

# The aesthetics of sport and the arts: competing and complementary

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## 1. The peculiarity of the sporting aesthetic

The connection between sport and art is a complex one, as is evident from the lively literature that was once generated on the topic (see Aspin 1974; Best 1974, 1978, 1985; Cooper 1978, Elliott 1974; Gaskin and Masterson 1974, Reid 1970). There is plenty of art about sport, and there are many examples of competitions involving art, but a more vexed question concerns whether sport is or ever could itself be art. It is less controversial that aesthetic values are to be found in sport (Gumbrecht 2006) but even here we should acknowledge the peculiar nature of such aesthetics and their complex connections with the sports that produce them. This will be the topic of the present paper.

The aesthetics of sport, it will be argued, stem from the particularities of what I will call the metaphysical basis of sport, understanding metaphysics in a broad sense. I am not offering a complete survey of what this basis of sport is. I will largely, though not entirely, neglect the topic of causation, for instance, even though it could be argued that it is the most significant metaphysical concept in sport (Mumford 2015). Instead, I will concentrate on three features of sport that explain some of its distinctive aesthetics. The point is to show how and why sport is capable of producing the special kinds of aesthetic values that it does. Again, the paper cannot be complete even on this more limited topic; but by illustrating three distinctive features of sport the main claim will be supported. The approach throughout will be that of analytic philosophy.

The three features in sport, that I claim explain some aspect of its distinctive aesthetics, are:

- Competition
- Indeterminism
- Emergent holism, in relation to team sports

I will consider each of these in turn.

## 2. Competition

The clichés that sport is art and that some of its greatest players are artists are refuted through a consideration of the role of competition and, in particular, the goal of winning (see Mumford 2011, ch. 5). The point of sport is to win and its goals are entirely lusory (from *ludos* = game playing). For example, nothing really hinges on jumping over a very high bar. No life is directly saved, nor is any natural disaster averted. And if it were so vital to get to the other side of the bar, it would be much easier to walk under it. Nor does it really matter that a football is forced into the net or a golf ball into a small hole. These ‘accomplishments’ matter only within a context of game playing and in compliance with a set of constitutive rules, for instance, that the golf ball go into the hole by being struck with a club or putter rather than being placed into it by hand. It is the game – the competitive game – that gives these outcomes the meaning that they have. It can thus be said that ceasing to hold a lusory attitude to such goals is to cease playing the sport and to commence some other activity. For example, if in football one stops trying to win the game, by outscoring the opposition, and instead begins juggling the ball, then one is not really playing football anymore but doing something else, such as trying to impress or entertain.

It follows from this that even though sport produces beauty and other aesthetic values quite frequently, if one’s primary aim in participating is to produce aesthetic values, then one is not truly playing sport: perhaps one would instead be making art, or attempting to do so (bearing in mind that what makes something art is not simply that it produces aesthetic value, as we shall see). Thus, when sport is being played – in pursuit of the lusory goals – then any aesthetic that is produced is incidental; that is, it is non-essential to the activity *qua* sport.

There is of course a class of sports that seem to present an obvious counterexample to this claim. Some sports have aesthetic values as an explicit aim, such as ice dance, gymnastics, diving and synchronised swimming. Aren’t these cases where the aesthetic is the primary goal? But a little further consideration reveals that we do not have to reverse our original judgement. In such examples, the competitors aim to present the aesthetic virtues of the relevant sport to the judges in order to win. They remain *competitors*, even though the competition is a competition to produce aesthetic value. What count as the aesthetic virtues of the sport is, of course, defined and codified such that there is a degree of clarity over what the athlete must produce in order to be a winner. And it is apparent that the aim of winning is the primary goal if one considers the following: what happens if such a sport revises its norms of aesthetic value? Perhaps a particular move, which is considered to produce aesthetic value, is suddenly prohibited in the codification. It would then almost certainly be the case that every serious competitor would cease employing that move in their routine. Indeed, continuation of its use would suggest that winning was no longer that athlete’s goal. The athlete would then have stopped competing in that sport and, again, have decided to produce beauty instead as an alternate activity. Hence, the case of the ‘aesthetic sports’ does not change our original judgement that competition is in every case the aim of sport.

