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The Nature and Values of Physical Education

Mike McNamee

There has always been an air of suspicion about those who think philosophically about the nature and values of physical education. On the one hand, physical education teachers are apt to claim that theirs is essentially a practical vocation; a calling to the teaching of physical activities that can help students to live better lives. What need have they of a philosophy? On the other hand, philosophers of education, notably in the liberal-analytical tradition, have often sought to cast a dim light on physical education, thinking it valuable (on good days at least) – but not educationally so. I shall try in this chapter to say something about the nature and values of physical education; the knowledge and the values that are inherent within its activities and those external ones which can be gained from them. The chapter revolves around a critique of some recent theoretically sophisticated attempts to discuss the nature and educational status of physical education by three philosophers David Carr (1997), Jim Parry (1998) and Andrew Reid (1996a, 1996b, 1997). I try to show where their arguments are both helpful but ultimately inadequate for the task of illuminating what physical education ought properly to consist of and how it might better prove its educational status and value. In particular, I try to show how it is absolutely necessary to think philosophically about the nature and values of activities that are thought to constitute physical education.¹

ON ANALYTICAL PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Before embarking on an account of the nature of physical education, and its knowledge and values claims, it is necessary to first take a short detour and second, offer an apology. First, it is necessary – if we are to have a reflective view of the philosophical terrain in which sense can be made of the concept of physical education – to understand a little of the nature of philosophical thinking. Second, the account here is itself situated within a particular tradition of thought. I do not speak of continental philosophy where there might be rich seams indeed for philosophers of physical education to plough. In particular, the work of phenomenologists² and hermeneuticists³ have tremendous potential to offer understandings

of our experiences in the activities that comprise physical education (whether in sport, games, play or even dance).

The manner in which this 'new' philosophy took a foothold in the UK and the USA – what came to be known as analytical philosophy of education – was nothing short of remarkable. The classic UK texts of the 1960s and 1970s bear testimony to it: Dearden's (1968) *Philosophy of Primary Education*, Hirst and Peters' (1970) *The Logic of Education* and Peters' (1966) *Ethics and Education* are paradigmatic. A cursory glance at their contents pages indicates their subject matter. Each philosopher bore down on their subject matter with microscopic linguistic scrutiny; precisely what was meant by concepts so central to education as 'authority', 'democracy', 'discipline', 'initiation', 'knowledge', 'learning', and so on. No educational concepts escaped their analytical scrutiny. A very similar movement was carrying the day in the USA where philosophers of education centrally saw themselves engaged in the same enterprise – and with surprisingly similar results given the cultural and geographical distance that set them apart. Despite the time that has elapsed since this highly original work, it is genuinely worthwhile to revisit their positions in order to better understand how (and perhaps how not) to think philosophically about physical education as an educational enterprise.

In the UK, Richard Peters developed the most powerful statement about the nature of education. In his inaugural lecture in 1965, he put forward a thesis that was to reach literally across the world through the old British Empire – many of whose educational lecturers were still taught in British universities – that education must be viewed, by all those who seriously investigate its nature, to comprise a certain logical geography. Briefly, his thesis was that education, properly conceived, referred to the initiation of the unlearned into those intrinsically worthwhile forms of knowledge that were constitutive of rational mind. Its shorthand was that education referred essentially to the development of rationality. Despite the hugely influential educational effects of muscular Christianity, physical education enjoyed little more than a Cinderella existence, even in British education, throughout the twentieth century. And now, it was surely not to be invited to the ball. The hegemony of that great thesis cast physical education well and truly into the educational hinterland. I shall now consider that thesis in a little detail.⁴

The particular picture of education favoured by analytical philosophers of education, then, is that of the British philosopher of education Richard Peters and, to a lesser extent, his close colleague Paul Hirst. I shall refer to their theses collectively as the Petersian conception of education. It is familiar enough to anyone who read any English language philosophy of education from 1965 to 1985. For Peters, the many uses of the word 'education' might be reduced to the central case and the philosophical task was to tease out criteria implicit in that case. This led Peters to develop his sophisticated account of education as the transmission of what was intrinsically worthwhile in order to open the eyes of initiates to a vaster and more variegated existence. That same worthwhile knowledge was

continuous with the various forms of knowledge that Hirst had delineated by his own set of epistemological criteria. The Petersian thesis was summarised thus:

- ◆ 'education' implies the transmission of what is worth-while to those who become committed to it;
- ◆ 'education' must involve knowledge and understanding and some kind of cognitive perspective, which are not inert; and
- ◆ 'education' at least rules out some procedures of transmission, on the grounds that they lack wittingness and voluntariness on the part of the learner. (Peters, 1966: 45)

The first two conditions have been referred to as the axiological and epistemological conditions by two other philosophers, Andrew Reid (1996a, 1996b, 1997) and David Carr (1997), both of whom have sought to conceptualise physical education in similar ways, but who have come to rather different conclusions about its educational potential. The third criterion refers to the processes by which such transmission was ethically acceptable. I will comment on the analytical and epistemological dimension of Carr's and Reid's articles and then examine the axiological dimension of Reid's work which is the bedrock of his justification for the educational status of physical education.

What is of significance in Reid (1996a, 1996b, 1997) is the idea that education, as conceived in the Petersian mould, is narrow and restrictive. Despite a lack of argumentation, he signifies a broader conception of education than is found in the accounts of philosophers such as Peters, Hirst, Barrow or, for that matter, anyone housed within the liberal tradition. These philosophers of education conceive of education as the development of individual, rationally autonomous, learners. In their writings they sharply distinguish education from other learning-related concepts such as 'socialisation', 'training' and 'vocation' in terms of their content, scope, value and application. Reid's conceptualisation of a broader account rests on the position of John White (1990) in his book *Education and the Good Life* where educators aim toward the development of personal well-being grounded in rationally informed desires of both a theoretical and practical kind. Education is thus subservient to, and continuous with, the kinds of development that enable an individual to choose activities, experiences and relationships that are affirmations of those informed choices.

