense 1999

[77] Kimmage, op. cit., p. 126.

[78] Lars-Henrik Schmidt, "Den arme synder – utidige bemærkninger om tidens sunde fornuft," in Verner Møller et al., *Hooked – om vanvid og æstetik i sport og kropskultur*, Odense 1994, p. 13.

[79] Ibid.

[80] Ibid., p. 20

[81] Health has, in fact, played an essential role since the Enlightenment, when it was used to discipline the population in accordance with the ideals of the bourgeoisie and to consolidate this social class. By emphasizing the healthy way of life, the bourgeoisie was able to distance itself both from the pernicious excesses and extravagances of the nobility and from the unhygienic rabble. Ever since this time, health

has often been used as an argument for either promoting or opposing certain behaviors. We have already seen how, at the beginning of the era of safety-bicycles, the bicycle salesman Sylvester Hviid spoke out against cycling competitions by citing threats to health (see Chapter 2). See also Signe Mellemgaard, *Kroppens nature – Sundhedsoplysning og nature idealer i 250 år*, Copenhagen 1998.

[82] For more on this topic see Christian Jantzen & Verner Møller, "Marginaloplevelser og tærskelværdier. Til installering af begrebet vanvidsidræt, in Møller et al., op. cit.

[83] Bauman identifies this attitude as postmodern, and he describes it as follows: "What distinguishes the postmodern strategy for optimal experience from the religious is that, instead of celebrating human inadequacy and weakness, it calls for the full development of the psychological and physical resources of the human being and takes for granted the existence of unlimited human strength. Paraphrasing Weber, one might call this postmodern layman's version of optimal experience 'a worldly ecstasy'." Bauman 1997, op. cit., p. 180.

[84] See, for example, Kevin Williamson, *Drugs and the party line*, Edinburgh 1997, which presents a surprisingly clear-eyed account of the inconsistencies of current policy regarding intoxicating drugs which also applies to the doping issue.

[85] A striking example of this is the commentary by *Weekendavisen*'s self-described sports idiot, Hans Davidsen-Nielsen, where, under the heading "It's Riis' Own Fault," he compares the recent doping revelations with the disappointment he experienced while growing up in the United States, when a friend informed him that professional wrestling, which had fascinated him up to that point, was in fact pure theatrics, at which point his interest in this "sport" evaporated. "The Tour de France is a big lie," he stated following Bjarne Riis's expression of sympathy for the Festina team after it had been expelled from the race and had taken its time before finally denying they had doped. (*Weekendavisen*, 31 July – 6 August 1998) It is hardly necessary to point out that staged professional wrestling matches cannot be compared with the Tour de France in a meaningful way, just as it should not be necessary to point out that it is frivolous to conclude from the lies of a few Tour riders that the entire event is a lie. Lacking any sort of critical acuity, this commentary does serve as an illustration of the frustration

and disappointment that – following the revelations – clearly resulted from the sense of having been cheated.

[86] One might be tempted to conclude that the cheating argument is not weakened by the fact that the riders themselves do not regarding this as cheating. One defense of the cheating argument goes as follows: "If you were to ask the people who cheat on their taxes, I don't think they would feel like 'cheaters', either. They are just being creative. But the most recent type of business fraud has clearly demonstrated that the authorities do not share this attitude. Many pedophiles also feel like misunderstood victims, but that hardly changes society's attitude toward them." (*Fyens Stiftstidende*, 29 March 1999) This defense disregards, however, a central point, which is why we want to punish tax cheats in the first place. We are justifiably offended by tax fraud, because in the last analysis it is a burden on our own financial viability. It has a direct effect upon us. But if people cheat each other in a game of Monopoly. this is not a matter of concern for us. This is why the cheater is not punished by society; he risks instead being punished by the people he is playing against. They can condemn him or refuse to play with him. But if those who remain silent agree to accept the possibility of cheating and being cheated, one might wonder whether onlookers would try to have cheating banned. It should not be necessary, therefore, to explain why the pedophile example is mistaken.

[87] Cf. Ross Coomber, "Controlling Drugs in Sports: Contradictions and Complexity," in Nigel South, ed., *Drugs – Cultures, Controls & Everyday Life*, London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi 1999.

[88] According to Ganong: "The plasma testosterone level (free and bound) is about 525 ng/dL (18.2 nmol/L) in adult men and 30 ng/dL in adult women. The level falls gradually in men as they age." William F. Ganong, *Review of Medical Physiology*, Connecticut 1993, p. 392.

[89] Cf. John Hoberman & Charles Yesalis, "The History of Synthetic Testosterone," in Scientific American, 1995, no. 2. The authors argue that hormone treatment for the purpose of rejuvenation is already culturally accepted, and they predict increasing commercial exploitation of the therapeutic possibilities as the older segment of the population expands.

[90] For an analysis of this kind, see Møller 1999, op. cit.

[91] Roger Qvarsell, Människan och hennes hälsa: Om hälsobegreppet och hälsoupplysningens idéhistoria," in Sten Philipsson & Nils Uddenberg, eds., *Hälsa som livsmening. Natur och Kultur*, Stockholm 1989, p. 95.
[92] TV 2 Sporten: "Piller og pedaler," 4 August 1998.
[93] This information comes from the conference on "The Press and Doping" held at the offices of *Aktuelt* on 21 October 1998, arranged in cooperation with the Danish Sports Federation and the Association of Danish Sports Journalists.
[94] Cf. Hoberman, op. cit., p. 110.
[95] Umminger, op. cit., p. 265.
[96] Because it is not the arguments that are interesting in this context, but rather how the argument is constructed, the second cause he mentions, namely, that it is unhealthy, is generally disregarded.
[97] Jens Sejer Andersen, "Fra egenværdi til megen værdi," in Henning Eichberg et al., eds., *Demokrati og kropslighed*, Slagelse 1999, p. 103.
[98] Pierre de Coubertin, *Den olympiske idé. Taler og artikler*, Copenhagen 1996, p. 34.
[99] Ibid., p. 12.
[100] The Ling gymnasts' accusation that Danish gymnastics was producing acrobats is interesting in this context, because it testifies to a fear of unruliness on the part of the "true and good" men. For a closer examination of this theme see, for example, Else Trangbæk, *Mellem leg og disciplin*, Aabybro 1987.
[101] Coubertin, op. cit., p. 35.
[102] Ibid., p. 24.
[103] Cf. Peter McIntosh, *Fair Play*, London 1979, p. 26.
[104] K. A. Knudsen, *Om sport – Indtryk fra en Rejse I England*, Copenhagen 1895, p. 5.
[105] Ibid., p. 46.
[106] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Tragediens fødsel*, Copenhagen 1996 (orig. 1872), p. 43.