This judgement might seem to denigrate the role of aesthetics in sport: it must always be secondary, where it is produced, we say. But the relationship between sport and its aesthetics is complex. This is because a class of aesthetic values are such that they tend to be produced in the pursuit of the lusory goals of sport. In simpler terms, competition has a tendency to create aesthetic value. I admit that I am saying very little on the ontology of aesthetics: what exactly is the nature of aesthetic value and the manner in which it exists, whether it is ‘real’ or subjective, and so on. But this is mainly because the points I am making hold no matter which of the accounts of aesthetic value are adopted

and it is thus not pertinent to enter those debates here. What matters is that it is in pursuit of the lusory goals that such values are produced. Arguably, the competitive aspect of sport contributes most to its aesthetic dimension. When athletes try their hardest, run their fastest, jump their highest, take a shot with most care and control, this is when the aesthetics of human movement are at their greatest. And the point yields something of a paradox of the sporting aesthetic: it is produced most when the aim is not to produce it.

Let us compare two runners. One is barely trained, taking a run in an attempt to regain long-gone fitness, has received no coaching to develop an efficient running style and, indeed, with increasing tiredness starts to flail around with a lack of control and gets slower and slower until the run stops. The other aims to beat all competitors, runs with efficiency, grace and style, paces the effort to finish strongly, has a well-developed musculature because of a prolonged sporting career and training regime, and completes the same distance in a fraction of the time of the other runner. Now, again staying clearer of some bigger ontological questions on the nature of aesthetics, it is without doubt the second kind of runner who produces the higher aesthetic value and the greater aesthetic experience for the viewer. Similarly, we are attracted by power, speed, extension, control, elegance, technique, and so on: all the physical features that also tend towards sporting success in competitive contexts. Hence, by not pursuing sporting aesthetics but, rather, sporting success, one is more likely to produce those aesthetic features in any case, which is why we can think of this relationship as somewhat paradoxical.

The mystery of this connection between the competitive nature of sport and the aesthetic values it tends to produce is dispelled when one considers that there are other cases where something is gained primarily in pursuing something else. For example, striving to be happy is not itself very successful in making one happy. If one simply wants to be happy, but with little idea of how such happiness is to be achieved, one is likely to end up without it. Instead, someone might want a big family or a successful career, or to write a novel, to be loved and so on, and in attaining those goals also finds that they are happy. Similarly, your aim could be to save the planet from environmental disaster rather than saving money on your fuel bills. But if you reduce your energy consumption in order to save the planet, this will most likely tend towards reducing your energy bills nevertheless.

What is true of sport might be true of a number of other practices. Competition occurs not just in sport but also in games, in careers and, of course, there can be art competitions such as the Turner Prize and the Booker Prize for fiction. It could be that, in appropriate circumstances, competition is connected with increased aesthetic value. But there are other cases of competition that seem to have no connection whatsoever with aesthetic value and might even lessen it. The economic competition for resources could, for instance, have an aesthetically detrimental effect on the environment or landscape. I have no general theory to offer that distinguishes aesthetic-enhancing competitive practices from those that are neutral or detrimental. For my argument, I need only the claim that, in the case of sport, competition can tend towards the aesthetic. The word 'tendency' is vital, however. A tendency is stronger than a pure contingency but might be less than a necessity. Smoking tends towards cancer, for example, meaning that smokers are thought to have a higher chance of cancer, *ceteris paribus*, than non-smokers. But it is not necessitated that any particular smoker gets cancer (Mumford and Anjum 2011: ch. 8). Similarly, the competitive nature of sport tends towards its aesthetic enhancement; but there could easily be some cases where it doesn't. There are many instances of two marathon runners deliberately crossing the line together without

competing to do so first. And although the competitive aspect of sport has been suspended in these cases, they might yet provide beautiful moments.

### **3. Indeterminism**

The second metaphysical feature of sport I consider, that is productive of a part of its aesthetics, is indeterminism. It may seem surprising that there is a link between indeterminism and aesthetics but one can indeed be found. One has to acknowledge, however, a distinctive aesthetic feature of sport, which itself is controversial, namely its dramatic aspect. It is here that the topic of causation is also relevant but I will not be considering it in any philosophical detail.

