



universität
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MASTERARBEIT / MASTER'S THESIS

Titel der Masterarbeit / Title of the Master's Thesis

On the Importance of Specifics in Blowout Ethics

The Effects of Running up the Score and Didactical Considerations
for Teaching This Issue of Sports Ethics in Secondary Education

verfasst von / submitted by

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angestrebter akademischer Grad / in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts (MA)

Wien, 2019 / Vienna, 2019

Studienkennzahl lt. Studienblatt /
degree programme code as it appears on
The student record sheet:

UA 066 641

Studienrichtung lt. Studienblatt
degree programme as it appears on
The student record sheet:

Interdisziplinäres Masterstudium
Ethik für Schule und Beruf

Betreut von / Supervisor:

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STATUTORY DECLARATION

I declare that I have authored this thesis independently, that I have not used other than the declared sources/resources, and that I have explicitly marked all material which has been quoted either literally or by content from the used sources.

Mag. Matthias Neumann

FOREWORD

Since I started playing American football at age 13, I have wondered about the nature of sportsmanship. Once, after suffering a crushing defeat, a teammate of mine asked: “Can we actually be proud of ourselves for scoring a touchdown late in the game against their backups? I mean, seriously, isn’t it sad that we could no longer attempt to score against their starters once their coaches decided to ease up?” These questions sparked my interest in blowout victories in sports.

After years of playing sports, even more years of coaching, and a diploma’s thesis in sports ethics, I was given the opportunity to explore the academic discourse of blowout ethics. For this, I would like to thank my supervisor MMRag. DDr. Paul Tarmann who encouraged me to pursue this subject as a Master’s thesis.

I would also like to thank all those who supported me during this challenging period of my life, with special thanks to my father, who has been my most important supporter all throughout my life.

Last, I would like to thank the many fellow American football players and coaches who I came to know during my long and still continuing journey in what I believe to be the most fascinating, complex, strategic, and physically demanding sport in the world.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1. INTRODUCTION TO THE SUBJECT	1
1.2. RELEVANCE	1
1.3. METHOD	2
2. CONCEPTIONS OF SPORTSMANSHIP	4
2.1. SPORTSMANSHIP IN SPORTS VS. SPORTSMANSHIP IN ATHLETICS (KEATING).....	5
2.2. SPORTSMANSHIP AS A SOCIAL UNION, A MEANS IN PROMOTION OF PLEASURE AND A FORM OF ALTRUISM (ARNOLD).....	10
2.3. SPORTSMANSHIP AS A GOLDEN MEAN (FEEZELL).....	14
2.4. SPORTSMANSHIP AS AN OUTCOME OF <i>THIRDNESS</i> (NLANDU)	16
2.5. SPORTSMANSHIP AS A CONGLOMERATE OF FOUR CONFLICTING VIRTUES (ABAD)	20
2.6. SPORTSMANSHIP IN EMPIRICAL RESEARCH.....	23
3. BLOWOUT ETHICS.....	30
3.1. UNEVEN CONTESTS AS A SOURCE OF PRIORITY CONFLICTS	30
3.2. THE ANTI-BLOWOUT THESIS (AB THESIS) AND THE CASE AGAINST IT	31
3.3. DEFENSE OF THE AB THESIS – ISSUES OF INCOMPETENCE AND HUMILIATION	39
3.4. ON THE CONNECTION OF INTRINSIC DISGRACEFULNESS AND LOSING BY A WIDE MARGIN.....	41
3.5. DEFENSE OF THE REVISED AB THESIS (RAB THESIS)	43
3.6. A CRITIQUE OF THE RAB THESIS.....	44
3.7. FOUR MAJOR DISTINCTIONS AND THE MERCY RULE	46
3.8. BLOWOUTS IN THE LIGHT OF ARISTOTLE’S CONCEPTION OF JUSTICE.....	48
3.9. THE IMPORTANCE OF SPECIFICS IN BLOWOUT ETHICS	50
3.9.1. STATE OF THE DISCOURSE	50
3.9.2. THE CASE FOR TWO ADDITIONAL DISTINCTIONS	51

4. DIDACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.....	59
4.1. JUSTIFICATION – WHY TEACH ABOUT BLOWOUTS ANYWAY?.....	59
4.2. THE DIALOGIC-PRAGMATIC PARADIGM BY MARTENS.....	60
4.2.1. FOUNDATION	61
4.2.2. DOING PHILOSOPHY – AN ELEMENTARY CULTURAL TECHNIQUE AND PRINCIPLE OF BILDUNG	61
4.2.3. THREE INSTANCES OF DIALOGUE	63
4.2.4. FIVE METHODS OF PHILOSOPHICAL THINKING	66
4.2.5. CONTENT	69
5. EXEMPLARY LESSON PLAN	70
5.1. LEARNING GOALS.....	70
5.2. PLANNING MATRIX.....	72
5.3. ANALYSIS OF SEQUENCES.....	73
5.3.1. FIRST SEQUENCE	73
5.3.2. SECOND SEQUENCE	75
5.3.3. THIRD SEQUENCE	76
5.3.4. FOURTH SEQUENCE	78
5.3.5. FIFTH SEQUENCE	79
5.4. RECONCILIATION WITH THE PHILOSOPHY CURRICULUM	80
5.4.1. PLACEMENT WITHIN THE CURRICULUM	80
5.4.2. COMPETENCIES.....	81
6. CONCLUSION	83
7. ABSTRACT.....	85
8. REFERENCES.....	86
9. ONLINE SOURCES.....	91
10. TABLE OF FIGURES	93
11. TABLE OF TABLES	94

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. INTRODUCTION TO THE SUBJECT

Lopsided victories in sporting contests raise a variety of ethical questions. Should winning contestants, after having built an uncatchable lead, slow down in order to avoid embarrassing or humiliating the losing contestants? Should they be *required* to do so from an ethical perspective? However, does the action of consciously slowing down in itself not constitute unsporting behavior, an implicit form of telling opponents that they are not serious competitors? In the context of sports involving a high degree of physicality, is slowing down mandatory because of the high risk of injuries in a contest between uneven competitors? If it is true that winning contestants should avoid running up the score after gaining an unassailable lead, how exactly are they supposed to do this? Should they ease up physically (play softer), strategically (run down the clock in timed events) or perhaps both? Also, if one values records, is slowing down in one-sided contests ethically questionable since it leads to a distortion of stats? Is there even a one-size-fits-all sports answer or should this question be posed separately for different sporting events?

Finding answers to these questions has been the quest of many sports ethicists, and in this thesis I try to build on their discourse, providing personal arguments that stress the importance of the specifics of the sport and individual situations. Additionally, I show how this topic might be taught to students in secondary schools, with reference to the dialogic-pragmatic philosophy didactics developed by Martens.

1.2. RELEVANCE

Compared to sporting events at the professional level, amateur contests have a greater chance of playing out in a one-sided manner. One rarely sees a score of 93:7 in a professional basketball game. In contrast, this score emerged at a high school women's basketball game between East Bridgewater High School and Madison Park High School last year.¹ Barros-Depina, a member of the Madison Park High School team, commented on their defeat: "Very demoralized and sad

¹ See <https://boston.cbslocal.com/2018/03/06/girls-high-school-basketball-blowout-score-east-bridgewater-madison-park/> (last accessed: 25.10.2019)

and very embarrassed. Just made me want to hide and make me never play ball again and go home.”² Statements like this reveal the level of psychological distress that lop-sided defeats can cause. Other famous blowouts include a 91:0 victory in a high school football game in Texas³ and a 21:0 victory in a high school soccer game in Southern California.⁴ In amateur sports, the list is long and steadily growing and the reader, by now, will know that the topic is not entirely theoretical but tightly connected to real-world phenomena with associated real-world consequences.

1.3. METHOD

After introducing the topic of *blowout ethics* in Chapter 1, followed by an explanation of its relevance, the second chapter spotlights different models of sportsmanship. Among the theories presented here are the traditional and influential accounts of Keating, Arnold and Feezell, as well as more recent paradigms suggested by Nlandu and Abad. In the third chapter, the discourse of blowout ethics will be reconstructed. A paper by Dixon with the programmatic title *On Sportsmanship and “Running Up the Score”*, which initiated the academic discourse of this issue, serves as a starting point. Critiques by Hardman et al. and Feezell will be discussed as well as Dixon’s replies. Three decades after the publication of Dixon’s paper, Sailors was the first to explicitly stress the importance of the specifics of morally right and wrong behavior during blowouts. In her paper *Mercy Killing: Sportsmanship and Blowouts*, Sailors summarized the discourse of blowout ethics that existed thus far: “The primary flaw with all such claims about blowouts is that they are too broad, making universal statements while failing to establish distinctions that may well determine moral status.”⁵ She then listed those criteria that she considers relevant for judging the morality of blowouts, which are whether a sporting contest is (1) timed or untimed, (2) between teams or individuals, (3) a form of direct or indirect competition and (4) a contest between “have” and “have-not” teams.⁶ Building on these considerations, I investigate the characteristics of different sports and the specific morality of blowouts in them. My attempt to expand the list of categories proposed by Sailors closes the third chapter. Thereafter, Chapter 4 marks the beginning of the second section of the thesis and

² Ibid.

³ See <https://www.foxnews.com/us/parent-accuses-texas-high-school-football-coach-of-bullying-after-91-0-blowout-game> (last accessed: 25.10.2019)

⁴ See <https://usatodayhss.com/2016/calif-girls-soccer-game-bishop-amat-ends-in-21-0-blowout> (last accessed: 25.10.2019)

⁵ Sailors, P. R. (2010). *Mercy Killing: Sportsmanship and Blowouts*. In: *Journal of the Philosophy of Sport*, 37, 62.

⁶ See *ibid.*

offers a detailed explanation of dialogic-pragmatic philosophy didactics developed by Martens. With this didactical model serving as a reference framework, I subsequently offer an exemplary lesson plan on blowouts for secondary school teachers (Chapter 5). Chapter 6 provides a conclusion.

2. CONCEPTIONS OF SPORTSMANSHIP

Before contemplating the issue of ‘right’ behavior during a one-sided contest, I introduce the reader to a concept relevant in most sport ethical discussions concerning the level of the individual: *sportsmanship*. To preface this topic, I should clarify that I use the term in a non-gendered sense, with no intention of applying it exclusively to male athletes. Instead, I use it to conform to standard usage and to avoid any misinterpretations. While the cumbersome *sportspersonship* has found its way into the literature of the last decade,⁷ *sportsmanship* is still the more commonly used term. What is necessary is to distinguish this term from *gamesmanship*, which “is the attempt to gain a psychological edge in a manner that is not prohibited by the rules of the game, but which is nonetheless inappropriate.”⁸

The range of influence of *sportsmanship* and its derivatives is attested to by the fact that it can also be found in German literature. For instance, Maier uses the phrase *sportsmanlike behavior* in his analysis of equal opportunity in sports.⁹ In my diploma’s thesis, I discussed the relationship between sportsmanship and “*Sportgeist*” – which literally translates to “*Sport spirit*” – and their connection to other thematically related terms like *fairness* and *fair-play*.¹⁰ In this chapter, I focus solely on the concept of sportsmanship by contrasting different views.¹¹ Accordingly, each of the following subchapters is devoted to one conceptualization of this much-debated term.

Our journey begins with an approach provided by Keating (Chapter 2.1.) who, over half a century ago, was – to the best of my knowledge – the first philosopher to publish a scientific paper on sportsmanship. Because many of the philosophers engaging in this debate referenced and criticized other participants in the discourse, I opted to discuss their different accounts of sportsmanship in chronological order. To make their arguments easier to understand and more accessible to a non-specialist audience, I have also added real-world examples.

⁷ As an example, see: Schwager, S., & Stylianou, M. (2012). Table-top Tennis: A Vehicle for Teaching Sportspersonship and Responsibility. In: *Journal of Physical Education, Recreation and Dance*, 83(7), 27.

⁸ Clifford, C., & Feezell, R. M. (1997). *Coaching for Character*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics, 34.

⁹ See Maier, B. (2004). *Sport – Ethik – Religion. Eine kleine summa ethica athletica*. Hollabrunn: MBC Verlag, 28.

¹⁰ See Neumann, M. (2015). *Die Rolle der TrainerInnen im Kontext der Förderung des Sportgeistes – Zur Frage der Wichtigkeit der Fairness für österreichische NachwuchstrainerInnen im American Football*. Diploma’s Thesis: University of Vienna.

¹¹ As already mentioned, I discussed some of the prominent models of sportsmanship in my diploma thesis, but on a more superficial level.

2.1. SPORTSMANSHIP IN SPORTS VS. SPORTSMANSHIP IN ATHLETICS (KEATING)

What exactly is sportsmanship and why is there so little agreement about the term, even though its use is prevalent? This question can be restated as two key questions, which Keating set out to answer in his paradigmatic paper *On Sportsmanship as a Moral Category*. He begins by citing a handful of different descriptions of sportsmanship, arguing that they have a high degree of inconsistency.¹² In his view, some of these conceptualizations are too rigorous, while others are too minimalistic. Additionally, he maintains that much of the confusion surrounding the concept of sportsmanship stems from a lack of a fundamental distinction between sports and athletics, which is why he provides a distinction of his own before seeking the term's essence:

Sport is a kind of diversion which has for its direct and immediate end fun, pleasure, and delight and which is dominated by a spirit of moderation and generosity. Athletics, on the other hand, is essentially a competitive activity, which is characterized by a spirit of dedication, sacrifice, and intensity.¹³

Regrettably, Keating does not explain in detail where he draws the line between sport and athletics. It is not clear, for example, what qualifies a sporting activity as an athletic event. What are the determining factors? The existence of official rules? The involvement of organizations? The possibility of attaining trophies or medals? Reducing such factors to a spirit of dedication, sacrifice and intensity raises more questions than the original distinction answers. For instance, is it possible that two people competing in a sporting event have different levels of dedication and intensity? Could it be that the same event is treated as “sports” by some participants and as “athletics” by others? Can an event morph from sports into athletics and vice versa? I vividly remember playing a game of table tennis with a friend that started out as an agreeable activity but soon became a serious and competitive contest. How is it possible to predict whether the opposing contestant regards the activity as either sport or athletics? As will be shown in Chapters 2.2. and 2.3., Keating received considerable criticism for this vague distinction, not least from Arnold and Feezell, both influential philosophers of sports. Indeed, a more promising and nuanced classification of different sporting activities is given by Bernhard Maier (Fig. 1).

¹² See Keating, J. W. (1964). Sportsmanship as a Moral Category. In: *Ethics*, 75(1), 26-27.

¹³ Ibid., 28.

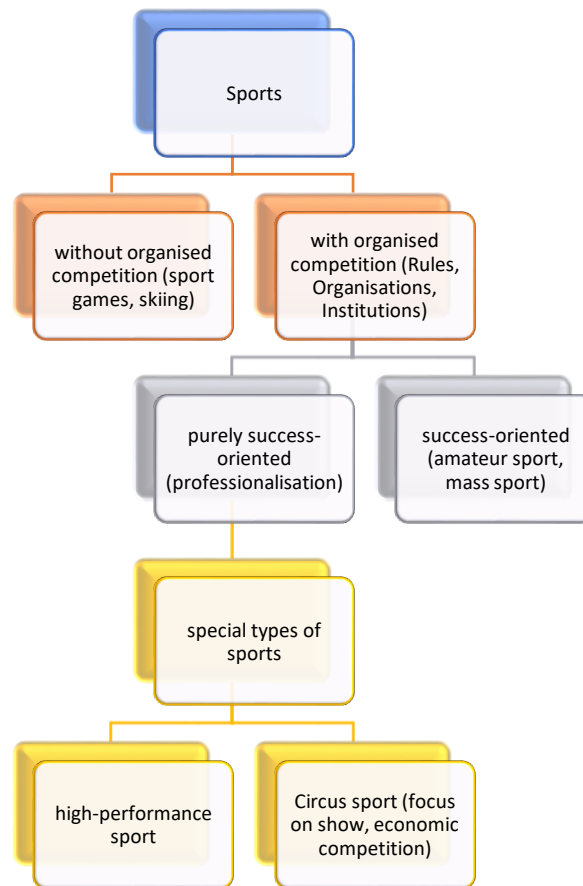


Fig. 1: Classification of sports according to Maier (2004)¹⁴

Although Keating offers a broad and general distinction between sports and athletics, he questions the code of sportsmanship as “an aggregate of moral qualities comprising a code of specialized behavior.”¹⁵ One of the problems with this is that the list of attributes associated with it seems endless. Keating argues that prescriptions that form the code of sportsmanship can be deduced from the maxim: “Always conduct yourself in such a manner that you will increase rather than detract from the pleasure to be found in the activity, both your own and that of your fellow participants.”¹⁶ Building on this, he presents a definition of sportsmanship that is void of a long list of desirable behaviors:

In itself, sportsmanship is a spirit, an attitude, a manner or mode of interpreting an otherwise purely legal code. Its purpose is to protect and cultivate the festive proper mood to an activity whose primary purpose is pleasant diversion, amusement, joy. The sportsman adopts a cavalier attitude toward his personal rights under the code; he

¹⁴ Maier, B. (2004). *Sport – Ethik – Religion*, 21.

¹⁵ Keating, J. W. (1964). Sportsmanship as a Moral Category, 29.

¹⁶ Ibid., 29-30.

prefers to be magnanimous and self-sacrificing if, by such conduct, he contributes to the enjoyment of the game.¹⁷

Keating also says that the “[sportsman] would be cheating himself and robbing the other participants of intense pleasure if his efforts were only halfhearted.”¹⁸ Nonetheless, sports stay a “cooperative endeavor to maximize pleasure or joy found in the activity itself.”¹⁹ To paraphrase, then, sport, for Keating, is an activity that serves as a means to an end, and the end is the joy found in performing the sport itself.

Athletics, on the other hand, fundamentally differs from sport, according to Keating. It is primarily characterized by competition and the fact that athletes “cannot share in the same victory, unless they are teammates.”²⁰ Therefore, sportsmanship in athletics is best characterized as a spirit that restrains the harshness of competition. In Keating’s words:

[T]o the extent that sportsmanship in athletics is virtuous, its essence consists in the practice of fairness under the most difficult conditions. Since the sportsman’s primary objective is the joy of the moment, it is obvious from that very fact that he places no great emphasis on the importance of winning. [...] [S]portsmanship as applied to athletics [...] asks the athlete, locked in a deadly serious and emotionally charged situation, to act outwardly as if he were engaged in some pleasant diversion.²¹

This indeed shows the demands that good sportsmanship places on athletes. Readers who remain unconvinced are invited to take part in the following thought experiment. *Imagine you have engaged in competitive sports your entire life. You went through the most gruesome workouts, battled major and minor injuries, struggled to make a career in sport and you gave up many other pursuits to fulfil your dream of becoming a professional athlete. You overcame all obstacles and made it into professional sports. You even enhanced your level of play to participate in national games and qualified for the World Cup. More than that, your team advanced to the final game of the tournament. Needless to say, it feels like your career has come down to this game. A victory would be one for the ages, indelibly printed in the record books. However, contrary to your hopes and dreams, the opposing team dominates the game. How would you feel? More importantly, how much willpower and discipline would it take for*

¹⁷ Ibid., 30.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid., 31

²¹ Ibid., 32.

you to be composed in your hour of defeat? As novel as this thought-experiment might seem, a story like it was the lived reality for the players of Croatia's national soccer team, which lost 2:4 against France in the FIFA World Cup Final of 2018 (Fig. 2).



Fig. 2: Croatian soccer players after losing the FIFA World Cup Final 2018²²

By now, even non-sports-minded readers will understand when Keating talks about how demanding sportsmanlike behavior can be. According to Keating, sportsmanship asks not only for a certain behavior during and after the process of losing but also in victory:

After an athlete has trained and sacrificed for weeks, after he has dreamed of victory and its fruits and literally exhausted himself physically and emotionally in its pursuit – after all this – to ask him to act with fairness in the contest, with modesty in victory and an admirable composure in defeat is to demand a great deal, and, yet, this is the substance of the demand that ‘sportsmanship’ makes upon the athlete.²³

It should come as no surprise that many athletes do not live up to this ideal, although failure in adhering to the code can manifest in many different ways. While some present “only” psychological harm, others manifest as physical violence. Some of the more famous examples that illustrate this difference include Serena Williams’ excessive arguing and cursing the umpire while throwing a tantrum at the US Open in 2008 (Fig. 3) and Zinedine Zidane’s well-known

²² <https://theworldnews.net/mt-news/pride-and-tears-for-croatians-after-world-cup-final-loss> (last accessed: 25.10.2019)

²³ Keating, J. W. (1964). Sportsmanship as a Moral Category, 32.

headbutt in the FIFA World Cup Final of 2006, in which he brutally attacked Marco Materazzi (Fig. 4).



