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The concept of athletic excellence – An inquiry into its meaning for a moral judgment on the ban on doping

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1 Introduction

Doping is a term evoking a variety of associations. For most people doping is something slightly mysterious, dangerous, wrong, but also fascinating and powerful. It is these last connotations that advertising agencies draw on when they promote their clients' products as doping for hair growth, sexual performance, or simply businesses. May the connotation of the term *doping* in these contexts be multifaceted or even positive, in its original context of sport it is purely negative. In sports, doping has more than just a bad name, it is deemed unacceptable and consequently illegal. Doping is a bad thing to do and athletes being caught using substances or methods banned under the anti-doping code pay dearly for their violations of the rules. Titles are denied retroactively and athletes are banned from future competitions. This sort of punishment, one may call it institutional, follows a certain rationale and has some justification. After all, doping athletes are cheating in the sense that they knowingly and willingly violate rules they had previously agreed to uphold. In that sense doping is not necessarily morally condemnable in itself, but the breaking of a promise, or contract if you will, in the course of exercising doping is. Jan Vorstenbosch makes an interesting point in that context in his article "Doping and Cheating". (Vorstenbosch 2010, p. 166ff) The cheating argument is often dismissed all too easy by reference to its not being informative about the justification of anti-doping rules in the first place. However, the question of the justification of anti-doping regulations is legitimate. Especially if one looks at the severe consequences those rules can have for athletes and the far reaching infringements on athletes' personal rights inescapably linked to the enforcement of such rules. Next to the institutional punishment for athletes convicted of doping there is a social aspect to it as well. Formerly praised role models, heroes even, see their reputation destroyed while facing a more or less hysterical outrage in the public, often fueled by the media. Being publicly disgraced can be very hurtful. These kinds of consequences are not intended in anti-doping rules, of course. However, as a sheer matter of fact, they would not occur if the rules were not in place. It is arguable if the social consequences doping offenders might face should be given any weight when discussing anti-doping rules. The infringements on some of the most basic personal rights of athletes that come with the enforcement of these rules definitely count in the debate. For example, athletes have to be available for testing any given day which requires them to constantly inform the anti-doping agencies about their whereabouts. When controlled, the refusal of urine-, hair- and even blood-samples is not an option. Doping inspectors will even follow athletes to the lavatory to oversee them giving a urine-sample. In no other profession or area of society are people willing to accept comparable infringements on their autonomy and

privacy. There must be very good reasons for such procedures. In other words, it better be worth it! That is the big underlying question of this paper. The contribution to be made here to the debate about the justification of doping-bans consists in developing an account of the spirit of sport. That notion is not picked out of thin air. It actually figures in the anti-doping code of the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA).

The obvious source to turn to when looking for justification for the anti-doping rules is the anti-doping code by the WADA. This code basically consists of a list of all the forbidden substances and methods that are classified as doping. However, there is one small chapter, one page to be precise, in which one can at least find some hints at the reasoning behind the code. That being said, the heading of the chapter "Fundamental Rationale for the World Anti-Doping *Code*" appears a little boastful. What it actually states is this: "Anti-doping programs seek to preserve what is intrinsically valuable about sport. This intrinsic value is often referred to as "the spirit of sport", it is the essence of Olympism; it is how we play true." (WADA 2009, p. 14) The notion *spirit of sport* appears again a little further down the side when it reads: "Doping is fundamentally contrary to the spirit of sport." (WADA 2009, p. 14) To add at least some content to the well-sounding but so far somewhat empty concept *spirit of sport* a number of catchwords are listed. Among them are fair-play, health and excellence in performance. (WADA 2009, p.14) These are singled out here because they play an important role in the doping debate, respectively in the upcoming paper. The main arguments to justify the ban on doping in the philosophy of sports can be divided into three groups. The first group includes arguments centered on some notion of fairness, the second includes arguments based on health or harm considerations and the arguments of the third group are directly concerned with the integrity of sport, or, in other words, an account of the spirit of sport. This categorization is following a chapter in the book "values in sport", edited by Torbjörn Tannsjö and Claudio Tamburrini. (Tannsjö/Tamburrini 2000) The chapter is entitled "A philosophical overview of the arguments on banning doping in sport" and was contributed by Angela Schneider and Robert Butcher. The authors go through the three groups of arguments and show their merits but first and foremost their flaws and inadequacies. Fairness arguments, in order to avoid a neat circle, would have to be build upon a concept of fairness that is independent of the rules in sports to show that doping is inherently unfair. According to Schneider and Butcher, proponents of this type of argument still have to develop such a notion. (Schneider/Butcher 200, p. 186f) On harm arguments, including what elsewhere is referred to as health arguments, they spend more time. There is a variety of harm arguments, differing in who is potentially harmed by doping and needs to be protected by banning doping. The first major problem for all versions of the harm argument is that actual hard medical

evidence for doping being harmful is missing in the first place. Then, there is more specific flaws related to the different versions. For example, if the anti-doping rules are justified by protecting the doping athlete, problems of paternalism arise. If they are justified by protecting other athletes from being coerced into doping, a further justification is needed for why doping is singled out among all the other coercions effective in sports. (Schneider/Butcher 2000, 188ff)

This seems the right time for a short excursus. Arbitrariness is a recurring feature in arguments supporting the ban on doping. It frequently remains unclear why doping calls for special regulatory attention, or why athletes are seemingly held to higher moral standards than other people, or why, in return, athletes have to endure restraints on their autonomy which would otherwise thought to be unacceptable. Even the WADA´s anti-doping code is inherently arbitrary. A good example is the ban of synthetic Erythropoietin (EPO) and autologous blood transfusions whereas high altitude training and use of high compression chambers are allowed.

Back to Schneider and Butcher and their last category of anti-doping arguments. Ultimately, their own view on doping falls into that group of integrity-, or spirit of sport- arguments. Before they get there, they dismiss integrity arguments build around concepts of naturalness or human nature for these notions being unclear, misconceived and overall not very compelling, morally speaking. (Schneider/Butcher 2000, p. 196f) After relying on their chapter for the summary just given, it seems fair to mention their own point, although it might not be very compelling. Schneider and Butcher think of doping as an ineffective means when it comes to the realization of the true purposes of sport. Well educated athletes, properly understanding what sport is really all about, will therefore not even take an interest in doping in the first place, it becomes irrelevant to them. All of the arguments mentioned above have been discussed back and forth and in a number of varieties. In the context of this paper, there is no need to get into these discussions any further. The task at hand is to offer a fresh perspective on the doping issue by developing a new account of the meaning of the concept *spirit of sport*.