By contrast, Carr is more traditional (in the liberal sense) in his account of education and therefore physical education. Like Barrow and Peters before him, he marks the education-training distinction by a thesis about mind. For the earlier writers in liberal philosophy of education, all educational activities were broader and richer in scope than mere training which was a form of instruction with limited, focused ends. Education properly conceived, they argued, aimed at something much richer and more variegated. The educated mind did not focus on things limited in scope, such as training for the world of work, but rather helped learners to better understand their world, and their place within it. As it was often said, education had no specific destination or goal as such; it was rather to travel with a new, enlarged view. Necessarily, this educated view was informed by an initiation into the forms

of knowledge or rationality; aesthetic, mathematical, philosophical, scientific, religious, and so on. These were simply what being educated consisted in. Despite the fact that Carr recognises the value of practical as well as theoretical rationality, he undermines Reid's thesis about the importance of physical education conceived of as practical knowledge, and is driven back to the old liberal ground:

The key idea here is the traditionalist one that certain forms of knowledge and understanding enter into the ecology of human development and formation – not as theories of a scientist or the skills of a golfer, but as the horizon of significance against which we are able to form some coherent picture of how the world is, our place in it and how it is appropriate for us to relate to others. Strictly speaking, it matters not a hoot on the traditionalist picture whether such received wisdom is theoretical or practical or located at some point in between; what matters is that there should be – in the name of education – some substantial initiation into this realm (or these realms) of human significance *alongside any training in vocational or domestic or merely recreational skills*. This is not to deny any proper normative conception of the latter, or that any pursuit of such skills may involve considerable rational judgement and discrimination; it is rather to insist that the sort of rationality they do exhibit may not and need not have anything much to do with education. Very roughly, one might put the point of the liberal-traditionalist distinction between educational and non-educational knowledge by observing that the former is knowledge which informs rather than merely uses the mind. (Carr, 1997: 201; emphasis added)

Thus, Carr's account is little more than a brave leap back to the Petersian position. Now, as with all philosophical argument, one can dispute a position on its own terms, one can deny the presuppositions of those terms or one can either assert or argue for a counter position. The middle option can be seen in any of a legion of writers⁵ who attacked the liberal position for its normative presuppositions. Under the banner of ideological neutrality, it seemed to smuggle in an awful lot of values. Moreover, nearly every self-respecting sociologist of education (and physical education) cried that it entailed little more than a crystallisation of the kind of curriculum favoured by British grammar and public schools in the UK over the last 100 years or so. I shall not discuss the normative presuppositions in the liberal account of education. Instead, I will merely indicate here that I am persuaded by a less restricted account of the contents of education based on the notion of a worthwhile life which is not exhausted by those activities that, so to speak, inform the mind. I lay out the contours of such an account in the final section below.

There is a point of considerable agreement between Carr and Reid that is typical of the liberal theory of education, and it is one that is typically used against the educational advocates of physical education. Both writers are keen to hold on to the liberal ideal that education has its own ends. This of course cuts across the grain of 'common sense' thinking that it is the job of education to effect socialisation, or produce a more efficient workforce, and so on. Reid says that a broader view of what education entails – the introduction to cultural resources – must not simply be thought of as the development of qualities of mind:

The idea of *introduction to cultural resources* is to be taken here as an abbreviated way of referring to the complex and lengthy processes associated with the knowledge condition of education, with the teaching and learning which are required for effective appreciation and use of those resources. The sports and games which figure in physical education, then, are to be distinguished from work, the arts, intellectual illumination and so on in terms of their fundamentally hedonic orientation, but not in terms of their role as major cultural institutions, and thus (on the view which sees personal well-being and its component values in terms of socialisation and acculturation) in terms of their educational importance. (Reid, 1997: 15–6; original emphasis)

It seems, therefore, that Reid is not unhappy with the general model of education as initiation into sports and games as major cultural institutions.⁶ As we have seen, Carr parts company with Reid on epistemological issues to do with the development of rational mind, though not only there. Despite recognising the value of such initiation, Carr pejoratively refers to sports and games (following Barrow, 1981) as merely a valuable part of one's schooling – but, note, not education. Carr's logical geography is restricted to the Petersian-liberal continent. Like many others before him, Reid wants to shift the ground of education away from the development of intellect as the sole basis and look also to a kind of 'pleasure principle'. Reid suggests that the nature and value of physical education is best characterised by a 'fundamentally hedonic orientation'. I shall consider these points in that order.

EPISTEMOLOGICAL ASPECTS

One major strand in physical education teachers' collective insecurity complex is to be found in epistemological aspects of their subject which, in the UK at least, has undergone significant professional changes. Central among those changes is the emergence of a graduate profession armed (supposedly) with a greater breadth and depth of theoretical knowledge. For my part, I harbour three suspicions about such claims. First, I am simply not sure if it is true that the development of an all-graduate profession has produced a teacher base that is characterised as having a broader and deeper knowledge base and I know of no empirical study to dis/prove the claim. Second, even if this were true, it does not follow necessarily that this would bring about better learning and teaching in physical education lessons. Third, over the last 20 years or so we have seen witnessed the introduction of significant elements of propositional knowledge into the school subject (taught in a fashion more typical of the classroom than the gymnasium) which has been incorporated systematically into syllabi, culminating in examinations.⁷ Yet, it is not the mere snobbery of the physics or maths teacher that is problematic here. Carr, as we have seen above, gives it its most pithy statement: education comprises those forms of knowledge that do not merely use but, rather, inform rational mind. The distinction is both clear and elegantly put. But what follows from it? The answer is 'nothing necessarily'. Further exploration is required.