Fig. 3: Williams calling an Empire a “thief” and a “liar” in the US Open 2008²⁴



Fig. 4: Zidane’s infamous headbutt against Materazzi²⁵

By Keating’s standard, both of these would be unsportsmanlike in either a sporting or an athletic event. Nonetheless, situations exist in which we expect different behaviors from those participating in either event. Keating gives an example:

If we take tennis [...] and contrast the code of conduct employed by the sportsman with that of the athlete in the matter of officiating, the difference is obvious. The sportsman invariably gives his opponent the benefit of the doubt. Whenever he is not sure, he plays

²⁴ <https://www.indiatoday.in/sports/tennis/story/is-serena-williams-a-bad-loser-opinions-after-naomi-osaka-wins-us-open-1335731-2018-09-09> (last accessed: 25.10.2019)

²⁵ <https://www.theguardian.com/football/blog/2014/mar/11/world-cup-moments-zinedine-zidane-head-butt> (last accessed: 25.10.2019)

his opponent's shot as good even though he may suspect that it was out. The athlete, however, takes a different approach. Every bit as opposed to cheating as the sportsman, the athlete demands no compelling proof of error. If a shot seems to be out, even though he is not certain, the athlete calls it that way. [...] As a result [...], the athlete will tend towards a legal interpretation of the rules.²⁶

To summarize, Keating proposes that “[t]he essence of sportsmanship applied to athletics can be determined by the application of the same principle [as when it is applied to sports].”²⁷ This means that in principle, the ideal of sportsmanship is applicable to both athletics and sports. Any difference between them lies in the detail, which is the expected behavior during close calls. While *sportsmanship in sports* mandates participants go by the rule “When in doubt, act in favor of your opponent”, such a charitable act during close decisions is not to be expected from athletes. Notably, this does not imply that athletes must never display charitable behavior. In fact, such examples, though rare, are found in celebrated athletic events. For example, when Stan Wawrinka played Roger Federer in the semi-finals of the Australian Open in 2017 and one of Federer's serves was called “out”, Wawrinka was not sure if that was the correct call. Displaying a great degree of sportsmanship, he encouraged Federer to challenge it. As it turned out, Wawrinka's doubt was justified, and the call was reversed.²⁸ A similar instance occurred with Dominic Thiem and Kevin Anderson when Thiem encouraged Anderson to challenge a questionable call that favored Thiem.²⁹ According to Keating, these actions are exemplary illustrations of sportsmanlike behavior, although they cannot be expected from every athlete because the main purpose of an athletic contest is “the objective and accurate determination of superior performance, and, ultimately, of excellence.”³⁰ The following chapter considers three approaches to sportsmanship by Arnold, an early critic of Keating.

2.2. SPORTSMANSHIP AS A SOCIAL UNION, A MEANS IN PROMOTION OF PLEASURE AND A FORM OF ALTRUISM (ARNOLD)

Arnold begins “Three Approaches Toward an Understanding of Sportsmanship” by pointing out that “no serious endeavor has been made to look at the phenomenon of sportsmanship (in

²⁶ Keating, J. W. (1964). *Sportsmanship as a Moral Category*, 33.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 34-35.

²⁸ See <https://www.essentiallysports.com/top-moments-sportsmanship-tennis/> (last accessed: 25.10.2019)

²⁹ See *ibid.*

³⁰ Keating, J. W. (1964). *Sportsmanship as a Moral Category*, 33.

the philosophical literature) for nearly twenty years.”³¹ This refers to Keating, who had published “Sportsmanship as a Moral Category” two decades earlier. Arnold proposes three partially overlapping views about sportsmanship:

- (1) Sportsmanship as a form of social union
- (2) Sportsmanship as a means in the promotion of pleasure, and
- (3) Sportsmanship as a form of altruism. ³²

Before separately discussing each of these, Arnold emphasizes a characteristic that applies to all of them – fairness – but fairness understood only in a legalistic or formal rule-following sense is a necessary though not a sufficient condition of sportsmanship.³³ Sportsmanship, therefore, includes following the rules but goes beyond them (Fig. 5).

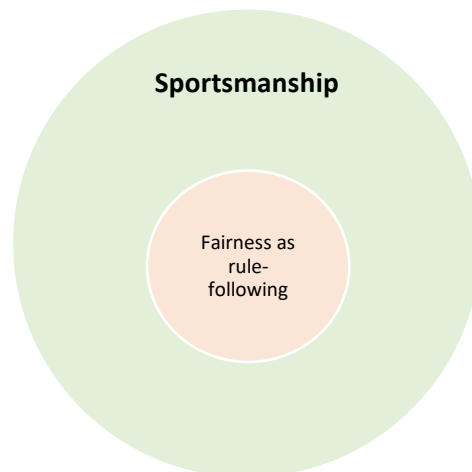


Fig. 5: Rule-following as a necessary yet insufficient condition of sportsmanship

As for understanding sportsmanship as a social union, Arnold stresses that this

view [...] is not to be seen merely as a social cohesive device in order to help regulate and oil the institutional practice of sport, though this effect may well come about. Rather it should be perceived as a community of individuals united by a particular practice in which the arts of chivalry are practiced in the interests of mutual affection, comradeship, and fellowship.³⁴

³¹ Arnold, P. J. (1984). Three Approaches Toward an Understanding of Sportsmanship. In: *Journal of the Philosophy of Sport*, 10, 61.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid., 62.

³⁴ Ibid., 63.

Arnold thus argues that sportsmanship is best understood as a kind of ideology or socialization that “predisposes group members to act in ways that are supported and admired by the social union of which they are an integral part”³⁵ and two of the ideals cherished by the sports union is to be a modest winner and a good loser. A practical example of this is the handshake, which often occurs before and/or after a competitive event. The connection between socialization and sportsmanlike gestures becomes clear when one sees children shaking hands with the support of parents, coaches or more experienced players, as shown in Fig. 6. This aligns with Keating’s thesis, but it places greater emphasis on conformity to group norms than on individual acts. Arnold, therefore, notes that “Keating’s analysis of sportsmanship has some things in common with the idea of sport as a social union.”³⁶



Fig. 6: The chivalrous handshake³⁷

In discussing the view of sportsmanship as a means to promote pleasure, Arnold takes up Keating’s distinction between sports and athletics. This distinction, as already mentioned, is somewhat simplistic, as Arnold himself points out.³⁸ For this reason, he suggests that sportsmanship, in Keating’s account, cannot do much more than restrain the rawness inherent in the process of competition and that the “purpose [of sportsmanship] is to mitigate the effects of what is seen as a confrontation and challenge between two adversaries.”³⁹ On the other hand, sportsmanship, as it should be demonstrated by a participant in a sporting event, is “a desirable

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid., 64.

³⁷ <https://pxhere.com/en/photo/655659> (last accessed: 25.10.2019)

³⁸ See Arnold, P. J. (1984). Three Approaches Toward an Understanding of Sportsmanship, 64.

³⁹ Ibid.

or efficacious manner or way of acting in sport which is in keeping with the promotion of pleasure and the spirit of play.”⁴⁰ After a brief summary of Keating’s views, Arnold asks three questions which he believes arise from Keating’s account of sportsmanship:⁴¹

- (1) If sportsmanship is only seen as a means to promote pleasure, can it be regarded as moral at all?⁴²
- (2) In which sense does Keating use the phrase sportsmanship as a “moral category”?
- (3) If one chooses to adopt a utilitarian point of view, it is not clear that “conduct that is conducive to fun is necessarily more pleasurable than conduct that is conducive to ‘honourable victory.’”⁴³

It is clear, for Arnold, that Keating’s account of sportsmanship leaves much to be desired. Because Keating’s account raises more questions than it answers, Arnold this concludes his chapter on sportsmanship:

Keating’s attempt to look at sportsmanship in terms of “athletics” and “sport” by reference to competition, or its relative absence, is not altogether clear or helpful. It does, however, emphasize the importance of the play spirit of sport and the desirable attributes of magnanimity and generosity.⁴⁴

Arnold’s third view – the one he believes is best – centres on altruism, defined by the Cambridge Online Dictionary as “the attitude of caring about others and doing acts that help them although you do not get anything by doing those acts.”⁴⁵ It is obvious from all accounts of sportsmanship thus far presented that there is *some* connection between altruism and sportsmanship. Arnold sheds light on this by pointing out that the “correct interpretation [of sportsmanlike appearing acts] would depend upon the considerations or states which prompted them. Moral actions in sport, like other actions, cannot be properly understood only by reference to their external form.”⁴⁶ This is a wholesale rejection of any attempt to build a model of

⁴⁰ Ibid., 65.

⁴¹ See Ibid., 65-66.

⁴² Arnold also mentions that the answer to this question largely depends on whether Keating is willing to take a utilitarian stance on this topic, which, as Arnold rightly points out, is not explained.

⁴³ Ibid., 66.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/altruism> (last accessed: 25.10.2019)

⁴⁶ Arnold, P. J. (1984). *Three Approaches Toward an Understanding of Sportsmanship*, 68.

sportsmanship upon a utilitarian basis.⁴⁷ Accordingly, Arnold stresses the importance of the motive rather than the outcome as the determining factor of altruistic forms of sportsmanship:

What characterizes altruistic forms of sportsmanship particularly is that sympathy, compassion, and concern are directed towards the other in virtue of his or her suffering, travail, misery or pain. The altruistic sportsman not only thinks about and is affected by the plight of the other, but acts in such a way that is directed to bring help or comfort in some way. Altruistic acts of sportsmanship *stem from a desire for the other's good*.⁴⁸

The next chapter considers Feezell's "Sportsmanship", which was published two years after Arnold's account.

2.3. SPORTSMANSHIP AS A GOLDEN MEAN (FEEZELL)

The first significant feature of Feezell's concept of sportsmanship is his dismissal of any sharp distinction between sports and athletics originally proposed by Keating. According to Feezell, the purpose of anyone engaging in sport who is both player and athlete

is to win the contest and to experience the playful and aesthetic delights of the experience. His attitudes are at once both playful and competitive, and these color his relationship with his fellow participants. He sees his opponent as both competitor and friend, competing and cooperating at the same time.⁴⁹

Feezell criticizes Keating's account of sportsmanship in competitive sports, seeing it as inadequate since – according to his reading⁵⁰ – it would sanction brutal competition as long as no rules are broken.⁵¹ Instead, he argues that sportsmanship should serve as a mean "between excessive seriousness, which misunderstands the importance of the play-spirit, and an excessive sense of playfulness which might be called frivolity and which misunderstands the importance of victory and achievement when play is competitive."⁵² With this virtue-based approach relying on finding a mean between two opposite ends of a spectrum, Feezell stands in the

⁴⁷ This is important with regard to Keating, whose theses – though not explicitly utilitarian – can be interpreted as such.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 68. [emphasis added]

⁴⁹ Feezell, R. M. (1986). Sportsmanship. In: *Journal of the Philosophy of Sport*, 13(1), 6.

⁵⁰ I encourage the reader to see Keating's original paper or my summary of his account in Chapter 2.1. I believe Feezell's criticism to be an uncharitable interpretation of Keating's account.

⁵¹ See *ibid.*, 7.

⁵² Ibid., 10.

tradition of Aristotle, who in his *Nicomachean Ethics* writes about the importance of moderation:

Virtue [...] has to deal with feelings or passions and with outward acts, in which excess is wrong and deficiency also is blamed, but the mean amount is praised and is right – both of which are characteristics of virtue.

Virtue, then, is a kind of moderation (μεσότης τις) inasmuch as it aims at the mean or moderate amount.⁵³

Sportsmanship, as a golden mean between excess and deficiency over the will to win, is analogous to other virtues proposed by Aristotle (Tab. 1).

Sphere	Excess	Mean	Deficiency
Fear/Confidence	Rashness	Courage	Cowardice
Pleasure/Pain	Self-Indulgence	Temperance	Insensibility
Self-expression	Boastfulness	Truthfulness	Understatement
Shame	Shyness	Modesty	Shamelessness
...	...	...	...
<i>Will to win in Sports/Athletics</i> ⁵⁴	<i>Excessive seriousness (Win at all costs)</i>	<i>Sportsmanship</i>	<i>Excessive playfulness (Frivolity)</i>

Tab. 1: Aristotelian virtues and sportsmanship⁵⁵

An important characteristic of virtue ethics is its emphasis on the significance of character development. This includes a variety of traits, such as good judgement and “taking pride in doing one’s best, rather than necessarily winning or achieving public recognition.”⁵⁶ Feezell cites John McEnroe as an example of a contestant who lacks the virtue of sportsmanship and whose “lack of [...] [the] quality of [self-honesty] is expressed in his constant paranoid complaints to officials, as if he has experienced more unfair and incompetent officiating than anyone in the history of tennis”⁵⁷ (Fig. 7).

⁵³ Aristotle (1893). *The Nicomachean Ethics*. London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., II., 43.

⁵⁴ The row regarding the *Will to win in Sports/Athletics* is put in italics because this concept, as I have explained, does not stem from Aristotle himself.

⁵⁵ See Aristotle (1893). *The Nicomachean Ethics*, 66-102.

Note: This is only a selected sample of the virtues promoted by Aristotle.

⁵⁶ Madigan, T. (2009). Developing One’s Character: An Aristotelian Defense of Sportsmanship. In: *Verbum*, 7(1), 86.

⁵⁷ Feezell, R. M. (2006). *Sport, Play and Ethical Reflection*. Urbana: Illinois University Press, 139-140.



Fig. 7: McEnroe arguing with the umpire⁵⁸

A good sportsman, Feezell adds, “doesn’t cheat, attempt to hurt the opponent, or taunt another. A certain lightness of spirit prohibits uncivil displays of temper, constant complaints to officials and the like.”⁵⁹ Nlandu offers still another account of sportsmanship, which I consider next.

2.4. SPORTSMANSHIP AS AN OUTCOME OF *THIRDNESS* (NLANDU)

In his attempt to set forth a new concept of sportsmanship, Nlandu presents famous “sport cases that illustrate the need to put back the power of rule enforcement into sports education and sportsmanship.”⁶⁰ He uses these, in which rules were deliberately broken, to illustrate bad sportsmanship, believing that such incidents occur across different levels of sport – on the professional level (Nlandu mentions what is now known as the “hand of God,” which occurred in the 1986 soccer World Cup when the Argentinian superstar Diego Maradona (Fig. 8) punched the ball into the goal) and the amateur level.

⁵⁸ <https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/sport/othersports/wimbledon-john-mcenroe-wont-look-back-in-anger-28626920.html> (last accessed: 25.10.2019)

⁵⁹ Feezell, R. M. (2006). *Sport, Play and Ethical Reflection*, 95.

⁶⁰ Nlandu, T. (2008). Play till the Whistle Blows. Sportsmanship as the Outcome of *Thirdness*. In: *Journal of the Philosophy of Sport*, 35(1), 74.



Fig. 8: Maradona and the “hand of God”⁶¹

Nlandu emphasizes the importance of the generalization of meaning, drawing on the concept and terminology by Charles S. Peirce, who

[m]ade the most fundamental categories of all “things” of any sort whatsoever the categories of “Firstness”, “Secondness”, and “Thirdness”, and he often described “things” as being “firsts”, or “seconds” or “thirds”. For example, with regard to the trichotomy “possibility”, “actuality”, and “necessity”, possibility he called a first, actuality he called a second and necessity he called a third.⁶²

Peirce, famed for his fondness of categorizing things into a group of three, applied his ‘triadism’ to a wide variety of concepts. Nlandu applies it to sports, where

thirdness refers to the fact that each participant in a particular game brings into the game her own understanding of the activity, which must be reconciled with that of all other participants for the activity to turn into a shared experience enjoyable by all. Without this reconciliation of meaning [...], it would make no sense to speak of, say, a game of tennis or hockey. On this account, each individual participant’s experience of each particular instance of a particular game might be construed to be a *first*, which must be followed by a *second* (i.e., the confrontation with each other participant’s experience), which in turn must be elevated to a *third* (i.e., to a generalized experience reconcilable with past, present and future experiences of the game).⁶³

⁶¹ <https://rarehistoricalphotos.com/hand-of-god-maradona-1986/> (last accessed: 25.10.2019)

⁶² <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/peirce/> (last accessed: 25.10.2019)

⁶³ Nlandu, T. (2008). Play till the Whistle Blows. Sportsmanship as the Outcome of *Thirdness*, 76.

According to Nlandu's model, sportsmanship is neither a virtue nor a collection of virtues. Instead, it is an outcome of a highly flexible *process*. Accepting this point of view raises the issue of whether something like a "true essence" of sportsmanship can exist because it cannot be denied that different players from different countries at different times and different sports play at different levels and bring different understandings to the game.⁶⁴ Indeed, Nlandu labels the question of the "true essence" of sportsmanship misleading.⁶⁵ This contrasts with most of the accounts presented here. When, for example, Keating writes about sportsmanship "as an attitude, a posture, a manner of interpreting what would otherwise be only a legal code"⁶⁶, there is little space for interpreting this as time-, sports- or culture-relative. Nlandu, on the other hand, notes that

sportsmanship is always local to each game and determined by its own rules and ethos. Although it appears to be totally unsporting for the mother of a 10-year-old girl to expect victory from a little league hockey game, there would be nothing wrong with the respectful disapproval expressed by some spectators concerning the lack of effort displayed by some professional athletes.⁶⁷

At first sight, this might seem like Keating's distinction between sports and athletics since Nlandu categorizes the 10-year-old's event as "sports" and that of professional athletes as "athletics". Upon closer examination, however, the parallel is inappropriate. First, it is unclear why the little league hockey game should not be considered as "athletics". It is, after all, a league system, so there might very well be a competitive element involved. If that is the case, Keating's account of sportsmanship would demand the same behavior for both events. Furthermore, Keating's paper focuses on the demand that sportsmanship puts on athletes,⁶⁸ not on parents or fans. In contrast, Nlandu explicitly points out that "sportsmanship [...] concerns all those who are, in any degree, participants in the activity of sport: players, coaches, officials, administrators, and spectators."⁶⁹ Another reason for discounting the parallel is the existence of exactly two categories – "sports" and "athletics" – in Keating's model. In Nlandu's model, there are no categories in this sense. His account of sportsmanship demands that the rules of

⁶⁴ See *ibid.*, 78.

⁶⁵ See *ibid.*

⁶⁶ Keating, J. W. (1964). Sportsmanship as a Moral Category, 29.

⁶⁷ Nlandu, T. (2008). Play till the Whistle Blows. Sportsmanship as the Outcome of *Thirdness*, 85-86.

⁶⁸ Keating implies that coaches can display unsportsmanlike behavior as well. Nevertheless, his focus is clearly on athletes, while never even mentioning fans or parents.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 78.

sportsmanlike behavior are to be negotiated in each specific sporting event, which is why he argues that

to play a game – say a game of basketball – one must be able to reach a certain level of shared meaning consistent with that reached by all other participants. Because basketball games cover a wide range of skill levels, physical demands, degrees of awareness or consciousness, and intended goals, talk of sportsmanship becomes plausible only insofar as each participant understands objectively the peculiar aims of the game.⁷⁰

In this sense, sportsmanship is not a static essence but rather an outcome of understanding processes between those involved in their respective sporting events. Accordingly, there is no set of rules that defines sportsmanlike behavior. Instead, a variety of factors affect the specific set of behaviors considered sportsmanlike in the specific event, as shown in Fig. 9.

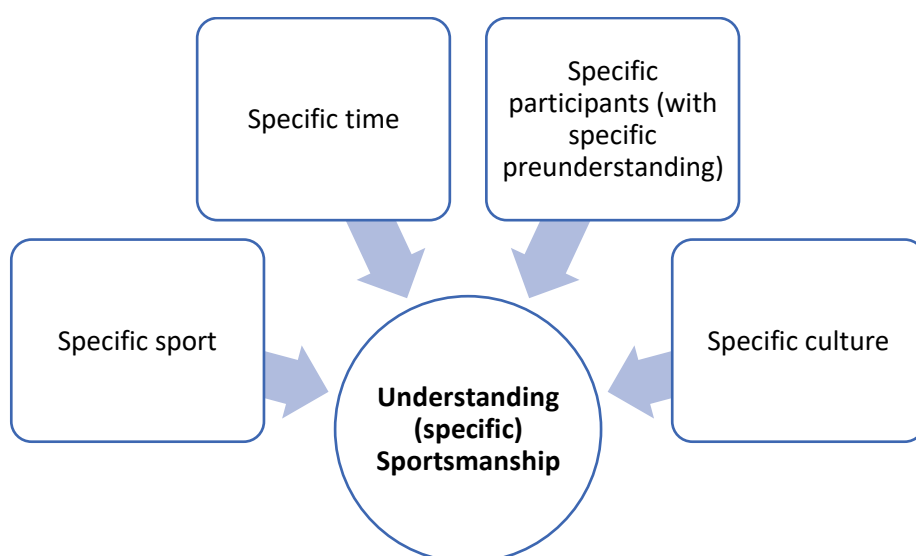


Fig. 9: Nlandu's account of sportsmanship

In Nlandu's model, one can contrast two extreme examples with several differences: What is considered good sportsmanship differs in an adult professional American football game in Japan in 2019 and in an amateur soccer game of 8-year-olds in England in 1940. Because this is, to say the least, an idiosyncratic model,⁷¹ we now consider a model by Diane Abad, who, like many others, connects sportsmanship to virtue.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 76.

⁷¹ I know of no other philosopher of sport who uses Peirce's notions of *Firstness*, *Secondness* and *Thirdness* to describe their accounts of sportsmanship.

