

Philosophy of American Sport

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Toward a Quest for Virtue

Arthur G. Ogden



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*Of all the accolades I could muster,
none is more appropriate or more fitting:
For Elizabeth—my Steel Magnolia*

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1.01	There are five facets of the American tapestry which together comprise a <i>construct</i> for the philosophy of American sport: <i>the American economy, the competitive nature of the American psyche, the sense of teamwork in the American character, the American educational structure from kindergarten through the college experience, and the organized recreational leagues which have emerged in community after community.</i>
1.02	Sport is an aspect of life which lionizes its participants as representatives of the most revered fundamentals, the highest ideals, and the most deeply held beliefs that civilization espouses.
1.03	Resolution to the age-old “mind-body” problem comes with American sport since we are <i>not</i> a dichotomy of a mind and a body working independently of each other, but, rather, we are a <i>unity</i> of the total being. Aristotle calls this the “Synolon.”
1.04	Sport in America is still viewed as that activity which best embraces, exhibits, and reinforces the conceptions of and the highest qualities of America’s values—competition, fair-play, opportunity unfettered by socio-economic, birth or ethnic status, staunch individualism, dedication to “team” and the belief that participation will develop a better awareness of character.

- 1.05 The founders of America strongly believed in *meritocracy*, the unique opportunities of athletic competition have provided the ideal venue through which a meritocracy has the means to manifest its practical applications and results.
- 1.06 Sport in America is rooted in the rudiments of the ancient Greek concepts of *agon*(struggle) and *areté* (personal excellence) and is a product of the growth of America as a unique experiment in the political and social history of humanity. It is these elements which combine to yield a definitive construct of the philosophy of American sports, and yield *a quest for virtue* seen as *The Construct of the Philosophy of American Sport*, and exhibits a concrete unity of the factors which have given birth to a quest for virtue—the root of American sport.
- 1.07 Whether it is the competition between two rival college football teams or some kids playing “pick-up” in the neighborhood, it bears the unmistakable quintessence de Tocqueville witnessed when he first visited and branded it “American *Exceptionalism*.” It is identifiably and indisputably a quest for and an exercise in virtue.
- 1.08 Out of necessity for survival, there developed the sense of cooperation, which has evolved to the “teamwork” we see as elemental in American sport.
- 1.09 The interplay of two seemingly dichotomous locutions—“rugged individualism” side-by-side with “help thy neighbor” —became preeminent and formed a stronger sense of competition. Initially, the competition was necessary for survival against the challenges and the wiles of a yet uncharted vastness.
- 1.10 Education as a distinct institution in America has played a crucial role in the development of sport.
- 1.11 The fact that interscholastic sport sponsored by local educational systems exists nowhere else in the industrialized world may be obvious but the uniqueness of this American phenomenon heightens a sense of philosophical enrichment concomitant with the crystallization of an aspect of American culture.
- 1.12 The economic growth and development America experienced opened the gates, if you will, for the expansion of sport in all facets of life.

- 1.13 The uniqueness of American sport was birthed of all the elements of its natural, its psychological, its cultural, and its adventuresome composition—and reveals a quest for *virtue* as *arête* in the Aristotelian sense.
- 1.14 The notion of meritocracy, the celebration of individual achievement and success through collaborative efforts serve as significant, identifiable, and distinctive benchmarks of sport in America, which combine to form a crucible with unique and diverse cultural components and serve as the vehicle through which American sport reveals itself as an effective and compelling quest for virtue.
- 1.15 *Agon* (“Struggle”) found in athletic competition allows its participants to exhibit the personal qualities of “excellence” in their souls as *areté*.
- 1.16 It is through American sport that we simultaneously measure our personal achievement and reach even higher for the principles on which we believe we are based. As such, through sport we can see what we want and can measure what we are.
- 1.17 It is through American sport that we simultaneously measure our personal achievement and reach even higher for the principles on which we believe we are based. As such, through sport we can see what we want and can measure what we are.

