

**THE PHILOSOPHY OF  
SPORT**

**( A Collection of  
Original Essays )**

*Edited by*

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**CHARLES C THOMAS • PUBLISHER**  
*Springfield • Illinois • U.S.A.*

*Published and Distributed Throughout the World by*  
CHARLES C THOMAS · PUBLISHER  
BANNERSTONE HOUSE  
301-327 East Lawrence Avenue, Springfield, Illinois, U.S.A.

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ISBN 0-398-02871-0

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 73-5620

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*Printed in the United States of America*  
H-2

### **Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data**

Osterhoudt, Robert G. comp.

The philosophy of sport.

CONTENTS: The ontological status of sport: Weiss, P. Records and the man. Schacht, R. L. On Weiss on records, athletic activity, and the athlete. Fraleigh, W. P. On Weiss on records and on the significance of athletic records. Stone, R. E. Assumptions about the nature of human movement. Suits, B. The elements of sport. Kretchmar, S. Ontological possibilities: sport as play, [etc.]

1. Sports—Philosophy—Addresses, essays, lectures.

I. Title.

GV706.083 796'.01 73-5620

ISBN 0-398-02871-0

To my wife, Kerry,  
and children: Kris, Nicole, and Kirk

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## THE GRASSHOPPER; A THESIS CONCERNING THE MORAL IDEAL OF MAN

BERNARD SUITS

It was clear that the Grasshopper would not survive the winter, and his followers had gathered round him for what would no doubt be one of their last meetings. Most of them were reconciled to his approaching death, but a few were still outraged that such a thing could be allowed to happen. Prudence was one of the latter, and she approached the Grasshopper with a final plea. "Grasshopper," she said, "a few of us have agreed to give up a share of our food to tide you over till spring. Then next summer you can work to pay us back."

"My dear child," responded the Grasshopper, "you still don't understand. The fact is that I will *not* work to pay you back. I will not work at all. I made that perfectly clear, I thought, when the ant turned me away from his door. My going to him in the first place was, of course, a mistake. It was a weakness to which I shall not give in again."

"But," continued Prudence, "we don't begrudge you a portion of our food. If you like, we will not require you to pay us back. We are not, after all, ants."

"No," replied the Grasshopper, "you are not ants, not any more. But neither are you grasshoppers. Why should you give me the fruits of your labor? Surely that would not be just, when I tell you quite clearly that I will not pay you back."

"But *that* kind of justice," exclaimed Prudence, "is only the justice of ants. Grasshoppers have nothing to do with such 'justice'."

"You are right," said the Grasshopper. "The justice which is fairness in trading is irrelevant to the lives of true grasshoppers. But there is a justice which prevents me from accepting your offer. Why are you willing to work so that I may live? Is it not because I embody in my life what you aspire to, and you do not want the model of your aspirations to perish? Your wish is understandable and to a certain point even commendable. But at bottom it is inconsistent and self-defeating. It is also—and I hope you will not take offense at my blunt language—hypocritical."

"Those are hard words, Grasshopper."

"But well meant. My life, you must understand, was not intended to be a sideshow, yet that seems to be what you want to make of it. You should value me because you want to be like me, and not merely so that you can boast to the ants that you are an intimate of the Grasshopper, that oddity of nature."

"We have never done that, Grasshopper!"

"I believe you. But you might as well have done so if you believe that your proposal is a good one. For it amounts to working so that I may be idle, which is the opposite of the wisdom to which I have tried to lead you. The whole burden of my teaching is that you ought to be idle, but now you propose to use me as a pretext not only for working, but for working harder than ever, since you would have not only yourselves to feed, but me as well. I call this hypocritical because you would like to take credit for doing something which is no more than a ruse for avoiding living up to your ideals."

At this point Skepticus broke in with a laugh. "What the Grasshopper means, Prudence," he said, "is that we do not yet have the courage of his convictions. The point is that we should not only refuse to work for the Grasshopper, we should also refuse to work for ourselves. We, like him, should be dying for our principles. That we are not is the respect in which, though no longer ants, we are not

grasshoppers either. And, of course, given the premise that the life of the Grasshopper is the only life worth living, what he says certainly follows."

"Not quite, Scepticus," put in the Grasshopper. "I agree that the principles in question are worth dying for. But I must remind you that they are the principles of Grasshoppers. I am not here to persuade you to die for my principles, but to persuade you that *I* must. We ought to be quite clear about our respective roles. You are not here to die for me, but I for you. You only need, as Scepticus put it, the courage of my convictions up to a point; that is, courage sufficient to approve rather than to deplore my death. Neither of you is quite prepared to grant that approval, though for different reasons. You, Prudence, because, though you believe the principles are worth dying for, you do not believe they need to be died for; and you, Scepticus, because you are not even sure that the principles are worth dying for.