Reid claims that the family of activities of physical education are best conceived of as expressions of 'knowing how', to use Gilbert Ryle's famous phrase. That is to say, the activities and their knowledge contents are not merely the handmaidens of theoretical knowledge, but a species of knowledge in their own right. They are better captured under the title 'practical knowledge'. Similarly, Parry (1988) claims that it is the practical knowledge required for successful participation in physical education activities that satisfies the epistemological criterion of education. On a technical point, it could be argued that the phrase 'epistemological criterion' requires correction. Peters' remarks on the epistemological criteria of education are better subdivided thus: (a) the development of knowledge and understanding which are not inert; and that (b) such knowledge and understanding must be framed in some 'cognitive perspective'. This distinction is important since, among other objections, one could argue that the knowledge and understanding of the activities of physical education may well come to characterise part of one's way of viewing the world. The phrase 'having a healthy and active lifestyle' (of late, barbarously misused) might well capture the idea of a person considered physically educated; one whose knowledge was tied to action in important respects. It could be said that most adults 'know' what a healthier and more active lifestyle looks like but they are unable to incorporate it into their lives. On the stronger epistemological account, one could not be said *properly* to know this whilst acting in a contrary way. But it is really the second epistemological aspect – the cognitive perspective – that offends both Peters' and Carr's rationalism. Lest it be said that I am erecting a strawman, consider Peters' construction of the value of theoretical knowledge. Note that it is in contrast to theoretical knowledge that he dismisses, among other things, sports and games:

To get attached to pets, people or possessions is a bad bet *sub specie aeternitatis*; for there is one thing we know about them – they will die or become worn out with use or age. No such fate awaits the objects of theoretical activities; for as long as there is an order of the world there will always be further things to find out about it. (Peters, 1966: 157)

In so far as knowledge is involved in games and pastimes, this is limited to the hived off end of the activity which may be morally indifferent. A man (sic) may know a great deal about cricket if he is a devotee of the game; but it would be fanciful to pretend that his concern to find out things is linked with any serious purpose, unless the game is viewed under an aesthetic or moral purpose. Cricket is classed as a game because its end is morally unimportant. Indeed an end has almost to be invented to make possible the various manifestations of skill. (Peters, 1966: 158)

In a passage that should be etched on the hearts and minds of all physical education student teachers, he continues:

Curriculum activities, on the other hand, such as science or history, literary appreciation, and poetry are 'serious' in that they illuminate other areas of life and contribute much to the quality of living. They have, secondly, a wide ranging cognitive content which distinguishes them from games. Skills, for instance, do not have a wide ranging cognitive content. There is very little to know about riding bicycles, swimming, or golf. It is largely a matter of knowing how rather than

of 'knowing that', of knack rather than of understanding. Furthermore, what there is to know throws little light on much else. (Peters, 1966: 159)

While Reid, therefore, presents a sophisticated account of practical knowledge and reasoning (ironically enough, following Carr and others), he fails to attack the proper target and to give an account for the specific epistemological aspects of the activities of physical education. It would seem to me that a more fruitful place to start would be to interrogate Peters' account of 'seriousness' which is used to demarcate knowledge considered educational from that which is not. Two brief sets of points can be made here. In what sense is the illumination of things other than themselves a necessary condition for what is said to be 'serious'? Why, furthermore, should wide-ranging cognitive content similarly be viewed as a logically necessary condition of educational activities? The criterion does indeed distinguish practices such as science from sport but, again, what follows from this? Second, note how the notion that certain ranges of knowledge contribute to the quality of living, gets sidelined thereafter. Surely this is one of the palpable claims that all physical educators would make as a hypothetical justification of the subject? As a matter of fact, one could survey the millions of people for whom sports and related practices are central to their quality of living. As a justification, of course, this form of argument is hypothetical since its success is contingent upon the satisfactions enjoyed by those persons. We should not need reminding that many children simply detest sports and games just as others come to love and care for them (both in spite of, and because of, the manner of a child's initiation into them).⁸ If we agree the philosophical point that to be physically educated, what one knows must characterise the way one acts in the world, then as physical educators, it is our duty to both habitualise children into patterns of activity and engagement with social practices such as hockey and basketball, and to open up to our students the significant sporting inheritance of our cultures so that they too may come to savour its joys and frustrations *and* to know a little about that aspect of the cultures which sporting practices instantiate (for no one would seriously deny their enormous significance in modern societies).⁹

Thus Reid's exploration of the underlying logic of practical knowledge is, despite Parry's assertion, a worthwhile task. But Reid fails significantly to take that analysis further. This omission is manifest in his observation that there are profoundly complex kinds of practical knowledge required, for example, in playing Tchaikovsky or flying a plane. Howsoever these examples are used to illustrate the potential complexity of forms of practical knowledge, they are not representative of the kinds of knowledge definitive of physical education. Nor can they be used helpfully as analogues in such an argument. There is a further complication, moreover, in the contrast between the serious forms of knowledge and sports and games which relates to the ease with which children are initiated into cultural practices. Like physical education, the 'serious' educational subjects too have easy skills and techniques at their onset, yet these are the first steps in practices of immense rational sophistication in range and depth. Sports do not possess this range of cognitive complexity and it would be folly to argue that they do. Yet there is more to them than *mere* knack: a forward roll is a skill and so is a double twisting back somersault but compare the range of

complexity. The capacity to generate immensely technical skills aligned to perceptive judgement and anticipation in a time-compressed manner is typical of any invasion game (though they too have their basic techniques). Sports skills are not comparable in density or range to classical music or philosophy. This is why Tchaikovsky's concertos or landing aeroplanes are inappropriate analogues. It might, however, be profitable to explore other areas of the curriculum that embody overt performative knowledge as opposed to intellectual ones with respect to the embodiment of that knowledge.