2.5. SPORTSMANSHIP AS A CONGLOMERATE OF FOUR CONFLICTING VIRTUES (ABAD)

Abad begins her investigation of sportsmanship by contemplating the essence of sports. After considering several problems associated with attempting a conclusive definition of sports, she settles for a working definition, which is “a rule-governed activity [...] that is about excellence, winning and how to play the game.”⁷² She tackles, first, what sportsmanship is not, categorizing behavior that is *not* sportsmanlike, which yields four types of unsporting behavior.

The first and most obvious category is related to breaking the rules. This can be done both knowingly and unknowingly. Breaking the rules to gain an advantage Abad labels ‘unfairness’,⁷³ adding that, although unfairness, as we understand it, is not limited to such acts, she means to consider unsporting behavior *only*. A good example of this is doping since it amounts to breaking the rules to gain an advantage. And while it is by no means a recent phenomenon – it has roots in ancient Greece and Rome⁷⁴ – researchers are concerned today with a doping epidemic.⁷⁵ The most famous doping scandal involved Lance Armstrong (Fig. 10), an American professional cyclist, who was stripped of all of his Tour de France titles and medals because of his use of performance-enhancing drugs.⁷⁶



Fig. 10: Famous doping sinner Lance Armstrong

⁷² Abad, D. (2010). Sportsmanship. In: *Ethics and Philosophy*, 4(1), 30.

⁷³ See *ibid.*, 30-31.

⁷⁴ See Conti, A. (2010). Doping in sports in ancient and recent times. In: *Medicina nei secoli*, 22, 181.

⁷⁵ See Hoberman, J. (2014). Physicians and the sports doping epidemic. In: *The virtual mentor*, 16(7), 570.

⁷⁶ <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/lance-armstrong-stripped-of-tour-de-france-medals/> (last accessed: 25.10.2019)

According to Abad, the second form of unsporting behavior occurs when athletes gain advantages through unacceptable ways without breaking the formal rules.⁷⁷ She cites a soccer team playing with a full team against a team with an injured player and refusing to kick the ball out of bounds. In such instances, no rules are broken, but the behavior is decidedly unfair.⁷⁸

A third group, Abad argues, is one “[that] is neither unfair nor inequitable, as it is not about gaining unacceptable advantages, all the more so because such behavior is often displayed after the match.”⁷⁹ Abad gives several examples:

- Not shaking hands after the match
- Constant complaining (Fig. 11)
- Lack of generosity
- Humiliating an opponent
- Badmouthing the opponent at press conferences
- Being a poor loser
- Being a poor winner⁸⁰



Fig. 11: Ronaldo complaining and shouting at a referee⁸¹

The fourth form of unsportsmanlike behavior, which in Abad’s model applies only to sports contests,⁸² is lack of effort:

⁷⁷ See Abad, D. (2010). Sportsmanship, 31.

⁷⁸ See *ibid.*

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ <https://www.mirror.co.uk/sport/football/news/fans-think-know-what-cristiano-12828211> (last accessed: 25.10.2019)

⁸² This is reminiscent of Keating’s distinction between sports and athletics, with Abad using her own terminology.

[I]t is unsporting to give up, not to give one's all, not to fight, not to live up to the occasion to the best of one's ability, or to be indifferent, to treat the contest as a joke – in a word: it is unsporting not to try to win as best as one can.⁸³

After citing these examples of unsporting behavior, Abad concludes that “their four positive counterparts make up sportsmanship, that is: fairness, equity; good form or honor, and, applicable only to sports contests, a will to win.”⁸⁴ But what is most interesting about her model is not the categorization itself but how the categories relate to each other. While fairness, equity and honour usually go together, they stand in systemic conflict with the will to win, since excellence in sports is generally measured against the achievement of opponents.⁸⁵

Abad concludes that “sportsmanship is about different things, that is a conglomerate of different virtues⁸⁶, that is, it is about fairness, equity, good form, willing to win, and moreover, about holding the balance between them.”⁸⁷ In other words: A good sportsman has a strong will to win, but not so strong that it leads to neglecting the virtues of fairness, equity and honor, since sportsmanship is not only an aggregate of virtues but a way of possessing and keeping them in balance (Fig. 12).

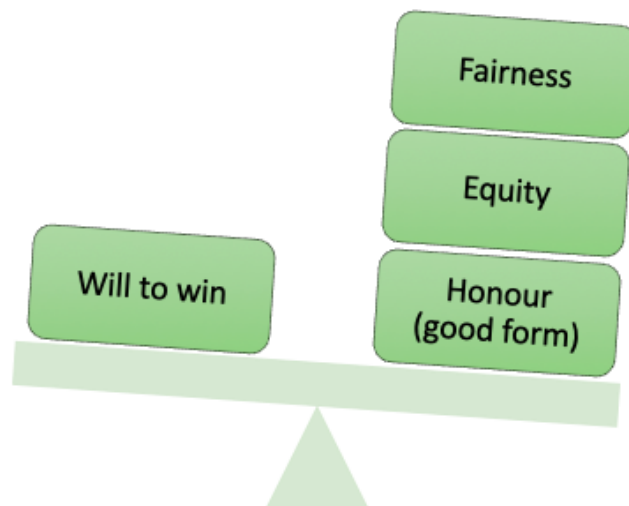


Fig. 12: Sportsmanship as an act of balancing virtues

⁸³ Abad, D. (2010). Sportsmanship, 31.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 32.

⁸⁵ See *ibid.*, 37.

⁸⁶ This is an important difference with Feezell's account of sportsmanship, which also relies on the notion of virtue.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 40.

2.6. SPORTSMANSHIP IN EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

To conclude this chapter, I want to show that, in the academic sphere, sportsmanship is not only an object of philosophical investigation but also a topic of discussion in the social sciences. Because sportsmanship is tightly connected to morals, and good morals are usually desirable, it is not surprising that the issue has caught the attention of disciplines such as psychology, sociology and the educational sciences. In fact, several – sometimes very specific – scales to measure sportsmanship have been proposed, like rating scales for young tennis players⁸⁸ and for coaching behavior.⁸⁹

Because definitions and conceptualizations of sportsmanship are this chapter's topic, a study by Vallerand et al. deserves close attention, since the authors aimed to “derive a definition of sportsmanship by applying premises from social psychological theories and research.”⁹⁰ They did so by surveying 1056 French-Canadian athletes aged between 10 and 18 (M = 14.8 years) from different sports, sexes and regions of Quebec (see Tab. 2).

	Gender			
Sport	Males	Females	N	%
Badminton	76	60	136	12.9
Basketball	87	80	167	15.8
Gymnastics	0	115	115	10.9
Hockey	171	1	172	16.3
Swimming	61	76	137	12.8
Track and Field	84	79	163	15.5
Volleyball	84	83	167	15.8
Totals	563	492	1,055	100%
	53,4%	46,6%		100%

Tab. 2: Breakdown of surveyed athletes by sex and type of sports⁹¹

⁸⁸ See Gimeno, F., Lacambra, D., Marcén, C., Gutiérrez, H., Sáenz, A., Castillo, R., & Sánchez, M. A. (2013). Sportsmanship Rating Scale in Tennis Competition with Young Players. In: *Procedia – Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 82, 740.

⁸⁹ See Bolter, N. D., Weiss, M.R., & Martin, J. J. (2012). Coaching for Character: Development of the Sportsmanship Coaching Behaviors Scale (SCBS). In: *Sport, Exercise, and Performance Psychology*, 1(2), 73.

⁹⁰ Vallerand, R. J., Deshaies, P., Cuerrier, J.-P., Brière, N. M., & Pelletier, L. (1996). Toward a Multidimensional Definition of Sportsmanship. In: *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 8(1), 89.

⁹¹ Ibid., 92.

The questionnaire consisted of 21 items, of which 18 were drawn from the results of a pilot study and three were added by the researchers.⁹² After surveying the participants (who assigned a number of 1 to 4 to each item; 4 = “strongly related to the notion of sportsmanship”; 1 = “not at all related to the notion of sportsmanship”), a factor analysis using the maximum likelihood approach was conducted. The results are presented in Table 3.

Item	Mean	SD	Factor loadings				
			F1	F2	F3	F4	F5
1. Show up for all practices and games	3.33	.91	.67				
2. Do not give up after mistakes	3.51	.81	.56				
3. Maximum effort in practices and games	3.40	.92	.55				
4. Obey the coach even when they do not want to	3.21	.92	.47				
5. Derive pleasure from competition	3.26	.94	.46				
6. Swing stick or racket aggressively after losing	2.50	1.33		.90			
7. Ridicule a less competent opponent	2.42	1.29		.74			
8. Take steps against which there are no rules or hinder the opponent's performance	2.54	1.13		.43			
9. Play only to win	2.17	1.11		.40			
10. Do not retaliate cheap shots from the opponent	3.29	.93			.41		
11. Stay calm when frustrated after making a mistake	3.34	.84			.41		
12. Respect the rules even when the opponent cheats	3.32	.90			.36		
13. Recognize own mistakes	3.46	.87			.33		
14. Do not criticize the referee for mistakes against self	3.04	.98			.30		
15. Always shake hands after the game	3.78	.58				.68	
16. Encourage and help teammates even if they make mistakes	3.74	.58				.62	
17. Be a good loser	3.69	.68				.43	
18. Lend opponent equipment if it enables him or her to play	3.33	.92					.61
19. Agree to play rather than winning by default if the opponent is late	3.16	.96					.46
20. Refuse to take advantage of an injured opponent	2.65	1.07					.45
21. Inform referee when he or she makes a mistake in one's favor	3.09	1.04					.41

Tab. 3: Results of the factor analysis for each sportsmanship item⁹³

According to Vallerand et al., this structure “reflects a readily interpretable multidimensional definition of sportsmanship.”⁹⁴ Five factors emerged, as shown in Table 3, which can be summed up as follows:

F1: respect and concern for one's full commitment toward sport participation

F2: negative approach toward sport participation

⁹² See *ibid.*, 92-93.

⁹³ *Ibid.* 94.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 95.

- F3: respect and concern for the rules and officials
 F4: respect and concern for social conventions
 F5: respect and concern for the opponent⁹⁵

These factors are equally reliable. Vallerand et al. also calculated the Cronbach's alpha, a parameter for the extent to which each item in a set of items correlates with at least one other item in the set (i.e., the commonalities of the items)⁹⁶ for each factor. The respective results are shown in Table 4.

Factors	1	2	3	4	5
1	.71	-.25	.38	.4	.23
2		.72	.02	-.09	-.01
3			.59	.42	.40
4				.66	.34
5					.59

Tab. 4: Correlation matrix of the five factors of sportsmanship⁹⁷

According to the authors' interpretation of the results, the analysis

revealed that each factor was somewhat reliable. [...] Nevertheless, results also revealed that there was somewhat more consensus with respect to the content of Factors 1, 2 and 4 [...] than with respect to Factors 3 and 5. Thus, findings with these last two factors must be interpreted with caution.⁹⁸

Although they deserve credit for cautioning the reader about Factors 3 and 5, the authors are probably overconfident of their results. After all, only two of the five factors exceeded the 0.7-mark, which is widely regarded as the absolute minimum for an acceptable alpha value,⁹⁹ and those that do meet the criterion of > 0.7 barely do so. Thus, one can argue that claiming that the results reveal five somewhat reliable factors probably overstates the case. It seems to be equally plausible to interpret the results differently, by saying that these 21 items show rather little intercorrelation, which is why only two of the five factors meet the criterion of Cronbach's alpha (> 0.7). The researchers have also searched for correlations between the five factors and

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Cortina, J. M. (1993). What is Coefficient Alpha? An Examination of Theory and Applications. In: *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 78(1), 102.

⁹⁷ Vallerand, R. J. et al. (1996). Toward a Multidimensional Definition of Sportsmanship, 95.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 95-96.

⁹⁹ See Tavakol, M., & Dennick, R. (2011). Making sense of Cronbach's alpha. In: *International Journal of Medical Education*, 2, 54.

sociodemographic variables assessed in the study. The only noteworthy correlation found was between age and Factor 2. Older subjects rather than younger ones were more likely to perceive items of Factor 2 as reflecting sportsmanship ($r = .23$).¹⁰⁰ This means that overall socio-demographic variables had little impact on whether individual items were categorized as representing sportsmanship. According to these findings, there seems, more likely than not, to be some kind of ‘essence’ of sportsmanship that encompasses different sports, age groups and levels of play. Nevertheless, this should not be regarded as conclusive evidence of such an essence. After all, not all potentially relevant variables were measured and all of the surveyed participants were from Quebec, and Quebecers’ understanding of sportsmanship might differ from those of athletes in other regions of the world. Moreover, no athletes were older than 18 years: it might be that individual understanding of sportsmanship changes with age and later participation in sports.¹⁰¹

Apart from this particular attempt to empirically attain a solid definition of sportsmanship, many studies have, instead, focused on pedagogy. While it is neither feasible nor reasonable to present the current status of this research here, it is worthwhile to discuss one example and show that the presupposition of sportsmanship in empirical research does not necessarily match concepts being proposed in sports philosophy. For this reason, I will now consider a study by Papp and Prisztóka, who “compared the ethical knowledge level – relevant to sports – of elementary and secondary school pupils with university students.”¹⁰² As in any empirical research, a key component is the operationalization of phenomena. Before constructing valid items, though, we need to define these phenomena and, if necessary, divide them into subcomponents. Papp and Prisztóka provide a list of what they consider as the sportsman’s positive moral values:

- honesty, loyalty, determined and dignified behavior even when the other treats him/her unfair
- respecting the partner
- respecting the opposition whether they won or lost knowing that they are essential partners with whom they should be on friendly terms because of sports acknowledging the decisions of the referee undebated, except in the case of those sports that allow complaints

¹⁰⁰ See Vallerand, R. J. et al. (1996). Toward a Multidimensional Definition of Sportsmanship, 96.

¹⁰¹ This point of critique is supported by the theoretical model provided by Nlandu, which was presented in Chapter 2.4.

¹⁰² Papp, G., & Prisztóka, G. (1995). Sportsmanship as an Ethical Value. In: *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 30(3-4), 375.

- winning the game only for fun and firmly rejecting at all costs the winning the game
- respecting the referee and this is shown by the effort to constantly cooperate with him
- modesty when winning the game, keeping calm when losing
- establishing lasting human relationship
- keeping the written and unwritten rules during the match
- rejecting unjust advantages
- communal behavior
- respecting and protecting collective property (sports establishments, sports implements)
- national feeling, self respect
- acquiring and strengthening a fine reputation for our country¹⁰³

Two things are immediately evident. First, there is clearly *some* overlap between the researcher's understanding of sportsmanship and the proposals made by the philosophers of sport. *Modesty when winning the game, keeping calm when losing* and *respecting the opposition* are examples of this. Second, the list contains some dimensions that are non-existent in the philosophers' models. *National feeling, acquiring and strengthening a fine reputation for one's country* as well as *establishing lasting human relationships* are not part of the models presented in the philosophy of sport. Also, *winning the game only for fun* is hard to reconcile with many philosophical models of sportsmanship. For example, in Abad's model (Chapter 2.5), taking a sporting contest insufficiently seriously – for which striving to win only for fun can be seen as an indicator – constitutes a lack of sportsmanship.¹⁰⁴ In Keating's model, sportsmanship restrains the rigors of competition in athletics but does not prescribe competing only for fun.¹⁰⁵

We need to stress the importance of being careful about interpreting the results of empirical studies investigating sportsmanship. Instead of drawing on multiple, detailed and well-thought-out conceptions provided by philosophers of sport, social scientists frequently resort to their own pre-understanding of sportsmanship. This might be because of the widespread notion that, although almost no one can give a clear definition of what sportsmanship is, there is a broad consensus about its general meaning. This notion was also revealed during the interviews I had with young American football coaches in Austria.¹⁰⁶ I am sure that, although there might be a

¹⁰³ Ibid., 378.

¹⁰⁴ See Abad, D. (2010). Sportsmanship, 31.

¹⁰⁵ See Keating, J. W. (1964). Sportsmanship as a Moral Category, 31.

¹⁰⁶ See Neumann, M. (2015). *Die Rolle der TrainerInnen im Kontext der Förderung des Sportgeistes – Zur Frage der Wichtigkeit der Fairness für österreichische NachwuchstrainerInnen im American Football*. Diploma's Thesis: University of Vienna, 72-73.

consensus concerning some types of behavior being unsportsmanlike – such as breaking the rules and avoiding handshakes – there is no societal consensus about the *essence* of sportsmanship, just as there is no such consensus in the philosophy of sports. So, although I encourage further empirical investigations of sportsmanship, it is important to base them on well-constructed models, rather than relying on a presumed consensus of what sportsmanship is and then deriving its subcomponents from it. The latter is essentially what Papp and Prisztóka did when they wrote the following before providing the list of individual features of sportsmanship presented above:

Before conducting our survey, we tried to determine the dominant value system that pertained to sport within the body culture as a whole. As is well known, the objective scale of values that is held by society is manifested in the individuals who make up the society as a set of subjective values.¹⁰⁷

This short digression about sportsmanship in empirical research should make the reader aware that whenever the topic is written about in non-philosophical journals, it often differs from what is meant by sports philosophers. Discrepancies between them are not only interesting on a theoretical level but also bear practical consequences. This can be seen in the conclusion of a paper on coaching sportsmanship by Rudd and Stoll:

In summary, there appear to be two general steps to inculcating sportsmanship. First, those who are attempting to establish sportsmanship must understand its meaning. Second, the individual who is teaching sportsmanship must use a teaching methodology that considers the athlete's competitive history (i.e. moral callouses). Furthermore, the teaching methodology must be such that the athlete acquires knowledge and appreciation of sportsmanship.¹⁰⁸

I identified this problem in my Diploma's thesis, and while many of the coaches I interviewed told me that they were keen on teaching their players sportsmanship, almost none could conceptualize what fairness or sportsmanship means.¹⁰⁹ This is strange considering that, whenever certain values or concepts are taught in any other field, it is generally understood that the teacher knows what they are.

¹⁰⁷ Papp, G., & Prisztóka, G. (1995). Sportsmanship as an Ethical Value, 377.

¹⁰⁸ Rudd, A., & Stoll, S. K. (1998). Understanding Sportsmanship. In: *Journal of Physical Education, Recreation and Dance*, 69(9), 42.

¹⁰⁹ See Neumann, M. (2015). *Die Rolle der TrainerInnen im Kontext der Förderung des Sportgeistes – Zur Frage der Wichtigkeit der Fairness für österreichische NachwuchstrainerInnen im American Football*. Diploma's Thesis: University of Vienna, 73-74.

However, after exploring the value of the empirical research of sportsmanship, as well as some of the problems associated with it, I now rely solely on the philosophical accounts of sportsmanship. This is due not only to this thesis being a philosophical study ¹¹⁰ but because, while a simple model of sportsmanship might be sufficient for some empirical research, controversial issues such as behavior in one-sided sporting contests need precise models to judge the players' behavior. Also, the rule of thumb of regarding sportsmanship as *what most people think it is*, works only for ethical issues in sports where there is at least some consensus.

Still, by now, the reader should be familiar with the philosophical discussion about the construct of sportsmanship. In the next chapter, the focus turns to the main topic, the question of morally right behavior in blowout victories. Authors often discuss this topic with reference to the sportsmanship models thus far proposed, which is why a basic understanding of these models should help in following the discourses of blowout ethics.

¹¹⁰ I do not mean that empirical research would not profit from using more thorough models, but I can see how a subtle model might not be needed if the goal is to measure changes in the kinds of behavior that are *indisputably* unsportsmanlike.

3. BLOWOUT ETHICS

I would like to begin by briefly discussing the first appearance of blowout ethics in the scientific literature (Chapter 3.1.) and then take a closer look at Dixon's *On Sportsmanship and "Running Up the Score"* (Chapter 3.2.), which sparked the productive exchange of ideas between him and other philosophers of sport over two decades ago. Chapters 3.3. to 3.8. are devoted to summarizing other papers published on this topic. As in my overview of different accounts of sportsmanship (Chapter 2), I have chosen to order them chronologically, offering an attempt to enhance the discourse of blowouts with my own contribution in Chapter 3.9.

3.1. UNEVEN CONTESTS AS A SOURCE OF PRIORITY CONFLICTS

The question of morally right behavior was first discussed in Fraleigh's *Right Actions in Sport: Ethics for Contestants* (1984), in which the subject of running up the score (RUS) is of minor importance since it primarily serves as a means to highlight priority conflicts in sports.¹¹¹ It is, therefore, unsurprising that Fraleigh does not take a definite stance on this topic. What is interesting, though, is that among all of sports' potential priority conflicts, this is the one he chose as an illustration and reveals how behavior in one-sided contests is a prime example of controversial topics in sports. Concerning the possible actions in such events, Fraleigh gives five options:

1. The contestant ahead could attempt to increase the advantage by vigorously using his/her normal style of play.
2. The contestant ahead could play deliberately to the opponent's strength.
3. If in a team sport, the contestant ahead could substitute less competent players.
4. The contestant ahead could deliberately offer little effective defense to the opponent's offense.
5. The contestant ahead could attempt untested tactics and strategy that are within his/her possibility.¹¹²

¹¹¹ See Fraleigh, W. P. (1984). *Right Actions in Sport. Ethics for Contestants*. Champaign, Ill.: Human Kinetics, 180-190.