The proposed view on doping in this paper will be build around and depend upon a notion of excellence. It is argued that the spirit of sport consists in achieving excellence in sports performances and in the kind of life related to and necessary for such excellent performances. The final conclusion will be that doping is very much in line with these essential features of sport and that a ban on doping can therefore not be

justified as protecting the spirit of sport thus understood. The argument is divided into four steps, the first being a general look at the meaning of the term *sport*. Chapter 1 is devoted to that particular task, dealing with the difficulties of defining that complex notion, but also showing that sports have all the characteristics of Alisdair MacIntyre´s concept of a social practice. MacIntyre´s ideas on practices developed in his famous book “After Virtue” constitute the theoretical framework of this paper. (MacIntyre 1984) In chapter 2 they are evaluated in some more detail. A lot of MacIntyre´s terminology is very useful in a sports context in general and for the purpose of this paper in particular. For example, he speaks of “standards of excellence”. (MacIntyre 1984, p. 187) Chapter 3 is an examination of the meaning of the term *excellence* in general and how it is used by MacIntyre in particular. In chapter four the findings of the previous chapters are then put together to develop the account of the spirit of sport, leading to the conclusion mentioned beforehand. Without further ado, let´s get to it!

2 Defining *sport*

In this chapter some groundwork is done. Doping happens in sport and therefore it is important to know what that actually means. Next to that, the stage is set for MacIntyre. By the time his ideas on practices are presented in the following chapter it should become immediately clear that sports are practices in MacIntyre´s sense.

To define the meaning of a concept, one has to give necessary and jointly sufficient conditions for things to fall under that category. In the case of the term *sport* that is extremely difficult. That might be surprising at first sight. After all, people talk sports every day and they seem to be doing just fine with their common sense understanding of the concept. So why not just put that understanding in words and get over with it? Well, that is where things get complicated. The meaning of a concept is not the same as a definition and it is perfectly possible to accurately use a term without being able to strictly define it. In a scientific context like this, however, a more precise understanding is needed and a definition can be very helpful. But again, in the case of sport it is difficult to come up with a proper definition. The concept of sport is so comprehensive, it includes such a variety of activities, that it is hard to do them all justice in a single definition. Consequently, a number of authors have chosen a different approach towards the concept of sport. They revert to Wittgenstein´s account of family resemblance. Wittgenstein particularly developed that idea in rejection of classical definitions with their immanent claim to generality. Some concepts, he thought, just do not work in that way. They cannot be defined by giving necessary and jointly sufficient conditions. Instead, one should look for similarities and overlap among the instances referred to by such concepts. That might result in a whole list of features of which none is necessary, but which can still be sufficient in different combinations. (Forster 2010, p. 67ff) *Sport* seems to be a family resemblance concept. To classify it as such has the additional advantage that the concept remains *open*. Future developments in certain sports as well as the emergence of completely new and unthought-of disciplines can thereby be handled with greater ease than with a *closed* concept defined in the traditional way. (Steenbergen 2001, p. 35ff) Wittgenstein himself uses the example of games to explain his idea. A good example of an author making use of Wittgenstein´s family resemblance when it comes to *sport* is Mike J. McNamee:

> "I have tried […] to sketch an account of sport that is sufficiently open but also sufficiently familiar with the family of activities that go by that name in schools and stadia […]. For my purposes, what typically allows us to recognise a sport is the arrangement of many of the following features: sports are activities characterised

> by a gratuitous logic involving, centrally, physical skill, and agonal qualities to which both technical and ethical standards pertain that are ritually derived." (McNamee 2008, p. 19)

Colin McGinn is another renowned author of the philosophy of sport who sees the concept of sport as a family resemblance concept:

> "What Wittgenstein says about games applies equally to sports. […] both these concepts are held together, not by a feature common and peculiar to all cases to which we apply the same concept, but by what Wittgenstein calls "family resemblance": a sense of overall similarity not analyzable in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions." (McGinn 2008, p. 15)

A very prominent deviation from that list is the attempt of defining *sport* the classical way by Bernard Suits. Wittgenstein´s idea has certainly inspired Suits definition though. In his widely recognized attempt, Bernard Suits champions the idea of sports being a sub-category of games. Consequently, his definition is divided into two steps. He first gives four conditions meant to be necessary and jointly sufficient for any type of game. In his second step, he then gives four more conditions that allow for the separation of sports from other games. Suits sums up his definition of games as follows:

> "To play a game is to attempt to achieve a specific state of affairs (*pre-lusory goal*), using only means permitted by rules (*lusory means*), where the rules prohibit use of more efficient in favor of less efficient means (*constitutive rules*), and where such rules are accepted just because they make possible such activity (*lusory attitude*). I also offer the following only approximately accurate, but more pithy, version of the above definition: Playing a game is the voluntary attempt to overcome unnecessary obstacles." (Suits 2007, p. 14)

Included in that definition of games, and thereby holding for sports, too, are the elements of competition, rule guidance, and voluntary subordination as a requirement for participation. All of the above sounds a lot like what MacIntyre has to say about engaging in a social practice, which will be examined in detail in the following chapter. Suits' four additional conditions which, if found in any given game are supposed to turn that game into a sport, are skillfulness, physicality, widespreadedness, and stability. (Suits 2007, p.14) These conditions are not self-explanatory and Suits offers some further elaboration on them accordingly. The first condition, the condition of skill, means that the outcome in sports has to be dependant, at least partially, on the execution, or better to say the superior execution, of relevant skills by one contestant or team compared to the respective opponents. By introducing that condition, Suits set sports apart from games which's outcome is purely based on luck, such as Russian roulette. (Suits 2007, p. 15) His second condition for segregating sports among other games has been called physicality. What is meant here is that Suits insists that the decisive skills in a given sport have to be physical skills. It seems very little surprising

that a definition of the concept of sport would make some reference to the human body and its functioning. On the contrary, the notion of a non-physical sport makes very little sense, although some board games such as chess, checkers, or bridge are sometimes mentioned as examples of that seemingly obscure category. Consequently, Suits does not put too much argumentative effort in establishing his condition of physical skill. In fact, most he has to say in this chapter is devoted to those borderline cases just mentioned:

> "[T]he question "Why do sports have to involve physical skills?" is not a well formulated question. The question should be, "What kind of skill do we find in the class of activities we call sport?" And the answer is "Physical skill." Thus, chess and bridge appear to have all the features requisite for something to qualify as a sport, except that they are not games of physical skill." (Suits 2007, p. 16)