"Although," replied Scepticus, "I believe you to be the wisest being alive—which is why I have never left your side during the whole summer of your life—I have to admit that I am still not convinced that the life of the Grasshopper is the best life to live. Perhaps if you could give me a clearer vision of the good life as you see it my convictions would approach yours, and my courage as well. You might do this by one of the parables for which you are justly esteemed."

"Parables, my dear Scepticus," replied the Grasshopper, "ought to come at the end, not at the beginning, of serious inquiry; that is, only at the point where arguments fail. But speaking of parables, you may be sure that the ants will fashion one out of my career. They will very likely represent my life as a moral tale, the point of which is the superiority of a prudent to an idle way of life. But it should really be the Grasshopper who is the hero of the tale; he, not the ant, who should have the hearer's sympathy. The point of the parable, that is, should not be the ant's triumph, but the Grasshopper's tragedy. For one cannot help reflecting that if there were no winters to guard against, then the Grasshopper would not get his comeuppance nor the ant his shabby victory. The life of Grasshopper would be vindicated and that of the ant absurd."

"But there *are* winters to guard against," Prudence protested.

"No doubt. Still, it is not only possible, but on the whole more likely than not, that with accelerating advances in technology the time will come when there are in fact no winters. We may therefore conclude that although my timing may be a bit off, my way of life is not wrong in principle."

"The operation was successful but the patient died," put in Scepticus.

"No," replied the Grasshopper, "it's not quite like that. That my way of life may eventually be vindicated in practice, is, now that I think of it, really beside the point. Rather, it is the logic of my position which is at issue. And this logic shows that prudential actions (e.g., those actions we ordinarily call work) are self-defeating in principle. For prudence may be defined as the disposition (a) to sacrifice something good (e.g., leisure) if and only if such sacrifice is necessary for obtaining something better (e.g., survival), and (b) to reduce the number of good things requiring sacrifice, ideally to zero. The ideal of prudence, therefore, like the ideal of preventive medicine, is its own extinction. For if it were the case that no sacrifices of goods needed ever to be made, then prudential actions would be pointless, indeed impossible. This principle, knowledge of which I regard as an indispensable first step on the path to wisdom, the ants seem never to have entertained. The true Grasshopper sees that work is not self-justifying, and that his way of life is the final justification of any work whatever."

"But surely," replied Scepticus, "you are carrying your point to an unreasonable extreme. You talk as though there were but two possible alternatives: either a life devoted exclusively to play or a life devoted exclusively to work. But most of us realize that our labour is valuable because it permits us to play, and we are presumably seeking to achieve some kind of balance between work input and play output. People neither are, nor want to be, wholly grasshoppers or wholly ants, but a combination of the two; people are and want to be (if you will forgive a regrettably vulgar but spooneristically inevitable construction) grasshoppers or ants. We can, of course, all cease to work, but if we do then we cannot play for long either, for we will shortly die."

"I have three answers to make to what you have said, Scepticus, and I fear I shall have to make them quickly, for the sun has set and the frost is already creeping through the fields. First, evidently I was put on earth just to play out my life and die, and it would be impious of me to go against my destiny. That is, if you like, the theology of the case. But second, there is also a logic of the case, which is as inescapable as fate or, if you like, a fate of the case which is as inescapable as logic. The only argument against living the life of the Grasshopper arises from the contingent fact that at present one dies if one does not work. The answer to that argument is that my death is inevitable in any case. For if I am *improvident* in summer, then I will die in winter. And if I am *provident* in summer, then I will cease to be the Grasshopper, by definition. But I will be either provident or improvident in summer; there is no third alternative. Therefore, either I die or I cease to be the Grasshopper. But since I am just the Grasshopper, no more and no less, dying and ceasing to be the Grasshopper are one and the same thing for me. I cannot escape that logic or that fate. But since I am the Grasshopper and you are not, it would seem to follow that you are not compelled by this logic. As I intimated earlier, I often think that I was put on earth just to die for you; to bear that heavy but inevitable cross. But I confess that that is when I am in something of an early Christian—that is, late pagan—frame of mind. At other times (and this brings me to my third and final answer to your objection, Scepticus) I have the oddest notion that both of you are Grasshoppers in disguise; in fact, that everyone alive is really a Grasshopper."

At this Prudence whispered to Scepticus, "The end must be near; his mind is beginning to wander." But Scepticus just looked keenly at their friend and teacher as he continued to speak.