What has to be acknowledged in this debate is the exceptional difficulty in talking about sporting experiences especially where they refer significantly to the emotional dimension that accompanies success and failure. It is not so much that one can give a full account of action if only sports people were linguistically sophisticated (a point lamentably true of most media, post-performance, interviews); the point is that these descriptions occupy different worlds. A phenomenological account simply does not try to do the same thing as, say, a physiological or biomechanical one.¹⁰ But that is a discussion for another day. This entire area has been largely neglected in the philosophy of physical education since David Best's (1978) and David Carr's work (1979) in the 1970s. Reid has done the profession a service by reminding us of their importance.

Characteristic of early analytical philosophers of education, however, Reid proceeds as if the logic of his philosophical analysis carries itself forward to a conclusion in the minds of any reasonable person (including policy makers, headteachers, and other curriculum tutors competing for scarce resources). Like so much earlier work in analytical philosophy of education Reid fails to accord sufficient weight to contextual particulars and specifically the power-related discourses of the school-as-institution (rather than mere concept) and the dominance of the academic therein. Reid merely gestures towards this problematic. Despite the clarity of his arguments regarding physical education, it is the widespread experiences of physical education teachers who have been demeaned by the hierarchical dominance, or positioning, of propositional over performative knowledge. I am certain that this is the core root of the professional insecurity that has always characterised the physical education profession, and which has culminated in the apparent 'academicisation' of our profession.

Finally, the greatest weakness in the epistemological aspect of Reid's account of physical education as education is his failure to offer a value argument for the kinds of knowledge representative of physical education. It is a point that Peters flagged up 30 years ago: 'It is one thing to point to characteristics of activities that are usually thought to be worth while; it is quite another to show why these sorts of characteristics make them worth while' (1966: 152).

Like any philosophical thesis, one may challenge the Petersian position by rejecting the manner in which it is presented rather than looking for inconsistencies or incoherence within it. One could, so to speak, reject the paradigm completely; that is to say, reject the very terms in which it is presented and the bases it presupposes. In doing so we could reconceptualise some or all of the notions of 'rationality', 'knowledge' or 'education' to find

an account more conducive to physical education and its claims to proper educational status. Despite making a case for the necessary existence of practical rationality in educational matters, on Reid's case, physical educationists would still be left to argue whether the activities of physical education were *productive* of practical rationality and *why* the particular practical rationality employed or exemplified in the activities were of particular value. Equally unfortunate, we have seen how Carr's position appears little more than a retrenchment into a broadly Petersian education. Reid's best hopes appear to be based on the pluralism of value conferred by the range of activities, but particularly in reference to their essentially hedonic character. While I think that it is clear that the range of activities represent a family (with some close relations and some more distant ones) I think the policies of both Carr and Reid are misguided. It is, therefore, to issues of axiology and physical education that I will now turn.

AXIOLOGY AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION

What Reid attempts, more generously than other liberal philosophers of education, is to connect the ways in which different kinds of knowledge in physical education activities embody different kinds of value. He sets out a fuller list of the sources of value and attempts to relate physical education to them. In addition to arguments about the value of theoretical knowledge, he articulates the following range: intellectual, ethical, aesthetic, economic, hedonic and health. As we have seen, anyone attempting to argue for the educational value of physical education on the grounds that the playing of games conferred a wide-ranging cognitive perspective on the world would be barking up the wrong tree. A more circumscribed claim regarding theoretical knowledge in physical education is plausible. Understanding sports and other forms of 'physical activities' from the appropriate field of theoretical standpoints (anatomy, biology, history, sociology, and so forth) illuminates the ways in which those activities can contribute to a worthwhile life. For example, I can benefit from knowing that steady state, medium intensity, exercise over 20 minutes' duration draws significantly upon aerobic rather than anaerobic metabolism and is therefore more appropriate to my maintaining lower levels of fat. Conversely, I may come to appreciate that circuit training is more conducive to anaerobic fitness and that by altering my body positions while performing sit-ups I may more specifically target my abdominal muscles and reduce the contribution of my hip flexors. Moreover, I may begin critically to appreciate the highly gendered atmosphere of the locker room or the deep offensiveness engendered by racist or anti-Semitic attitudes in some sports crowds. The point remains, however, that despite these benefits, the value-arguments for physical education ought not to be erected on *exactly* the same grounds as other curriculum subjects that are palpably different in nature. This inspires Reid's search for a broader range of values.

There is a sense in which Reid has brought this problem upon himself *because* of the way in which he conceives physical education. He recognises that no satisfactory account of the

subject will flow simply from an examination of the ways in which the words 'physical' and 'education' are used. Rather, such an account must begin from an analysis of the historical practices and traditions that have been prominent in giving shape and form to physical education. Rather, Reid thinks the task is to elucidate

the conceptual features of a set of well-founded educational practices and traditions. What is 'given', from this standpoint, is not some set of axioms or intuitions about the nature of 'physicality' and 'education', but what might rather be called physical education as a form of life, that is the practices and traditions of physical education as they have evolved historically and continue to evolve, in concrete social, cultural and institutional contexts. (1997: 10)

This is absolutely the right way to go about things. Not only should we look historically at those practices and traditions but also at their contemporary instantiations. But it is problematic to argue merely that physical education is the sum of its practices and traditions without also offering an account that articulates and brings together the disparate nature of those practices and traditions.¹¹ For which practices are we to opt? Into whose traditions ought we to initiate our young? Compare what values Rugby Union stood for only ten years ago with its new professional metamorphosis. To what extent does it represent the same kind of practice into which we once thought it worthwhile for our children to be initiated?¹² Is the ethos of girls' hockey or cricket really full of camaraderie as is stereotypically thought? What is entirely unhelpful, is to argue that what holds the different activities, their practices and traditions together, is the notion of hedonic pleasure.