Whereas the first and second accessory conditions of Suits are pretty straightforward and agreeable, the third and fourth are not. What has been pressed into the unwieldy term of *widespreadedness* is actually formulated by Suits as the condition that a game to be properly denoted as a sport has to have a "wide following" (Suits 2007, p. 14). It is up to the reader to decide which notion is more confusing. What Suits means here is that proper sports must have a certain number of people involved who fulfill certain functions. Whereas he remains completely vague on what that number might be or how to estimate it, he does give some further information on those functions. First of all, there has to be a considerable amount of active participants, or athletes, actually doing the sport. Second, there must be people who are concerned with precisely laying down, publishing, and monitoring the rules of the sport. One could see those keepers of the rules as the foundation of institutions to emerge. Last, Suits' condition of a wide following requires the existence of "a body of experts whose concern it was to improve the game and its players". (Suits 2007, p. 16) Again, the exact amount of experts needed and the kind of their expertise remain highly vague. It helps to understand Suits third condition for sports if one focuses on what he tries to exclude by it. That is games that are competitive, rule guided, skillful, physical, and so on, in short that fulfill all the other requirements for sports, but which are clearly not a sport. Suits is primarily thinking of *private sports* here. One can just make up a whole lot of games out of everyday situations, e.g. running for the tram, or driving slalom around road marks with the bicycle. However, those activities would not count as proper sports for that they are "too private and too personal". (Suits 2007, p. 16) The last of Suits´ four sports conditions is stability. Stability is to be understood as longevity through professionalization. It adds to the function of the rule keepers mentioned in condition three. According to Suits, for a game to be a sport there have to be institutions and certain established roles fulfilling functions including, but not limited to, "teaching and

training, coaching, research and development […], criticism […], and archivism […].” (Suits 2007, p. 16) In first sight, it may seem as if Suits just grabbed the bull by the horns and came up with a definition of sport against all odds and contrary to what has been said earlier about how difficult it was to do that. And it is true that his definition makes intuitive sense in large parts and captures all the major components one would expect to find in a definition of *sport*. His idea of defining sport as subcategory of games is a smart move, too, given the large overlap among the two concepts. However, there are some problems for which Suits’ attempt has been criticized accordingly. For the sake of completeness, some of the critic should be mentioned here. The first concerns the vagueness of the last two conditions. That problem has been hinted at before. Mike McNamee makes the point explicit when he asks: “What does it mean to say that activities without a wide following are not sports, or that those without a wide level of stability cannot be so classified?” (McNamee 2008, p. 15) He uses the example of bull fighting to show how the vagueness in Suits’ account can become problematic and render the whole definition useless in precisely those cases that are not straightforward and where it would therefore be most needed. (McNamee 2008, p.15f) Probably the sharpest critic of Suits is Graham McFee. He thinks that Suits did not come up with a genuine definition of *sport* in the first place. McFee points out that there are two tests any genuine definition would have to pass. The first is that it has to fit. The accordant failure can manifest itself in two ways. A definition can be too tight, it excludes things that should be included, or it can be too loose, it includes more than it should. To proof that a given definition is failing in that respect one has to find counterexamples, of course. The second test for proper definitions to pass is that they should not be circular. If it can be shown that the definiendum figures in the definiens, the definition is circular and thereby shown to be false. (McFee 2004, p. 22f) McFee puts Suits´ definition of *sport* to the test. However, it is important to notice that he is going after Suits´ definition of *game*; he is not attacking the four additional conditions for sports to be met on top of the conditions for games. Nonetheless, if his critic holds, Suits´ definition of sports goes down just the same. After all, it is composed of two parts, one being the definition of *game*. McFee comes up with mountaineering and working out in a gym as examples for activities in which unnecessary obstacles are voluntarily overcome but which one would not call games. (McFee 2004, p. 25) If he were right, he would have shown that Suits´ definition of *game*, and thereby of *sport*, was too loose. In the case of mountaineering one could simply reply that it is not called a game because there is a more precise, more accurate term for activities of the like; one calls them sports. And since sports are a subcategory of games, mountaineering is a game after all and McFee has failed to proof what he wanted, at least with this particular example. Things are different with his second example. Working out in a gym does not qualify for

being a sport and one would not call it a game either. McFee seems to have a point here. However, he is not finished just yet. He goes on by producing counterexamples of the second kind as well, those which are meant to show that the definition of Suits is too tight. He does not have to wander the ontological zoo for too long to find an exemplar that suits his purpose. His counterexample of choice is actually chess, probably *the* paradigmatic case of a game. If he can show that Suits´ definition has a problem with identifying chess as a game, he has certainly done some damage. McFee raises the following question:

> "[T]here are activities which *are* games but where the idea of ´unnecessary obstacles` makes no sense, the idea of *obstacles* here only having application within the game. For example, what unnecessary obstacles are there on the path to checkmate, in a chess game?" (McFee 2004, p. 25)

The point that McFee is making here is that all the obstacles that one might possibly encounter in a chess game are essential to the game. Without them, the game could not be played, there would be no game of chess at all. Therefore, since the obstacles help establish the game in the first place, they can hardly be thought of as being unnecessary. Clearly, they have a function. (McFee 2004, p. 25) In addition to all that, McFee attempts to show that Suits' definition of *game* is circular. One could say that he makes use of every weapon in the arsenal of fighting definitions. What he picks up on is that Suits, in his definition of games, refers to his conditions one, two, and four as the pre-lusory goal, lusory means, and lusory attitude respectively. Lusory means playful, sportive, to be used in play. For McFee the case is clear. Suits tries to define the concept of a game by explaining what it means to play a game. In that explanation he then uses a term that to be understood requires an understanding of what was meant to be explained. In McFee´s words, it sounds like that: "Hence, to explain *games* in terms of lusory-means, and lusory attitudes (and even a pre-lusory goal), is to explain games in terms of… games!" (McFee 2004, p 25) The question really is what Suits' use of the term lusory adds to his definition. One way to see it is that he just labels the respective conditions he just explained, using the term lusory to create technical terms that make it more convenient to refer to the respective condition. Some of McFee´s critic seems more like bashing Suits for even attempting a definition at all rather than making compelling arguments on the actual account Suits is offering. In general, Suits' definition is very well received up to this day and it provides a good basis for a deeper understanding of the concept of sport. In the context of evaluating the doping issue, Suits' definition of *sport* is indifferent. The abandonment of doping procedures could be interpreted as one of the unnecessary obstacles to be overcome in sports. On the other hand, nothing indicates that the use of certain procedures, methods or substances would be inconsistent with sport. On the contrary, from the condition of physicality it might be derived without too much imagination that whatever is helpful in

developing the physical basis for the required skills would have a place sport, including substances and methods currently banned as doping.

It is now time to turn to MacIntyre and to see what he has to say about social practices. Keeping in mind what has been said about sport so far, it should become apparent fairly quickly that sports are perfect examples of MacIntyrean practices.

3 MacIntyre´s critique of the enlightenment and his notion of a social practice

The goal of this paper was to offer a new account of the spirit of. In that respect, the notion of excellence, particularly excellence in sport, will have a prominent role. The whole project in general and that concept of excellence in particular need to be adequately embedded into an ethical theoretical framework. That framework is provided by Alistair MacIntyre. Against the background of his account of a revived, modern version of virtue ethics as stated in his book *After Virtue*, excellence in sports will be defined. Before that can be attempted, it is important to understand what MacIntyre is after in *After Virtue*, especially since he is not writing in a sports or doping related area. In the upcoming chapter, a very brief recapitulation of his starting point, main arguments, and key concepts is given.