We need first to understand the distinction between determinism and indeterminism if we are to grasp how it bears on the sporting aesthetic. Determinism is best understood as the view that there is only one possible future (as, e.g., van Inwagen 1983: 2) and that this is/was true at any point in history. Indeterminism would then be most simply understood as the negation of that, though we will see that the term indeterminism could be used to describe many different sorts of situations. There are also a variety of different reasons why determinism would be the case. Some might say that the current total state of the universe together with the laws of nature fix all future states of the universe. Another way of looking at determinism is the view that every event has a cause and a cause always necessitates its effect. A further view, which doesn't need causation at all, would be just that the whole history of the universe is predetermined, set in stone, and no one can do anything to change it.

It is notable that neither determinism nor indeterminism – as the latter is typically understood – fits well with the idea of sport. If we apply the idea of determinism to sport, it would entail that there is only one possible winner of any particular contest. There can only be one result, presumably no matter how much, or how little, the contestants try. Sport then loses its point for the competitors and its interest for the spectators. Consider, for instance, how we feel if we ever hear that a game has been 'fixed' or, worse, if we knew in advance that it was fixed. It would lose all sporting interest to us immediately (though it might be interesting from other perspectives, e.g., a criminal one). Although it also includes slightly different issues, consider also how watching a sporting contest that has already occurred, even without knowing the result, seems to lack some of the excitement of watching a contest that is live and where the outcome is still to be decided (Fisher 2005). These cases seem to show us that we want to watch sport where the result is genuinely up for grabs, rather than the contestants playing out what is already decided. And then why distinguish the case of a fixed match, in which the result has been agreed in advance and a match that is fixed by the laws of nature to permit only one possible outcome?

While it makes no sense for sport to be premised on determinism, then, things seem hardly better if indeterminism is the case. Suppose that the outcome of a sporting contest is decided by some random element, akin to the toss of a coin. Would that be of comfort to either the participants or the spectators who were concerned about the necessity of sporting outcomes? If the results are a matter of pure chance, then we seem in hardly any better position. Coin tossing would not make a good spectacle. The problem would be that the players would have no control over the outcomes, hence no say in what they are. Why then train in advance? Why have a strategy or tactics? One

couldn't have a legitimate strategy in coin tossing. It is supposed to be a game of pure chance in which you are not allowed to influence the outcome. And, then, why would it be of any interest at all to watch such a game of chance? Indeed, games of chance might be some fun to play, if there are stakes involved, but they would be of very limited interest to watch. We want to see sporting participants negotiate their ways through a series of challenges, using skill, strength, dexterity and experience to conquer them. There is some aesthetic appeal in seeing such problem-solving and this can only occur if the sportsmen and women have influence over the outcomes.

If we had a stark choice between determinism and this randomised version of indeterminism, then it seems there is no place for meaningful sport. Fortunately, there is a version of indeterminism that allows us what we need. Furthermore, we can see that it provides a metaphysical basis for a key aesthetic feature of sport. This is a form of indeterminism that, while it denies that everything is necessitated, it also denies that sporting outcomes are purely random matters. Both those options deny the athletes any control – because both deny there is any alternative to the actual outcomes that the athlete is able to bring about. Instead, the solution is in terms of tendencies once more: the better athlete tends to beat the weaker because they have a power to do so (Mumford and Anjum 2014). Training hard so that you have the requisite sporting skills increases your likelihood of success, though this will in almost every case be a matter comparative to the other contestants. Tendencies can reveal themselves in frequencies of outcomes, though, again, they don't have to. They only tend to do so. If a stronger team plays a weaker team ten times, then, you would expect the stronger team to win most contests (and we will avoid saying that the team that wins most is the stronger simply in virtue of that fact, for this would make skill and aptitude redundant in explaining why one team tended to beat the other). But in any single contest, the weaker team has a chance. It is still worth them turning up and trying their best; and it remains an interesting spectacle for us to watch such a contest. Even over ten games, the weaker team has a chance – a slimmer chance – of winning the majority: but it is a chance that will tend towards zero (without reaching it) as the number of contests increases.

Adoption of a metaphysics of tendencies allows one to deny the necessitation of outcomes that follows from determinism but without lurching to a world of pure chance. Indeterminism is true, strictly speaking, even if just one event is not wholly determined. In rejecting determinism, then, one need not accept the extreme version of indeterminism in which randomness rules all. Instead, we can have a view of sport, as in causal action generally, in which the players have influence over outcomes and can attempt to sway them in their favour, even though they do not have absolute control. They can certainly be causally responsible for the outcomes they produce but where producing an outcome does not require guaranteeing it. And it is this form of indeterminism, I argue, that is responsible for what we call drama in sport, where I take dramatic value to be a sub-category of aesthetic value.