Chapter 2 Historical Roots of Sport in America 15

- 2.01 There needs to be a unification between the history of American Sport and a philosophy of American sport to develop a comprehensive philosophy of American sport.
- 2.02 There are five reliable sources for the history of American sport: Benjamin Rader; Randy Roberts and James S. Olson; David Wiggins; Warren Goldstein and Elliot J. Gorn; Gerald R. Gems, Gertrude Pfister and Linda J. Borish.
- 2.03 Robert Osterhoudt began a serious reunification of American History and philosophy of sport.
- 2.04 It has been acknowledged that there needed to be a definitive history of American sport in order to develop a clear definition of American philosophy of sport.

- 2.05 Robert Mechikoff and Steven Estes achieved a foundation for this reunification with their 1993 work, *A History and Philosophy of Sport and Physical Education*.
- 2.06 Mechikoff and Estes found that *metaphysics* is the best branch of philosophy to address a philosophy of American sport.
- 2.07 *Metaphysics* is the realm of philosophy that deals with the nature of reality and the nature of causality. In *metaphysics* we get an interpretation of why we even have sport and how has emerged as a distinctive research discipline today.
- 2.08 As a consequence there is a true unification of the history and the philosophy of American sport.

Chapter 3 Philosophy and Sport: Virtue in Action 21

- 3.01 The heart of this venture and its foundational underpinning are to corroborate a clear justification for the use of the term “philosophy” in relation to sport.
- 3.02 Athletic competition and the adoration of its athletes as heroes is a function of the notion that these athletes represent the highest ideals of the cultures from which they emerge.
- 3.03 In religious principles lay the highest hopes of the human condition and, by application, motivate its practitioners.
- 3.04 History confirms that the birth of athletic competition lay at the feet of the gods who presided on Mount Olympus.
- 3.05 Those principles for which the human condition constantly reaches to improve its plight are present in both religion and athletic competition.
- 3.06 The ancestors of contemporary American sport specifically, and world-wide generally, were interested in celebrating their religion through many genres of human activity—dance, poetry, the arts, oratory—but it was always the games of the athletes which was the most revered component activity at these celebrations for the gods.
- 3.07 The celebrations at Olympus were a religious salute to the gods, who expected “perfection” from their creations—that is, “perfection” as “virtue.” From this point, it is vital to understand that the concept of *areté* is a function of virtue, and as such mandates a meticulous examination of the Greek concept of *areté*.

- 3.08 This is obligatory as it serves as a rudimentary principle upon which a philosophy of sport unique to the American culture is based.
- 3.09 Plato and Aristotle presented *areté* in their works, but each had a different function for it in the human condition.
- 3.10 These two distinctions do not present a dichotomy of meaning for the purposes of delineating a philosophy of American sport but, rather, enhance the importance of *areté* as part of its definition.
- 3.11 The study of a distinct discipline within the general field of philosophy, which can be rightly termed “philosophy of sport” or “sport philosophy,” is a relatively recent development within academia.
- 3.12 Mihalich revealed a very simple fact that an athlete is primarily an existentialist concerned with the performance of the moment with all its tenacity, its imperfections, its relative impermanence and, above all, its authenticity.
- 3.13 As Mihalich points out, the concept of *agon*, the Greek word for “struggle,” it became more viable to consider the philosophy of sport rightly within the parameters of an academic discipline, for the notion of *agon* relies on the presence of virtue as a practical motivation in the “struggle” which accompanies sport.
- 3.14 Hollowchak’s application of pure philosophical inquiry to sport itself compares Aristotle’s ideas of competition and virtue as “craft.”
- 3.15 It is self-evident that throughout the development of the philosophy of sport, allusions to, if not outright applications of, virtue confirms that virtue serves as an identifiable and inseparable element of sport and sport competition.
- 3.16 As such, analyzing virtue is rudimentary and is fundamental in identifying a philosophy of sport in America since virtue is the vehicle for the development of the entirety of sport in America.
- 3.17 The crux of understanding sport and a philosophy of it are predicated on the notion that athletic participation is a function of a unified “whole” athlete/human.
- 3.18 Descartes’ inquiry posed the question of how it could be possible for the soul, an essentially immaterial entity, to influence the