"I admit that this is a wild fancy," the Grasshopper was saying, "and I hesitate to tell you my thoughts. Still, I am used to being thought foolish, so I shall proceed, inviting you to make of my words what you will. Then let me tell you that I have always had a recurring dream, in which it is revealed to me—though how it is revealed I cannot say—that everyone alive is in fact engaged in playing elaborate games, while at the same time believing themselves to be going about their ordinary affairs. Carpenters, believing themselves

to be merely pursuing their trade, are really playing a game, and similarly with politicians, philosophers, lovers, murderers, thieves, and saints. Whatever occupation or activity you can think of, it is in reality a game. This revelation is, of course, astonishing. The sequel is terrifying. For in the dream I then go about persuading everyone I find of the great truth which has been revealed to me. How I am able to persuade them I do not know, though persuade them I do. But precisely at the point when each is persuaded—and this is the ghastly part—each ceases to exist. It is not just that my auditor vanishes on the spot, though indeed he does. It is that I also know with absolute certainty that he no longer exists anywhere. It is as though he had never been. Appalled as I am by the results of my teaching I cannot stop, but quickly move on to the next creature with my news, until I have preached the truth throughout the universe, and have converted everyone to oblivion. Finally I stand alone beneath the summer stars in absolute despair. Then I awaken to the joyful knowledge that the world is still teeming with sentient beings after all, and that it was only a dream. I see the carpenter and philosopher going about their work as before . . . But is it, I ask myself, just as before? Is the carpenter on his roof-top simply hammering nails, or is he making some move in an ancient game whose rules he has forgotten? But now the chill creeps up my legs. I grow drowsy. Dear friends, farewell."

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The rest of my remarks will consist in an elucidation of Grasshopper logic, an examination of Grasshopper ideals, and an interpretation of Grasshopper dreams. I hope to accomplish these tasks with the help of a definition of game-playing. Here is the definition:

To play a game is to attempt to achieve a specific state of affairs, using only means permitted by rules, where the rules prohibit more efficient in favor of less efficient means, and where such rules are accepted just because they make possible such activity.

In high-jumping, for example, the contestants strive to be on the other side of a barrier. But certain means for achieving this goal are ruled out, for example, walking around the barrier, ducking under it, or using a ladder or catapult to get over it. The goal of the contestants

is not to be on the other side of the barrier *per se*, since aside from the game they are playing they are unlikely to have any reason whatever for being on the other side. Their goal is not *simply* to get to the other side, but to do this by using only means permitted by rules; namely, running from a certain distance and then jumping. The players accept the rules, furthermore, just because they want to act within the limitations the rules impose; that is, they accept rules so that they can play a game, and they accept these rules so that they can play this game.

There is thus a sharp difference between the ways in which we justify ordinary rules and the ways in which we justify the rules of games. To the question why there are traffic rules we respond, so that automobiles will not be continually crashing into one another. While to the question why Smith is hitting a ball with a funny stick we respond, because he is playing golf. But we do not justify Jones's obedience to the traffic rules by the fact that he is driving a car, and we do not justify Smith's hitting a ball with a funny stick by the fact that he wants to get the ball into a hole.

For convenience, I have formulated a one sentence version of my definition: Playing a game is the voluntary attempt to overcome unnecessary obstacles.

Now let us return to a proposition which was advanced by the Grasshopper as a basic principle; namely, that the life of the Grasshopper—that is, a life of play—is the only justification for work, so that if there were no need for work, we would simply spend all of our time at play. Now, if playing and playing games are the same thing, and if I have correctly defined game-playing, then it would follow that the Grasshopper is recommending a life devoted to the kind of activity I have defined. But it does not seem to be the case that playing, as the Grasshopper uses that term, can be the same as game-playing. The Grasshopper uses the terms “work” and “play” as logical complements of that class of things which we may call “intentional behaviour.” His assumption is that if an action is not work then it is play, and *vice versa*. But *prima facie*, at least, this is an unconvincing dichotomy. For example, passing the time of day with a colleague seems to be neither work nor play, and attempting to solve a double crostic seems to be both work and play. As descriptions,

therefore, the words “work” and “play” do not designate sub-sets of intentional behaviour which are either exclusive of each other or exhaustive of the set which includes them. My conclusion, however, is not that the Grasshopper has given us poor descriptions, but that he has not given us descriptions at all. He is using the words “work” and “play” stipulatively rather than descriptively. He means by “work” activity which is instrumentally valuable, and he means by “play” activity which is intrinsically valuable.

It may be wondered how I can be sure that that is what the Grasshopper intended. The answer, of course, is that he is *my* Grasshopper, and that he intends precisely what I intend him to intend. By “play,” then, the Grasshopper intends to designate all those activities which are intrinsically valuable to those who engage in them. Game-playing, as I define it, is one such activity, but not all such activities are game-playing. Thus one may value for their own sake—value intrinsically—things like scratching an itch or listening to a Beethoven quartet, but their being intrinsically valued does not make such things games.

The thesis I would like to advance has three main elements. They are (1) play as the Grasshopper uses that term, (2) game-playing, as I use that term, and (3) what I shall call the moral ideal of man. I take it that what the Grasshopper means by “play” and what I mean by “game-playing” are sufficiently clear, so let me just say a word about the moral ideal of man. By the phrase I mean that thing or those things whose only justification is that they justify everything else; or, as Aristotle put it, those things for the sake of which we do other things, but which are not themselves for the sake of anything else. The Grasshopper is making the claim that play as he defines it is identical with the moral ideal of man. I shall attempt to establish a position which is, in effect, an interpretation or modification of the Grasshopper's claim. This position can be expressed by two related contentions. The first is that Grasshopperian play is necessary but not sufficient for an adequate account of the moral ideal of man. The second is that game-playing performs a crucial role in delineating that ideal—a role which cannot be performed by any other activity, and without which an account of the moral ideal is either incomplete or impossible.