MacIntyre´s starting point is an aggravating gut feeling that something has gone fundamentally wrong with modern moral philosophy following the enlightenment. According to him, two crucial mistakes being made during the period of enlightenment have lead to moral philosophers finding themselves in a fatal situation. The first mistake was to reject Aristotle´s moral philosophy as well as its inheritance in Christian morality but continue to use its terminology. (MacIntyre 1984, p. 51ff) MacIntyre turns around the perspective on one of the major projects of the enlightenment and what is usually seen as one of its major achievements. According to him, the price of being freed from the errors of Aristotelian metaphysics and the oppression of divine Christian law is the loss of the framework that gives meaning to our moral concepts. Those once meaningful concepts, stripped of their defining social and historical context, turn into mere fragments and become nothing but empty clichés. By excluding social and historical approaches from moral philosophy while at the same time hanging on to those now empty concepts, enlightened philosophers committed their second crucial error and were doomed to fail in their efforts to justify morality in a new way. (MacIntyre 1984, p. 54f) The culmination of that failure MacIntyre sees in the emergence of moral emotivism which theories are more theories of the use of our moral vocabulary than of the meaning of moral concepts. (MacIntyre 1984, p. 12ff) To him, post-enlightenment moral philosophy is deeply caught up in emotivism and in that sense degenerated. Objective moral claims are no longer possible; morality has become a matter of taste. That shows in the nature of contemporary moral disagreement as MacIntyre states. So the fatal situation that moral philosophers nowadays find themselves in is that they are working with empty concepts, blind towards the contributions of empirical history and sociology, while still facing the task of providing sound ethical theories allowing for objective, universal moral claims.

MacIntyre´s solution to the dilemma is to revive virtue ethics with a strong Aristotelian touch. However, he cannot just reinstantiate Aristotelianism in its original form. MacIntyre knows that, of course, and so he comes up with his own virtue ethical approach. What MacIntyre has to replace is the setting in which Aristotle places the virtues. That set up of Aristotle consists in a naturalistic account of how the human being actually is and how it could be if it were to reach its full potential, or *telos*. This is crassly simplified and not an adequate presentation of Aritstotle´s ethics, of course. Still, it will do its job here. It should just shortly be mentioned that in Aristotle there is not just one ideal of the human being as such that serves for every individual. There are different societal roles, each of which has its own *telos*, building a hierarchy of purposes ultimately leading up to happiness. The virtues are then presented as a means of transferring from one stage to another. By actualizing the virtues through his activities, man can move from his "untutored human nature" (MacIntyre 1984, p. 54) into becoming, or at least coming closer to, what he could be. It is precisely that Aristotelian idea of "man-as-he-could-be-if-he-realized-his-*telos*" (MacIntyre 1984, p. 54) and the accordant promise of paradise in Christian morality that was rejected during the enlightenment period and that is not available to MacIntyre anymore. However, without such an idea exercising the virtues becomes pointless. In order to reimplement and somewhat save the virtues and their guiding function in moral decision making, MacIntyre has to set up a new framework in which they can become intelligible again. His solution consists of three stages. He claims that in order to fully understand the "core conception of a virtue", no less than three background accounts are necessary. (MacIntyre 1984, p. 186) The first of these background accounts is an account of social practices, the second is an account of the identity of human beings through time, and the third is an account of moral tradition. MacIntyre develops these accounts in order, any later one building on and presupposing the former. (MacIntyre 1984, p. 187 and 204ff) In the context of this paper it is first and foremost his conception of a social practice that is helpful in developing the account of excellence in sports that is needed to address the doping issue. Consequently, the focus will lie upon the first of MacIntyre´s three stages, excluding the last two.

The best way to introduce MacIntyre´s ideas on what a social practice consists in is to quote him:

> "By a ´Practice` I am going to mean any coherent and complex form of socially established cooperative human activity through which goods internal to that form of activity are realized in the course of trying to achieve those standards of excellence which are appropriate to, and partially definitive of, that form of activity, with the result that human powers to achieve excellence, and human conceptions of the ends and goods involved, are systematically extended." (MacIntyre 1984, p.187)

Obviously, those lines are packed with information. But they raise even more questions. For example, one might wonder what it precisely means that a human activity is coherent, complex, and socially established. All those concepts, that define the range of the concept of a practice, are in need of further explanation, or some specification, at the least, to be actually informative. MacIntyre at this point only gives a few examples of what counts for a practice and what does not and leaves the answers to those questions for the later stages of his exploration of the concept of a virtue. However, the examples he mentions are sufficient and quite useful for the task at hand here and therefore there is no need to follow up those more elaborate explanations given later in the book. One of the examples is even a sports example. MacIntyre says that to skillfully throw a football is not a practice in his understanding "but the game of football is". (MacIntyre 1984, p.187) It shows here already that sports are practices in MacIntyre´s sense, albeit the specifications on complexity and coherence, and the meaning of being socially established. The next question would be what internal goods to a certain practice are. In the course of defining his notion of a practice, MacIntyre is more precise on that one. The internal goods of a practice are those goods that can only be gained through participation in the practice. Every practice provides exclusive access to its internal goods. They are contrasted with goods external to a practice. Those might also be realized through participation in the practice, but there are always other ways to realize them, for example other practices. Examples of external goods are money, power, and fame. To give an example of internal goods, MacIntyre briefly talks the reader through the practice of portrait painting. It is in this passage that he connects internal goods with an idea of excellence and those standards of excellence he mentions in the definition cited above. Like every practice, the art of portrait painting for MacIntyre is developing and changing over time. Throughout the history of the practice, stages can be identified coined by exceptional artist each with a different emphasis on the art of portrait painting. To MacIntyre, there are at least two internal goods to be gained at each of the stages in the development. The first is excellence in portrait painting. This good is thought to be of a twofold character: "There is first of all the excellence of the products, both the excellence in performance by the painters and that of each portrait itself." (MacIntyre 1984, p. 189) This division of an excellent product into performance and artifact is going to be of importance when excellence in sports is discussed. The second internal good to be achieved is "the good of a certain kind of life." (MacIntyre 1984, p. 190) To engage in a practice like portrait painting, chasing excellence in that field, is character shaping. It influences the identity of the participant turning him into an artist, in that case a portrait painter. The standards of excellence of a practice primarily contain the rules by which it is governed, the standards by