- physical body. For both the Ancient Greek philosophers and the field of philosophy which grew from them, there has always been the struggle to reconcile them—thus, the “mind-body problem.”
- 3.19 Understanding how athletic performance depends upon a reconciliation of the processes of the mind and the processes of the body resulting in a fully integrated, unified “whole” entity is at the heart of understanding the methodologies American athletes and coaches engage in approaching their respective sports.
 - 3.20 As a solution for reconciliation of the “mind-body,” or “form versus substance” dilemma, Aristotle introduced the concept of the *synolon*, the complete unification of the mind and the body, and the embodiment of the reconciliation of the processes of both acting as a single whole.
 - 3.21 Nietzsche recognized this necessary unity in human activity as he repeatedly referred to “the dance” as being illustrative of the unity personified in the *synolon*.
 - 3.22 An overview of the “mind-body” problem or dualism is important for developing a philosophy of American sport in that it allows a better understanding of what Ancient Greek philosophy and the attendant performances before the gods at Olympus intended.
 - 3.23 There is no sufficient translation into English for *areté*; however, it is commonly translated as “excellence” and/or “virtue.” Both of these have application to the formulation of an American philosophy of sport, since they are present either as motivators or tenets of the five constructs of the Philosophy of American Sport.
 - 3.24 Both translations of *areté* have specific relevance for sport in the pursuit of excellence. From a moral position for Plato, and from a purposive position for Aristotle, an athlete is exhibiting *areté* in a competition as a quest for excellence.
 - 3.25 *Areté* in American Sport is a function of “American Exceptionalism.”
 - 3.26 The notion of America’s “creed” is a branch on the same tree which fruited *areté*.
 - 3.27 The notion, practice, or concept of “meritocracy” paved the way for a broader spectrum of America’s population to aspire and to achieve.

- 3.28 An abiding and indelible conviction in the practice of meritocracy as a bedrock principle of American freedom became etched into the framework of American culture.
- 3.29 The concept of meritocracy in sport as a product of the first two points of the “American Dream.” since we should see the vehicle to the “American Dream” as the application of a meritocracy. Again, Hochschild points out that “1) individuals can succeed on the basis of their autonomous decisions and actions; 2) this success is based upon moral virtue.”
- 3.30 Dennis Rodman, a star National Basketball Association Hall-of-Fame member whose story is so very “American” it cannot be ignored or marginalized.
- 3.31 The attendant notions of hard work, dedication, and resolve measured with a desire for personal achievement all individually and collectively point to the Greek notion of “virtue” as *areté*—through the American concept of *meritocracy*.

Chapter 4 Overview of American Sport History 39

- 4.01 The study of a distinct discipline within the general field of philosophy, which can be rightly termed “philosophy of sport” or “sport philosophy.” is a relatively recent development within academia.
- 4.02 Early on there was very little academic interest in a topic, such as “philosophy of sport,” and sport as a serious human activity was not taken as a legitimate cerebral enterprise of the human condition.
- 4.03 The Ancient Greek concept of *areté*, prompts a serious discussion in the scheme of an American Philosophy of Sport since it serves as a rudimentary principle upon which a philosophy of sport unique to the American culture is based.
- 4.04 From a moral position for Plato, and from a purposive position for Aristotle, an athlete exhibits *areté* in competition as a quest for excellence and this distinction points directly to the concept of *virtue*.
- 4.05 An index of attributes for *areté* as *virtue*—realizing one’s potential, doing one’s best, life as a journey not a destination, personal dis-

cipline, participating—does not guarantee victory or balance, but reveals that *areté* is the fulcrum of complete training of the mind, body, and soul.

- 4.06 The spirit of opportunity to achieve also serves as a testament to the concept of American sport meritocracy, an integral component in identifying a philosophy of American sport.