In order to support these contentions I would like to borrow from Plato, as I have already borrowed from Plato in creating a Socratic Grasshopper. This time I would like to use the kind of device Plato used in trying to get at certain characteristics of the human psyche. If we look at the state, said Plato, we will find there the magnified extensions of the characteristics of the psyche that we are seeking; and, being magnified, they will be easier to recognize. Somewhat similarly, I would like to begin by representing the Grasshopper's version of the moral ideal of man as though it were already instituted as a social reality. We will then be able to talk about a Utopia which embodies that ideal—that is, an actual state of affairs where people are engaged only in those activities which they value intrinsically.

Let us imagine, then, that all of the instrumental activities of human beings have been eliminated. All of the things ordinarily called work are now done by wholly automated machines which are activated solely by mental telepathy, so that not even a minimum staff is necessary for the housekeeping chores of society. Furthermore, there are so many goods being produced so abundantly that even the most acquisitive cravings of the Getty's and Onassis's of society are instantly satisfied, and anyone who wishes may be a Getty or an Onassis. Economically, the condition of man is a south sea island paradise, where yachts, diamonds, racing cars, symphonic performances, mansions, and trips around the world are as easily plucked from the environment as breadfruit is in Tahiti. We have, then, eliminated the need for productive labour, for the administration of such labour, and for a system of financing and distributing such production. All of the economic problems of man have been solved forever. Are there any other problems? There are indeed. There are all of the inter-personal problems which do not depend upon economic scarcity.

Let us, then, further imagine that all possible inter-personal problems have been solved by appropriate methods. Let us suppose that psychoanalysis has made such giant strides that it actually cures people, or that all the various kinds of group treatment have proved successful, or that some quite new development in socio- or psycho-therapy or in pharmacology has made it possible to effect 100 per cent cures for all psychic disturbances. As a result of these developments there

is no longer any competition for love, attention, approval, or admiration, just as there is no longer any strife in the acquisition of material goods. Perhaps a single example will serve to illustrate the state of affairs in question. Let us take the case of sex. Under present conditions, or at least under conditions of the relatively recent past, there is a short supply of willing sexual objects relative to demand. The reason for this is the prevalence of inhibitions in the seekers of such objects, in the objects themselves, or in both, such that great expenditures of instrumental effort are required in order to overcome them and thus get at the intrinsic object of desire. But with everyone enjoying superb mental health the necessity for all this hard work is removed, and sexual partners are every bit as accessible as yachts and diamonds.

At this point I would like to cast the presentation of my argument in dialogue form once again, and for that purpose I would like to resurrect the Grasshopper. Besides being useful for my exposition, such resurrection is also dramatically fitting, since the Grasshopper seems a bit undecided as to whether he is Socrates or Jesus Christ. Let us imagine, then, that the Grasshopper is once again discoursing with Scepticus and Prudence. Prudence, by the way, will have only one line in this renewed colloquy. To resume, then. The point has been made that sex would not have to be struggled for in Utopia. Scepticus then raises another question.

- S. But what about love, approval, attention, and admiration, Grasshopper? Even in Utopia people would have to work to achieve these.
- G. On the contrary, Scepticus, many people seem to believe that the kind of love, attention, and admiration alone worth having is just the kind that one ought *not* to work at.
- S. Yes, but many other people, such as marriage counselors, take a quite different view. They are always saying things like, "You have to *work* at your marriage, you know."
- G. Yes, but what does this "working at" mean in the case of marriage or, for that matter, in the case of any other intrinsically valued relationship between people? Does it not mean, essentially, being tolerant of, and helpful with respect to, one another's social and psychological short-comings? But in Utopia we are

- supposing that there are no such short-comings to be tolerant of. Furthermore, whether it is or is not the case that in Utopia one will have to work at something in order to gain love and admiration, it cannot be love and admiration at which one works. We admire a person who works hard, let us say, at teaching. But we admire him because he works hard at teaching, not because he works hard at being admired. I suggest that for convenience we lump together under the word "approval" all of the pro-attitudes we have been talking about, and then ask whether there is anything at all that our Utopians could do to gain approval.
- S. Very well. First, then, it is clear that they cannot gain approval by their economic industry, since there is no need for such industry. And I take it that we must also rule out approval for governing well, since with no competing claims for goods requiring legislation, adjudication, and execution, there is no need for government. What seems to be left for approval is excellence in moral, artistic and intellectual accomplishment. Do you agree?
- G. For our present purpose, at any rate, I think your list will do. Let us consider moral goodness first. Will you agree with me that moral action is possible only when it is morally desirable to prevent or to rectify some wrong or evil that is about to be or has been done somebody?
- S. Yes, I agree with that.
- G. But we are also agreed, are we not, that in Utopia no evil or wrong can befall anyone?
- S. Yes, that is true of Utopia by definition, since Utopia is just a dramatization of the ideal of human existence, and evil and wrong-doing are obviously inconsistent with such an ideal.
- G. Well, then, if no evil can befall anyone in Utopia, there will simply be no demand there for the performance of good deeds. They will, in fact, be quite impossible, and therefore not a means for gaining approval. Morality is relevant only to the extent that the ideal has not been realized, but there is no room at all for morality in the moral ideal itself, just as there is no room for revolution in the ideal which inspires revolutionary action.
- S. What about excellence in art? We admire superior artistic creators, good critics, and accomplished connoisseurs.