¹¹² Ibid., 181.

Fraleigh explains why the leading contestant should or should not continue to increase his/her advantage by sticking to his/her usual style of play. Reasons for staying with the current style of play include:

1. Such action would be consistent with seeking oppositional superiority continuously.
2. It would maintain the oppositional superiority already earned.
3. It would save the alternative tactics and strategies for future contests when they may be needed.
4. It would provide for the continuation of the test, which the behind contestant chose upon entering the contest.
5. It would fulfill the tacit promise, made by the contestant, to try to perform the test better than his/her opponent.¹¹³

However, he also argues against this kind of behavior:

1. Such action would be viewed by other sports agents and spectators as “running up the score”, intentionally, which is a negatively act and contrary to courtesy.
2. It would provide an insufficient test of the abilities of the ahead contestant.¹¹⁴

To summarize, Fraleigh describes the difficulties of finding the right actions during a one-sided contest by pointing to moral arguments as well as to practical, egoistical arguments. Still, the aim of this section of his book is not to analyze whether building an already existing lead in a lopsided contest is intrinsically unsporting. This is why I will not dwell on Fraleigh’s volume but move on to what can be regarded as *the* seminal paper in blowout ethics.

3.2. THE ANTI-BLOWOUT-THESIS (AB THESIS) AND THE CASE AGAINST IT

In 1992, Dixon’s *On Sportsmanship and “Running Up the Score”* was published, in which the author explains his purpose in the first lines of his controversial thesis:¹¹⁵

¹¹³ Ibid., 183-184.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 184.

¹¹⁵ Dixon, N. (1992). On Sportsmanship and Running Up the Score. In: *Journal of the Philosophy of Sport*, 19, 1.

I wish to argue against a widely-held view concerning sportsmanship. I call this view the *Anti-Blowout* thesis (AB):

AB: It is intrinsically unsporting for players or teams to maximize the margin of victory after they have secured victory in a one-sided contest.

Dixon continues, citing a Detroit sports journalist who classified Michigan's 61:7 defeat of Houston's American football team as "grossly classless behavior."¹¹⁶ Although Dixon gives no source for this statement, it is easy to believe that it was spoken. After all, these are comments that every individual who competes in any form of competitive sports has run across. Whether it is journalists, parents, opposing coaches or players, there is a general consensus that winning by a big margin and continuing to play as if the score was 0:0 represents unsportsmanlike behavior. Indeed, Dixon's AB thesis closely aligns with what I experienced during two decades of playing and coaching American football:

The AB thesis is widely held in both college and professional sport, especially football¹¹⁷. It is also applied to some extent in basketball, and even in baseball. For instance, eyebrows would be raised if the visiting team, already ahead 12–0 in the top of the ninth inning, attempted to pad the lead by bunting and stealing bases.¹¹⁸

One could legitimately argue that the above statement is somewhat conservative. Evidence for the prevalence of the AB thesis in several other sports is easily found. For example, the following remark by a father whose son's team suffered a heavy defeat in a Lacrosse tournament is evidence it happens in Lacrosse:

Toward the end of the game I was squirming in my chair. I just wanted to yell something across the field [...] Well [...] with about 30 seconds to go and their team still playing as though the fate of the Long Island Iced Tea depended on whether they could reach 25, I half-yelled, "Can you show a little class, please?"¹¹⁹

Although this is *one* account by *one* person, it is highly likely that the father would not have yelled across the field if he thought he was the only person thinking this way. Another, more

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ When Dixon writes about football, he refers to American football. What most Europeans refer to as football translates to soccer in American English.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 2.

¹¹⁹ <https://patch.com/connecticut/westhartford/xx-35866cc5> (last accessed: 25.10.2019)

prominent example comes from soccer, where the U.S. woman's national soccer team beat Thailand 13:0 in June 2019 (Fig. 13).¹²⁰



Fig. 13: U.S. woman's national soccer team celebrates 13:0 victory¹²¹

This victory drew considerable criticism from several sources. For example, Kaylin Kyle, a Canadian sports journalist, commented:

They're the No. 1 team in the world. And for me, I'm disgusted, honestly. You're going up against a team that's their first time in the World Cup. They're just happy to be there. I'm embarrassed. I was a female professional athlete. There are kids watching this.¹²²

Although Dixon's AB thesis is reminiscent of Keating's distinction between sports and athletics (Chapter 2.1), he uses different terminology to write about the difference between recreational sports and competitive sports and believes that easing up has a place in recreational sports.¹²³ Nevertheless, he questions the widely-held belief that extreme wins are unsporting.

One line of argument for this mistaken belief is a rather distasteful attitude toward sport: Winning is the only thing that matters. If this were so, it would indeed be gratuitous to continue to score points long after victory [...]. However, the premise is false: Winning is *not* the only thing that matters. Players who win blowouts can be justly proud of their

¹²⁰ <https://sports.yahoo.com/uswnt-criticized-for-celebrations-running-up-score-im-disgusted-there-are-kids-watching-232723878.html> (last accessed: 25.10.2019)

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ See Dixon, N. (1992). On Sportsmanship and Running Up the Score, 2-3.

display of athletic excellence, the personal and team records they have set, and the excitement provided for fans.¹²⁴

In the case of the aforementioned 13:0 victory, Dixon would argue that celebrating a decisive win is justified. What the U.S. team displayed was not a just better performance than the opposing team but athletic excellence. Certainly, it takes a better performance to beat a team by a margin of 13 goals rather than by five or even one, but Dixon adds that the AB thesis is based on a second line of argument, which, contrary to the first, emphasizes the psychological well-being of the losing contestants:

Players who suffer lopsided defeats have been humiliated and diminished as human beings. The fact that the AB thesis is most often cited in football and basketball, both of which involve considerable contacts, suggests that the macho notion of sport as a test of manhood is also involved.¹²⁵

The argument in favor of the AB thesis is essentially a consequentialist one: that winning contestants should not pursue high margins of victory due to the suffering generated by it. This can be reconciled with utilitarian reasoning. Bentham, the founder of utilitarianism, stated that “mankind [is] under the governance of two sovereign masters, *pain* and *pleasure*. It is for them alone to point out what we ought to do, as well as to determine what we shall do.”¹²⁶ If one accepts that the amount and intensity of pain in a lopsided loss are higher than the amount and intensity of pleasure in a lopsided win¹²⁷, winning by a large margin should be discouraged. However, Dixon argues that feelings of shame, diminishment and strong humiliation are completely misguided because

there is absolutely no disgrace in suffering a heavy defeat by a far stronger team. While they do indicate athletic ability, neither victory nor defeat affects one's worth as a human being. What *does* reflect players' character is how hard and fairly they play, and how they conduct themselves in defeat and victory.¹²⁸

¹²⁴ Ibid., 3.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Bentham, J. (1948). *A Fragment on Government and An Introduction to the principles of morals and legislation*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell & Mott, 125.

¹²⁷ I do not mean that this is true in every case, but from personal introspection and conversations with a number of coaches and players, I would assume that it is true in the majority.

¹²⁸ Dixon, N. (1992). On Sportsmanship and Running Up the Score, 3.

To better explain his argument, Dixon distinguishes between weak and strong humiliation, maintaining that humiliation in a weak sense – humiliation thereby meaning “reducing to a lower position” – is a guaranteed outcome in many competitive events. In contrast, “appropriate occasions for feelings of strong humiliation would be the revelation of a moral fault (e.g. cheating), a nonmoral character fault (such as the lack of persistence [...]), or an act of gross stupidity or incompetence.”¹²⁹ In other words, the difference between weak and strong humiliation is of qualitative, not quantitative nature.

However, Dixon does not deny that there *are* incidents in which coaches or players try to “maximize the margin of victory precisely order to humiliate their opponents.”¹³⁰ These actions, he says, are morally reprehensible because of their intention, which implies the significance of goodwill, a concept with a long tradition in moral philosophy. Kant, one of the most influential philosophers, argued that there is nothing that can be viewed as good without limitation, except goodwill itself.¹³¹ Nevertheless, Dixon points out that it is possible to pursue a one-sided victory without any intention to do harm. Insofar “as the winning team shows respect for the losers, no apology is needed for an exciting display of skill and athleticism.”¹³²

As an example of a team that outclassed many of its competitors but appeared to have no negative intentions, or engaged in taunting, mocking or otherwise unsporting behavior, Dixon cites the famous U.S. Basketball “Dream Team” competing in the 1992 Olympics (Fig. 14). This team, consisting of several NBA legends such as Michael Jordan, Charley Barkley, Larry Bird and Karl Malone, won the gold medal, defeating all opposing teams by an average margin of over 40 points.¹³³ The opposing teams “played with great enthusiasm and spirit, clearly enjoying every minute they shared the court with the NBA legends.”¹³⁴ They understood that a lopsided defeat meant nothing more than that the teams had lopsided levels of ability.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 4.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ See Kant, I. (2008). *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten*. Stuttgart: Reclam, 15.

¹³² Dixon, N. (1992). On Sportsmanship and Running Up the Score, 5.

¹³³ <https://www.usab.com/history/national-team-mens/mens-tournament-of-the-americas-1992.aspx> (last accessed: 25.10.2019)

¹³⁴ Dixon, N. (1992). On Sportsmanship and Running Up the Score, 5.



Fig. 14: American Dream Team of the 1992 Olympics¹³⁵

After elaborating on the AB thesis in the first chapter and stating his case against it in the second, Dixon devotes the third chapter to demonstrating why he thinks his view on lopsided victories can be reconciled with several influential accounts of sportsmanship. The accounts he chooses are those by Keating, Feezell and Arnold, each covered in the second chapter of the thesis at hand.¹³⁶

In fact, Dixon not only seeks to reconcile his dismissal of the AB thesis with Keating's model but goes further, arguing that Keating's account mandates this dismissal since competitive sports (athletics) have the purpose of "objective and *accurate* determination of superior performance."¹³⁷ Taking this into consideration, Dixon notes:

If anything, if the runaway winner eases up in the later stages of the game, the purpose of determining athletic excellence is undermined. It is true that the contestants' "relative abilities" have already been determined by this stage in the sense of a rank ordering. However, an eight-goal margin of victory may more accurately reflect, for instance, the relative abilities of two soccer teams than a still-comfortable three-goal difference. The margin of victory gives tangible quantitative measure of the relative abilities of the teams.¹³⁸

¹³⁵ <https://www.usab.com/history/national-team-mens/mens-tournament-of-the-americas-1992.aspx> (last accessed: 25.10.2019)

¹³⁶ I encourage the reader to re-read Chapters 2.1, 2.2. and 2.3. to avoid potential confusions.

¹³⁷ Keating, J. W. (1964). Sportsmanship as a Moral Category, 33. [emphasis added]

¹³⁸ Dixon, N. (1992). On Sportsmanship and Running Up the Score, 6.

Moreover, Dixon argues that we are also interested in comparing the abilities of athletes who never compete against each other.¹³⁹ This is indeed hard to deny, as anyone who follows sports is aware of several discourses that trace back to precisely this interest. Is Michael Jordan or LeBron James the best basketball player of all time? Who is the best skier of all time? What was the strongest national soccer team to take to the pitch in a World Cup tournament? The reader can easily extend the list. While it not clear that most or any of these questions can ever be answered definitively, the fact that they occur so frequently is evidence of our interest in them. To demonstrate the link between such questions and the question of pursuing lopsided victories, I ask the reader to consider the following question: Would I assess the strength of Germany's World Cup team in 2014, which defeated Brazil 7:1 in the Final, in the same way if it had won by 3:0? The answer, more than likely, would be "no".

Dixon concludes his analysis of the dismissal of the AB thesis through the lens of Keating's account of sportsmanship by repeating that "if the primary purpose of competitive sport is to determine relative athletic ability, then the pursuit of emphatic victories may be not only compatible with sportsmanship but even required by it."¹⁴⁰ He then takes a closer look at a competing account of sportsmanship, namely Feezell's account.

Feezell regards sportsmanship as an Aristotelian mean between competitiveness and playfulness. Therefore, both an excess and a lack of will to win is unsportsmanlike. However, Dixon argues that behavior in line with the AB thesis is a manifestation of a lack of playfulness:

There is nothing in the least bit playful when a football team that is ahead by five touchdowns devotes the entire fourth quarter to grinding out time-consuming, conservative running plays [...] Genuine playfulness would consist of continuing to entertain the fans with exciting, innovative plays, taking advantage of the freedom that is provided by having already secured victory.¹⁴¹

He readily admits that a measure that usually correlates to some extent with adherence might enhance the fun of the game, namely substituting backup players for starters,¹⁴² but concludes that "neither starters nor backups are required to ease up in uneven contests by Feezell's model

¹³⁹ See *ibid.*

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 7.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 9.

¹⁴² See *ibid.*

of sportsmanship.”¹⁴³ An analysis of Feezell’s response to Dixon’s attempt to show the incompatibility of his account of sportsmanship with the AB thesis will be given later in Chapter 3.5.

Last, Dixon tries to show that Arnold’s model of sportsmanship does not support the AB thesis either. He gives two reasons:

First, it relegates sportsmanship to the status of optional acts of altruism, making it inappropriate to condemn the failure to perform such acts as easing up on outmatched opponents. Second, even within the realm of optional acts of altruism, they are better reserved for fellow competitors who are genuinely in need of help rather than extended to people whose only misfortune is to be losing a competitive sporting contest by a wide margin.¹⁴⁴

In other words, Dixon views the fate of an outclassed contestant as not bad enough to qualify for sportsmanlike intervention. A prime example of a situation reserved to qualify for such action is a marathon runner struggling to get over the finish line.¹⁴⁵ Such an incident occurred during the 2017 London Marathon, when Matthew Rees, competing for the Swansea Harriers Running Club, helped David Wyeth of Chorlton Runners finish his race (Fig. 15).



Fig. 15: Altruistic marathon runner helps contestant finish the race¹⁴⁶

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 10.

¹⁴⁵ See *ibid.*

¹⁴⁶ <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/athletics/2017/04/23/london-marathon-runner-gives-race-help-exhausted-athlete-ultimate/> (last accessed: 25.10.2019)

After showing what he considers to be a mismatch between three popular accounts of sportsmanship and behavior in accordance with the AB thesis, Dixon concludes by restating his main objectives against it:

The AB thesis may be based on the view, condemned by all plausible accounts of sportsmanship, that winning is the only thing that matters in sport. Second, it assumes that suffering a heavy defeat is an affront to one's status as an athlete, if not as a human being. While this mistaken attitude is in itself inoffensive, it reflects a gross overestimation of the importance of the outcomes of sporting events[.]¹⁴⁷

Chapters 3.3. – 3.6. cover two attacks on Dixon's claims and his subsequent defense.

3.3. DEFENSE OF THE AB THESIS – ISSUES OF INCOMPETENCE AND HUMILIATION

The first attack on Dixon's argument comes from Hardman et al., whose principal objection is a belief in strong humiliation, not weak humiliation, being the more likely outcome of lopsided sporting contests.¹⁴⁸ The authors reject Dixon's assertion by pointing out that

poor performances may also be the result of inadequate preparation, defective coaching, improper technique, a lack of skill, or a number of other nonmoral failings. Furthermore, in examples of extremely one-sided competition, losers could be inept to the extent that they reveal – to use Dixon's own criteria for strong humiliation – “gross stupidity or incompetence”.¹⁴⁹

To illustrate, they use an extreme example of a one-sided tennis match, in which the better player serves only aces and returns every serve by immediately scoring. In such cases, they argue, our attention would be drawn primarily to the performance of the losing contestant, adding that “we would likely think that [their] [...] play revealed nonmoral character faults, gross incompetence, or both.”¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁷ Dixon, N. (1992). On Sportsmanship and Running Up the Score, 11.

¹⁴⁸ See Hardman, A. et al (1996). On Sportsmanship and “Running Up the Score”: Issues of Incompetence and Humiliation, In: *Journal of the Philosophy of Sport*, 23, 60.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

Another concern arises not from what viewers might think of the losing contestant but from the felt experience of the losers themselves. According to the authors, Dixon

downplays the shame currently experienced by some losers in one-sided competition. It is one thing to say that the perceptions that undergird the AB thesis are misconstrued, but it is quite another to argue that the humiliation losers may actually feel in blowout games should not be considered seriously. To apply Dixon's thinking to other situations, he would have us [...] disregard the very guilt experienced by many children of divorced parents *just because* that guilt is often unfounded.¹⁵¹

Expressed another way, Hardman et al. stress the importance of whether the losers *are* experiencing strong humiliation rather than if they *should* experience it. In addition, they are not in favor of downgrading the importance of winning in the first place and emphasize that contestants "enter the competitive arena of sport with full knowledge that victory may reveal their excellence whereas defeat may show up their weaknesses."¹⁵² According to this argument, the high level of excitement associated with sports relies partially on the fact that strong emotions *are* involved and self-esteem *is* at stake. Lessening the importance of winning would, therefore, rob competitive sports of a key component. It is easy to see why they think that

Dixon's version of sport is vanilla-flavored and lifeless, for it acts to accommodate the mediocre, the safe, and the inoffensive side of sport. Participants are forced into a version of sport that cannot measure personal self-esteem and in return are bestowed a diminished form of competition with pitiful compensations.¹⁵³

To summarize, Hardman et al. believe that strong humiliation occurs in extremely lopsided contests and, therefore, the AB thesis should be upheld. Moreover, they argue that sporting contests would lose some of their merit if self-esteem was detached from it. Two years after the publication of their thesis, Dixon defended his rejection of the AB thesis in a reply recapitulated in the following chapter.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 62.

¹⁵² Ibid., 65.

¹⁵³ Ibid., 66.

3.4. ON THE CONNECTION OF INTRINSIC DISGRACEFULNESS AND LOSING BY A WIDE MARGIN

A key point in Dixon's response is a description of what he considers to be the interaction of losing by a wide margin, self-esteem and strong humiliation. His criteria for the latter are the display of "character flaws and gross incompetence"¹⁵⁴. These, he argues,

are *independent of* the margin of defeat. In other words, a heavy defeat that does not display these criteria – that is, a contest in which a competent, well-trained, and resolute athlete or team is nonetheless overwhelmed by a far stronger opponent – does *not* strongly humiliate the losing player or team. And strong humiliation can occur when these criteria are present, even if the margin of defeat is relatively narrow and no blowout occurs.¹⁵⁵

As a practical example, one can think again of the 1992 Olympics, where the U.S. Basketball Dream Team won the title via one blowout after another. In line with Dixon's reasoning, I cannot recall any voices calling their opponents grossly incompetent or flawed in character. It is true that, although there might be a strong correlation between losing by a wide margin and displaying character flaws and gross incompetence, there is no causation. Instead, the large "margin may be *symptom* of factors that do indeed disgrace and shame an athlete – for example, lack of persistence, inadequate preparation, and gross incompetence."¹⁵⁶

Dixon also replies to the objection that blowouts are problematic because an extremely one-sided victory "*draws attention* to the character flaws or gross incompetence that really do humiliate losing athletes and teams."¹⁵⁷ In his view, in any attempt to hide these flaws by purposefully "[easing] up to narrow the margin of victory, nobody – neither spectators nor the opponent – will be fooled."¹⁵⁸ Having seen many such attempts as an athlete, coach and spectator, I find it hard to disagree, but I would add that saying that *nobody* is fooled by such attempts is an exaggeration. At many events, there are usually a few spectators with no expertise in the sport and who consequently have a hard time distinguishing between contestants easing

¹⁵⁴ Dixon, N. (1998). Why losing by a wide margin is not in itself a disgrace: Response to Hardman, Fox, McLaughlin and Zimmerman. In: *Journal of the Philosophy of Sport*, 25, 62.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 63.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

up on purpose and getting tired over the course of the event. Even as a sports fan, I am not sure if I could always tell the difference in a sport with which I was unfamiliar.

Dixon also addresses the point that believing that heavy defeats do not lead to strong humiliation would devalue competition in sport. He does so by re-emphasizing that self-esteem and strong humiliation are not as tightly connected to each other as Hardman et al. suggest. The possibility of strong humiliation, he argues, is not needed to prevent sports from becoming lifeless and dismally bland, for

[a]s long as their self-esteem is at stake, players will continue to give their all, in order to win and excel. The belief that defeat by a wide margin is a strong humiliation is not necessary to motivate players, as it is shown every day by excellent performances by athletes [...] outside the U.S. where the AB thesis is unknown.¹⁵⁹

While I consider Dixon's claim that the AB thesis is unknown outside the U.S. is mistaken,¹⁶⁰ his argument concerning emotional attachment to a sport at a level where a big loss is felt as a form of strong humiliation not being necessary to highly motivate contestants sounds reasonable. After all, we are also highly motivated to do well in other areas of life where strong humiliation is not at stake. Additionally, he convincingly argues that even if believing that losing by a wide margin "is a moral disgrace [which] may provide a slight additional motivation for athletes [...] [T]his minor loss is more than outweighed by the benefit of removing this false belief, which is [...] psychologically harmful."¹⁶¹ If we look at this issue through a utilitarian lens,¹⁶² the argument is persuasive because psychological harm most certainly affects a large number of children.