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- 5.01 The corpus of *Philosophy of American Sport: Quest for Virtue* is imbued with the philosophical concept of *virtue*, which is rudimentary since it is the vehicle for the development of the entirety of sport in America.
- 5.02 Resolution of “dualism” is confirmed in Aristotle’s Concept of the *synolon* and sets a tone for American sport.
- 5.03 The ancient concept of *virtue* as *areté* is foundational for a philosophy of sport in America.
- 5.04 *Virtue* as *areté* in American sport is a function of the notion of “American Exceptionalism” posited by Alexis de Tocqueville.
- 5.05 America as a *meritocracy*—nowhere is this more evident than in sport—Denis Rodman is a good example.
- 5.06 Analysis of *Construct of the Philosophy of American Sport*, as it symbolizes the quest for *virtue*, which is elemental in establishing a philosophy of sport in America.
- 5.07 There have emerged eight sources for identifying a philosophy of American sport, which are roughly divided into three areas and strongly influence the conclusions about approaching a philosophy of sport in America: 1) general literary approaches to sport; 2) sport as cultural advancement; and, 3) the relationship between religion and sport in America.
- 5.08 It was through American’s military interventions that sport was both a product and a tool in the spread of such advancement.
- 5.09 There is little doubt that God has played a significant role in the development of America in all aspects of its history, its government, its social codifications, and in its culture and his is no different in sport.

- Chapter 6 Influencing Factor: American Sport Culture's Underpinnings in Its Civil War 53**
- 6.01 Sport in America is both a mirror of and a beacon for American values.
 - 6.02 The overriding influence exercised by the American Civil War on the construction of the culture of America serves those reflective and generative affects.
 - 6.03 The American Civil War laid the roots and boundaries of the five Constructs which style the Philosophy of American Sport.
 - 6.04 The Civil War lessons impacted sports far more than it first appears.
 - 6.05 Owing to the devastation of the Civil War to the South coupled with depressed Cotton Markets the South did not fully "Recover" until World War II.
 - 6.06 There were many "firsts" for African Americans in sport but the most impacting of those came after WWII.
 - 6.07 Without the American Civil War sport in America would not be what it is today.
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- 7.01 Sport in America affords the opportunity to indulge the competitive nature inherent in the American personality.
 - 7.02 The platitudes with which we associate sport and competitive natures are more than plentiful in the American sport lexicon.
 - 7.03 The athletic spectacles, or competitions, at the foot of Mount Olympus were to honor the gods, yes; but, at the same time, afforded Greeks the occasion to demonstrate their pursuit of excellence as a function of the perfection of their individual virtue, their *areté*.
 - 7.04 The "Turner Thesis" posits that with each new geographical frontier Americans encountered as the boundaries of the new nation expanded westward, something intrinsically tied to the geography added to the development of the political and governmental functions which produced the democracy which emerged as a result.

- 7.05 The notions of “self-reliance” and “improvisation.” for all intents and purposes, were largely learned from the Native Nations here long before the Europeans began their trek into the natural wealth of the continent, and allowed for a blending of practical utility of what was immediately at hand with the techniques associated with early industrialization known by the early European-Americans.
- 7.06 The model of “exceptionalism” Tocqueville witnessed could not have existed in the absence of “competition” or the emergence and refinement of an indigenous competitive psyche—unique to the new Americans on the new continent.
- 7.07 Competition is evident and prevalent in every phase of American discourse and exchange.
- 7.08 A veritable cottage industry emerged in sport psychology and psychology-related sport research in the late 1970’s.
- 7.09 Duina does an excellent job of presenting the case for a complete understanding of what Americans believe competition to entail, and how that belief has developed, evolved, and expanded throughout our history.
- 7.10 Medina presents more than an analysis of what she perceived to be a waning of the “spirit” of competition in American sport; she offers very specific instances of sports and their relationship to that American competitive spirit exemplified by sport, citing the self-reliance of boxing and the team play of baseball as primary examples of how the American immersion in competition reveals the essence of Aristotle’s virtue ethics.
- 7.11 The extension of sport through the celebrations at Olympus provided an excellent vehicle for finding virtue in the human condition and was the fact of competition in those celebrations which clearly established that sport is a perfect means to find virtue and to understand the interconnectedness between virtue and competition.
- 7.12 *Areté* is directly derived from the excellence of character and explains why sport, being implicitly entwined in pursuits of “excellence” yields an activity worthy of being analyzed in terms of “philosophy.”