In terms of ethical value, Reid points out the inherent normativity of physical education activities. Here, it must be pointed out, the diversity of what goes under the heading physical education renders generalisations problematic. In sporting games, the moral educational features are written into their very nature (that is to say, the regulative rules). Where games are taught properly, ethical notions such as equality, fairness, honesty and rule-abiding action necessarily arise. The extent to which these notions are merely caught rather than taught is another matter. Precisely, how these values infuse dance, health-related exercise, or orienteering is quite another matter and Reid's recognition of eclectic argumentation is helpful. Yet in his final paper (see Reid, 1997) there is a tendency to use only sporting games as the vehicle for his own justificatory argument. Reid makes two points that are designed to defuse the arguments of those who deny sports' ethical dimension. While I am in agreement with the point of arguing for the ethical dimension of sports I will dispute his specific argumentation below. Reid writes:

The first relates to the discussion earlier on the relations between the constituents of our axiology, which concluded in favour of the priority of ethical values (when competing values are entertained). In the context of games teaching, this reflects the traditional principle that fair play, sportsmanship and respect for one's opponent take precedence over the competitive objectives of winning and avoiding defeat. The second point, likewise, concerns questions of priority. The position adopted in this paper . . . is that games and sports are forms of play, aimed essentially at promoting pleasure enjoyment, excitement, recreation, and the like; their primary

value, in short, is hedonic. Winning, from this point of view, is not, as is sometimes supposed, the ultimate goal of competitive games: enjoyment is, and competitive action, structured in highly specific ways by the operation of the norms, rules, codes, conventions and so on of the various particular sports and games, is the way in which the conditions of enjoyment are fulfilled, its possibilities realized. (1997: 12)

He continues: 'games themselves are, as essentially hedonic activities, fundamentally self-contained and in some sense non-serious . . . and this observation gives some weight to the scepticism sometimes expressed about the prospects for extending those ethical principles beyond the boundaries of the game'.

Here Reid answers Peters' question regarding the source of value. But is it a satisfactory one? I will make a few general points about Reid's general argument here, and then move specifically to the adequacy of his hedonic direction. First, Reid has failed to apply his own reasoning to his analysis of the logic of competitive games viz. their ethical dimension. He posits that where there is conflict between the competitive urge to win and other, ethical, principles such as fairness and honesty the latter should prevail. Yet he has already informed the reader that to play games logically entails the observance of such principles. This being the case there can be no such conflict, for where players are dishonest, or unfair or not rule-abiding (assuming they are breaking the rules, in being dishonest, or violent or disrespectful) they are *ipso facto* not playing the game. This point is commonly referred to as the 'logical incompatibility thesis'. Adherents of the thesis argue that to play a game one must play by the rules and to do otherwise is to be engaged in behaviours that are, by definition, not part of the game.¹³

Second, on an historical note, Reid's move can be compared with Robert Carlisle's (1969) doomed essentialistic argument.¹⁴ Where Carlisle attempted to locate the educational status of physical education in terms of their essentially aesthetic character Reid opts for the hedonic. This sort of essentialism appears in marked contrast to his earlier recognition of the disparate nature of the constituent activities of physical education. Similarly, despite his earlier eclecticism, Reid appears to have turned physical education into competitive games. It is not a new sleight of hand; the National Curriculum for PE in the UK underwent such a reduction in the highly politicised policy formulation stages. And there are some clear benefits to such a strategy though there are burdens too. The dietary narrowness of competitive games has been the object of much rancorous debate and the breadth of modern physical education curricula is something welcomed not only by egalitarians of the left.¹⁵ Nevertheless, from a philosophical point of view, it seems clear that if one were to conceptualise or justify physical education solely in terms of sports and games then this would beg questions as to the educational place of the other members of the family of activities that traditionally fall under the heading of physical education, in the UK at least. Furthermore, if one were to alter the conception of physical education it seems clear that one's arguments concerning the types of knowledge entailed therein, the aims, value and educational justification of the subject ought correspondingly to alter too. Reid's failure to

acknowledge this is problematic since he later discusses at length the benefit of health values wrought by a physical education curriculum.¹⁶ The precise picture of physical education Reid wants to defend is not specified though the contours are visible; a distaste for theoretical engagement; a predominance of sporting games; a reductionism to hedonic values. What Reid argues later is for a kind of eclecticism that blurs the emphasis on competitive sporting games. He urges that the full value of physical education is to be found in its manifold contributions to different sorts of value but that as a matter of logic, on his analysis, their value is essentially hedonic.

I have argued at length elsewhere (see McNamee, 1994) of the weakness of reducing sports and related practices to the value of felt pleasures and I will merely rehearse those arguments briefly here.¹⁷ The central reason why the hedonic thesis should not be considered adequate is that it offers no criteria (and hence no logical basis over and above mere preference) against which to evaluate such practices or make subsequent policy decisions. If, for instance, we are concerned with the questions 'what practices are worth pursuing/providing/committing ourselves to?' we find ourselves without logical assistance since the first and last words of the hedonist's thesis are 'it gives me pleasure' or 'I enjoy it'. This response is sometimes referred to as a 'stopper'. It fails to provide any sort of logical answer to a sceptical questioner but stops them from further exploration. Of course, many children and adults who are committed to sports find the exercise of skilful acts deeply satisfying, fulfilling or pleasurable and attribute their value to nothing other than the experience or engagement in the activity. The language in which their accounts of the value of their experiences are often couched is hedonic in the sense that they refer exclusively to the subjective value of pleasurable feelings. Reid fails to instantiate in detail what the hedonic thesis amounts to.