- G. You will no doubt find what I am about to suggest very hard to accept, but it strikes me that there is no place in the moral ideal for any of the skills you have mentioned.
- S. I must admit, Grasshopper, that I find your suggestion positively staggering. How on earth do you arrive at such a strange conclusion?
- G. I believe that these skills would not exist in Utopia because art would not exist there. Art has a subject matter, which consists in the actions and passions of men: with human aspirations and frustrations, hopes and fears, triumphs and tragedies, with flaws of character, moral dilemmas, joy and sorrow. But it would seem that none of these necessary ingredients of art could exist in Utopia.
- S. Perhaps a good deal of art would be impossible for the Utopians, but surely not all of it. There is, or at least there used to be, a school of aesthetics which regarded art as essentially consisting in pure forms, such that content was either adventitious and therefore dispensable or, preferably, not present at all. Art as shape or design or form does not require the kind of subject matter you are talking about.
- G. My own belief is that form is not separable from content in the way you suggest, but if it were, then the creation of designs, whether in tones, shapes, colours, or words could, and presumably would, be turned over to computers, since the products to be turned out would be, by hypothesis, uninspired by human emotion.
- S. Even if the Utopians could not admire workers in the field of the arts, they could still admire accomplished thinkers: scientists, philosophers, and the like. Persons, that is, who are engaged in the acquisition of knowledge. Suppose we consider that possibility.
- G. Very well, let us do so. Now, by hypothesis, we are supposing that our Utopians have completely eliminated the need for any instrumental activity whatever. But the acquisition of knowledge, just like the acquisition of anything else, is an instrumental process; that is, acquisition is instrumental to possession, no matter what it is that one is seeking to possess—food and shelter or knowledge. And just as we have supposed that our Utopians

have acquired all the economic goods they can use, we must assume that they have acquired all the knowledge there is. In Utopia, therefore, there are no scientists, philosophers, or any other intellectual investigators.

- S. Then it seems that there is nothing that one could do in Utopia in order to gain approval. But we were talking about approval only to try to discover whether such things as love and friendship could exist in Utopia. But human relationships like love and friendship include more than approval. Just as important, surely, is the *sharing* which is generally recognized to be very prominent in love and friendship. And mutual interest in something does not imply a deficiency to be overcome on the part of those who have such an interest.
- G. True enough, Skepticus, but in Utopia what is there left to share? The sharing which admittedly plays a large part in love and friendship cannot be the sharing of love and friendship themselves. There must be something else; something like success and failure, adversity and prosperity, the enjoyment or creation of art, intellectual inquiry, respect for the moral qualities each possesses, etc. There is simply nothing of any importance in Utopia to be shared, so that if love and friendship could exist in Utopia, it would have to be kinds which contained neither approval nor shared interests; at most, therefore, extremely attenuated forms of love and friendship.
- S. Grasshopper, let me collect my wits. In Utopia man cannot labour, he cannot administer or govern, there is no art, no morality, no science, no love, no friendship. The only thing which our analysis has not utterly destroyed is sex. Perhaps the moral ideal of man is just a supreme orgasm.
- P. Don't complain, Skepticus. It's a lot better than nothing.
- G. Of course, we mustn't forget game-playing. That has not been ruled out.
- S. No doubt, no doubt. Are we then to conclude that the moral ideal of man is sex and games or, as we might say, fun and games?
- G. Actually, now that I think of it, I am no longer all that sure about sex.