A year later, Dixon saw his views critiqued again, this time by Feezell, whose framework of sportsmanship as a golden mean was discussed in detail in Chapter 2.3. An outline of this critique follows in the next chapter.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 69.

¹⁶⁰ From talking to many sports coaches and players, as well as from my own experience, I can say that in Austria – and possibly in all of Europe – the AB thesis is well known.

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 69.

¹⁶² To avoid any misunderstanding, I want to clarify that this does not mean that I advocate looking at this topic solely through a utilitarian lens.

3.5. DEFENSE OF THE REVISED AB THESIS (RAB THESIS)

Feezell begins his investigation by proposing to call persons supporting the traditional view of blowouts “traditionalists” and those rejecting this view, like Feezell, “critics”. He asks whether a traditionalist must support the AB thesis in precisely the way it was formulated by Dixon.¹⁶³ According to Feezell, this need not necessarily be the case, since many traditionalists could imagine situations in which it is not unsporting to maximize the margin of victory. He, therefore, suggests a revised AB thesis (RAB thesis), which he thinks is more representative of the actual traditionalist view than the original one proposed by Dixon:

RAB: It is prima facie unsporting for players or teams to maximize the margin of victory after they have secured victory in a one-sided contest.¹⁶⁴

An important characteristic of Feezell’s position is that unlike Hardman et al., he agrees with Dixon concerning the lack of strong humiliation in blowouts.¹⁶⁵ This means that he does not intend to show that lopsided victories lead to strong humiliation. Instead, he proposes two different arguments that favor the RAB thesis. The first centres on the psychological consequences of the losing contestants, since

losing badly normally carries with it the pain of recognizing the significant gap between one’s desires and the reality of one’s actual talents and abilities “Pouring it on” or “rubbing it in”, however one might describe the phenomenon, is rubbing the opponent’s nose in his failure and, at least momentary, badness. To do so is typically an expression of a lack of graciousness and respect for others’ feelings or emotions[.]¹⁶⁶

His second argument is that one-sided victories – unlike even contests – do not constitute “true” or “real” competition, that in lopsided match-ups when the issue of winning is already resolved, competition in a strong sense has broken down. In his words, “[t]rue competition, good competition, requires being challenged or tested by worthy opponents. In a blowout, this factor is at least momentarily absent.”¹⁶⁷

¹⁶³ See Feezell, R.M. (1999). Sportsmanship and blowouts: Baseball and beyond. In: *Journal of the Philosophy of Sport*, 26, 69.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 70.

¹⁶⁵ See *ibid.*, 75.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 71.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 72.

Feezell also addresses Dixon's claim of sportsmanship not being consistent with the AB thesis, insisting that this view "*requires* that players or teams 'ease up' [but] only in the strategic sense, not in the sense of effort. Playing hard shows respect for opponents; pursuing blowouts doesn't."¹⁶⁸

In the year following Feezell's critique, Dixon delivered a response similar to how he did to the critique of Hardman et al. A condensed version of its content follows in the next chapter.

3.6. A CRITIQUE OF THE RAB THESIS

Dixon agrees with Feezell that a heavy defeat might cause psychological pain.¹⁶⁹ He even states that "[d]isappointment and loss of self-esteem qua athlete are the inevitable result of losing by a wide margin[.]"¹⁷⁰ Therefore, according to his view,

any attempt to soften the blow of a loss to a stronger team by easing up [...] is doomed to failure. All it does is eliminate a symptom of the real source of disappointment: the vast superiority of the opponent. No amount of [...] mercy will obscure the losing team's realization of this superiority.¹⁷¹

However, he insists that this does not make them wrong. Dixon clarifies by drawing analogies from outside the world of sports. For instance, romantic rejections, unsuccessful job applications and rejections of submitted papers to scientific journals can cause psychological harm.¹⁷² In such cases, "[p]rovided that no malice is involved [...] and provided that the decisions involved were made in good faith according to the appropriate criteria, we would not dream of criticizing those who perform them, despite the terrible disappointment[.]"¹⁷³ In other words, he considers "bad consequences" to be an insufficient basis for moral judgement, pointing out that being defeated by a small margin can also lead to psychological pain, especially if heavily favored to win. A popular example of this is "The shame of Córdoba"¹⁷⁴, which occurred when the highly favored West Germans lost to Austria by 2:3 during the World

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 76.

¹⁶⁹ See Dixon, N. (2000). The inevitability of disappointment: Reply to Feezell. In: *Journal of the Philosophy of Sport*, 27, 94.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 95.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 98.

¹⁷² See *ibid.*, 95.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ In Austria the game is referred to as *The Miracle of Cordoba* (*Das Wunder von Cordoba*).

Cup of 1978.¹⁷⁵ Additionally, Dixon argues that even close victories can lead to uncomfortable consequences when they happen against a far weaker opponent.¹⁷⁶

After dismissing psychological pain and loss of self-esteem as reasons to regard blowouts as unsportsmanlike, Dixon addresses Feezell's claim that blowouts fail to constitute true or real competition. He restates an argument that he made in his original paper: that competition does not end as soon as the winner of the contest is known. In the following paragraph, we see that Dixon's definition of competition is a broad one:

One purpose of an athletic contest is to give a quantitative measure of the relative abilities of the teams (not just rank ordering). Pursuing a scoreline that better reflects a team's degree of superiority thus serves a quite legitimate goal. [...] And in low-scoring games, like soccer, the ability to translate superior skills into emphatic victories that fully reflect this superiority is a sign of athletic excellence (as is reflected by the practice of counting "goal difference" as a tie-breaker in soccer tournaments[.]"¹⁷⁷

Finally, Dixon deals with Feezell's proposal to soften blowouts by easing up in a strategic sense, maintaining that "it isn't clear that easing up strategically is any less condescending than easing up in terms of efforts [...] since strategy is just as much an element of athletic excellence as physical prowess."¹⁷⁸ Furthermore, he argues that easing up strategically "may well achieve the goal of keeping the margin of victory relatively modest"¹⁷⁹, but it will not fool anyone.¹⁸⁰

The RAB thesis, like the original AB thesis, misses the point, in that a wide margin of defeat is a mere symptom of the real cause of negative feelings: the vast superiority of the winning team. Eliminating the symptom by easing up strategically will not significantly reduce the disappointment and loss of self-esteem.¹⁸¹

The next chapter is devoted to Sailors' "*Mercy Killing: Sportsmanship and Blowouts*", which, while not directly concerned with the core debate about the ethics of blowouts, is interesting

¹⁷⁵ <https://www.rundschau-online.de/sport/wm-geschichte--schmach-von-cordoba--als-dunkle-stunde-der-dfb-geschichte-30029564> (last accessed: 25.10.2019)

¹⁷⁶ See Dixon, N. (2000). The inevitability of disappointment: Reply to Feezell, 95.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 96.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 97.

¹⁸⁰ One might argue that easing up strategically fools fewer people than easing up physically. For example, running down the clock in a football game is a more obvious way to keep the margin small than by blocking or tackling with a little less intensity.

¹⁸¹ Ibid., 97.

for two reasons. First, Sailors proposes “four [...] distinctions [...] that a fully adequate examination of blowout ethics should include[.]”¹⁸² Second, she defends Mercy rules, which are closely related to blowouts.

3.7. FOUR MAJOR DISTINCTIONS AND THE MERCY RULE

After an overview of famous blowouts and summarizing several positions on blowout ethics,¹⁸³ Sailors kicks off her attempt to defend Mercy rules by explaining their usage. According to Sailors, they

constitute an attempt to hasten the end of such lop-sided contests. The rules vary by sport, by location and by level of competition. In the United States, the National Federation of High school Associations (NFHS) permits Mercy rules for football, baseball, basketball, softball, field hockey, ice hockey and soccer on a state-by-state basis. The Federation suggests use of a running clock in timed sports and a run differential rule in sports without a clock.¹⁸⁴

In her defense of Mercy rules, Sailors criticizes certain statements about blowout ethics, arguing that “[t]he primary flaw with all such claims about blowouts is that they are too broad, making universal statements while failing to establish distinctions that may well determine moral status.”¹⁸⁵ While participants in the discourse did, at times, point to specific sports characteristics, drawing on anecdotes with which they are familiar, she is correct that both the AB thesis and the RAB thesis were formulated in a broad and sports-unspecific sense. In addition, an attack or defense of the theses rarely included explicit sport-specific considerations. For the Master’s thesis at hand, her proposed distinctions are considerably more important than her defense of Mercy rules. For this reason, I focus on them rather than on the main topic of her paper.

Sailors’ first distinction is between timed and untimed events.¹⁸⁶ With timed sports, such as soccer and basketball, the clock runs out independently of the score. In contrast, contests in untimed sports such as baseball or tennis can theoretically go on forever. Her second distinction

¹⁸² Sailors, P. R. (2010). *Mercy Killing: Sportsmanship and Blowouts*, 62.

¹⁸³ All were discussed at length in the previous chapters.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 61.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 62.

¹⁸⁶ See *ibid.*

is between team sports and individual sports.¹⁸⁷ Since this is self-explanatory, I will not dwell upon a long commentary, but one important point to note is that Sailors, falling back on sociological evidence, argues “that it is practically inevitable that blowouts will bring out the worst behavior in both the winning and the losing team.”¹⁸⁸

Her third distinction is between sports involving direct competition (sometimes referred to as interactive competition) and those involving indirect competition (sometimes called parallel competition). In direct competition, “athletes not only try to do well but also try to block in some way the efforts of opponents. In indirect competition, the performance of one athlete has little or no impact on the performance of another.”¹⁸⁹ Examples are soccer, baseball and table tennis, while swimming, track races and downhill skiing are examples of indirect competition. Sailors notes that we should be more concerned with blowouts in direct competitive sports than in other sports.¹⁹⁰

Sailors’ final distinction is between what she calls “have” and “have not” teams.¹⁹¹ Although this concept might be unfamiliar to European readers, whose club-based amateur sports systems hardly ever lead to many match-ups being scheduled between “have” and “have not” teams, in the U.S., especially in high school and college sports, such games frequently take place. The terms “have” and “have not” can be understood as “having resources” and “not having resources” – although resources can have different meanings, such as financial resources (private schools are often “haves” and public schools are often “have nots”), a long tradition in a specific sport or having the option to award scholarships for specific sports.¹⁹²

To reiterate, Sailors does not have an emphatic position about the morality of blowouts. After all,

Mercy rules will not eliminate victories by wide margins [...], but they will go some way toward eliminating the harms that come along with blowouts. They also seem to be a better and more honest response to blowouts than having the winning team adopt tactics to slow down scoring [...] Thus, I conclude that while blowouts may not be

¹⁸⁷ See *ibid.*, 63.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 64.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁰ See *ibid.*, 65.

¹⁹¹ See *ibid.*

¹⁹² See *ibid.*

intrinsically (or even *prima facie*) morally wrong, there are good reasons to encourage the use of mercy rules.¹⁹³

I return to Sailors' four distinctions in Chapter 3.9., where I attempt a contribution to blowout ethics of my own. For the present, however, I intend to focus on a paper by Taylor and Johnson, who entered the debate by drawing on Aristotelean ideas.

3.8. BLOWOUTS IN THE LIGHT OF ARISTOTLE'S CONCEPTION OF JUSTICE

In "*Virtuous victory: Running up the score and the anti-blowout thesis*", Taylor and Johnson, after summarizing the important issues in blowout ethics – such as competition and humiliation – advance their own ideas. A key element from them lies in the Aristotelian notion of justice, which states that equals should be treated equally, unequals unequally and that unequal treatment should be in proportion to the level of inequality.¹⁹⁴ Another Aristotelian idea, closely connected to the idea of justice, is that of status and status-recognition. Taylor and Johnson urge that

we can fail with regard to justice in two different ways: we can fail properly to recognize other people's statuses, and we can fail properly to recognize our own. These failings can be conceived both epistemically and morally. Epistemically we can fail in judging what is due ourselves and others, whereas morally we can fail in acting on our epistemic judgements[.]¹⁹⁵

The authors apply the principles of justice and status-recognition to blowout ethics, contrasting two blowouts in interactive competition. In the first – a blowout between equals – the wide margin of victory does not follow from the superiority of one competitor "but because for any number of reasons one of the participants plays particularly poorly or catches a succession of bad breaks."¹⁹⁶ In a blowout like this, the authors argue that continuing to play "hard against the opponent is to respect their worth or status as an equal, and to acknowledge that the discrepancy in score is due to anomalous factors."¹⁹⁷ Easing up in contests like these is not only

¹⁹³ Ibid., 67.

¹⁹⁴ Aristotle (1999). *Politics*. Ontario: Kitchener, 62-63.

¹⁹⁵ Taylor, J., & Johnson, C. (2014). *Virtuous victory: Running up the score and the anti-blowout thesis*. In: *Journal of the Philosophy of Sport*, 41, 256.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., 257.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

“not mandatory”, but positively unsporting, as that would convey “the message [...] that they think the opponent is in fact of lesser ability than they are, which would humiliate them by treating them as a lower status than they merit.” In a blowout between unequals, however, they argue “that RUS is inappropriate since it involves the winning party either failing to discern the losing party’s inferiority or more likely failing to care about it.”¹⁹⁸

To summarize, Taylor and Johnson regard the inherent abilities of the contestants as deciding factors for whether slowing down is appropriate or not. They then try to decide which is the best way to act in an interactive sporting contest of unequals after the win has been secured. As we saw in the preceding chapters, a variety of different ways to soften blowouts have been proposed by different authors. For their part, Taylor and Johnson draw on Aristotle’s ideas of goodwill and true friendship to find the best solution.¹⁹⁹

The truth seems to be that well-wishing is the germ of friendship [...] [I]t is impossible for people to be friends unless they first become well-wishers, but people who wish each other well are not a whit on that account friends; for they merely wish good to those whose well-wishers they are, but would never help them any enterprise, or put themselves out for them.²⁰⁰

Goodwill is a precondition for friendship “in that it involves strangers recognizing virtue in one another and treating each other well so as to nurture that virtue and thereby develop a friendship.”²⁰¹ Taylor and Johnson transfer this relationship to sports, arguing that “goodwill [can] be exercised as a way of recognizing and nurturing the potential of an opponent to the end of equal sporting relations.”²⁰² They subsequently suggest that winning parties in blowouts between unequal contestants should handicap themselves in such a way that leads to good challenges and opportunities for both parties to develop. As an example, they suggest that a winning soccer team might try to attack down the wings, instead of through the middle at which it excels.²⁰³ This would help both parties: the winning team could try to improve a team weakness and the losing team could try to defend against a superior team practicing a playstyle that it does not particularly excel at. Accordingly, the authors conclude:

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹⁹ See *ibid.*

²⁰⁰ Aristotle (1893). *The Nicomachean Ethics*, 213.

²⁰¹ Taylor, J., & Johnson, C. (2014). *Virtuous victory: Running up the score and the anti-blowout thesis*, 257.

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ See *ibid.*, 258.

hen handicapping is done well [...] the losing party is treated in such a way that their capacities are allowed to be demonstrated. Their status to make claims of equal ability is certainly rejected, but not their status to make all claims whatsoever. We might thus understand handicapping as providing a platform for the positive demonstration of ability, and blowouts as denying all such platforms through the singular rejection of equal status.²⁰⁴

Another issue the authors consider is that of balancing moral and non-moral goods in blowouts. For example, in a ranking system that uses goals or point differentials as tiebreakers, refraining from RUS puts a player or team at a disadvantage.²⁰⁵ However, such problems are not exclusive to sports since adhering to moral “principle[s] makes one vulnerable to violations of principle[s] by others. Any advantage that accrues thereby can jeopardize one’s pursuit of non-moral goods.”²⁰⁶ Thus, in many cases, the issue of blowouts constitutes a balancing act, a view that aligns with Abad’s account of sportsmanship and discussed in Chapter 2.5.

As of this writing, the most recent article about blowouts is Jonathan Santana’s “*Effects of Running up the Score in Sport*”. Since his paper is a literature review that does not cover articles about blowouts which I have not already discussed in this chapter, I will not examine it in detail. However, his recommendation “for future research would be to look deeper into specific sports”²⁰⁷ segues into the next chapter, where I build upon Sailors’ categorization that supports the notion of looking at the characteristics of specific sports to elucidate the morality of blowouts.

3.9. THE IMPORTANCE OF SPECIFICS IN BLOWOUT ETHICS

3.9.1. STATE OF THE DISCOURSE

Thus far, after examination of the literature on blowout ethics I have reached two preliminary conclusions:

²⁰⁴ Ibid., 260.

²⁰⁵ See *ibid.*, 259.

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

²⁰⁷ Santana, J. (2017). *Effects of Running Up the Score in Sport*. In: *Kinesiology, Sport Studies, and Physical Education Synthesis Projects*, 30, 22.

(1) Even critics of blowouts usually state that there are *some* situations in which victories by a wide margin might be morally defensible. Therefore, I stand with Feezell that the AB thesis is hardly representative of the traditionalist view on blowouts.

(2) All philosophers of sports engaged in the debate – even Dixon, the most outspoken critic of the AB and RAB – agree that *some* blowouts are unsportsmanlike.

While these two findings might sound trivial, they are far from meaningless. If one decides to take them seriously, it follows that moving forward, the focus should no longer be on the intrinsic (im)morality of blowouts but on which types of blowouts are unsportsmanlike. Taylor and Johnson's paper touched on this question by falling back on one of Sailors' four distinctions, namely interactive (direct) and parallel (indirect) competition. In the next chapter, I make the case for two further distinctions that determine the morality of lopsided victories.

3.9.2. THE CASE FOR TWO ADDITIONAL DISTINCTIONS

To reiterate, when discussing blowouts, Sailors proposes four distinctions “(1) between time-limited and untimed events, (2) between team and individual contests, (3) between direct and indirect competition and (4) between ‘have’ and ‘have not’ teams.”²⁰⁸ I suggest expanding these with two additional distinctions. First, that blowouts in contact sports are different from those in non-contact sports. Second, financial incentives should be taken into account as well.

For good reasons, the issue of humiliation has been raised in the discourse of blowouts, but significant parts of the discussion about its role have been about whether blowouts are humiliating in a weak sense only, or in a strong sense as well. The difference between “weak” and “strong” has been, therefore, one of quality, not of quantity. I do not intend to contribute to this debate about different qualia of humiliation. This is largely due to the fact that while I consider the distinction to be helpful theoretically, it bears little relevance for the feelings of a losing contestant. This means that if we care about the psychological well-being of athletes, we should be interested in asking what kind of blowouts lead to humiliation in a quantitative sense. From now on, then, to avoid potential confusion, I refer to ‘larger’ and ‘smaller’ degrees of humiliation as quantitative measures, reserving ‘weak’ and ‘strong’ for what they have always meant in the discourse of blowouts.

²⁰⁸ Sailors, P. R. (2010). *Mercy Killing: Sportsmanship and Blowouts*, 62.

I maintain that being dominated in an interactive event leads to a larger degree of humiliation than having the same thing happen in a parallel competition. This is because in direct competition a superior opponent can make you feel helpless since their playing at full strength can lead to your being unable to *really* participate in the competition. The opponent of a superior tennis player who always scores after his first touch of the ball cannot show that he or she is capable of playing the game at a certain level. As a counterexample, in an uneven parallel contest of track racing, a losing contestant can show his athletic prowess independently of the level of difference between the runners. Thus, there is no way of humiliating the losing contestant to a large degree by making him appear incompetent.

However, there is another difference between specific kinds of interactive sports that might be almost as important as the distinction between direct and indirect competition. This is the difference between contact and non-contact sports. A contact sport, according to the Cambridge Online Dictionary, is “a sport such as rugby or American football in which players are allowed to touch each other when, for example, they are trying to get the ball.”²⁰⁹ Examples of interactive non-contact sports are badminton and tennis. In an article primarily concerned with showing that analytic philosophy and not continental philosophy constitute the dominant tradition in most discourses in the *Journal of the Philosophy of Sports*, Kretchmar noted that

in physical contact sports, like ice hockey and wrestling, the chances of humiliation once again might be greater than in, say, tennis or golf. In those games, one merely plays a game and records a score. But in activities like wrestling and American football, a defeat is not merely recorded on the scoreboard. The loser in a lopsided contest is also likely to be physically beaten and defeated, if not also injured.²¹⁰

Kretchmar did not dwell on this distinction, since, as already stated, he did not intend to engage in the discourse of blowout ethics. For him, RUS was a means to an end, to reveal the dominance of analytic philosophy. My goal, in contrast, is to further investigate the distinction between contact sports and non-contact sports.