By way of criticism, consider first those activities that are ill-characterised by felt pleasure. For instance, there may be many qualities, goods or values associated with, for instance, outdoor and adventurous activities in the winter time. It may be assumed, however, that fun or pleasure may not commonly be among them. These activities may come to be enjoyable but only after some considerable time and effort and this may only be afforded to a limited number of people who are genetically predisposed to them or who, through training, have come to be committed to them. Second, as Parry noted, the pursuit of pleasure itself does not demarcate any special class of activities except those logically thus defined. The corollary of the hedonic view would entail the justification of whatsoever people found pleasurable simply because they found it pleasurable. And the contents list of such an account could render some fairly unthinkable items for education. Third, pleasures differ in quality. The pleasures derived by a six-year-old child from engaging in simple motor actions are considered inappropriate for sixteen-year-olds who demand something more complex. To the best of my knowledge no one has explored this idea in the context of sport from a philosophical point of view yet the classification of games by Celia Brackenridge and John Alderson presupposes it.¹⁸ It has been called the 'Aristotelian Principle' by John Rawls who writes:

other things equal, human beings enjoy the exercise of their realized capacities (their innate or trained abilities), and this enjoyment increases the more the capacity is realized, or the greater its complexity. The intuitive idea here is that human beings take more pleasure in doing something the more they become proficient at it, and of two activities they do equally well, they prefer the one calling on a larger and more intricate and subtle discriminations. (1972: 435)

Indeed the value of sports and games may themselves be considered time-related goods.¹⁹ No one would want to deny that the satisfactions afforded by the successful grasping of timing a boast in squash or spotting a somersault are tremendously rewarding but are they always so, and is pleasure the right concept to denote the attendant satisfactions?

Every account of the value presupposes a particular *weltanschauung* and, moreover, a particular philosophical anthropology. Any particular and substantive account of the value of sports and related practices will therefore be related conceptually to an account of a person that is thought desirable for one to become. Sports and related practices thus become seen as one of a family of engineering processes (less deterministically, practices and traditions) that are constitutive of a person's becoming just that: a person. Each culture, indeed each epoch, has more or less tightly defined horizons that inform and are informed symbiotically by each other.

How are such horizons informed by the hedonic thesis? Let me start with a logical point. One cannot pursue pleasure in isolation. Pleasure is derived *through* actions and activities. A similar point is made by Nozick in one of his thought experiments, the 'experience machine'.²⁰ A thought experiment is a typical tool used by philosophers to get people to imagine a hypothetical scenario and then to show how this sheds light on a real case by analogy. So Nozick asks his readers, 'What else matters to us other than how life feels on the inside?' He asks us to consider whether we would hook ourselves up to a machine which simulates the feelings experienced when having any and all the wonderful experiences we desired. I have tried the experiment out with students over 20 years of lecturing. The vast majority, on the first run through of the argument opt to plug in. After considerable discussion many change their mind. The reasons for this are illuminating for our consideration of the value of physical education. In the experience machine one remains essentially passive. But *as* persons²¹, we want to *do* certain things; to achieve the attendant satisfactions of being a successful teacher or pupil, cricketer, or athlete. To *be* such things is to be committed to various activities, roles and relationships which define the sort of persons we are. Plugging into the machine is a form of suicide. In a sense, we cease to be the same person since the relationship between our experiences and our acts no longer holds. Many of my students have used the language of merit: 'you don't deserve those experiences because you have not got the ability, or trained for years, or sacrificed your life to the goals of sport' they say. In the machine, all these pleasurable experiences would not be related to us in the strong way that flows from our being attached to particular plans and projects. On the contrary the status of those experiences would be contingent to, rather than definitive of, our identity. The experience machine effectively lives our lives for us. This is not the life of a person.

It should be noted that I have not denigrated the value of pleasure as an action guiding reason *per se*. It is in need of some focus if it is to be used in offering a sound account of the value of the activities, practices and traditions of physical education. Moreover, a value argument ought not to be built in terms of the pursuit of pleasure alone. Pleasure, as was noted above, can only be pursued through particular acts and activities.

All these arguments about the inadequacy of educational justification being based upon hedonic lines leaves untouched the philosophical questions concerning the nature of value itself and classes of value used to account for physical education. Parry discerned the blurring of the intrinsic/instrumental distinction by Linda Bain (in the USA) and Keith Thompson (in the UK).²² Carr correctly offers a similar critique of Reid, and Peters before him, who employ the terms 'intrinsic', 'extrinsic', 'inherent' and 'instrumental' to refer to both the value of an activity and the motivational states of a person. It is helpful here to stipulate linguistic usage in the interests of conceptual clarity. Let the terms 'intrinsic' and 'extrinsic' refer to my motivations or valuing of an activity but preserve the terms 'inherent' and 'instrumental' to refer to the (potential) value of a given thing or activity. For one can be intrinsically motivated to bang one's head against a wall (i.e., where one did it for its own sake and sought no further end) whereas no one would want to maintain that it was an inherently valuable act. On the other hand, it could be argued that while sport was inherently valuable, any particular athlete only valued it instrumentally and therefore that their motivations were entirely extrinsic. Much confused debate in physical education has occurred precisely for the want of drawing these distinctions with care.

Though I have captured the heart of Carr's point here I have expressed it somewhat differently. Moreover, I want to say that the highest goods, after Plato,²³ should be called mixed goods; those which are inherently valuable *and* valuable as means to further valuable ends. Furthermore, we could extend the debate to consider not only the relationality between means and ends, but also between particular persons who have particular capacities, abilities, dispositions and potentialities, and those means and ends. The very same activity might be inherently valuable but, as a matter of fact, be valued intrinsically by one person, extrinsically by another, both by the same and or not at all by a third person.

Having set out the inadequacies of Reid's hedonic argument in terms of its inherent weaknesses, the essentialism his position embodies and, finally, the classification of value it rests upon, it is now incumbent upon me to offer the beginnings of an alternative picture of the nature and educational value of physical education.