- S. Oh, come now, Grasshopper!
- G. No, Skepticus, I am quite serious. The obsessive popularity that sex has always enjoyed is, I suspect, inseparably bound up with man's non-Utopian condition. Sex, as we have come to know and love it, is part and parcel with repression, guilt, naughtiness, domination and submission, liberation, rebellion, sadism and masochism, romance, and theology. But none of these things has a place in Utopia. Therefore, we ought at least to face the possibility that with the removal of all of these constituents of sex as we value it, there will be little left but a pleasant sensation in the loins—or wherever. People like Norman Browne in his book *Life Against Death* take the view that sex is something which has been distorted and corrupted by the repressions and restraints of civilization, and that with the end of civilization (which Browne looks forward to with great keenness), sex will re-emerge as the unsullied item that it was in our infancies. We will then all become happy children once again, enjoying without inhibition our polymorphous perversity. But if, as I believe, sex is the product rather than the victim of civilization, then when civilization goes, sex—at least as a very highly valued item—goes as well.
- S. If not convinced I am for the moment silenced.
- G. Very well. Then we appear to be left with game-playing as the only remaining candidate for Utopian occupation, and therefore the only remaining constituent of the moral ideal of man.
- S. And now I suppose you are going to rule out game-playing as well. Grasshopper, I begin to suspect that what you are really up to is to show that the concept of Utopia itself is paradoxical, as philosophers from time to time try to show that the alleged perfections of the Deity entail paradoxes.
- G. Quite the contrary, Skepticus. I believe that Utopia is intelligible, and I believe that game-playing is what makes Utopia intelligible. What we have shown thus far is that there does not appear to be anything to *do* in Utopia, precisely because in Utopia all instrumental activities have been eliminated. There is nothing to strive for precisely because everything has already been achieved. What we need, therefore, is some activity in which what is instru-

mental is inseparably combined with what is intrinsically valuable, and where the activity is not itself an instrument for some further end. Games meet this requirement perfectly. For in games we must have obstacles which we can strive to overcome *just so that* we can possess the activity as a whole, namely, playing the game. Game-playing makes it possible to retain enough effort in Utopia to make life worth living.

- S. What you are saying is that in Utopia the only thing left to do would be to play games, so that game-playing turns out to be the whole of the moral ideal of man.
- G. So it would appear, at least at this stage of our investigation.
- S. I don't think so.
- G. I beg your pardon?
- S. I don't think that conclusion follows.
- G. You don't.
- S. I believe we made a mistake earlier on.
- G. A mistake.
- S. Yes. Earlier on.
- G. Perhaps you would be good enough to point it out to me.
- S. I shall be happy to do so. When you were advancing the view that science, or any kind of intellectual inquiry, was an instrumental activity and thus could have no place in the moral ideal of man, I had some misgivings, and now I believe I know why. You know, Grasshopper, as well as I do, that people who are seriously engaged in the pursuit of knowledge value that pursuit at least as much as they do the knowledge which is its goal. Indeed, it is a commonplace that once a scientist or philosopher after great effort solves a major problem he is very let down, and far from rejoicing in the possession of his solution or discovery, he cannot wait to be engaged once more in the quest. Success is something to shoot at, not to live with. And of course, now that I think of it, this is true not only of intellectual inquiry, but it certainly can be true of any instrumental activity whatever, and frequently is. We might call this state of affairs the Alexandrian condition of man, after Alexander the Great. When there are no more worlds to conquer we are filled not with satisfaction but with despair.

- G. How do you think we could have made such an elementary mistake, Skepticus?
- S. I think we failed to take note of the fact that an activity which is, from one point of view, instrumentally valuable can, from another point of view, be intrinsically valuable. Thus, we would agree that carpentry is an instrumental activity; that is, instrumental to the existence of houses. But to a person who enjoys building for its own sake, that otherwise instrumental activity has intrinsic value as well. And the same could be true of anyone who really enjoys his work, whatever that work might be. It seems to follow from this that we may now re-instate most of the activities we thought we were obliged to banish from Utopia. The ideal, therefore, does not consist wholly in game-playing.
- G. I believe you are correct, Skepticus, in pointing out that otherwise instrumental activities can be valued as ends in themselves. But I am not convinced that it follows from that fact that game-playing is not the only possible Utopian occupation. Let me see if I can persuade you of this. Let us continue to think of the moral ideal of man as an actual Utopian community, then, but where, instead of supposing that all—so to speak—*objectively* instrumental activities have been banished—physical and intellectual labour, and the like—what has been banished is simply all activity which is not *valued* intrinsically, thus leaving it open to any Utopian to enjoy the exertions of productive endeavor. Thus, just as some Utopians will be able to pluck yachts and diamonds off Utopian trees, others will be able to pluck off opportunities to fix the kitchen sink, to solve economic problems, to push forward the frontiers of scientific knowledge, and so on, with respect to anything a Utopian might find intrinsically valuable.
- S. Yes, Grasshopper. That seems a much more satisfactory picture of Utopia and of the moral ideal of man.
- G. Splendid. Now, to continue. It is clear, I should think, that the opportunity to work—or whatever other instrumental activity it might be which is desired—should not be left to chance in Utopia. If, at any given period of time, *everyone* in Utopia wanted to work at something, then such work should be avail-

able for them all. And if nobody wanted to work, then it would not follow (as it surely would in our present non-Utopian existence) that society would collapse. And similarly, of course, with intellectual inquiry. That is to say, with respect to any objectively instrumental activity whatever, it would have to be the case that such activity *could* be undertaken, but it would also have to be the case that no such activity *need* be undertaken. For another way of saying that the Utopians only do those things which they value intrinsically is to say that they always do things because they want to, and never because they must.