- 7.13 The relevance of developing “character” and Aristotle’s concepts of “virtue” find a fundamental intersection, then, through sport and specifically through the coach’s exhibitions of “excellence”—virtue as *areté*.
- 7.14 “Virtue” and *areté* coincide and confirm competition as a form of “excellence.” and this leads to identifying an American philosophy of sport.
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- 8.02 The Greek *agon* adds to the imperative for teamwork and cooperation in an emerging and expanding continent.
- 8.03 Frederick Jackson Turner’s “Frontier Thesis” contends that the practical applications of *teamwork* were a fundamental necessity in the development of American democracy.
- 8.04 Without the concept of teamwork there is neither *virtue* nor *areté*, hence no quest and no philosophy of American sport.
- Chapter 9 Influencing Factor: American Economy 71**
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- 11.04 An American philosophy of sport as a quest for *virtue* democratized higher education through intercollegiate athletics.
- Chapter 12 Global Influence of American Sport 93**
- 12.01 In the twenty-first century, American sport finds itself as a leader in sport development throughout the globe at all levels—grade school to middle school to high school to junior college to college.
- 12.02 Countries around the world seek to emulate American approaches to sport.
- 12.03 Many of them send coaches and athletes to the United States to learn these approaches and invite experts in the field to visit their countries and deliver those uniquely American sports methods in lectures and workshops.
- 12.04 It is noted that the characteristic globalization of sports actually originated in America.
- 12.05 The “exporting” of American sport began with the American Civil War during which both Union and Confederate soldiers played baseball, which became known as “America’s pastime.”
- 12.06 American sport has also been spread by the American military.
- 12.07 International recruiting of athletes by American colleges and universities has been instrumental in expanding the globalization of American sport and its philosophy.

- 12.08 America's business model on an international level has tailored sports approaches in an easily adaptable fashion.
- 12.09 Dominant performances in the Olympics also by American athletes and coaches has expanded American sport globalization.
- 12.10 Professional sports through MLB, the NBA and the NFL have begun establishing international teams.
- 12.11 The impact and influence American sport have exerted on sport expansion and globalization cannot be minimized and will continue at whatever pace its fans in every sport and every country will demand.

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- 13.01 The prominent influences on American Sport are 1) expanded marketing which is a concomitant function of expanded globalization, 2) television contracts for both college and professional sports, 3) extended sport seasons, 4) sport options and participation availability at the recreational and scholastic levels, 5) free agency for professional athletes, and 6) athletes' voices in current issues on social, political, and moral platforms.

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- 14.01 Restating of the concepts of *agon* and *virtue* as *areté* in identifying a Philosophy of Sport in America.
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Foreword

In the United States we hold to the firm conviction that all men and women are entitled to an opportunity to develop their capacities to the highest level of efficiency in order to compete well in the race of life.

This author, Dr. Arthur G. Ogden, is an academic genius in the world of sport. He is supremely qualified to present this book, which, as the title suggests delves into the “Philosophy of American Sport: Toward a Quest for Virtue.” Dr. Ogden possesses a keen analytic mind with an extremely adept capacity for exceptional research. He has made an exhaustive study of the history, background and tradition of all phases and influences of sport in America. And, Dr. Ogden’s professional and academic background are of the highest quality; therefore, the reader will be exceptionally challenged.

This book is a fascinating compilation of truth, fact, honesty and philosophy. Anyone who has an idea that sports can make difference in people and in a country’s culture should read and study this book.

Ogden shares a wealth of information both from research and experience. *Philosophy of American Sport: Toward a Quest for Virtue* is a must and compelling read for anyone who believes deeply in the value of virtues actualized from athletics and sport.

Mike Lude
Director of Athletics (Ret.)
University of Washington
Collegiate Athletics Consultant

Prelude

This exposition of an American philosophy of sport is a lightly trekked excursion through a survey of American economic development, a brief interlude through America's expanding western frontiers, a quasi-psychological analysis of its penchant for competition *as* competition, an examination of America's educational structure, and a brief voyage of discovery into the plethora of America's recreational sporting opportunities. As such, it would seem only appropriate that a statement regarding the zenith of the entirety of this venture be proffered.