To make this claim more persuasive, I will illustrate it with a couple of examples and then offer some justification for a dramatic interpretation of sport.

My first example comes from football. Assume that a shot is taken, coming away from the player's boot in a general direction that she cannot control exactly but which is as best as she can do under the game circumstances to get it on target but away from the goalkeeper. It hits the crossbar and lands down on the line. Will it have backspin and come back out; or it will it have forward spin and

bounce into the goal? If it genuinely could go either way, then it is exciting and dramatic to watch. A lot can hinge on such fine margins, which can make a big difference to the result of the contest. If it goes in, we certainly hold the scorer responsible. We assign her the credit: for although the shot was close to being a miss – had there been just a little less backspin – she exercised her footballing skill in making the shot, she deliberately kicked it in the right sort of direction, and so on. So even though she was unlikely to have the requisite control to repeat the same shot exactly as it was, she was exercising her skill and she did succeed in projecting the ball in a direction where it had a tendency to go into the goal. But sporting situations are often hypersensitive, where the slightest different in initial conditions can make a huge difference in outcome. Had the boot contacted the ball in some very slightly different way, that it was impossible for the player to control to such a level of detail, forward spin might well have taken the ball away from the goal. Anyone wanting a real-life example of such a fine margin making all the difference need only consider Geoff Hurst's famous (or infamous) second goal in the 1966 World Cup Final. He hit the ball in the direction of the goal. It struck the bar and fell very close to the line. It was not within Hurst's complete control, when the ball left his boot, that it would bounce over the line after it hit the crossbar. It was probably not within his control, even, that it would hit the bar and bounce down. We can be confident that he was not aiming to score-off-the-bar, rather than directly. But what drama it produced when he did so.

The second example is a golfer who makes a putt towards the hole. For a real-life example, consider one of Tiger Woods' best putts, at the 16<sup>th</sup> hole of the 2005 US Masters. The shot was taken from the outer edge of the green with the ball resting against the cut of the rough. Woods planned to hit the ball up hill on to the green above the hole and then let it change direction and roll back down towards the hole. The shot was executed exactly as planned but with the ball having only just enough momentum to reach the hole. Indeed, it teetered on the brink of the hole for what seemed like a whole second before it finally dropped in. It would be implausible to say that Woods had total control over this exact ending. Were he to attempt the same shot all day, every day, for the rest of his life, it is unlikely that he could repeat the same dramatic finish, with the ball pausing on the cusp. Nevertheless, we are right to credit him with the successful shot. A golfer does his or her best to plays a skilled shot with the best possible chance of falling in the hole. But there is no guarantee of outcome. Suppose it's a great shot. But still a gust of wind could divert it just at the wrong time, a blade of grass could spring up at the last second and change its course very slightly, or a squirrel could run across the ball's path and steal it. None of these matters are within the golfer's control. But if they don't happen, and the ball goes in, we are certainly right to give the golfer praise, and the trophy, even though he or she could not control everything that might have prevented the victory. That's how sport should be. But the more skilled a golfer is, the stronger a tendency his or her shots will have to go in the hole.

This indeterminism, and the uncertainty it leaves, contributes to the aesthetic of sport. We can be witness to a striving for – a tending towards – an outcome that is not guaranteed by the sportsperson's actions. Hence there is drama: the result is always up for grabs, fortunes can change rapidly on the basis of little things, anything can happen, even though some events are more likely than others. But it means that sport is oftentimes surprising, and thus capable of filling us with a sense of wonder. Even where the outcome is not a surprise, there can still be the dramatic satisfaction of an uncertainty that resolves into a deserved victory, rewarding superior skill and strength.

Again there can be a comparison between this feature of sport, producing its particular aesthetic, and some similar cases in recognised arts. Improvised performance in jazz contains, for the audience and musicians, a thrill of uncertainty that hopefully gets resolved when, through skill and experience, the players are able to take the music through a journey to reach a satisfactory conclusion. Or consider the seemingly random drips of a Jackson Pollock painting. Pollock knew pretty well where he wanted the drips to fall but the technique allowed only a degree of control. Things could easily have gone wrong. But there was pleasure to be had when the painting was satisfactorily 'resolved' by those uncertainties resulting in an effective and powerful work of art.