- S. Yes, that seems correct.
- G. Very well. Now let us consider two cases that would inevitably arise in Utopia. Case One: John Striver has spent his first decade in Utopia doing all the things that newcomers to Utopia usually do. He has traveled round the world several times, loafed a good deal in the sun, and so on, and now, having become bored, he wants some *activity* to be engaged in. He therefore makes a request (to the Computer in Charge or to God or whatever) saying that he wants to *work* at something, and he selects carpentry. Now, there is no demand for houses which John's carpentry will serve, because all the houses of whatever possible kind are already instantly available to the citizens of Utopia. What kind of house, then, should he build? Surely it would be the kind whose construction would give him the greatest satisfaction, and we may suggest that such satisfaction would require that building the house would provide enough of a challenge to make the task interesting while not so difficult that John would utterly botch the job. Now, what I would like to put to you, Skepticus, is that this activity is essentially no different from playing golf, or any other game. Just as there is no need, aside from the game of golf, to get little balls into holes in the ground, so in Utopia there is no need, aside from the activity of carpentry, for the house which is the product of that carpentry. And just as a golfer could get balls into holes much more efficiently by dropping them in with his hand, so John could *obtain* a house simply by pressing a telepathic button. But it is clear that John is no more interested in simply *having* a house than the golfer is in

*having* ball-filled holes. It is the *bringing about* of these results which is important to John and to the golfer rather than the results themselves. Both, that is to say, are involved in a voluntary attempt to overcome unnecessary obstacles; both, that is to say, are playing games. This solution, it is interesting to note, was also open to Alexander the Great. Since he had run out of worlds to conquer by impetuously conquering the only world there was, he *could* have given it all back and started over again, just as one divides up the chess pieces equally after each game in order to be able to play another game. Had Alexander done that, his action would no doubt have been regarded by his contemporaries as somewhat frivolous, but from the Utopian point of view his failure to take such an obvious step would indicate that Alexander did not really place all that high a value on *the activity of conquering worlds*. Case Two: The early experience of William Seeker in Utopia is very similar to that of John Striver. William, too, after a time, wishes to be able to achieve something. But whereas John's abilities and interests had led him to choose a manual art, William is led to choose the pursuit of scientific truth. Now again, how much scientific inquiry there is to undertake at any given time cannot be left to chance, since the interest in doing scientific research might far exceed the amount of research that could logically be undertaken at any given time. It is even conceivable that there would come a time when all scientific investigation had come to an end; a time, that is, when everything knowable was in fact known. Since, therefore, there could be no guarantee that there would always be an objective opportunity to do scientific research, it follows that it would be undesirable to have Utopian scientists stop doing research on a problem simply because the problem had already been solved. For what is important in Utopia is not the objective state of scientific knowledge, but the *attitude* of the Utopian scientist, which may be described in the following way. If the solution of the problem he is working on were readily retrievable from the memory banks of the computers, the Utopian scientist would not retrieve the solution. This is just like the devotee of crossword puzzles, who knows that the

answers to the puzzle will be published next day. Still, he tries to solve the puzzle today, even though there is no urgency whatever in having the solution today rather than tomorrow. And just as the dedicated puzzle-solver will say, "Don't tell me the answer; let me work it out for myself," William Seeker will have the same attitude toward his scientific investigations. Even if other means of coming to know the answer are readily available, he voluntarily rejects these means so that he will have something to do. But this is again, I submit, to play a game.

- S. What you seem to be saying is that a Utopian could engage in all of the achieving activities that normally occupy people in the non-Utopian world, but that the quality, so to speak, of such endeavors would be quite different.
- G. Yes. The difference in quality, as you put it, can be seen in the contrast in attitude of a lumber-jack when he is, on the one hand, plying his trade of cutting down trees for the saw-mill and, on the other hand, when he is cutting down trees in competition with other lumber-jacks at the annual wood-cutter's picnic. Thus, all the things we now regard as trades, indeed all instances of organized endeavor whatever would, if they continued to exist in Utopia, be sports. So that in addition to hockey, baseball, golf, tennis, and so on, there would also be the sports of business administration, jurisprudence, philosophy, production management, motor mechanics, *ad*, for all practical purposes, *in finitum*.
- S. So that the moral ideal of man does, after all, consist in game-playing.
- G. I think not, Skepticus. For now that the Utopians have something to do, both admiration and sharing are again possible, and so love and friendship as well. And with the re-introduction of the emotions associated with striving—the joy of victory, you know, and the bitterness of defeat—emotional content is provided for art. And perhaps morality will also be present, possibly in the form of what we now call sportsmanship. So, while game-playing need not be the sole occupation of Utopia, it is the essence, the "without which not" of Utopia. What I envisage is a culture quite different from our own in terms of its *basis*. Whereas our own culture is based on various kinds of scarcity—

economic, moral, scientific, erotic—the culture of Utopia will be based on plenitude. The notable institutions of Utopia, accordingly, will not be economic, moral, scientific, and erotic instruments—as they are today—but institutions which foster sport and other games. But sports and games unthought of today; sports and games that will require for their exploitation—that is, for their mastery and enjoyment—as much energy as is expended today in serving the institutions of scarcity. It should behoove us, therefore, to begin the immense work of devising these wonderful games now, for if we solve all of our problems of scarcity very soon, we may very well find ourselves with nothing to do when Utopia arrives.