PERSONS, PRACTICES AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Parry (1988) captured the bigger picture with respect to the nature and values of physical education when he urged upon the profession a fundamental re-examination of the central concepts education, culture and personhood.²⁴ He observed that any educational ideology

could be challenged at a variety of levels: first, at the level of actual practices as legitimate expressions of the educational theory, or as efficient means to its goals; second, at the level of educational theory as a legitimate expression of the ideology; and, finally, at the level of ideology. The radical kind of conceptualisation was never fully taken up. But neither analytical philosophy of education nor the physical education profession at large is sympathetic to this dense continental philosophy that employs a language all of its own and seems antithetical to the common-sense strand of English-speaking analytical philosophy.²⁵ Parry urged a less cognitivist conceptualisation of education and personhood.

I have elsewhere attempted to answer that call by suggesting a conception of personhood based strongly around Charles Taylor's account which emphasised the human capacity not merely for weak, instrumental, evaluation (means–ends reasoning) but also for strong, qualitative, evaluation (ends–ends reasoning) and which also contains at its core the centrality of the emotions in the life of persons. I think that the move of situating a less rationalistic view of persons necessarily opens up a proper consideration of the role of the emotions in our lives and especially in sports where they are channelled, frustrated, exposed, and potentially explored in self-critical ways. But this has rarely been addressed either theoretically or in the professional education of physical educators where spaces for non-applied, or immediately relevant, professional matters are rarely created. Elsewhere I have attempted to situate that argument in a broader philosophical account about the nature of education, analytical philosophy of education, and an alternative account of value and the broader nature of practices that can inform one's identity and constitute an important component of one's evaluative picture of a worthwhile life.²⁶ I can only set out the skeleton of that argument here.

I would urge a less than radical evaluation of Petersian thinking; one that loosens the shackles tying education to the development of theoretical rationality embodied by the distinct forms of knowledge. I would not argue for a wholesale rejection of the thesis since, so it seems to me, education is concerned precisely with initiation into significant cultural practices. Neither would I set great store by those radical or revolutionary philosophers of education who are antithetical to the nature of authority as encapsulated by education and its constituent practices. This very thin conceptualisation is preferable at two levels to the position made famous by Peters and retained by Carr. In the first instance, it is preferable on normative grounds in that it recognises a plurality of conceptions of education that emerge from some shared understanding of the need for societies to seek the grounds of their own continuance. How is this to be done other than by capturing the hearts and minds (and lungs!) of its young? On analytical grounds, so open a position does not prescribe in precise terms how this is to be done though one would want, as Peters did, to proscribe certain procedures on ethical grounds. To set out the traditional liberal distinctions as Carr does, and as Peters did before him, renders him open to the simple charge of ideology; no matter how internally coherent the thesis, he is always open to counter-ideological critique. It seems that Parry, Reid and I point in a different direction but none of us have travelled down it any distance here. We have all signposted a less restricted account of education as

the initiation into a range of cultural practices that have the capacity to open up the possibilities of living a full and worthwhile life. Reid has given us no clues as to a broader *weltanschauung* that informs the shared position against cognitive imperialism: he is merely at pains to stress the primacy of the hedonic. Parry has suggested some liberalised-Olympic thesis while I am inclined towards a communitarian position central to which would be a stronger recognition for the dominant role that social practices like sport play in the formation of our identities and values. I have suggested elsewhere a developed account of how sport can be characterised, within a broad communitarian framework, as a social practice broadly under MacIntyre's description of that term. I have also suggested how that thesis cannot unproblematically be translated into the context of sport as writers such as Peter Arnold have done. Furthermore, it will be clear from the position developed there that I see such practices as one of the foundational bedrocks of character and identity formation which is one of the crucial tasks that fall predominantly, though not exclusively to formal education.²⁷

At an analytical level, then, rather than arguing that X is education or not-education on the grounds of a pre-eminent criterion: cognitive depth and breadth (or the capacity to inform rather than merely use the mind, as Carr pithily puts it) recognition must be made for the fact that there are competing conceptions of education. I would not wish to consort with the radical revision of education as an 'essentially contested concept'. If an essence at so basic a level as I have asserted is contestable, I see no grounds for calling it a concept, let alone a concept of education. Instead, as a matter of conceptual necessity, it seems to me that despite the fact that these conceptions embody particular evaluative commitments regarding the nature of persons and society, they all share the formal notion that education is the development of persons towards the living of full and valuable lives. The next step of the argument is to develop an account of persons and the kinds of things that make their lives worthwhile over and above Peters' intellectual pursuits. Persons, on the kind of account I am disposed to, are beings who have the capacity to develop, evaluate, and live out life-plans based on a combination of projects, relationships and commitments. Among this combination of activities are a variety of practices which are valuable by virtue of their internal goods and their capacity to secure external goods in particular and unique ways. The activities of physical education are exemplified by a certain range of sporting practices, which are taken as paradigmatic which can be characterised as mixed goods because they have the capacity to be valued not only for their internal goods but also for the particular manner in which they secure external goods. Physical education can, therefore, contribute to the living of full valuable lives for persons and is thus of educational value. I think this is precisely the kind of rationale that can be either be read *into* the work of the American physical educator, Daryl Siedentop (1986), with his enormously influential model of sport education or simply might be explored as a philosophical justification for at least some portions of that model.²⁸