which any participation in the practice is judged and, related to these points, the historical evolvement of the practice. But there is more to it. Standards of excellence also contain a universal element that is valid for all practices. That element is the will of the participant to follow the rules in a given practice, to subordinate him- or herself to be judged according to the standards and to respect the history of the practice and those who contributed to it. (MacIntyre 1984, p. 190ff) For MacIntyre, that definition of standards of excellence leads to three virtues that necessarily have to accepted by anyone who wants to realize the internal goods in any practice and who wants to achieve the respective standards of excellence. One might call them basic virtues. They are justice, courage, and honesty. As a reminder, virtues are means for human beings to realize their true potential. Without exercising the virtues relevant to a practice, and the three basic virtues are relevant to every practice, one might still participate in practices, but one will never excel. Instead, as MacIntyre points out, "not to accept these, to be willing to cheat […], so far bars us from achieving the standards of excellence or the goods internal to the practice that it renders the practice pointless except as a device for achieving external goods." (MacIntyre 1984, p. 191) Doping athletes in top sports are often criticized for using their sport as a mere means to gain money and fame, ignoring its true spirit. Overall, what MacIntyre has to say on standards of excellence and the goods to be acquired in a practice seems to imply a clear stance on the doping issue and doping regulations. However, that indication is based on the assumptions that doping actually is cheating and that the anti-doping regulations are in line with the spirit of sport. The first assumption has to be granted under current conditions, in which anti-doping regulations are in place as a matter of fact. Again, Jan Vorstenbosch makes a strong case for the cheating argument. (Vorstenbosch 2010, p. 166ff) His argumentation is particularly convincing because he steers clear of general questions of justifiability of the anti-doping regulations. He takes them as they are and goes from there. The second assumption mentioned above is problematic. Later on, when an account of excellence in sports is developed, it will show that the anti-doping regulations are by no means in line with the spirit of sport. For now it is important to stress the final aspect of MacIntyre´s definition of practices before it is applied to a sports specific context. The systematic extension of human powers to achieve excellence and of the conceptions of ends and goods involved in that process is seen by MacIntyre as a result of exercising the relevant virtues in a certain practice. It is this striving to push the limits of what is achievable that makes development in a practice possible and that determines the history of a practice from which its standards of excellence are derived and the internal goods are determined.

Everything that MacIntyre has to say about practices and how they provide ends to the virtues is obviously relevant in sports. That is not surprising, since sports are clear examples of practices. MacIntyre repeatedly draws on sports examples to explain certain features of his concept of practices. After all, it seems like sports are almost paradigmatic cases of practices. Before MacIntyre´s ideas on practices and their respective internal goods are applied to practices of sports in order to develop a notion of excellence in sport, it is important to say something about excellence in a more general manner and to clarify MacIntyre´s use of the concept.

4 MacIntyre and the concept of excellence

In this paper, as it has been announced early on, a lot will hinge on the concept of excellence in sport. As it is MacIntyre who provides the ethical theoretical background to the arguments on sport and doping still to be made, and since he is referring to excellence in his definition of practices, it makes sense to pick it up where he left it and go from there. Unfortunately, that leads right into a mess. Contrary to his thoughts on the virtues and the framework in which they can become intelligible again, it seems that MacIntyre introduces the notion of excellence in a rather unreflected manner. Even if this might seem a little bit rude and slightly unfair towards MacIntyre, as a matter of fact he does not introduce the term specifically. However, it may be more accurate to say that he just does not take the time to go deeper into the concept because he simply assumes that it is clear. Given his project of telling the history of the virtues, of reviving them and thereby add to that history, he comprehensibly has strong ties to Aristotle. One might therefore be inclined to think that the understanding of excellence he is assuming is simply that of Aristotle. That, however, does not safe the day for him. In fact, all of a sudden things have gone from bad to worse for MacIntyre. Excellence in the Aristotelian sense is inseparably linked to the concept of *telos*. According to Aristotle, excellence is a quality that can apply to things of all kinds. There are excellent knifes, excellent saddles, excellent houses, and, of course, people who are excellent in their roles as wives, soldiers, or philosophers. (Sherman 2001, p. 503ff) Whether something or someone is excellent is judged by comparing it with its respective *telos* and other individuals of the same kind. That makes Macintyre's use of the notion of excellence without further elaboration problematic. The concept of *telos* does not only provide the grounds for judgments on excellence in Aristiotle´s theory, it also gives direction and meaning to the virtues. Again, MacIntyre´s project mainly consists in providing a new framework in which the virtues can become intelligible avoiding Aristotle´s concept of *telos*. If he were now found to introduce that concept through the backdoor by using Aristotle´s notion of excellence in his definition of practices, that would prove a weak spot in his approach, to say the least. Before that conclusion is drawn, however, other possibilities need to be explored. One would be that MacIntyre relies on the way competent speakers of the English language use the term excellence nowadays. The entry for the term *excellence* in the online dictionary Merriam-Webster.com is divided into three parts and reads as follows: "1: the quality of being excellent 2: an excellent or valuable quality: virtue 3: excellency" (http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/excellence) It is a good idea to go through the entries one by one, whereas the third one concerning excellency is negligible in the current context. Excellence here is not understood in the

sense of an evaluative quality of certain entities but as a title or a form of address that comes with certain social positions. The other two, however, are very well informative for the task at hand. The first entry explains excellence as the quality of being excellent. That does not add a lot to the understanding of the concept at first sight. All that can be gained here is that excellence is a predicate, or quality, that applies to certain entities. If one follows the link tagged on the term *excellent*, some further information is offered. Being excellent is defined as being superior in an archaic sense, and, more importantly, as "very good of its kind: eminently good". (http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/excellence) Especially that last definition catches the use of the term excellence, or being excellent, nowadays. It is used to accentuate something as outstanding. There is no limitation concerning the kind of things to which the quality of excellence can be prescribed. What precisely constitutes excellence in the individual case can therefore be very different. An excellent can opener would certainly have to meet other requirements than an excellent veterinarian. This relation to the purpose or function of an entity when it comes to excellence, and more generally the attribution of any evaluative property, leads straight back to Aristotle. The meaning and use of the term excellence these days is clearly still coined by Aristotle. In order to determine a very good exemplar of its kind, one needs to have an idea of what the purpose or function of the respective kind is. Maybe one could even still say that some idea of the *telos* as a pattern against which to hold the individual exemplar is needed if excellence is to be prescribed, or, again more generally, any evaluative judgment is to be passed. Those who reject such Aristotelian talk would have to admit all the same that something in replacement of Aristotle´s concept of *telos* was in fact needed. When it comes to the virtues, MacIntyre is very well aware of that. Only when equipped with some sort of an ideal pattern, comparisons of exemplars of the same kind become intelligible and rankings can be established.