First, I agree with Kretchmar’s argument that RUS is more problematic in contact sports than in non-contact sports because pursuing a victory by a wide margin is more likely to result in additional injuries. Whenever a blowout does occur in a contact sport, it is usually because a

²⁰⁹ <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/de/worterbuch/englisch/contact-sport> (last accessed: 25.10.2019)

²¹⁰ Kretchmar, S. (2014). The Philosophy of Sport and Analytical Philosophy. In: Torres, C. R. (Ed.). *Bloomsbury Companion to the Philosophy of Sport*. London: Bloomsbury, 47.

team is superior both physically and in skill. Of course, physically outmatched teams can, in some instances, win against physically stronger teams by having a superior technique and/or strategy, but in these sports, blowing out an opponent is only possible if you also dominate physically. While easing up by either going light or by substituting weaker players might prevent injuries to players of the opposing team, this consequentialist argument alone indicates that RUS is more problematic in contact sports – although there is more to say on this topic.

In his seminal paper, “On Sportsmanship and ‘Running Up the Score’”, which opened our discussion, Dixon said that because “the AB thesis is most often cited in football and basketball, both of which involve considerable contacts, suggests that the macho notion of sport as a test of *manhood* is also involved”.²¹¹ I contend that attributing this to a macho notion of sport is not only misleading but wrong and it draws attention away from the important distinction of contact and non-contact sports. First of all, being dominated in a contact sport is just as humiliating for girls and women as it is for boys and men. Unless one believes that women playing basketball, for example, do so partly to prove their *machismo*, it makes no sense to introduce that concept in the discussion. As far as I know, there is no empirical research indicating that (1) blowouts in contact sports lead to larger degrees of humiliation or that (2) girls and women losing in contact sports blowouts feel less humiliated than boys and men. However, neither do we have evidence to suggest the opposite, which leads me, for now, to bolster my claims with theoretical considerations.

Perhaps blowouts in contact sports and the humiliation that comes with them can be explained partly by evolutionary biology. Over the millennia we have come to associate specific kinds of sensorimotor signals with danger and potentially struggling for survival. In many contact sports, some of these signals – such as being hit, falling down as a result of collision or being buried under a pile of other human beings, occur regularly. These can then lead to feelings of helplessness, which are rarely experienced in non-contact sports. On such occasions, feelings of helplessness occur only in the sense of not being able to participate in the imagined contest. On the other hand, contact sports can lead to feelings of strong helplessness, which occur when you are put in a position in which the dominant opponent suppresses your freedom of movement. Moreover, it happens in male and female contests alike and has nothing to do with *machismo* or *manhood*. Fig. 16 shows an example of a player, wearing jersey number 97, in a prone position of helplessness. He knows that until the whistle blows and the current play is

²¹¹ Dixon, N. (1992). On Sportsmanship and “Running Up the Score”, 3. [emphasis added]

over, he is unable to move. In Fig. 17, we see a player, wearing jersey number 3 moments away from being “pancaked” by his opponent.



Fig. 16: Strong helplessness²¹²



Fig. 17: Pancake block²¹³

To summarize, being blown out in a game of a non-contact sport might make you feel humiliated *qua* athlete, but it does not necessarily make you feel physically weaker or physically helpless. In contact sports, however, being dominated on the scoreboard usually implies being dominated at a rudimentary physical level. This, in turn, manifests itself in the

²¹² <https://www.colts.com/video/big-q-colts-rookie-guard-quenton-nelson-mic-d-up-during-win-over-jacksonville> (last accessed: 25.10.2019)

²¹³ <https://www.mercurynews.com/2015/10/07/stanford-football-chrysts-pancake-block-deserving-of-a-poster/> (last accessed: 25.10.2019)

losing contestant finding himself or herself in the position of strong helplessness, which is quantitatively more humiliating than the position of weak helplessness. Thus, in terms of the blowout humiliation, RUS is more problematic in contact sports than in non-contact sports.

My second proposed distinction involves financial incentives. First, I want to state that this distinction is not in any way related to the distinction of sports versus athletics by Keating, nor to be confused with one between amateur and professional sports. For the sake of simplification, however, I will start my explanation with an obvious example, in which one athlete competes in professional sports and the other in amateur sports:

Example Athlete A is a professional American football player competing in the National Football League (NFL). He recently signed his Rookie contract, is by no means a star player but tries hard to keep his spot on the Roster. Since he is not a starting player, he has playing time only when his team is already leading by a wide margin. If that happens, what is he supposed to do during the blowout? Let us not forget that he has very few opportunities to display his skills in real competition. Backing off just slightly could easily result in the end of his professional career. It should be obvious that he is not to blame for playing at full strength. The non-moral good, in this case, fulfilling his dream of having a career as a professional athlete, justifies playing with full effort. Let us also not forget that playing at this level requires an enormous amount of dedication, effort and time. In some cases, athletes bet everything on one card as they pursue a professional contract. This may lead to their neglecting their academic studies and subsequently negatively impact their career. This is particularly true if the athlete has family responsibilities.

Example Athlete B is a backup player in an American football team as well but competes at the local level for a small club in Austria.²¹⁴ He knows that he will never make a living playing American football. Is he supposed to go a bit easier on his opponents when he finally enters the field with his team having a big lead? Arguably yes, because although not playing at full strength might have bad consequences for him, even leading to his being underrated by his coaches, such consequences pale compared to those for Athlete A. The combination of the non-moral goods of (1) having fun as a result of playing at full strength and (2) generating more playing time for himself by showing his coaches his abilities do not justify further humiliating the opposing team's players.

²¹⁴ The author disavows any resemblance between Athlete B's and his own sporting history.

However, as already stated, the issue is more complex than the above examples suggest. Financial incentives in sports do not always come in the form of direct payments. The path to becoming a professional is usually long, involving many years of competing at different levels of the game. Such paths vary between countries and regions, but in the U.S. the usual path is to go from being a high school athlete to becoming a college athlete and then eventually obtaining a professional contract. College athletic scholarships play a big role in this process. According to figures from the National College Athletic Association (NCAA), “Division I and II schools provide more than \$3 billion in athletics scholarships annually to more than 150,000 student-athletes.”²¹⁵ Even so, only 6 percent of high school athletes become NCAA athletes and only 2 percent of those go on to be professional athletes.²¹⁶ In most European countries, however, club-based sports systems are the norm. Here, players frequently start to compete at a very young age at a local club. If they perform well, they may switch to another club that plays in a better league. In cases where players are exceptionally talented and compete in a sufficiently high league, they may attract the attention of scouts of semi-professional or professional teams. Although differences between the systems are vast, two similarities stand out. First, in order to become a professional athlete, players have to compete *and* dominate at different levels of the game. Second, attracting the attention of scouts is vital. While the old-fashioned way of watching live games of potential candidates still has a role in today’s scouting process, advances in technology have led to the emergence of a new way of efficiently determining player potential. As Weathersby, an American football scout for the University of Carolina puts it:

Many programs subscribe to a recruiting service which loads footage of recruits onto a server or site where a staff can all watch and evaluate a recruit. High school coaches and recruits are also very proactive these days. Colleges get thousands of highlight DVDs mailed to them every day from all over the country from coaches, players and parents. As a scout at heart, this is where I relish evaluating and many coaches at colleges do too. The tape doesn't lie.²¹⁷

Thus, having a great highlight tape is of paramount importance. One factor for evaluating a tape is its length. After all, how good can a player be if he only manages a highlight tape of, say, three minutes? In other words, the longer the highlight tape, the better. Unfortunately, easing up on opponents can significantly reduce the length of your highlight tape. For example,

²¹⁵ <https://www.ncaa.org/sites/default/files/Recruiting%20Fact%20Sheet%20WEB.pdf> (last accessed: 25.10.2019)

²¹⁶ See *ibid*.

²¹⁷ <https://bleacherreport.com/articles/1582239-a-scouts-take-on-how-college-football-recruits-are-evaluated#slide2> (last accessed: 25.10.2019)

running down the clock in American football means shortening the net playtime and, therefore, having fewer opportunities to produce highlights against an inferior opponent. Similarly, playing it safe in soccer denies any forward or another offensive player the chance of shining. The same goes for other positions, as Defenders would not be wise to put safe yet not necessarily important backward passes to the goalkeeper on their highlight tape.

Besides highlight tapes, another tool commonly used for evaluating prospective players is statistics. Players refraining from using RUS are placed in a disadvantageous position, compared to athletes who use every game against an outmatched opponent to bolster their individual stat sheets. Therefore, an athlete refraining from RUS not only has a shorter and less exciting highlight tape but also less impressive statistics. This undoubtedly results in fewer athletic scholarships and professional contract offers.

Let us look, too, at the often-cited proposal of substituting starters for back-up players in uneven contests. To preface the following example, I believe that, as a good coach, you should look at your players not only as *your* players but also as human beings with interests to consider. This is essentially an applied version of Kant's notion of treating human beings as ends-in-themselves rather than as means.²¹⁸ Now imagine coaching a high school football team and having a star player on your team who has already attracted the interest of major colleges. Wanting him to have a good chance to receive a scholarship – maybe even a full scholarship – you will want his highlight tape to be as impressive as possible. How would you decide to act in an uneven contest? Would you pull him from the field in order not to humiliate the opponent? And, more interesting from an ethical point of view, would it be unsportsmanlike not to do it? I do not propose to have a definitive answer since the decision here – as a coach – might be between two different moral goods²¹⁹, but I hope to have shown that it is reasonable to suggest that direct or indirect financial incentives should be considered when discussing the moral legitimacy of RUS.

As a final note to this chapter, I want to mention an issue that has yet to be discussed in blowout ethics. When talking about team sports, it is often said that it is *unsportsmanlike* for a *team* to RUS, but we should not forget that a team consists of at least two players. Usually, not all of these individuals have a say in deciding whether to pursue a blowout victory or not. In some

²¹⁸ See Kant, I. (2008). *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten*, 65.

²¹⁹ I consider helping a player in his/her personal development a moral-good, as is trying not to humiliate opposing players.

cases, it is a coach making this decision, and players have to follow if they do not want to risk losing their spot on the team. So, whenever we talk or hear about *Team X* being unsportsmanlike because of RUS, we should note that not all the players have to agree with the team's decision, especially in sports with a large number of team members. In other words, while it is certainly of practical utility to talk of teams as a whole, this is often a crude generalization.

After the roundup of the current status of research on blowouts and an attempt to provide ideas for advancing the discourse, the focus now shifts to didactical considerations concerning the subject's place in secondary education.

4. DIDACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

This chapter marks the beginning of the second principal section of this thesis. While the previous section focused on philosophical reflections, this section focuses on didactical considerations. I will start by giving reasons why the ethics of blowouts is an attractive topic for philosophy and/or ethics classes (4.1). This will be followed by a chapter that considers the dialogic-pragmatic model of didactics of philosophy by Martens (4.2.).

4.1. JUSTIFICATION – WHY TEACH ABOUT BLOWOUTS ANYWAY?

The world is full of urgent ethical problems: How should we deal with climate change? Is factory farming one of the biggest atrocities in the history of humankind? What is the right way to deal with dictators? Are countries supposed to open borders to immigrants? Will drones and other technologies rewrite the rules of military warfare? How will artificial intelligence change our lives? Will it do so in ways that imperil us? Are abortions ethical? If so, what can be regarded as an acceptable time limit? Do laws against assisted dying conflict with human dignity and autonomy?

Because time in school, as elsewhere, is both valuable and limited, why should we spend time teaching students about minor issues such as the ethics of winning one-sided contests? Surely, it is more important to deal with drug use? Or indeed: What is the right way to deal with whistleblowers in sports? Should the International Olympic Committee be allowed to comment on human rights violations in host countries?²²⁰

I will try to explain why it is a good idea to teach blowout ethics. In fact, there are a number of reasons this problem is especially suitable for secondary school students, particularly as part of a philosophy and/or ethics class.

The first argument is counterintuitive; that is, the subject's relative lack of conspicuous importance is a strength, not a weakness. While the possibility of some students having strong opinions cannot be ignored, discussions are less likely to get heated as they are about other

²²⁰ For a more comprehensive outline of these and several other major ethical problems in sports, see: Maier, B. (2018). *Dictionarium der Sportethik*. Horn: Berger.

topics. Blowout victories are not life or death issues. They can be discussed calmly and rationally, in an atmosphere that fosters critical and rational thinking.

Another advantage of the ethics of blowouts is its apolitical nature. Political and religious topics often correlate with ethical positions; and, in some cases, peer pressure resulting from religious or political affiliations might hinder autonomous thinking. The student self-identifying as Christian might feel pressure to adhere to its doctrines on euthanasia, or a socialist student might support workers' rights or feminist causes. The ethics of blowouts does not interfere with the individual or group's political identity and is, therefore, a topic on which students can entertain new thoughts without feeling threatened by the consequences of a religious or political in-group.²²¹

Third, the ethics of blowouts connects to personal experiences. The majority of students who engage in regular sporting activities are no doubt familiar with one-sided sporting contests. Others might not have had such experiences but can understand the feeling of one-sided contests *empathetically*. Some students might remember feelings of humiliation or embarrassment from other areas, while others will recall feelings of pity or *schadenfreude*. Perhaps many students will look at blowouts from multiple angles, knowing a little about ethics from other classes and life itself.

I will close this chapter by emphasizing that there *are* more important ethical dilemmas than blowouts. None of my arguments in favor of teaching this subject are meant to discredit teaching more pressing moral issues. I only wanted to show that this topic has characteristics that make it fertile ground for high-school philosophy and/or ethics classes.

4.2. THE DIALOGIC-PRAGMATIC PARADIGM BY MARTENS

The dialogic-pragmatic approach is closely linked to Martens. Not only is his model among the most widely accepted in didactics but it also serves as a framework for almost all other new paradigms in the field.²²² Due to the length constraints of this thesis, I can provide only

²²¹ I do not propose that there are absolutely no correlations between religious or political affiliations and positions on blowouts. Empirical research might very well indicate that they exist. The key point is that, at present, an affiliation does not entail an expectation of how to think about blowouts.

²²² See Hofer, R. (2016). Philosophiedidaktische Modelle im Überblick. In: Pfister, J., & Zimmermann, P. (Eds.). *Neues Handbuch des Philosophieunterrichts*. Bern: Haupt, 438-439.

the principal insights of his works, which span several decades. As a result, I focus on the practical derivations of his model in the following chapter.

4.2.1. FOUNDATION

Martens argues that philosophy's self-conception has developed simultaneously with the development of the self-conception of those *doing* philosophy.²²³ Together, philosophy and philosophers have searched for the truth and this search cannot be seen as an addition to an already existing philosophy but as a constituent part of it.²²⁴ This relationship is what Martens refers to as the dialogic-pragmatic didactics of philosophy.²²⁵

He notes also that teachers should not teach philosophical thinking as finalized truths but instead introduce the content of philosophy as a process that students can examine with respect to importance and correctness.²²⁶ Excessively demanding topics should be avoided.

4.2.2. DOING PHILOSOPHY – AN ELEMENTARY CULTURAL TECHNIQUE AND PRINCIPLE OF BILDUNG

To obtain a better understanding of Marten's theses, it is helpful to look at how he answers the question of *why* he thinks that philosophy should be taught in secondary education. In his opinion, philosophy is an elementary cultural technique as well as an indispensable principle of *Bildung*, loosely translated education.²²⁷⁻²²⁸

Philosophy as a cultural technique aligns *doing* philosophy to other important cultural techniques such as reading, writing and calculating, but it is important to add that Martens

²²³ See Martens, E. (1986). Philosophieunterricht als Problem- und Lerngeschichte – Ein dialogisch pragmatischer Ansatz. In: Rehfuß, W. D., & Becker, H. (Eds.). *Handbuch des Philosophieunterrichts*, Düsseldorf: Schwann, 95.

²²⁴ See *ibid.*

²²⁵ See *ibid.*

²²⁶ See *ibid.*

²²⁷ Martens' original term was "Bildungsprinzip." While Prinzip "translates to "principle", there is no equivalent for the term "Bildung" in English. The most widely used translation is education, but this is problematic, as most German speakers would translate education back to "Erziehung". Bildungsprinzip should, therefore, not be understood simple as "principle of education", since the word 'education' does not encompass what is meant by Bildung. Because Bildung is a central term in German-led discourses of educational science, it has seen its share of definitional changes. Since reconstructing its meaning require a thesis by itself, I will simply use the word Bildung, which has become standard practice in the scientific community.

²²⁸ See Martens, E. (2010): Wozu Philosophie in der Schule? In: Meyer, K. (Ed.). *Texte zur Didaktik der Philosophie*. Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun. 2010, 167.

cautions against seeing philosophy as a purely instrumental skill.²²⁹ Instead, he compares it to different types of craftsmanship and artisanship. Like dancing or painting, philosophy is not something to be learned by applying a set of rules to achieve a certain outcome. Instead, it relies on a certain amount of *Fingerspitzengefühl*²³⁰ to adapt the way of thinking according to what is needed in the specific circumstance.

Another feature of philosophy as a cultural technique is that it cannot be detached from the subject engaging in it.²³¹ This means that although content-related philosophical knowledge can be learned from an outside perspective, the development of this cultural technique takes place chiefly in the inner processes of the learner. The philosophically important senses of wonder, doubt, assertion or the will to engage in meaningful dialogue cannot be instilled by an external influence.

According to Martens, philosophy is an *elementary* cultural technique, since to do philosophy one does not need to possess a high level of philosophical knowledge.²³² Consequently, philosophy can be done by almost everyone.

As mentioned before, Martens provides a second reason for teaching philosophy in schools: as a principle of *Bildung*. He regards philosophy as a way to cultivate autonomous thinking.²³³ Certainly, philosophy can enhance the ability to reflect, and because this ability is a prerequisite for autonomous living, Martens pleads for doing philosophy with children. He even wrote two monographs on this topic. In one, he discusses the importance of philosophy for children²³⁴ and in the other, he focuses on philosophy in primary and lower secondary schools.²³⁵

Martens closes his justification for teaching philosophy in schools with a simple syllogism:

²²⁹ See *ibid.*, 168.

²³⁰ This is another German word used by Martens that lacks a precise translation. The often-used phrase “instinctive feeling” is inferior as it suggests that instincts (in a biological sense) might have something to do with it. That is certainly not what is meant. Instead, it refers to the high level of dexterity that human beings possess only in their fingers.

²³¹ See *ibid.*

²³² See *ibid.*, 169.

²³³ See *ibid.*

²³⁴ See Martens, E. (1999). *Philosophieren mit Kindern. Eine Einführung in die Philosophie*. Stuttgart: Reclam.

²³⁵ See Martens, E. (1994). *Philosophieren mit Schulkindern: Philosophie und Ethik in Grundschule und Sekundarstufe I*. Heinsberg: Agentur Dieck.

- (1) If the ability to reflect and Bildung of personality should be taught in school
(normative premise) and
- (2) if doing philosophy as a cultural technique is an effective tool for doing so,
(descriptive premise)
- (3) Philosophy should be taught in schools.²³⁶

4.2.3. THREE INSTANCES OF DIALOGUE

Martens not only gives reasons for *why* Philosophy should be taught in schools but also suggestions for *how* such instruction should take place. As the name *dialogic-pragmatic* suggests, dialogue is a key feature in his conception of didactics. According to Martens, the principle of dialogue consists of

- (1) Open dialogue
- (2) Re-enactment
- (3) Realisation of the dialogue offer²³⁷

Concerning the open dialogue, Martens stresses that this form of dialogue does not exclude steered dialogues.²³⁸ In school, completely open dialogue may not be possible since a) students may lack the necessary level of development and b) it is contradictory to some institutional restraints, such as an obligation to grade the students. Thus, the word ‘open’ does not refer to the dialogue being uncontrolled or unchecked. Indeed, Martens explicitly rejects open class dialogue if it serves only as a motivating source for a question that is subsequently answered by a text presented afterwards.²³⁹ According to Martens, the open dialogue serves primarily for students to gain insights into their preconceived interests, notions and opinions concerning a certain issue.

Although Martens regards the Socratic method as the ideal for teaching philosophy, he admits that it is not feasible in a school environment, because its consistent use would require a 1:1

²³⁶ See Martens, E. (2010). Wozu Philosophie in der Schule? 170.

²³⁷ See Martens, E. (1979). *Dialogisch-pragmatische Philosophiedidaktik*. Hannover: Schroedel, 140.

²³⁸ See *ibid.*, 142

²³⁹ See *ibid.*, 140

ratio between teachers and students. Additionally, this method requires a high level of spontaneity and creativity which – although it can be trained – is hard to plan for.²⁴⁰

During the learning process, the moment of transitioning from open dialogue to re-enactment cannot be determined in advance. Martens argues that teachers have to decide individually on an individual basis whether all arguments have been discussed so extensively that the lesson can proceed to the introduction of an expert opinion seems viable.²⁴¹ The re-enactment itself can take place via a reading of philosophical or non-philosophical literature or listening to a presentation.

Martens also names criteria that the texts or presentations should meet to enable effective re-enactment.²⁴² First, an adequate level of language is necessary. This means texts that are syntactically challenging or contain a high number of loan words should be avoided. Second, the texts should not demand much foreknowledge to be understood. He also clarifies that this is not to be confused with lazy thinking. After all, the complexity of philosophical thought patterns cannot be simplified *ad infinitum*.