Before leaving this topic of indeterminism as the basis of sporting drama, it should be acknowledged that the credentials of sport to qualify as real drama have been challenged. Elsewhere I have defended the claim that the drama in sport is real enough so I will not repeat all the points here (Mumford 2011, ch. 6). Briefly, David Best alleged that the cases of sport and drama are not analogous. For instance: 'It is the character of the athlete which is shown in sport, whereas in drama it is the character not of the actor but of the person he or she is portraying' (Best 1985: 536). However, the two cases are not so dissimilar. The sportsman or woman indeed seems to adopt a role when playing sport; for instance, he or she could be aggressive in a game against an opponent who is also a personal friend. And just as they might bring something of their own personality to the sporting role they play, so could an actor on the stage or screen. Indeed, this is a valid reason for a choice of casting: what the actor will bring to the part. The actor adopts a role for the entertainment of our dramatic sensibilities, and the same can be understood of the men and women of professional sport. Spectator sports are not just about winning and losing but also attracting paying customers to watch it: and they will do so if there is a serious prospect of drama played out in front of them.

#### **4. Emergence**

The topic of emergence has been a thorny one in philosophy for some time. Its relation to sport has been rarely discussed but it seems highly relevant to team sports and, I will argue, is the ground of another feature of sport's aesthetics. Although emergence seems most pertinent to team sports it may not be exclusively so. It is certainly easier, however, to explain the idea first in terms of teams.

The philosophical notion of emergence concerns certain types of case where properties of wholes are not found among their parts. We have to be careful how we articulate this, though. Two right-angled triangles can form a whole that is a square, if they are aligned in a particular way. The whole is square but the two parts that form it are not squares. However, if this were to count as emergence, it would make it too ubiquitous and the case is best thought of as mere composition with an arrangement. Similarly, a whole might weigh 10 kg though none of its parts do. The weight of the whole is simply the addition or aggregate of the weights of the parts. For the concept of emergence to be useful, it should not apply to too many things. Nor should it apply to too few. We want a philosophical concept that applies to the sorts of things that we think ought to count as emergent, while also allowing that a precise, regimented concept could rule some things not to be emergent that pre-theoretically we thought were. This is how philosophy often works.

A duly serviceable notion of emergence has been offered by Anjum and Mumford (2017) and which can be applied to team sports. This is called the causal-transformative model. It says that emergence is where a whole has a property or power that is not found among the component parts, nor in their mere aggregation, and that this higher-level property is a result of the causal interaction of the parts, leading to their change. This might sound complicated but it is simple once one has a few examples.

First, a non-sporting case. Water has a power to put out fires but none of its constituents do. Hydrogen and oxygen would both fuel fires. So how can the whole have this property that none of its constituents have? The answer seems to be that the parts of a water molecule – two hydrogen atoms and one oxygen atom – causally affect each other when they bond. The vacant spaces in the outer shells of electrons are completed by the binding; and given that many of the chemical properties of things are explained by their outer shells of electrons, it is not mysterious that in changing the constituents through the binding process the whole does not simply inherit the properties that the parts had before they were binded.

Now let us consider a sporting example. Some teams can be greater or better than the sum of the abilities of the individual players that make them up – were those players to be considered in isolation – while some can be worse. A good team plays as a whole, instead of as a collection of individuals. They become a unit that, if it is well-functioning, affects the individual constituents and makes them better players. They become transformed through their participation in the whole (Mumford 2015a). A good team can function like a single entity in which the individual is subsumed, and this creates a high-level aesthetic that is available for the spectator's appreciation. When Nottingham Forest became twice-European Champions of football with a team of previously unsuccessful players, it was seen in these terms. This counts as emergence on the causal-transformative view. The negative case would also count, where participation in a whole makes players worse and it is a bad team, though this will be unlikely to produce any positive aesthetic value.

Can emergence really be the basis of an aesthetic judgement? It might seem odd to suggest that we appreciate emergent phenomena aesthetically. But there are plausible cases in the arts for comparison. Consider a jazz quartet. If one listens to the individual musicians play their parts individually, perhaps as they rehearse, then it can certainly be interesting and appreciated. But now let us put all four players together. As a whole, they play a piece of music, which has a pleasing unity to it. Let us take it that in a situation of playing together, the musicians affect each other positively. As sometimes happens, they coax the best performances out of each other, feeding off the energy of live performance and not wanting to let the others down, maybe even competing, in a sense, to be the best among them. This can certainly produce in us an additional aesthetic appreciation: not just because of the music sounding complete but also from hearing that it is such a fine improvisation as a result of the mutually-enhancing effects of the musicians' collaboration. There can be something special about such a collective effort, particularly if one feels that the performance has a unique quality. This is the sort of thing that sends a tingle down the spine. And what is said of a collective musical performance can clearly apply to a cast of actors on the stage or screen: they too might bring the best out of each other and deliver a performance that is in some sense greater than the sum of the parts. We can appreciate not just the play but also that it was a fine delivery, performed well because the cast operated as a mutually-improving whole.