- S. You mean we should begin to store up games—very much like food for winter—against the possibility of an endless and endlessly boring summer. You seem to be a kind of ant after all, Grasshopper, though, I must admit, a distinctly odd kind of ant.
- G. No, Skepticus, I am truly the Grasshopper; that is, an adumbration of the ideal of existence, just as the games we play in our non-Utopian lives are intimations of things to come. For even now it is games which give us something to do when there is nothing to do. We thus call games "pastimes," and regard them as trifling fillers of the interstices in our lives. But they are much more important than that. They are clues to the future. And their serious cultivation now is perhaps our only salvation. That, if you like, is the metaphysics of leisure time.
- S. Still, Grasshopper, I find that I have a serious reservation about the Utopia you have constructed. It sounds a grand sort of life for those who are very keen on games, but not everyone *is* keen on games. People like to be building houses, or running large corporations, or doing scientific research to some purpose, you know, not just for the hell of it.
- G. The point is well taken, Skepticus. You are saying that Bobby Fischer and Phil Esposito and Howard Cosell might be very happy in paradise, but that John Striver and William Seeker are likely to find quite futile their make-believe carpentry and their make-believe science.
- S. Precisely. (pause) Well, Grasshopper, what answer do you

have to make to this objection? (There is another pause).

Grasshopper, are you dying again?

G. No, Skepticus.

S. What is it then? You look quite pale.

G. Skepticus, I have just had a vision.

S. Good lord!

G. Shall I tell you about it?

S. (Skepticus glances furtively at his wrist watch). Yes. Well. Certainly, Grasshopper, please proceed.

G. The vision was evidently triggered by your suggestion that not everyone likes to play games, and it was a vision of the downfall of Utopia, a vision of paradise lost. I saw time passing in Utopia, and I saw the Strivers and the Seekers coming to the conclusion that if their lives were merely games, then those lives were scarcely worth living. Thus motivated, they began to delude themselves into believing that man-made houses were more valuable than computer-produced houses, and that long-solved scientific problems needed resolving. They then began to persuade others of the truth of these opinions, and even went so far as to represent the computers as the enemies of mankind. Finally they enacted legislation proscribing their use. Then more time passed, and it seemed to everyone that the carpentry game and the science game were not games at all, but vitally necessary tasks which had to be performed in order for mankind to survive. Thus, although all of the apparently productive activities of man were games, they were not believed to be games. Games were once again relegated to the role of mere pastimes useful for bridging the gaps in our serious endeavors. And if it had been possible to convince these people that they were in fact playing games, they would have felt that their whole lives had been as nothing—a mere stage play or empty dream.

S. Yes, Grasshopper, they would believe themselves to be nothing at all, and one can imagine them, out of chagrin and mortification, simply vanishing on the spot, as though they had never been.

G. Quite so, Skepticus. As you are quick to see, my vision has solved the mystery of the dream I was telling you about earlier, just be-

fore I died. The message of the dream now seems perfectly clear. The dream was saying to me, "Come now, Grasshopper, you know very well that most people will not want to spend their lives playing games. Life for most people will not be worth living if they cannot believe that they are doing *something* useful, whether it is providing for their families or formulating a theory of relativity.

S. Yes, it seems a perfectly straight forward case of an anxiety dream. You were acting out in a disguised way certain hidden fears you had about your thesis concerning the moral ideal of man.

G. No doubt. But tell me, Skepticus, were my repressed fears about the fate of mankind, or were they about the cogency of my thesis? Clearly they could not have been about both. For if my fears about the fate of mankind are justified, then I need not fear that my thesis is faulty, since it is that thesis which justifies those fears. And if my thesis is faulty, then I need not fear for mankind, since that fear stems from the cogency of my thesis.

S. Then tell me which you feared, Grasshopper. You alone are in a position to know.

G. I wish there were time, Skepticus, but again I feel the chill of death. Goodbye.

S. Not goodbye, Grasshopper, *au revoir*.

## SPORT AND ETHICS IN THE CONTEXT OF CULTURE

JAN BROEKHOFF

Play lies outside the antithesis of wisdom and folly, and equally outside those of truth and falsehood, good and evil. Although play in itself is a non-material activity it has no moral function. (7).

### I

In the course of our discussions of play theory, many of my students have expressed puzzlement about Huizinga's segregation of play from the realm of ethics. This is not surprising, since play has hardly ever been free from valuations of virtue or sin. To Friedrich von Schiller "man is only whole when he plays," to Paul Weiss ". . . a