Some basic conclusions concerning the concept of excellence can be drawn at this point. First, it is exclusive in the sense that it allows to separate among individuals of the same kind. Second, the concept of excellence is inclusive in the sense that it can apply to things of all kinds. That inclusiveness makes it a very diverse concept which´s complexity and even meaning reflects and partly depends on the complexity and purpose of the respective entity and belonging kind. If MacIntyre was not to use the term in his own way, one might very well call those criteria for what constitutes excellence the standards of excellence of a certain kind. And every kind has its own standard, as it has been noticed. For reasons of clearness from here on MacIntyre´s use of the term ´standards of excellence` will be the only one used in this paper. There is a third, very important point to be summed here. There is a relational aspect to excellence. Judgments

about the excellence of an entity are depending on comparisons with other entities of the same kind against the background of some understanding of what entities of the respective kind would ideally look like. When the concept of excellence is put into the context of sports, the relational aspect, and especially the comparison with direct competition, will play a major role in defining the different layers of excellence in place there. But for now it is important not to lose sight of the project at hand. The second of the three entries for excellence in the online dictionary cited above treated excellence as synonymous with virtue. The use of excellence to describe a virtuous person clearly goes back to the great ancient Greek philosophers leading up to and including Plato and Aristotle. Barbara Forrest defines excellence in *The International Encyclopedia of Ethics* as "[t]he highest intellectual and moral functioning of a human being; for ancient Greeks, synonymous with "virtue" (arête), meaning the effective performance of a thing´s proper function[.]" (Forrest 1995, p. 292) On the same page, a remark is to be found that, while the term is prominently associated with and has been coined in the work of Plato and Aristotle, it really dates back to Homer. (Forrest 1995, p. 292) In the *Iliad*, the main incentive for Achilles, the most heroic among the many heroes populating that great epos, to fight in the Trojan War is glory. He wants his name to be remembered throughout the centuries. Homer is proposing an understanding of excellence that is build around the notion of fame. Very much simplified, excellent is what is memorable. Apparently, the notion of excellence has undergone some change from Homer to Aristotle. Fame has become a byproduct of excellence, but it lies no longer at the heart of the concept. These days, MacIntyre does not even see fame as an internal good of practices. He lists it together with money and other external goods of potentially corrupting influence. Consequently, fame is not part of the standards of excellence of MacIntyrean practices. As a result, the Homeric interpretation of excellence clearly cannot be what MacIntyre has in mind when he speaks of excellence. However, that leaves him yet another time being thrown back to Aristotle´s notion of excellence at last. After all, it has shown that the way in which the notion of excellence is used nowadays is deeply rooted in the conception of Aristotle. The criticism of introducing the concept of *telos* through the backdoor is thereby still not off the table. However, MacIntyre might be able to pull himself up by his own bootstraps. A glimpse at the solution to his unreflected use of the concept of excellence can possibly be derived from the wider context of his project. In this wider context, he is trying to make the virtues intelligible and give leading a virtuous life an aim without relying on Aristotle´s concept of *telos* and the account of human nature that goes with it. He comes up with his idea of social practices as a replacement, providing a new background, or framework, in which the virtues can become useful without naturalistic burdens. Basically, MacIntyre is filling the gap left behind by a naturalistic concept and the rejected problematic assumptions

that come with it with a social historical concept. It is this historicity of the approach that might be applicable in the case of the concept of excellence again. Maybe it would be possible to derive those ideal patterns that hold the requirements for excellence of a respective kind from the history of individuals belonging to that kind. Be it an actual thing, a person, an activity, a social role, and so on, all those entities to which excellence applies have their own history. Of course, a lot more would have to be said about how such a deduction would actually work. It is more than likely that MacIntyre would be able to come up with something substantial here to avoid the circle he seems to have put himself into. In this paper, the issue has to be left at this point. There is, however, one more interesting point to consider. If an argument along the lines that have just been sketched would succeed, that would add another feature to the concept of excellence. So far, in the course of exploring MacIntyre´s use of the concept, it has been noted that excellence is a predicate that functions distinctive among individuals but inclusive concerning kinds and that has a relational aspect when it comes to the detection of it. Now it can be added that the criteria for the correct ascription of excellence are not static but evolving. What constitutes excellence can change over time. In a sports context, that makes intuitive sense. With the development of new methods in training and new technologies in material, the limits of performance are pushed further and further. It makes sense to assume that what counts for an excellent performance changes over time, too.

5 Excellence in sports and the implications for the doping issue

This chapter is all about bringing the findings of the previous chapters together and exploring what excellence in sports consists in and to develop an account of the spirit of sport upon it. To do so, MacIntyre´s concept of practices is applied to sports by going through the criteria and exploring what they mean in the context of sport. As MacIntyre exemplary showed with portrait painting, there are two major internal goods to be realized in a practice, the product and a certain kind of life related to the practice. The product dimension is interesting here because the excellence of a social practice is realized in its products. (MacIntyre 1984, p. 189ff) Therefore, it is obviously important to investigate the products of sports. Excellence does not play a role in the second internal good of practices, a related kind of life. However, this dimension of sports practices, the life of the athlete, is still important to consider. After all, it is in the daily grind of athletes that doping occurs and the consequences of enforcing anti-doping regulations are experienced. But first, the products of sports are discussed.

The internal goods in sports show some interesting specifics. Usually, the excellence of the product is twofold, divided into the actual product, e.g. a painting, and the performance of bringing it about. In sports the performance aspect is much more prominent than in other practices, to say the least. Bringing about an excellent product in sports is performing on the highest level achievable for the respective athlete. Later, there is more to be said about such levels, but at this point it would interrupt the current argument. In sports, there is no actual product, no artifact as a result of the performance. The performance is all there is, the product is not divided into two parts. That might not seem very plausible at first. Performances in sports are chronicled in the form of records and titles. So one could think of these things as the actual products of sports. But that idea, as appealing as it may seem, quickly shows to be flawed. A record or a title is a rather abstract, difficult to grasp entity. Such things certainly lack the presence and immediate impression of a fine painting or sculpture. The products of the fine arts are vibrant and appeal to the emotions of the beholder, even if he is not very knowledgeable. That is certainly not true for a record. To understand the extraordinary achievement behind a record, usually expressed in a number on a paper somewhere, one has to be knowledgeable in the respective sport. To get that clear, it is helpful to bring up an example of a record in a sport that is not that popular that it belongs to the canon of general knowledge. Most people will be able to rank and acknowledge a fast 100 meter sprint time. However, presented with the ergometer rowing world record over 2000m of 5 minutes 36.6 seconds, very few people that are not involved in rowing themselves