Trying to articulate a philosophy of sport which is distinctly "American" in terms of identifiable benchmarks and queues is an undertaking which is as daunting as counting the grains of sand on one's favorite beach. As such, it has been the attempt here to present an ostensive definition—that is to say, define the thing in terms of its elemental parts as a whole thing including the effects of each of those elemental parts as well as what they do singularly and collectively.

In sum, the definition is a complete construct to which each of the individual constructs, elements, has added to the entirety of the definition in this instance. All in all, the definition of a Philosophy of American Sport is an attempt to identify a "process," analogously like Heraclitus' declaration that we can never put our foot into the same river twice since ever new waters are flowing on our foot—nevertheless, the river *is* there and we *do* wade into it.

So, as we seek to cross the river, we experience its process and while the process is ever-changing, the river, itself is defined by its place and time, its boundaries of its process and its ostensive nature, thus, yielding something definitive and identifiable.

The ultimate aim of American sport is the collective amalgamation of each of its constructs seeking its own perfection, its own "excellence" and in so doing rendering its own "virtue."

As such, it is a quest for virtue in a collective context, but is achieved in and for individual virtue. Applied in this context, sport in America is more than a pursuit, a hunt, a chase, or merely a pastime. Its participation and culmination encompass the process and the effects of its motivation as a true *quest*—the genuine desire to achieve personal “excellence” as *areté*, thus, *an authentic quest for virtue*.

The inter-dependence of each elemental construct and how each one simultaneously builds on and is built by each of the others becomes vividly self-evident as its application effects the others and is affected by the others—and is the substance of a Philosophy of American Sport, *toward a quest for virtue*.

It has borrowed from the Ancient Greek notions, but has left its own unique imprint on the activity and approach to sport in the human condition which cannot be denied and must be acknowledged as “American Sport.”

Acknowledgments

As anyone who has ventured an endeavor such as this has attempted to offer proper thanks and acknowledgement knows that a sad but factual oversight invariably misses some who deserve kudos and recognition. And so, to anyone who believes that she or he should have been included in this salute and was not for whatever reasons, let me here and now render a sincere apology and blanket acknowledgement of the contributions and encouragements you have freely offered in this effort. The attempt here to approach an American Philosophy of Sport could not have been possible without your assistance.

Still, from here I shall attempt to name those who have been helpful in the research, the discussion, the writing, and the identification of a philosophy of sport which is uniquely American.

First and foremost, I offer thanks and honor to my God, the God of Abraham and my ancestors in Faith. With Him, I must thank my priest and dear friend, the Reverend Larry Shinnick, a Notre Dame graduate who practiced law for thirty some-odd years before he was untimely widowed and took up the mantle of priesthood, a decision for which I will be eternally grateful to him and to God.

Let me also thank the United States Sports Academy and its founder and President *Emeritus*, Dr. Thomas P. Rosandich, along with his son and Academy President, Dr. Thomas J. Rosandich, for affording me the opportunity to engage and ultimately complete this research and to continue work in the academic field of Sports Management. Their encouragement and support were constant and most welcome.

In addition, my dear colleague, Dr. Tim Foley, and the man who consistently guided me in this venture, Dr. Fred Cromartie, were incessantly demanding and offered edits, changes, and suggestions which strengthened this effort. Gentlemen, you were always there for me and I will always be thankful for your presence in this effort.

Professionally, I owe a significant debt of gratitude to Dr. Heather Reid, a pioneer and pillar in the field of sport philosophy. It was her work, and her guidance, which prompted me to focus the vision of this research on “virtue” as *areté* and to relate it to American Sport. Without the subtle observations she offered, the central thrust of this research would not be what it has become.

I also must offer a deep sense of gratitude to the late Dr. Joseph Mihalich, my undergraduate Senior Advisor at La Salle University, whose craft blended an existential/metaphysical approach to sport and philosophy and showed us the natural connection between the totality of the human experience and philosophy through sport.