The application to team sports is too obvious to labour as all the points discussed above can apply to any team sport. Seeing that a team is a well-honed machine, improving each individual's performance, is a special moment in sport: both for the spectators and, no doubt, the players. It is such performances that go down in sporting history. The team seems to be the *unit*: as if an entity in its own right, capable of performing collective actions. An organic unity in action can be wondrous. *The team* scores the goal and wins. It can be almost as if the players have lost their individual identities, which have been subsumed into the greater whole.

Although emergence has a clear application to team sports, we should probably not rule it out in relation to individual sports either. Some cases in which it could plausibly apply are where a coach and athlete work well together, bringing out the best in each other, resulting in the best possible individual performance for the athlete; or where stiff competition means that the opponents each unintentionally coax the best performance out of the other. The story of emergence is probably more complicated to tell in individual sports but it is worth remembering that an athletic performance, even in solo sports, is typically the result of a collaborative effort. The final performance can still be thought of as one part of a greater whole: the entire process that got the athlete to the starting line in well-prepared condition.

## 5. Common aesthetics

While there are some particularities of sporting aesthetics, as described here, this is not to say that the aesthetics of sport are entirely distinct from those of art or from naturally occurring aesthetic properties such as those found in sunsets. There are also similarities, as we have seen. We look in both art and sport for aesthetic value within the categories of drama, grace, economy, symmetry, emotional and intellectual engagement, beauty, and so on. Indeed, sport and art might then have much in common, which is doubtless why sport is so commonly spoken of as if it is art. I will not follow that line, not because I see art and sport as having conflicting essences, though. On this question, a non-essentialist institutional theory of both art and sport seems more plausible. Sport, like art, is a status bestowed upon certain forms of practice by a set of historically evolving institutions. And there is little doubt that the institutions of the art world and the sporting world are almost entirely distinct. This might seem in conflict with my earlier claim that winning was the primary goal of sport. Perhaps one might be tempted to say that, in contrast, aesthetic value is the primary goal of art and this shows sport and art to have distinct essences. But a clear contrast with art could not be made on this basis. After all, it is not only sports in which the purpose is to win, which we find also in games, in gambling and in quizzes. Furthermore, it is clear that there are now many instances of art that do not have the realisation of aesthetic value as their primary goal: indeed, as no goal at all. This has been the case since at least Duchamp's fountain was deemed art.

The separation of art and sport is, then, unlikely to be found in philosophical analysis. It is a matter of culture and social practices. The more interesting philosophical issues concern the specific detail of the aesthetics of the practice. The references to art, within the context of a discussion of sport, are thus more significant insofar as they support the credentials of the identified values to be specifically aesthetic values. We could find similar values within more paradigmatic artistic practices, and this supports the claim that these are aesthetic matters. For, even if aesthetics are not the aim

of all art, it is clear that they have been closely aligned with a lot of art as it did traditionally have a function of exploring the aesthetic, even if it now does so less.

There remains a question of whether the aesthetics within sport form a unique combination that is not found in any non-sporting practice. The analysis in this paper suggests that this might be so. Embodiment is of course a vital ingredient for the aesthetic appreciation of many sports. There is an aesthetic admiration of the human form in sport, especially in gymnastics, for instance. But the same might be said of dance. There is also admiration of skill and dexterity in sport but it is far from clear that this is a specifically aesthetic concern. In focusing on the three metaphysical features of sport – competition, indeterminism, and emergence – I have been able to show the grounds of a set of aesthetic values that, taken together, do seem to form a distinctive set. While admiration of the human form is common to both dance and sport, then, if we add the competitive, indeterministic and emergent elements, then we start to get something that looks unique. If that is the case, it supports the view that sport plays a special and distinctive aesthetic role, providing an experience for the viewer that cannot be found elsewhere.

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