will be able to adequately relate to the fantastic performance by Rob Waddell from New Zealand encrypted in those numbers. They are not self-explanatory in a way that the artifacts of the fine arts are. To compare the two things, to lift Rob Waddell´s record to the same level of Michelangelo´s David sculpture seems bizarre. One might compare the performance of an artist with that of an athlete. Although that would not be easy, at least it would not feel like a categorical error. From the perspective of the individual athlete, records are perishable and to a certain degree are titles. The 100m sprint world record only lasts until someone else runs faster. Germany will always be the winner of the UEFA European championships of 1996. That does not make Germany the European champion in football for all times. In contrast, Dürer's *Self Portrait* will always be recognized as a masterpiece, and one cannot take the achievements that come with it away from him. But excellence in sports is less enduring than the artifacts of the fine arts in yet another respect. At the very moment the competition is over, the excellence of the athletes in form of their performances starts to vanish and fade into memory. Audio and later video recordings have somewhat attenuated that effect. Such recordings are another probable candidate for being the actual products of sports. And they are a much better one than records or titles. The excellence of arts and other practices lies partially in the respective artifacts. Why should not TV-recordings be the artifacts of sport? It is true that some sport contests have become legendary and are still interesting to watch, even some ten or twenty years later. The Men´s pair rowing final at the 2000 Olympic Games in Sydney is one such legendary contest. The way in which Jean-Christophe Rolland and Michel Andrieux wind up the stroke rate in the third quarter of the race, way earlier than it has been seen before, especially in the pair, and the way in which they just "call the whole field nothing" in just 250 meters is simply amazing. (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cym4_teegyM) Watching the race is still exciting, it is emotionally appealing and very easily accessible. One does not have to be knowledgeable in the sport of rowing at all to grasp that the two rowers in the film are doing something remarkable. However, there is one big reason why recordings of sports events cannot be the actual product of sport. The French rowers did not intend to make a movie that day in Sydney. They went out there to excel over their competitors, to be the best they could be on that day and hopefully be crowned as Olympic champions as a result. If they were able to entertain the people on the race course or those to watch the recording, they would probably be happy about it, too. But it was not their intention. And how could it be? If the recordings of sports performances were the actual products of sport, the athletes were only partially responsible for the excellence of the product of what they are doing. A great deal of the excellence of the product of sport would lie in the hands of cameramen, producers, commentators, and whoever else is needed to make a proper film of an event.

In painting, things are different. The painter sets out to create a painting right from the beginning. His efforts are aimed at the production of an artifact. The product of painting is the process of painting and the actual painting by which it is concluded. The intuitive way to think of it is that an excellent performance of painting is crowned by an excellent painting. Both together are an excellent product of the social practice of painting. Whereas the excellence of the performance vanishes, the excellence of the actual painting lasts. In sports, there is nothing to last, at least not in that same sense. The upside is that because excellence in sports is only perceptible, for the athletes as well as the spectators, during the performance itself, it is a much more direct but also complete experience. The product of sports is the respective performance. That is all there is to it. Since the excellence of the product of sports is not divided into an actual product and a performance, it is fully available and experienceable as a whole as long as it lasts. With other practices that is not the case. In portrait painting one can experience the excellence in the performance of painting as long as the work is in progress. Once the work is done, one can experience the excellence of the actual painting. Both together form an excellent product of portrait painting but that product is always split in two parts. Those parts are dispersed over time and therefore never experienceable as a whole. The excellence of the products of sports is unmediated, intense, and directly accessible as a whole. On the downside, excellence in sports is short-lived, despite advancements in recording technology. In sports performance is everything. The ephemerality of the first of the two major internal goods of sports practices, the excellence of the products in the exclusive form of performances, has significant implications for the second major internal good, the kind of life related to sports practices. Before the life of the athlete is discussed, it makes sense to first look a little bit deeper into what an excellent sports performance means and what it depends on.

In order to produce excellent performances in a sport one has to master the relevant skills of that sport. Depending on the sport, those skills can vary widely. However, there are some basic components to be found in sports in general. Obviously, sports are physical activities. Despite the great differences in the skills required in different sports, certain functions of the human body are always involved. It is not necessary to go into the physiological details here. The talk is of those functions that determine the basic parameters of athletic activity in sport; strength, speed, and stamina. In general it is better to be stronger, quicker, and to have greater stamina, independent of the discipline one is engaged in. Those features are the basis of all skills required in whatever sport. By the way, those same features are most susceptible to the substances and methods currently under the ban on doping. Where the focus lies depends on the

demands of the sport in question, of course. But in every sport at least some of the skills are composed of these three elements. Combined with other, often non physical capacities, strength, speed, and stamina form the sport specific skills. Let´s take rowing for an example again. As all sports, it requires a unique mix of the three elements. A good rower is very strong, reasonably explosive, and possesses great aerobic as well as un-aerobic capacity. The non-specialization makes it special. To move a racing shell properly, one cannot effort a weakness in any of the basic physical attributes. In addition, one needs a good feeling for the own body to balance the boat. Coordination is very important to handle the technical side of rowing. A good feeling for rhythm and timing are essential, too. And last but not least, when it comes to racing, a certain tough mindedness and fighting spirit are definitely needed and can very well make the difference in a close race. However, if lacking in the basic attributes, one will never get into one. It all starts with strength, speed, and stamina. Without scoring good numbers in those fields, the skills specifically needed for rowing cannot even be developed. On the other hand, being strong, explosive, and enduring does not make you a good rower all by itself. All the other capacities have to be build on that fundament. The same is true in other sports. They are never as easy as they might look from the outside. Once you engage in a new sport, you will almost certainly find out that there is much more to it than you would have imagined. Bringing about an excellent performance in a sport means to master all the required skills of that sport in an evenly distributed manner. The set of skills of an excellent athlete is complete in the sense that he or she does not lack in any of the relevant capacities in her sport. The concinnity of relevant skills and the execution of those skills at just the right moment make for excellent performances in sport. It is possible to be excellent only in certain particular capacities, e.g. to have a very elegant style, or to be extraordinary powerful. However, those particular sparks of brilliance are not enough to produce excellence in case the athlete suffers from a weak spot in one of the other main compartments.

It is now time to turn to the second major internal good of sports practices, the life of the athlete. As seen, in sports excellence of the product means excellence in performance. That fact in combination with the high physical demands of sports practices just considered determines the kind of life related to sports practices. The life of the athlete is dominated by efforts to improve and, if possible, perfect the skills required in his sport. It is all about preparing, getting ready for the big moment in which the chance to produce and experience excellence is given in a competition. The preparation for competitions will consume the most part of the life lived as an athlete. It should be noted at this point that one does not have to be a full-time athlete in order to live the life of the athlete. Non-professional sportsman and -women naturally will not