While it might seem strange to some I am compelled to offer an immeasurable debt of thanks to my family physician, Dr. Judith Travis. She healed my battered body with great aplomb and gave true meaning to what Hippocrates meant when he admonished physical healers to “do no harm.” Without her I would not have been alive to write this book. Thank you, Judy.

At the same time, I wish to thank all the students at the Sports Academy, as well as all those students who suffered my lectures and diatribes for over half a century at the various high schools and colleges at which I served, each and every one of you was a real marine to have walked with me through the mine fields of trying to think and to make some sense of that process. I salute all of you.

To all the coaches and friends in the field of athletics who have assisted and guided me, I offer humble thanks. They include Terry Bowden, Bobby Bowden, Mike Lude, Mike Leach—undoubtedly the most philosophical and the deepest thinker in the college coaching ranks today—Ron Dickerson, Sr., Pat Head Summit, Donna Lopiano, Tommy Bowden, Jimbo Fisher, Dr. Bob Lacivita, Jay Jacobs, Vince Dooley, and the late Theodore “Tex” Robinson. Each one of them helped form some aspect of this construct of the Philosophy of American Sport, and their individual contributions were as unique as they.

When I talk of family, the first person who comes to mind is my Uncle Bill Hinson. He is fourteen years my senior and has always been the big brother I never had. Uncle Bill was a very accomplished quarterback in the 1950’s at Miami Jackson High School. He earned honors as an All-City, All-State, All-Southern, and All-American player at Jackson. He played at Baylor behind Hayden Fry, who later gained fame as one of the greatest coaches at the University of Iowa. Uncle Bill chose to become a pastor in the Southern Baptist

Church, where he was elected Moderator of the Southern Baptist Convention. He also holds a doctorate in psychology. His influence on me has been immeasurable and I will always be deeply indebted to him.

Still, a family is not really complete without children and my nine children, Captain Chris Ogden, USN (Ret.), and his wife, Amy, Dr. Jon Ogden, Ms. Jenni Murphy and her husband, Shawn, Mr. Josh Ogden, Ms. India Oberkirch Ogden and her husband Mr. Alex Brand, Ms. Zarah McLaurine Ogden, Mr. Benjamin Baldwin Ogden, Mr. Nathan McClellan Ogden, and Ms. Savannah Sutton Ogden have all contributed at one time or another to the development of this research. And their children, my grandchildren, Mr. Patrick Ogden, Mr. Steven Murphy, Mr. Shawn Murphy, Ms. Rachel Ogden, Mr. Kevin Ogden, Mr. Daniel Ogden, Ms. Caroline Ogden, Ms. Callie Ogden, Mr. Joshua W. Ogden, and Mr. Wesley Brand contributed in spirit, if not in fact, to “Papa’s project.”

It is my sincerest hope that years henceforth all of them review this work and, perhaps, make sense of it and even add to it.

Finally, it is short-sighted and purely narcissistic not to give credit to a spouse who has suffered through the travails of a research such as this and to have endured a personality such as mine. To have a strong partner is a gift and a blessing, and so I extend my most sincere and humble gratitude to my wife, Elizabeth, who has suffered far more than anyone could or should have during this research, as well as enduring me for more than two decades. Thank you, Elizabeth!

And so, I remain one whose efforts rest on the spirit and support of those who have so graciously and continuously supported me and my efforts here. And, again, to those whom I have failed to mention please accept my unpretentious *mea culpas*.