This kind of argument, it might be said, holds true only for those practices we recognise as sporting games or athletic activities (and I would add, *pace* Siedentop, dance too). While

the argument is long on initiation into those practices that are partly definitive of a culture and its identity(ies) it is short on the kinds of individualised, health-related activities. Historically, there have been two strands in what is called physical education: sports and health (or in older times hygiene, posture, and so forth). It seems clear to me that a different type of justificatory argument is required to support each. Maybe Carr is right here to classify the latter activities (along with life saving and other 'anomalies' that fall to the task of physical educators) as valuable but not educationally valuable because of their lacking in what can be referred to as cultural significance or cultural capital. Time and space do not allow me to comment in any way here upon these other strands except to note the following. Those who look for *conceptual* unity are simply wasting their time. There is no meaningful essence to the concept in that way. As Reid remarks, one must look rather to culture-specific, historical and political factors that have shaped the professions. Dance is a cultural practice that employs large motor-skilled activity like tennis or football. Some forms of gymnastics require interpretative movements and proceed with music like dance. Sculpting bodies, like training for rugby or netball, often requires the kinds of regimes and exercises that are common. But these similarities are nothing more than that. If all that one can do is to point out commonalities then there is little that is philosophically interesting here for anyone attempting a conceptual analysis by necessary and sufficient conditions of linguistic usage. Reid's peroration towards value pluralism should extend so far as to recognise the inherent openness of the concept of physical education: pluralism in activities; pluralism in values. No universal criterion of demarcation can be raised that will help physical educators to select activities is available, and so we should simply stop looking. Instead we should enquire as to the types and natures of rituals that sports instantiate in our modern world. And if, as Wollheim argues,²⁹ traditions pass on what they possess, then we should see to it, as guardians of these great cultural rituals, that the values physical education has and gives are kept in good health.³⁰

NOTES

- 1 This chapter is a revised version of a paper first published as 'Education, philosophy and physical education: analysis, epistemology and axiology' (McNamee, 1998b). In particular, I have omitted or diluted some of the more technical philosophical points that were made in the original article as well as connecting thoughts there with other material that I have published elsewhere in the ethics of sport, and more generally to other recent contributions to the field.
- 2 See, for example Whitehead (1990).
- 3 See, for example, Hogenova (2002).
- 4 Though the reader is invited to scan at least the veritable legion of writers that have written more and less charitably about it. See for examples of these, respectively, Cooper (1986) and Kleinig (1983).
- 5 Again, for just one example among many, see Kleinig (1983).
- 6 Most writers, oddly enough, in the philosophy of physical education, are in agreement with this view. This may well have something to do with the fact that sports typically have conservative forces – notably in the idea of rule-following, and the transmission of dominant norms, via physical activity to the socialisation of the

players/athletes/dancers involved. I shall comment later, though only briefly, on this value-conserving function. For much more specific insights, one might look to sociologists of physical education (notably Evans and Penney, 2002) to highlight these latent political functions.

- 7 This is itself part of that wider trend which might be called 'certificationism' – if I may be excused for introducing a word that looks dangerously postmodern.
- 8 In a celebrated remark, Peters once observed that 'education cannot be forced upon unwilling minds'. Without recourse to dualism one should also remark that it cannot likewise be forced upon unwilling bodies (or persons with both physical and mental aspects, if you prefer to avoid dualistic, specifically Strawsonian language). See Strawson (1959).
- 9 Although my point here is somewhat abstractly stated, it seems to me that this is precisely the kind of philosophical orientation that guides the work of Daryl Siedentop in his model of Sport Education and which Kirk (2002) has recently elaborated.
- 10 On which see Whitehead (1990).
- 11 The term practice is used in a special way in recent philosophy. It is derived from the work of Alisdair MacIntyre (1985). I note that this way of talking of sports activities is gaining ground in mainstream physical education discourse (Almond, 1996; Kirk, 2002; Siedentop, 2002). Their account, like some philosophers of sport, rarely seeks to acknowledge the problems of considering sports as social practices as opposed to, say, architecture or farming. For an account of some of these subtleties see McNamee (1994, 1995).
- 12 I am not implying that the 'professionalisation' of that sport has necessarily wrought a morally poorer game. It strikes me that, in the particular case of rugby, we may well witness less violence and more legal but exceptionally harmful aggression. Is that progress? Moreover, I am not at all clear that the phrase 'professionalisation' best characterises the kinds of development we have witnessed in elite, finance-driven, sports.
- 13 A fuller discussion of this debate can be found in Lehman (1982) and Morgan (1987).
- 14 See Carlisle (1969).
- 15 An excellent collection housing a variety of egalitarian criticisms of traditional curricula and pedagogy is Evans and Davies (1993). See especially the editor's introduction, of the same title, pp. 11–27.
- 16 I have made some critical philosophical remarks about the tenuous relationship involved here while the movement was at its height in McNamee (1988) though I no longer hold to the justificatory argument that I set out there.
- 17 See McNamee (1994).
- 18 Brackenridge and Alderson (1982) unpublished. I have benefited from several long discussions with Rod Thorpe on this point in the context of sports.
- 19 For a discussion of this concept see Slote (1989).
- 20 Nozick (1974) see especially pp. 42–5.
- 21 The terms 'person' and 'personhood' are rather special ones in moral philosophy. See McNamee (1992) and Meakin (1982, 1990) for competing analyses and applications of them in physical education contexts.
- 22 See Bain (1976) and Thompson (1983).
- 23 See Plato (1974).
- 24 A footnote is required here as a matter of intellectual honesty. When Parry published the article that is reprinted with additions in this journal I was a doctoral student of his. The subsequent thesis 'The Educational Justification of Physical Education' owes a very significant debt to his intellectual guidance. A portion of one of the chapters sought to satisfy one of his perorations: McNamee (1992).
- 25 A more recent attempt to offer a phenomenological account of the sports experience (particularly what is often referred to as 'peak experience') from a Heideggerian perspective can be found in Standish (1998).
- 26 See the unpublished doctoral dissertation cited above, University of Leeds, 1992.
- 27 See McNamee (1995). With respect to conceptualising social relations more generally see, McNamee (1998a).
- 28 See his classic Siedentop (1986) and most recently Kirk (2002) and Siedentop (2002). In saying this I am in no way committing myself to what can sometimes be read into Siedentop's earlier work regarding the uncritical

socialisation into dominant forms of sometimes ethically corrupt (viz. homophobia, racism, sexism, and so forth) values. See also McNamee (1995).

29 See Wollheim (1993).

30 I am extremely grateful to Graham McFee for his incisive and generous observations and criticisms on an earlier version of this essay.

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