

SPORT

Sport and the legal philosophers

#1. From Plato, *Ashes*, trans. D. Manderson.

Socrates (a footballer): And does not each thing aspire to its own form of the good, the flower and the bee, the lamb and the olive, do they not each strive to achieve an excellence unique to their nature?

Telemachus (a skier): Assuredly, that is true.

Socrates: So we would not judge a lily's perfection by the flavour of its fruit, or an olive by the beauty of its flower?

Telemachus: Socrates, that would be foolish, and no just man would do so.

Socrates: And if this is so in the natural world, is it not also so in the world of men? Does not each man have a form of the good that is his?

Telemachus: Again, Socrates, what you say must be correct, though I wish you would cut to the chase.

Socrates: I propose that we proceed to begin to engage to consider the form of the good in a particular field of endeavour.

Telemachus: That seems a most sensible approach. I am eager to learn and anxious to be done.

Socrates: How then shall we determine the form of the good of a cricket captain?

Raucus (a barracker): Why we will imagine, um ... the perfect ... um ... cave ... and ...

Socrates: Oh for the love of the delphic virgins Raucus, I don't know why I bother sometimes. I'm going to limit my trialogues to two next time.

Raucus (sullenly): Well, sorry.

Socrates: Shall we not examine he who best approximates this form and study the excellence [$\alpha\rho\epsilon\tau\epsilon$] that is truly his?

Telemachus: Most assuredly, Socrates, that is the obvious way to proceed.

Raucus: Well, talk about the form of the brown-nose.

Socrates: And who is it who is the finest cricket captain in our history?

Raucus (who has at last followed the question): Why all the world knows that it is Mark Taylor whose exploits are celebrated in song and on slow-mo replay. Did he not just beat the Stoics in the golden ration 2:1?

Socrates: What form, then, does his excellence take?

Raucus: He is a leader of men, an oracle of meteorology, determined of demeanour, placid of character, and a lucky little bastard with it.

Socrates: And does he shame his men by the selfish accumulation of runs and the aggrandisement of his batting average?

Telemachus: Most assuredly not, Socrates, for that would only make them feel inadequate.

Socrates: We may conclude then, may we not, that the ideal form of the cricket captain should be as poor as possible.

Telemachus (hesitantly): — yes... —

Socrates: — for if a quality of batsmanship were necessary —

Telemachus (who is beginning to detect a sleight of hand here): — our good captain would most assuredly possess it?

Socrates: Precisely. The logical conclusion to which we are driven is that the form of the good has nothing to do with having good form.

Telemachus: You must be right Socrates, and only sophists and epicureans would deny it.

Socrates: Very well then. Now what is the form of the good of the $\omega\iota\chi\kappa\epsilon\tau\kappa\epsilon\pi\rho$?

Raucus (who understands the question again): Bumptiousness? Obstreperousness? Overweening —

(At this point the manuscript breaks off. It appears to have been burnt and the remains placed in a [Grecian] urn.)

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Letter

Dear Editor

Andrew Sharpe's argument (*Alternative Law Journal*, February 1997) that exempting women's sport from transgender legislation is discrimination against women cannot be allowed to stand. He states that 'it is through this legislative exception that women are represented as inferior and that inferior-

ity is naturalised.' If he is correct, then the very existence of women's sport, as separate from men's sport, is a representation of women as inferior.

The use of labels as 'inferior' is not helpful. Women's bodies are biologically different, and male biological advantages in strength, muscle to weight ratio and size are not negated by transgender reassignment. Women's sports

exist because of these differences. If 'the division of sport along sexed lines contains a certain arbitrariness' as Sharpe states, then I would like to see where he would draw the line.

My concern in speaking in Parliament against the legislation remains: if biologically male bodies cannot be excluded from women's sport, what is the point of having women's sport? Andrew Sharpe has confirmed my concern.

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