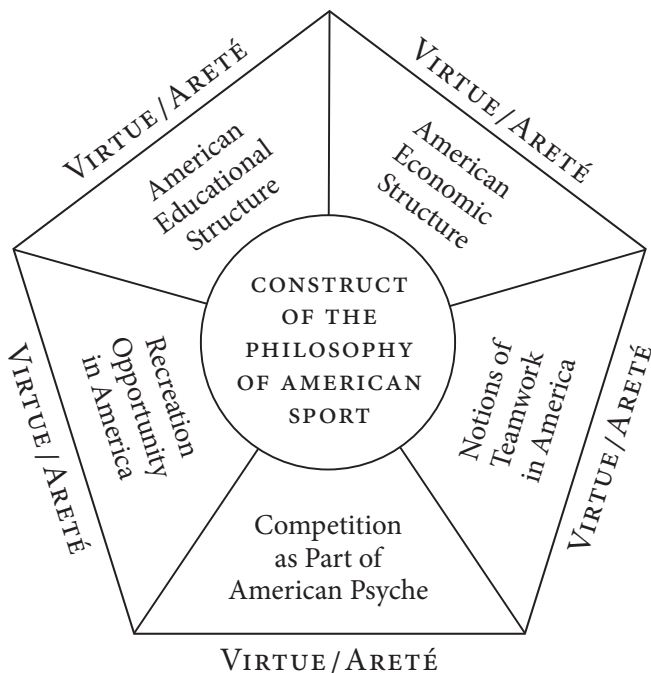
Thank you one and all! You are truly a blessing, and I have risen on your shoulders.

Introduction

The growth, development and popularity of sport in the United States of America are as dramatic and as dynamic as the growth and development of the country itself. As with cultures and civilizations throughout the history of the human condition, sport is a logical and necessary extension of America's self-image. That self-image has been framed by two, distinct societal locutions, which, themselves, have been conceived in idealistic parameters. Although seemingly disparate in concept and application, these two locutions have defined the collective American psyche, and, as a consequence, have laid the elemental girders of America's social fabric, as well as its approach to every discursive activity, and here, more importantly, to its sporting activities. Those two locutions are 1) *praise for, pursuit of and participation in "rugged individualism" in the form of self-reliance and independence*, and 2) *the practice of collective community cooperation from the Judeo-Christian ethical admonition to "help thy neighbor."* Together, these two maxims have been axiomatic in any success realized by America; and, ultimately, their unified applications embrace the concept of *virtue* from Ancient Greek philosophy.

There are five components of the American tapestry which have contributed to the exponential growth and unparalleled quality of sport in America, each of which comports with the other four through its distinctive significance; *the American economy, the competitive nature of the American psyche, the sense of teamwork in the American character, the American educational structure from kindergarten through the college experience, and the organized recreational leagues which have emerged in community after community.*

Construct of the Philosophy of American Sport, © Arthur G. Ogden, 2010



The figure above, *Construct of the Philosophy of American Sport*, represents a concrete, schematic illustration indicating the interwoven structure of these components which provides for a unique philosophy of sport emerging from the totality of the American Experience in its political, economic, geographic, social, and psychological development.

It is significant to note that the founders of America strongly believed in a *meritocracy*, as opposed to the rigid structure of an aristocracy with its inherent inhibition of talent confined to the fortunes of birth. The belief in personal independence and self-reliance serve as an obvious and necessary concomitant basis of a meritocracy. Since sport ultimately seeks perfection through achievement based exclusively on talent, the unique opportunities of athletic competition have provided the ideal venue through which a meritocracy has the means to manifest its practical applications and results. Nowhere has that been more evident in American culture than in the conventions of its approaches to sport, thus, blending the concepts of individual achievement and cooperative effort in the sense of teamwork.

What is more, however, is that the amalgamation of the seemingly tangential elements idealized in American sport actually has its roots in the fundamental concept of “virtue.” Ancient Greek philosophers believed that virtue was attainable in all forms of human activity, but physical competition, through *agon* or “struggle,” presented and afforded an opportunity (Mihalich 1982) which could allow attainment of yet another form of virtue—*areté*, personal excellence (Reid 2011). Both Plato and Aristotle addressed the issue of “virtue” and related it to sport and sport participation.

Through an explicit application of the concepts of virtue—*agon* and *areté*—it is obvious and apparent that American sport, with all its successes and failures, with all its vices and foibles, exhibits the fundamental rudiments of virtue in the human condition. In the final analysis, it is rooted in the notions of ancient philosophers, is a product of the growth of America as a unique experiment in the political and social history of humanity, and yields a definitive construct identifying and exhibiting a distinct philosophy of sport in America—a *quest for virtue*.