invest the same amount of time into their sport than professional athletes will. But in the part of their life that they live as athletes, they will predominantly be occupied with the same sort of preparation. In that they are just like professional athletes, only on a smaller scale. The term preparation is used here because it indicates that there is more than just training. The life of the athlete happens in cycles of training and regeneration. They are the two poles of preparing for competition. In the training units the athlete actually *does* her sport, learns the techniques and refines the skill set. Equally important are the phases between the training units. Those are not only about relaxing and recovering. Besides the body restoring and growing, what has been learned in the last training sinks in and a better understanding of the dynamics of the sport is created. Serious athletes on any level are constantly busy with their sport, their body and mind set. The search for optimizing training methods, schedules, nutrition and spiritual means never comes to an end. It is in that sense in which athletes fulfill MacIntyre's last condition of practices "that human powers to achieve excellence, and human conceptions of the ends and goods involved are systematically extended." (MacIntyre 1984, p. 187) That last part of the definition gives the account a perfectionist twist. It can be understood in the way that real, or complete, success in a practice is only achievable by the respective elite. Since the average and even sub-top participant will struggle somewhere along the way of realizing the existing standards of excellence, he will never get into a position to actually extend the conceptions involved in the practice or human powers to achieve excellence. Thought all the way through, it would mean that there is no excellence for no one in any given practice apart from the absolute elite. The standard is set by the best and as Randy Newman sings "it´s lonely at the top". (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qlmGJQq3AIM) However, in a sports context, such a harsh method of judgment seems inadequate. One want to call a young girl playing tennis on a level thought way beyond her years excellent. When a senior citizen runs the stadium lap in a time that most men in their mid thirties cannot do, that seems to be an excellent performance. In general, whenever people reach their personal potential, becoming the best athlete they can possibly be, there is excellence in that, independent whether they win or lose. In chapter 4 it has been said that in order to ascribe the predicate of excellence some sort of an ideal pattern is needed against which to hold the things to be judged. Excellence is always relational. Since sports practices and the people participating in them are so varied, it seems strange to assume that there should only be one such pattern in every sport to judge the respective performances in terms of excellence. Differentiation is needed if sound judgments are to be made. Performances have to be judged against a *relevant* pattern, not necessarily an absolute one. Sometimes, for elite athletes, they fall together, excellence then is determined in absolute terms. In most cases, it is not. Three general levels of sports

performances can be identified, and on each level excellence can be achieved. The first and lowest level is the individual level. Every person has a certain athletic potential. Living up to that potential, being the best athlete one can possibly be and performing in the best way one can is excellent, even if one is never to win a competition. The second level is that of reasonable, or reasonably restricted, competition. Competing against other athletes of comparable athletic capacities and winning against them, excelling over equally competent competitors, marks an excellent sports performance on an even higher level. The third and highest level of excellence in sports is to compete and excel in an unrestricted competition over the best athletes in the sport. It is at this level where the greatest extensions in sports practices are achieved. There is a trickledown effect from the top level of sports to lower levels in term of such achievements. Innovations in preparation for competitions are picked up by "normal" athletes. But there is also a bottom up effect. Like it has been said earlier, any serious athlete is always trying to get the most out of himself, trying new training regiments or supplements, adjusting them to his personal needs. Every athlete who eventually makes it to the top of his sport will have competed and excelled at the lower levels of that sport, too. Once he makes it to the top, he brings his experience and individual history with him that has partially been shaped by his former competitors. In that sense, athletes achieving excellence on the first two levels of sports are helping to extend the boundaries of their discipline, too.

What has all this to do with the project of this paper, the development of an account of the spirit of sport, the doping issue in sports generally and the debate evolving around it? First of all, what has just been discussed, the detailed examination of the internal goods of sports practices, offers a possible view on what the spirit of sport might be. Following the line of argument, the spirit of sport is excellent performance. It has been shown what those consist of and how they are brought about by the athletes through a certain way of life. Second, the doping issue may not be directly addressed in this chapter but it is looming in the background the whole time. This chapter is so full of implications for the debate, it has doping written all over it. To start with, there is the concentration on performance as all there is to the product of sports and the momentariness of excellence that comes along with it. The banned substances and methods in the anti-doping codes are thought of as performance enhancing. Given the prominent place of performance in sports, that, on its own, seems like a good thing rather than something to ban. Next it has been established that the skills required in any given sport are always to some degree composed of or depend on the basic physical attributes of strength, speed and stamina. Although they are not the only qualities athletes need to possess in order to be successful, they are a necessary foundation. In combination with hard training,

doping is especially effective in maximizing these parameters basic for any sports performance. Again, that seems like a good thing and not something to dismiss and exclude from sports, definitely not in the absence of strong further arguments. Some may think these arguments exist. However, as it has been indicated in the introduction to this paper, they are not conclusive. The next point made in the actual chapter was that the majority of the time spent being an athlete will be occupied with the preparation for competition. That first and foremost includes the perfection of sport specific skills which are based on strength, speed and stamina. It should be clear by now where this is heading. The last point in this chapter with great implications for the doping debate is MacIntyre´s thought that achieving excellence in any given practice will ultimately lead to the systematic extension of the goods involved and the means to get there. Athletes on all levels contribute to the development and extension of their sport but it really is the elite athletes that are responsible for most of the progress here. Naturally, they will use all available resources to push them themselves and to push the limits of their sport. And yet another time, it is unclear why certain substances and methods should be excluded from the repertoire. Long story short, in this chapter an account of the spirit of sport is finalized, based on the findings of the previous chapters, and it entails nothing that would indicate the necessity of a ban on certain substances and methods in sports. The spirit of sport, at least when understood in the way presented here, is not protected by current anti-doping regulations. Since substitute arguments going from fairness-, harm- or health, or other integrity-considerations have yet to make a compelling case, anti-doping rules are more desperately in need of justification than ever.

6 Conclusions

The starting point of this paper was a puzzling lack in moral justification for anti-doping rules. Picking up the notion *spirit of sport*, and in the face of other arguments showing unequipped to justify anti-doping measures, an inquiry into meaning of that notion has been conducted. The result is a fresh outlook on the doping issue, based on a new account of the spirit of sport.

The argument has unfolded in four steps. In chapter 2, the concept of *sport* has been investigated to gain an understanding going beyond the common-sense knowledge and to check if there where any implications concerning the doping issue to be found at the very level of definition. The implications found have been vague and rather indifferent. In the chapter 3 of this paper, the ethical theoretical framework for the argument to be made has been introduced in the form of Alisdair MacIntyre´s ideas on social practices in his famous book “After virtue”. It became clear that MacIntyre´s terminology is very well suited for the given context and that sports are practices in a MacIntyrean sense. The next step in chapter 4 was to explore and clarify MacIntyre´s use of the concept of excellence and to say something about excellence in more general terms. In chapter 5, the findings have finally been assembled. MacIntyre´s ideas on practices have been put to work in a sports context. It has shown that the internal goods to be realized in sports practices are special and different from other practices. In sport, performance is everything. The products of sports are the respective performances, that is all there is to it, there is no lasting artifact. That has consequences for the second internal good to be realized in sports practices, the life of the athlete, and it has implications concerning doping. In a practice where performance dependent on skills partially based on physical attributes is key and where the life related to the practice is predominantly occupied with the development and perfection of the required skills, substances and methods enhancing those underlying attributes should naturally be welcome, not doomed. The spirit of sport, understood as the realization of the internal goods of sports practices in the form of excellent sports performances and the living of the athlete´s life, provides no reason or justification for anti-doping rules.

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