Concerning the realization of the dialogue, Martens emphasizes the importance of the philosophical approach. Students should not simply claim certain positions and/or repeat the position of an author whose work they read. Instead, claims should be fairly, objectively and thoroughly scrutinized.²⁴³ Martens also argues that if one decides to take this approach towards written philosophical thoughts, it becomes a subsidiary matter if the choice is to use complete philosophical writings or only short extracts as teaching tools.²⁴⁴ He also provides suggestions on how to read a philosophical text in a way that lets the reader understand the position of the author.

- the text has to be read carefully – if possible, multiple times;
- unclear terminology or arguments should be noted;

²⁴⁰ I would add that institutional constraints also play a part. Teaching exclusively via the Socratic method would make it almost impossible to meet curricular requirements, as the dialogue would frequently extend beyond permissible limits and curricular goals would be hard to meet.

²⁴¹ See *ibid.*, 144.

²⁴² See *ibid.*

²⁴³ See *ibid.*, 145.

²⁴⁴ He also argues that the dissent concerning which of these methods is to be regarded as superior is a false problem. Nevertheless, anecdotally, I have to attest to the fact that 40 years after Martens wrote these words, this discussion is still ongoing among philosophy teachers in secondary education.

- unknown terms have to be looked up;
- key passages and keywords should be highlighted;
- longer texts should be divided into segments that should be named or very briefly described;
- whether the author subjects to something, brings something up for discussion or makes a claim by himself should be understood;
- the level of confidence that the author has in his claims should be recognized;
- possible intentions and interests of the author should be analyzed;
- the writing style should be characterized;
- the claims of the author should be recited in a paraphrased way, either orally or in writing.²⁴⁵

Martens further provides a list of four possible desirable outcomes of engaging with a philosophical text:

- Clarification concerning misunderstandings, which can be attributed to a variety of causes, such as an unclear use of words or a way of reasoning by the author or a simple lack of understanding by the reader.
- Detection of mistakes in the use of words by the author (like mistaken absolutization or contradictory use of terminology) or in the line of argumentation (logical errors, staying behind the proposed solution).
- Noticing differences of opinion between the author and the reader. These can exist with regards to the problem itself, the used method or the proposed solution.
- Attempt to identify common claims by mutual correcting of mistakes and finding commonalities in spite of differences in opinion.

An important feature of the three presented stages is that they are not seen as stages that always follow each other in chronological order. Any of the stages can lead to every other one, depending on the outcome of the completed stage.²⁴⁶ This is illustrated in Fig. 18.

²⁴⁵ See *ibid.*, 146-147.

²⁴⁶ See *ibid.*, 147.

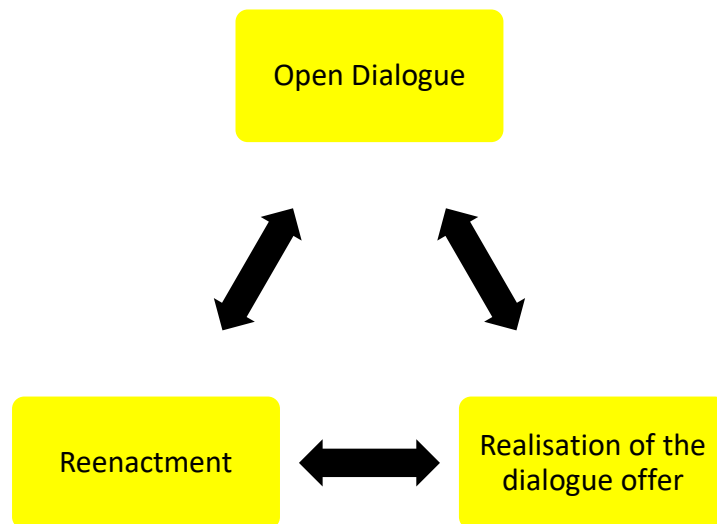


Fig. 18: Three stages of dialogue according to Martens

In order for productive dialogues to occur, philosophical thinking is necessary. Different ways of philosophical thinking will be the focus of the next chapter.

4.2.4. FIVE METHODS OF PHILOSOPHICAL THINKING

Philosophical thinking can take different forms. In order to talk reasonably about the specifics of these forms, a classification is needed. Martens draws on the Socratic-Aristotelian paradigms and categorizes their methods in five different aspects:²⁴⁷

- (1) Phenomenological Method: Comprehensive and differentiated description of one's own perception and experience. Empirical data gained from other sciences are also taken into account.
- (2) Hermeneutic Method: Doctrines, interpretations and reading of (not only) philosophical literature are used to help discover one's own preunderstanding of certain phenomena.
- (3) Analytic Method: Important terms and arguments are highlighted and scrutinized. In addition, premises, contradictions and constricted or loose definitions are uncovered and scrutinized.

²⁴⁷ See Martens, E. (2003). *Methodik des Ethik- und Philosophieunterrichts. Philosophieren als elementare Kulturtechnik*. Hannover: Siebert, 54.

(4) Dialectic Method: Weighing in different positions or accepting a dialogue offer (orally or written) and discuss the pros and cons.

(5) Speculative Method: Trying to make use of new ideas and testing them playfully.

These methods are not equivalents of their respective schools of thought, like Gadamer's hermeneutic school or Hegel's dialectic.²⁴⁸ Instead, they are elementary and interconnected methods of philosophical thinking. While one method can be emphasized in a particular instance, they complement each other to a degree. According to Martens, the connection of these methods is not to be seen as a linear, step-by-step process.²⁴⁹ Not all sequences are equally likely to follow a certain one and both order and the end are undesignated. To illustrate how the application of one method sparks the use of another, Martens uses what he refers to as the "snake of methods", which is depicted in Fig. 19. Each one of the five segments represents one of the five mentioned methods of philosophical thinking.



Fig. 19: The "snake of methods"²⁵⁰

Martens analyses how a strong emphasis of only one of these methods can lead to bad consequences, describing five different pictures of ailments, one for each method of philosophical thinking.

²⁴⁸ See *ibid.*, 54-55.

²⁴⁹ See *ibid.*, 56.

²⁵⁰ See *ibid.*

An overemphasis on the phenomenological method results in what he calls *morbus phänomenologicus*.²⁵¹ Its main symptoms are prolonged time spent on unreflected phenomena, such as contemplations, feelings or specific examples. These lead to an absence of deeper, more abstract thinking.

A different ailment can result from an overemphasis on the hermeneutical method. Martens uses the term *morbus hermeneuticus* – which was originally coined by Schnädelbach – to describe this phenomenon.²⁵² It occurs when teachers try to hide behind philosophical literature and great philosophers.²⁵³ As Schnädelbach notes, learning how to understand and interpret philosophical texts is highly important, but that must not be understood as learning how to engage in *doing* philosophy.

The third ailment in Martens' list is the *morbus analyticus*,²⁵⁴ more widely known as quibbling. It is characterized by the persistent discussion on the meaning of terms, which obstructs the dialogue's progress.

The endless exchange of views without attaining any meaningful insights Martens calls *morbus dialecticus*.²⁵⁵ This ailment, like the others, can be averted by an integrative use of methods.

According to Martens, the last of these ailment is stemming from not using several thinking methods is *morbus sepculativus*.²⁵⁶ It manifests itself through too many creative ideas being considered without proper analysis.

To summarize, Martens argues for the importance of mixing different types of philosophical thinking. No mode of thought is intrinsically better or worse than any other; they all need each other to foster rigorous philosophical thinking.

²⁵¹ See *ibid.*, 65.

²⁵² See *ibid.*, 73.

²⁵³ See Schnädelbach, H. (1981). *Morbus hermeneuticus – Thesen über eine philosophische Krankheit*. In: *Zeitschrift für Didaktik der Philosophie*, 1, 4.

²⁵⁴ See Martens, E. (2003). *Methodik des Ethik- und Philosophieunterrichts. Philosophieren als elementare Kulturtechnik*, 77.

²⁵⁵ See *ibid.*, 83.

²⁵⁶ See *ibid.*, 89.

4.2.5. CONTENT

As Hofer notes, Martens provides a careful analysis of his proposed methods of teaching but does not go into detail about the content.²⁵⁷ This is also a key difference in his didactical model with the Bildungstheoretical and identity-theoretical model of Rehfuß. In Rehfuß' model, paradigmatic works should be the focal points for teaching philosophy in secondary education.²⁵⁸ Rehfuß further recommends reading complete, exemplary monographs. In this instance, exemplary refers to:

- Author
- School of thought
- Discipline
- Epoch
- Method
- Problem and attempted solutions²⁵⁹

No such plea can be found in the texts of Martens. In fact, Martens provides an anecdote in one of his books on how he let students co-determine the topics of his lessons in 1981/82.²⁶⁰ This can be seen as a sign of his openness about lesson content, and a high degree of openness allows for higher flexibility concerning topics. Therefore, more exotic topics of philosophy, such as the philosophy of sports, can also have a place in philosophy lessons in Martens' framework.

²⁵⁷ See Hofer, R. (2016). *Philosophiedidaktische Modelle im Überblick*, 441.

²⁵⁸ See Rehfuß, W. D. (1986). *Der Philosophieunterricht. Kritik der Kommunikationsdidaktik und unterrichtspraktischer Leitfaden*. Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 95.

²⁵⁹ See Rehfuß, W. D. (1980). *Didaktik der Philosophie. Grundlage und Praxis*. Düsseldorf: Schwann, 170.

²⁶⁰ See Martens, E. (1983). *Einführung in die Didaktik der Philosophie*. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 104-105.

5. EXEMPLARY LESSON PLAN

In this chapter, I outline a lesson plan for teaching blowout ethics in high school. This plan is designed for Grade 12 since this – according to the current Austrian high school curriculum – is the only grade in which philosophy is taught.²⁶¹ For this plan to be valuable for lower grades appropriate adjustments would have to be made. Also, this template should serve as an orientation guide rather than as an optimal blueprint.

I will begin by explaining the learning goals (5.1.) and proceed to provide a planning matrix for a 50-minute lesson (5.2.). In this matrix, the method, the content and the planned time-frame for different segments of the lesson will be given. Afterwards, I lay out an in-depth didactical analysis of each of the five lesson sequences (5.3.) by referencing Martens' theoretical framework. To conclude the chapter, the lesson's content will be reconciled with the competence-oriented guidelines of the Austrian high school philosophy curriculum (5.4.).

5.1. LEARNING GOALS

One of the first steps in planning a lesson is to declare its desirable learning goals. In the case of this exemplary lesson plan, the goals would include:

- (1) Detection of latent opinions on how to act like a winner in a lopsided contest. (It is likely that many students have not explicitly thought about this. However, when they are confronted with it, it turns out that they actually do have latent opinions about the subject.)
- (2) Problematization of a personal opinion contrasting with opposing views. Like many ethical issues, this topic is controversial in the sense that many people hold rather dogmatic opinions.²⁶² Exposing students to a variety of sound viewpoints should help them to develop a better understanding of why it might be reasonable for others to disagree with them.

²⁶¹ <https://www.ris.bka.gv.at/GeltendeFassung.wxe?Abfrage=Bundesnormen&Gesetzesnummer=10008568> (last accessed: 25.10.2019)

²⁶² This is especially true for coaches, players, commentators and journalists who do *not* have an academic background in philosophy or ethics.

- (3) Specify frequently used terms and phrases in that discourse to attain a better understanding of each other's arguments: For example, what does it mean to *slow down* during a game? Does it mean to try less hard? Does this entail substituting in worse players where possible? Does it mean to slow down the speed of the game, as in taking more time between plays and play calls in games like American football? Whenever such ambiguous phrases come up during discussions, they should be explained.
- (4) Understanding that terms like RUS often mean different things to different people: the goal of (4) is connected to (3). If students gain a better understanding of how the same phrase can mean a different thing in different situations, they are more likely to have a better awareness of the fact that people who discuss blowouts and RUS oftentimes are not actually talking about the same thing even though they are convinced that they are.
- (5) Recognizing common misunderstandings in the debate around the ethics of winning in one-sided sporting contests: as laid out in the previous two points, the use of equivocal terms and phrases can lead to people talking past each other. It is desirable that students can spot these kinds of misunderstandings and comprehend their origins.
- (6) Connecting discourse arguments to own experiences: as mentioned before, some students will have experienced one-sided (sporting) contests. Accordingly, they can use those experiences to test the strength of certain arguments. For example, when Hardman et al. write that "in overwhelmingly one-sided contests, performances marked by nonmoral faults or gross incompetence can humiliate in a strong, harmful way"²⁶³, students can reflect on the feelings they experienced during and after the loss. Of course, this is only one way of evaluating the merits of a claim.²⁶⁴
- (7) Thinking about ways to enhance the discourse around the issue: in the optimal case, students find ways to think about the problem in innovative ways by pointing to

²⁶³ Hardman, A. et al (1996). On Sportsmanship and "Running Up the Score" Issues of Incompetence and Humiliation, 62.

²⁶⁴ This cannot be stressed enough, since it is important for students not to fall into the lazy pattern of thinking along the lines of "I did not feel any kind of humiliation." Therefore, the argument of Hardman et al. must be wrong.

ignored features of the discussion, bringing in new arguments or considering the topic from a new angle.²⁶⁵

It should be noted that these seven goals cannot be solely allocated to one sequence in the lesson. Therefore, most are found in several sequences in Table. 5.

5.2. PLANNING MATRIX

Time	Content	Arrangement	Method	Media needed	Learning goals
0-10	Introduction to the topic of blowouts, the AB-Thesis, and its practical relevance in sports competition	Plenary	Video	PC	- Detection of latent own opinions on how to act as a winner in a very lopsided contest - Problematicization of the own opinion by contrasting it with opposing views
11-20	Collecting arguments for and against regarding increasing the lead after securing the victory as intrinsically unsportsmanlike	Plenary	Classroom discussion	Blackboard	- Specify frequently used terms and phrases in that discourse to attain a better understanding of each other's arguments - Understanding that terms like RUS often mean different things for some people than it does for others - Recognizing common misunderstandings in the debate around winning in one-sided contests. - Connecting arguments made in the discourse to own experiences

²⁶⁵ This seventh goal is more of an optional one. It is something that is really hard to do, since it involves a higher level of creative thinking than what is needed in order to achieve the other six goals combined.

21-35	The AB-thesis and Dixon's case against it	Partner work	Text work	Text: "On Sportsmanship and 'Running Up the Score'" by Dixon	- Specify frequently used terms and phrases in that discourse to attain a better understanding of each other's arguments - Understanding that terms like RUS often mean different things for some people than it does for others - Connecting arguments made in the discourse to own experiences
36-47	Evaluating Dixon's case against the AB-Thesis and trying to formulate new ideas and arguments in the realm of blowout ethics	Plenary	Classroom discussion	-	- Connecting arguments made in the discourse to own experiences - Thinking about ways to enhance the discourse around the issue
48-50	Feedback	Plenary	Kahoot survey	PC; internet connection; Kahoot	-

Tab. 5: Planning Matrix

5.3. ANALYSIS OF SEQUENCES

As portrayed in the planning matrix (Tab. 5), the presented sample lesson consists of five different sequences. They are chronologically discussed in the following five sub-chapters.

5.3.1. FIRST SEQUENCE

One of the chief reasons why the choice for the introductory segment fell to video was the likelihood of sparking interest. As Martens points out, it is the teacher's job to make the students willing to engage actively in philosophical thinking²⁶⁶, although Martens does not explicitly

²⁶⁶ See Martens, E. (1986). Philosophieunterricht als Problem- und Lerngeschichte. Ein dialogisch-pragmatischer Ansatz, 96-97.

identify video clips as a tool for doing so.²⁶⁷ Still, I chose a 10-minute clip currently available on YouTube and linked in the footnotes.²⁶⁸ It has several merits:

- (1) It illustrates how outraged a player's parents and opposing coaches can become in response to a team that engages in what they regard as RUS. Sometimes, it even leads to the actors themselves displaying bad sportsmanship (swearing, insults, refusal to shake hands). Although it is not the primary focus of the lesson, these reactions can be seen as an optional pathway to leading a discussion on the topic of how to deal with what one sees as bad sportsmanship. It is hard to defend not shaking hands or cursing in front of players as an appropriate reaction to RUS.
- (2) Even though the coach, who clearly dismisses the AB-thesis, is portrayed as a heated personality,²⁶⁹ during the interview he can also be seen as a rational, caring person who genuinely wants the best for his players and has no intention of harming or humiliating anyone.
- (3) A multitude of voices on the topic can be heard – the coach rejecting the AB-thesis, one of his players and coaches who had to coach against his team. It can also be seen that some actors have an opinion on the topic while being unable to articulate their reasons for holding it. For example, Robert Perez, defensive coordinator of Hebbbronville high school, can be heard saying: “They are going to score as many points as they want, honestly. But there comes a point in the game where enough is enough.” He does not explain at which score differential “enough” is actually “enough” or why “enough” is “enough” in the first place.²⁷⁰

The main goal of the first sequence is to evoke latent opinions on blowouts. As mentioned in the goal section, it might well be the case that many students *do* have an opinion on this topic, even though they might not have consciously thought about it yet. A video clip on this topic

²⁶⁷ This might also be attributed to the work being written in 1986, when video recorders were not as prevalent in schools as they are today.

²⁶⁸ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SA7ZWnRjmq0&t=309s> (last accessed: 25.10.2019)

²⁶⁹ To viewers of the video unfamiliar with American football, his on-field behavior may seem outrageous. And while his tone is indisputably harsher than the average American football coach, his attitude is probably closer to the average coach than the rather whiny attitude displayed by some opposing coaches in the video. It is still likely that he is perceived as a very unlikeable person by many students. If that turns out to be the case, this opens an opportunity to teach about the argumentum ad hominem.

²⁷⁰ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SA7ZWnRjmq0&t=309s> (last accessed: 25.10.2019)

might serve as a vehicle for students becoming more self-aware of these opinions. For some, watching a clip on this topic might even bring back memories of one-sided sporting contests that they by themselves have happened to participate in.

Moreover, independently of their own take on the topic, the students will be confronted by arguments that run contrary to these opinions. This is a process that will be intensified in the second sequence.

Before continuing with the analysis of the next sequence, it has to be noted that some schools lack the necessary equipment for using videos. In such cases, a newspaper article about blowouts can substitute for the video. I have listed potential ones in the footnotes in Chapter 1.2.

5.3.2. SECOND SEQUENCE

This sequence, a classroom discussion, will take place in a plenary setting. Hopefully inspired by the clip, students should try to collect as many arguments as possible in favor of and against the view that maximizing the lead in an already decided contest is morally permissible. Optionally, students could first be asked on which side of the debate they see themselves and subsequently to give arguments that contradict their view. This can enhance their ability to take a different perspective on issues and to practice steelmanning arguments.

Within the framework of Martens, this sequence would be associated with the open dialogue,²⁷¹ which takes place between the teacher and the students. In fact, rather than “a dialogue”, it is more accurate to speak of a series of short dialogues, each between the teacher and an individual student. In these, the better arguments are separated from the worse ones. It is important to point out that this sequence is not to be confused with brainstorming, where quantity usually triumphs over quality. Instead, each argument should be rigorously scrutinized. A collection of good arguments for both pro and con perspectives can be represented on the blackboard.

²⁷¹ See Martens, E. (1979). *Dialogisch-pragmatische Philosophiedidaktik*, 140.

In Martens' model of the five fundamental ways of philosophical thinking²⁷², the described sequence would be characterized as fostering phenomenological and analytic thinking. First, students are encouraged to think about their own experiences and about the empirical scientific data relevant to this topic – in this case, psychology (the phenomenological method). Second, all arguments are critically discussed. False premises and potential contradictions are highlighted during the process (analytic method).

After either the projected time is finished, or the students run out of arguments, the sequence is stopped.²⁷³ While handing out the papers to be read in the next sequence, students are told to partner with another student.

5.3.3. THIRD SEQUENCE

In the third sequence, students are asked to read sections of Dixon's paper "On Sportsmanship and Running Up the Score" in pairs. They are encouraged to ask their partners in case they do not understand certain words or passages. For many students, understanding philosophical texts is challenging, especially if they lack proper reading socialization.²⁷⁴ A way to facilitate better understanding and one that is applicable in this sequence is the so-called PLATO-Method²⁷⁵, by which students are told to read the text by focusing on five aspects:

- (1) What is the presented problem?
- (2) Which solution is proposed by the author?
- (3) How does the author argue for his/her position?
- (4) How convincing are the arguments presented by the author?
- (5) Does the author's argumentation provide orientation for my future life and thinking?²⁷⁶

²⁷² See Martens, E. (2003). *Methodik des Ethik- und Philosophieunterrichts. Philosophieren als elementare Kulturtechnik*, 54.

²⁷³ In an extreme case, if the students run out of arguments very quickly, it is the teacher's job to give hints for possible arguments.

²⁷⁴ See Wittschier, M. (2016). Methoden der Textarbeit. In: Pfister, J., & Zimmermann, P. (Eds.). *Neues Handbuch des Philosophieunterrichts*. Bern: Haupt, 228.

²⁷⁵ The PLATO-Method has nothing to do with the philosopher Plato. Instead, its name is an acronym consisting of the first letter of important words within the German definitions of each of the five aspects: "Problemstellung", "Lösung", "Argumentation", "Tragfähigkeit" and "Orientierung".

²⁷⁶ See *ibid.*, 233.

While the number of pages should be adjusted to the class level, I recommend focusing on the first two chapters or only on the second chapter²⁷⁷. There are several reasons why I chose this particular paper over the other ones that I cited in this thesis.

First, the paper shows how a new term is coined in order to make it easier to talk about the topic. Dixon does so by starting the paper with the following two sentences:

I wish to argue against the widely-held view concerning sportsmanship. I call this view the Anti-Blowout thesis (AB):

AB: It is intrinsically unsporting for players or teams to maximize the margin of victory after they have secured victory in a one-sided contest.²⁷⁸

Second, the paper goes well along with the video clip shown in the first sequence of the lesson. Dixon obviously observed a phenomenon that is also displayed in the clip, which is that there seems to be a rather widespread acceptance of the opinion that blowout victories should be avoided in sporting contests.

Third, the text meets the criteria proposed by Martens.²⁷⁹ It does not require a detailed understanding of the topic to be understood, and there is little technical jargon in this it.

Fourth, connected to the above, it enables interdisciplinary education, which is highly desirable.²⁸⁰ As English is not the mother tongue of most students in Austria, this paper provides an excellent opportunity for them to read a philosophical primary text in a second language. This is only possible due to how well it is written. Many, perhaps most, 17- or 18-year old Austrians will find it easier to digest than works written by most well-known German philosophers.

As an assignment, one could have the students perform the following tasks:

“Read the text carefully. While doing so, highlight all the terms or complete sentences that you do

²⁷⁷ In the case of having double lessons and more time for this topic, students might read the whole paper. However, within the framework of a single lesson, reading that 11 pages in a second language is likely to take too much time.

²⁷⁸ Dixon, N. (1992). On Sportsmanship and Running Up the Score, 1.

²⁷⁹ See Martens, E. (1979). *Dialogisch-pragmatische Philosophiedidaktik*, 144.

²⁸⁰ See Peterssen, W. H. (2000). *Fächerverbindender Unterricht: Begriff – Konzept – Planung – Beispiele*. München: Oldenbourg, 54.

not understand in one color. Highlight the central claims by the author in a different color. After reading the text, team up with your neighbor and try to paraphrase Dixon's main arguments. Also, try to analyze the level of confidence that you think the author has in his claims. Is he doubting something? Or, is he rather convinced in having detected something that he considers to be an error in moral judgement?"

All of these tasks align with Martens' proposals on re-enactment.²⁸¹ Students should try to understand the claims of the author as well as possible. The fact that they are put into teams of two should facilitate that process.

Due to differences in reading speed and comprehension, some pairs will be faster than others. To account for this, students should be assigned to discuss the text with their partner as soon as they have finished reading it. The focus of this discussion should not be on what they think of Dixon's claims but on understanding his arguments. Methodologically, this sequence corresponds to what Martens outlines as the hermeneutical method of philosophical thinking.²⁸²

5.3.4. FOURTH SEQUENCE

In the fourth sequence, students should first present Dixon's thesis against the AB-Thesis as accurately as possible. Subsequently, they are encouraged to point out what they consider to be mistaken premises, contradictions or unclear usage of words or phrases. Within the dialogical-pragmatic framework, this method is referred to as analytical thinking.²⁸³ Moreover, students also engage in a dialectical process here, since they are supposed to consider all the strengths and weaknesses of the arguments and identify similarities as well as differences to Dixon's view.

Additionally, the method which Martens refers to as the speculative method of philosophical thinking can be used here.²⁸⁴ Students should be encouraged to think about novel arguments that have not been discussed in the three sequences. These arguments can then be evaluated by classmates, who do so by engaging in analytical and dialectical thinking.

²⁸¹ See Martens, E. (1979). *Dialogisch-pragmatische Philosophiedidaktik*, 146-147.

²⁸² See Martens, E. (2003). *Methodik des Ethik- und Philosophieunterrichts. Philosophieren als elementare Kulturtechnik*, 54.

²⁸³ See *ibid.*

²⁸⁴ See *ibid.*

5.3.5. FIFTH SEQUENCE

According to the plan, the last few minutes are spent on feedback, which has become more popular in educational research and practice in recent years.²⁸⁵ Although most feedback is given by teachers to students, the version proposed here runs in the opposite direction.

An effective tool to gather feedback in the form of quantitative data is Kahoot!, a game-based online platform designed primarily to create online-quizzes in which students answer questions via their own devices, while the questions and answers are displayed on a shared screen.²⁸⁶ In the last few years, Kahoot! has become a subject of scientific investigation. For example, Licorish et al., conducting semi-structured interviews with students, reached the following conclusion:

Key findings revealed that Kahoot! enriched the quality of student learning in the classroom, with the highest influence reported on classroom dynamics, engagement, motivation and improved the learning experience. Our findings also suggest that the use of educational games in the classroom is likely to minimize distractions, thereby improving the quality of teaching and learning beyond what is provided in conventional classrooms. Other factors that contributed to students' enhanced learning included the creation and integration of appropriate content in Kahoot!, providing students with timely feedback, and game-play (gamification) strategies.²⁸⁷

Kahoot! provides several benefits for teaching in school, ranging from helping to learn new words²⁸⁸ to assisting as a general motivator.²⁸⁹ In addition, Kahoot! can be used as a highly efficient survey device. Instead of giving students up to four answers to a particular question, one can use these answers as a Likert scale, ranging from 1 (do not agree at all) to 4 (totally agree). Possible statements at the end of the presented lesson could be:

(1) Language-wise, the text was easy to understand.

²⁸⁵ See Hattie, J., & Timperley, H. (2007). The power of Feedback. In: *Review of Educational Research*, 77(1), 81.

²⁸⁶ <https://kahoot.com/what-is-kahoot/> (last accessed: 25.10.2019)

²⁸⁷ Licorish, S., Owen, H., Daniel, B., & George, J. (2018). Student's perception of Kahoot!'s influence on teaching and learning. In: *Research and Practice in Technology Enhanced Learning*, 13(1), 1.

²⁸⁸ See Medina, E. G. L., & Hurtado, C. P. R. (2017). Kahoot! A Digital Tool for Learning Vocabulary in a Language Classroom. In: *Revista Publicando*, 4(12), 441.

²⁸⁹ See Sabandar, G. N. C., Supit, N. R., & Suryana, E. (2018). Kahoot! Bring the Fun into the Classroom. In: *Indonesian Journal of Informatics Education*, 2(2), 127.

- (2) The text, as a whole, was easy to understand.²⁹⁰
- (3) I found the topic of today's lesson interesting.
- (4) Today's lesson was interesting.²⁹¹
- (5) I would be interested in learning more about ethical dilemmas in sports.²⁹²

If one assumes that it takes about a minute for all students to log into Kahoot! and rating each statement takes another 15-20 seconds, the sequence can be completed in 2-3 minutes. Like the first sequence, however, this one requires technology that is not readily available in every school. Moreover, though highly unlikely, every student might not have a mobile device with them. As a contingency plan, one can request feedback in the more traditional way of talking directly to the students. While this might lead to detailed feedback by individual students, the chances are high that some will not participate in the feedback session at all. This carries the risk of getting a biased sample which in succession could lead to false assumptions on how the lesson was perceived by the class. In the following chapter, I discuss whether the lesson conforms to the Austrian high school curriculum for philosophy.

5.4. RECONCILIATION WITH THE PHILOSOPHY CURRICULUM

5.4.1. PLACEMENT WITHIN THE CURRICULUM

In Austrian high schools, philosophy is taught in Grade 12 only.²⁹³ As shown in Fig. 20, the curriculum requires teachers to cover specific subdisciplines of philosophy in each semester. Thus, the proposed exemplary lesson would have to occur in the second semester.

²⁹⁰ Answers to these statements can provide valuable information for planning future classes. This is especially true in this specific instance because philosophy teachers do not have the same insights as English teachers into the students' English skills.

²⁹¹ While the answers to (4) might have a strong correlation with those to (3), the difference between them can serve as markers to indicate whether, in case the students did not find the lesson interesting, this can be attributed to the lesson's topic or to its design.

²⁹² Like the first two statements, the main objective of this one is to obtain further information to enhance the quality of future lessons.

²⁹³ <https://www.ris.bka.gv.at/GeltendeFassung.wxe?Abfrage=Bundesnormen&Gesetzesnummer=10008568> (last accessed: 25.10.2019)

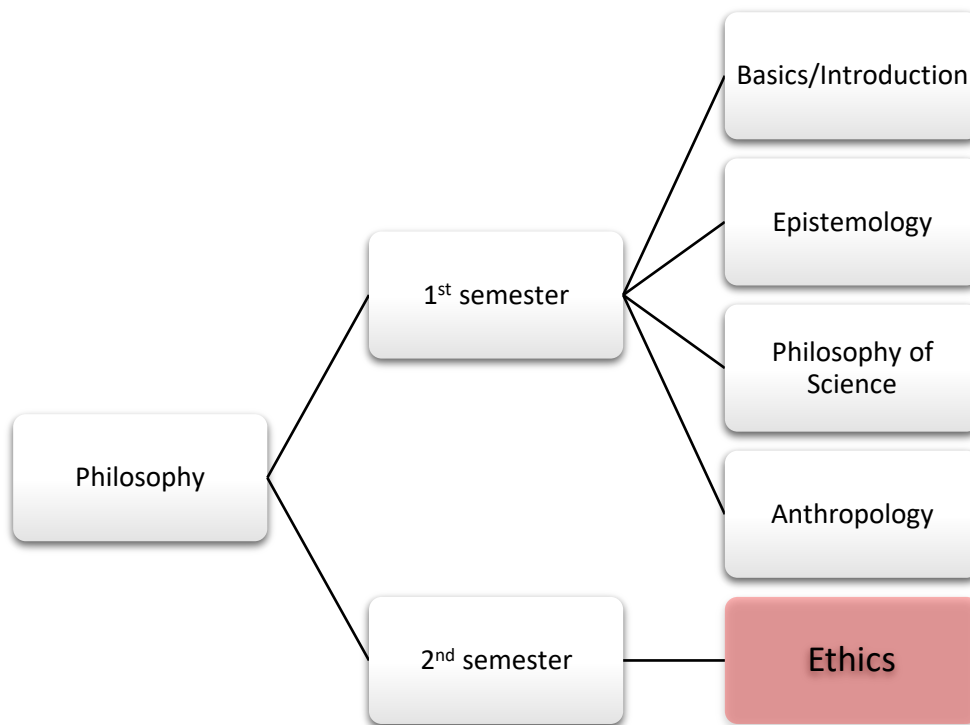


Fig. 20: Philosophy curriculum in Austrian high schools – an overview

5.4.2. COMPETENCIES

“Competence-orientation”, a key term within the Austrian high school philosophy curriculum, refers to the interconnectedness of knowledge-acquisition and its application.²⁹⁴ The curriculum describes three levels of competency:²⁹⁵

- (1) Knowledge reproduction
- (2) Knowledge transfer
- (3) Ability to reflect and creative application of knowledge

For knowledge reproduction, the proposed lesson should teach students to recite philosophically sound arguments for both sides of the blowout debate. They should be able to state why the question of behavior as a winner in a one-sided contest is of philosophical interest and what specifics are to be considered when discussing the topic.

For knowledge transfer, students should be able to connect prior knowledge gathered in their previous philosophy lessons to blowout ethics. More specifically, they should be able to apply

²⁹⁴ Ibid.

²⁹⁵ Ibid.

their knowledge of the main ethical schools of thought – deontology, utilitarianism and virtue ethics – to evaluate arguments in the debate. The content of this lesson aligns with curricular standards that name three goals in terms of the ethical knowledge students should acquire in Grade 12:²⁹⁶

- (1) Being able to explain and critically question the main ethical theories
- (2) Being able to identify differences between ethical theories
- (3) Developing and justifying one's own values in private, political and ecological issues.

The lesson also fosters reflective and creative ways of dealing with acquired knowledge. These aspects play an important role in the fourth sequence (Chapter 5.3.4.), in which, among other things, the students are encouraged to find new lines of arguments during the lesson.

According to the curriculum, the described competencies are primarily learned via exemplary content.²⁹⁷ This accords with the proposed lesson. The topic of blowouts in sporting contests serves as exemplary content to acquire these competencies. As described in Chapter 4.1., this topic should not be chosen due to its level of importance but rather because it has several characteristics that make it an effective vehicle for teaching the requested competencies.

The curriculum also points to the importance of interdisciplinary teaching in the subjects of psychology and philosophy.²⁹⁸ This refers to connecting these two subjects²⁹⁹ and connecting each to other subjects. Both suggestions are met in the described exemplary lesson, as 1) Dixon's paper is written in English, which a) mandates students to read in English and b) forces them to translate Dixon's argument back into German when trying to discuss them in class and 2) the students are asked to remember how they felt during blowout victories or losses, which serves as a link to emotional psychology. All told, it can be said that the proposed lesson aligns with the curricular standards.

²⁹⁶ Ibid.

²⁹⁷ Ibid.

²⁹⁸ Ibid.

²⁹⁹ In the Austrian school system, psychology and philosophy are officially taught together as one subject, named „Psychology and Philosophy.“ Nevertheless, the focus of the 11th grade is on psychology while in the 12th grade, this subject is centred around philosophy.

6. CONCLUSION

The question of morally correct behavior during lopsided victories is not easily answered. After displaying different influential accounts of sportsmanship, all scientific papers published to this point are summarized in this thesis. These articles show that no absolute consensus exists among academics on what constitutes sportsmanship, which is similar to the views of athletes, coaches and fans. However, at least two reliable findings resulted from the (still ongoing) discourse. First, there *are* events in which ‘running up the score’ does not violate the principle of sportsmanship. Second, blowouts *do* constitute unsportsmanlike behavior when the intention is to harm the opponent. Besides that, there is little agreement among sport philosophers concerning this topic.

It seems that Sailors’ paper marked a turning point in the discussion of the right behavior during one-sided sporting contests. It is at least partly thanks to her ideas that the idiosyncrasies of specific sports are now considered more relevant. In this thesis, I tried to extend her list of four relevant distinctions between different types of sports (time-limited vs. untimed events; individual sport vs. team sport; direct vs. indirect competition; “have” teams vs. “have not” teams) by adding two others. In doing so, I first showed why blowouts are more humiliating in contact sports than in non-contact sports. The main reasons for the importance of this distinction are (1) the high probability of injuries associated with blowouts in contact sports, already noted by Kretchmar, and (2) blowouts in contact sports being quantitatively more humiliating than those in non-contact sports, since losing contestants often find themselves in situations of complete helplessness. The second factor was financial motive. I explained that in some sporting events athletes have financial incentives that justify playing at full strength even when a blowout occurs as collateral damage. For example, to judge a young professional athlete who is trying to make a living as ‘unsportsmanlike’ when his/her career is on the line is hardly fair. Yet, on the other hand, having *any* financial benefit does not automatically validate running up the score by playing with full effort.

Moreover, it can be shown that the topic of blowouts could be of interest to high school teachers. The reason for this is not the topic’s relative importance to young athletes since other topics in applied ethics are associated with more serious consequences, sometimes life and death issues, as in medicine and war ethics. However, several distinct characteristics of this topic are particularly relevant for high school teachers. First, its lack of relative importance can be seen

as advantageous for class discussions, since the topic is not particularly emotional, which fosters an environment in which reasonable thinking can flourish. Second, the fact that blowout ethics are – unlike many other ethical issues – intrinsically apolitical. This can help to free students from feeling the need to adhere to a certain position held by a group to which they feel politically or religiously affiliated. Third, the topic can build upon the students’ experiences, since most students are likely to have experienced one-sided competitions, either in sports or in other competitive endeavors. Fourth, it is suitable for interdisciplinary learning – something that is explicitly called for in the Austrian high school curriculum – because a) primary text sources on this topic are written in easy-to-understand English and b) the different emotions during lopsided victories in sports are psychological processes that, in themselves, can be turned into a teaching/learning moment.

By providing an exemplary lesson plan, I hope to have shown the high degree of compatibility between teaching the subject of blowouts and teaching philosophy on the basis of the dialogic-pragmatic account of didactics proposed by Martens. All five ways of philosophical thinking (phenomenological, hermeneutical, analytical, dialectical, and speculative), which Martens presents as essential cornerstones of philosophy, can be exercised in a lesson on this topic. Martens also notes the importance of learning not only about philosophy but also engaging in the process of *doing* philosophy, even categorizing this activity as the fourth elementary cultural technique, after reading, writing and counting. This emphasis fits well with the previously explained notion of the strength of the topic of blowouts being its characteristics, which, in the classroom setting, can facilitate independent and rational thinking.

To end on a personal note, I hope that by making students aware of the nuances in lopsided victories and encouraging critical reflection on blowouts, we can foster a virtue that is becoming less and less prevalent in what is known as clickbait journalism – the virtue of charitable interpretation. Instead of accusing coaches or athletes of “purposely trying to crush the opposing contestant’s soul”, journalists and commentators should first look for other reasons why RUS might have occurred. Still, the challenges that sports journalism faces in an age of social media, where anything goes and fair comment is rare, is an endeavor for another day.

7. ABSTRACT

English Version:

Lopsided victories in sporting contests (blowouts) raise an important ethical question: How should winning contestants behave in such events? Conventional wisdom tells us that the right thing to do is to avoid humiliating weak opponents by physically and/or strategically easing up after victory has been secured. However, in the 1990s, a discourse concerning this view's validity emerged in the *Journal of the Philosophy of Sport*. It has since evolved and is now predominantly about the specifics that make particular blowout victories unsporting. In this thesis, I attempt to enhance the discourse by exploring two important issues in the context of blowouts: the difference between contact and non-contact sports, and financial incentives. This will be provided after a detailed explanation of influential accounts of *sportsmanship* and a summary of the previous discourse of blowouts. Additionally, I provide an exemplary lesson on blowouts for upper secondary schools. For this, a model of dialogic-pragmatic philosophy didactics serves as a theoretical framework.

German Version:

Sportliche Wettkämpfe mit eindeutigen Siegerinnen und Siegern (Blowouts) werfen eine interessante ethische Frage auf: Welches Verhalten ist im Zuge eines solchen Sieges moralisch angebracht? Eine gängige Meinung dazu ist, dass es angebracht ist, körperlich oder strategisch bewusst nachzulassen, um GegnerInnen nicht zu demütigen. In den 1990er Jahren entstand jedoch ein Diskurs im *Journal of the Philosophy of Sport*, in dem die Gültigkeit dieser Annahme diskutiert wurde. Seither hat sich der Diskurs weiterentwickelt und aktuell werden insbesondere Spezifika diskutiert, von denen es abhängig ist, ob ein Blowout als unsportlich zu betrachten ist. In der vorliegenden Masterarbeit wird nach der Darlegung einflussreicher Modelle von *sportsmanship* und einer Zusammenfassung des bisherigen Diskurses über Blowouts der Versuch unternommen, die Wichtigkeit zweier bisher vernachlässigter Themen im Rahmen von Blowouts zu erörtern. Hierbei handelt es sich um die Differenz zwischen Kontaktsportarten und kontaktfreien Sportarten einerseits und um die Berücksichtigung finanzieller Anreize andererseits. Zusätzlich wird im Zuge der Arbeit unter Berufung auf den Ansatz der dialogisch-pragmatischen Philosophiedidaktik eine exemplarische Unterrichtsstunde zum Thema Blowouts für die AHS-Oberstufe vorgestellt.

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9. ONLINE SOURCES³⁰⁰

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<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/de/worterbuch/englisch/contact-sport>

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10. TABLE OF FIGURES

Fig. 1: Classification of sports according to Maier (2004)	6
Fig. 2: Croatian soccer players after losing the FIFA World Cup Final 2018	8
Fig. 3: Williams calling an Umpire a “thief” and a “liar” in the US Open 2008	9
Fig. 4: Zidane’s infamous headbutt against Materazzi.....	9
Fig. 5: Rule-following as a necessary yet insufficient condition of sportsmanship.....	11
Fig. 6: The chivalrous handshake.....	12
Fig. 7: McEnroe arguing with the umpire	16
Fig. 8: Maradona and the “hand of God”	17
Fig. 9: Nlandu’s account of sportsmanship	19
Fig. 10: Famous doping sinner Lance Armstrong.....	20
Fig. 11: Ronaldo complaining and shouting at a referee.....	21
Fig. 12: Sportsmanship as an act of balancing virtues	22
Fig. 13: U.S. woman’s national soccer team celebrates 13:0 victory	33
Fig. 14: American Dream Team of the 1992 Olympics	36
Fig. 15: Altruistic marathon runner helps contestant finish the race.....	38
Fig. 16: Strong helplessness	54
Fig. 17: Pancake block	54
Fig. 18: Three stages of dialogue according to Martens	66
Fig. 19: The “snake of methods”	67
Fig. 20: Philosophy curriculum in Austrian high schools – an overview	81

11. TABLE OF TABLES

Tab. 1: Aristotelian virtues and sportsmanship	15
Tab. 2: Breakdown of surveyed athletes by sex and type of sports	23
Tab. 3: Results of the factor analysis for each sportsmanship item	24
Tab. 4: Correlation matrix of the five factors of sportsmanship	25
Tab. 5: Planning matrix	72–73