

# The Genealogy of Power: Historical and Philosophical Considerations about Doping

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**The current paper tries to indicate the origin and genealogy of doping. It will be shown that the sport organizations only pretend to have humanistic reasons to prohibit doping, e. g. the health of the athlete, fair play etc.. The real reasons for the prohibition of doping and the way doping control is organized cannot be found in the purity of sport but in the maintenance of power. The norm of "purity" is deeply rooted in traditional Western metaphysics and develops itself into the norm of self-containment of the human body in a sporting context of a modern secular society in which sport has a quasi-religious function. Finally, this way of thinking is critically discussed.**

**Keywords:** Doping, Modern Elite Sport, Genealogy

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## 1. Introduction

"Doping is the administration or use by a competing athlete of any substances foreign to the body or of any physiological substance taken in abnormal quantity or taken by an abnormal route of entry into the body with the sole intention of increasing in an artificial and unfair manner his/her performance in competition. When necessity demands medical treatment with any substance which because of its nature, dosage or application is able to boost the athlete's performance in competition in an artificial and unfair manner this, too, is regarded by the IOC as doping" [Wadler and Hainline (1989)]. This was basically the definition of the Council of Europe (1963) which tried to define doping according to its aims. The definition was taken over by the IOC which arranged for solid doping control (for amphetamines) at the Munich Olympic Games of 1972 for the first time. The definition was enlarged after the 1976 Montreal Olympics, when e. g. homologous blood transfusions (blood doping) were used to improve endurance, and the West German swimmers and modern pentathletes had their intestines inflated with air pressure to improve their swimming times. The list of doping substances was

also increased in 1976, including now also anabolic steroids. Current doping rules still use the same approach. The basis of this definition is a notion of "artificiality" vs. "naturalness", "being part of the body" vs. "being foreign to it", of "fairness" vs. "unfairness", of "abnormal" vs. "normal", in which the former is good and the latter is bad and should therefore be prohibited.

If something is not considered artificial, unfair, foreign, and abnormal it is not considered doping even if strong medication is taken. The Northern Mexican Indian tribe of the Tarahumaras have been using Peyote to run 200 km in 24 hours non-stop. Peyote consists of the roots of a cactus plant and functions as a natural pain killer which has also a hallucinogenic function [Krüger (2000) 14 ; Diem (1960)]. If such a plant is not considered artificial, unfair or abnormal in the cultural context but customary there is no notion of doping in such a society.

If all participants in sports would agree about what is artificial, unfair, foreign, or abnormal, doping would have one problem less. But the cultural context of world-wide elite sports is very distinct in many different countries. To assure a level playing field, international sport organizations have to

maintain common rules. This is, however, a problem as the standard of the value of a human body is culturally different in the over two hundred countries which compete internationally in sport. In a poor country, e.g., where many people die of hunger, the health of an athlete is of little concern. It is, therefore, attempted to intensify world-wide doping control with similar if not identical rules all over the world.

In the current context, you have to differentiate between doping control during international competitions (Olympic Games etc.), and controls out-of-competition. While in international competitions the same standard can be reasonably assured for all, out-of-competition control is mainly organized by national organization of doping control (National Anti-Doping Agencies or National Sports Federations). While the sports federations try to intensify doping control, the athletes try to avoid getting caught. By this doping control becomes an endless cat-and-mouse game.

Following Nietzsche and Foucault, we do not see a universal or absolute value system, but we can only observe a system which becomes visible as a result of various (power) struggles. We therefore look at the genealogy of that value system<sup>1</sup>. From Foucault we can also learn that power is often used over the body of other persons. We should therefore not only look at who is making a value judgement, but also how this judgement is executed in a given context.

In this regard, a number of social science publications from the German language area are important as doping is analyzed not only on moral grounds but in a social and cultural setting. Doping is thus regarded as a social construct. Doping is considered as the result of different movements and organizations which all have vested interests in sports (e. g. athletes, sport federations, spectators, mass media, economic and political organizations) and which try to gain their own benefit from athletic success [Gamper, Mühlethaler and Reidhaar (2000); Bette and Schimank (1995) etc.].

Trying to analyze the social structure which is causing the doping problems and following the

above mentioned German language Social Science literature, I will try to explain the doping problems genealogically, looking at the reasons and the origins of the thinking that results in doping practice. My paper will therefore follow the doping question on two levels:

• **The social structure which results in the doping problem:**

I will look particularly at the background of the opportunism of the sport organizations, particularly the International Olympic Committee (IOC), which is the sports governing body which controls the rules of doping (although the technical side has been passed on to the World Anti-Doping Agency – WADA – in 2002). I will analyze the structure of hypocrisy, i. e. the power to punish and to avoid punishment.

• **The Genealogy of “purity” in modern elite sports:**

The reasons and the origin of the norms of purity of modern elite sports will be investigated genealogically. The sport organizations have continuously praised the notion that sports are “pure” to assure their own role as a monopoly organization and have the power to further or punish individual athletes. Why is the notion of *purity* in elite sports so useful? Which are the origins of that notion? Finally the idea of purity is analyzed.

## 2. The power structure of sport federations

The definition of doping, the abstract notions of “artificial”, “unfair”, “foreign”, “abnormal”, permit many different interpretations. It is therefore a definition which cannot be executed in a straight forward manner. If according to the Ottawa Declarations of the World Health Organization (WHO) health is the physical, psychological and social equilibrium, then the elite athlete in the stress of competition might be ill, and might therefore be permitted to take certain medicine by this definition.

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1 “Genealogie” (German), “généalogie” (French), “genealogy” (English). Nietzsche’s aim has been the change of all value systems. Genealogy which had only been an auxiliary science of history received a new function by him. It became a methodology of historical philosophy. Nietzsche analyzed the origins of value systems and showed under which historical contextual circumstances judgements about good and evil had been made. Foucault adapted Nietzsche’s system in the last part of the twentieth century and radicalized it particularly in relation to power [Sudoh(1998)]. Foucault began “a new phase in his intellectual career from the mid-1960s when he published *Discipline and Punish*, it is important to realize that his turn to a genealogical analysis of what he called regimes of power/knowledge by no means meant an abandonment of the notion of an archaeological analysis of discourse” [Freundlieb(1998) 154].

The IOC doping standard consists therefore of a list of substances. A list of doping substance to enumerate what is prohibited (in which quantity) is therefore the only practical solution. Different agencies have the power to influence what is prohibited and to what extent it is prohibited. It has been shown for over one thousand years that coffee has an ergogenic function. There is sufficient scientific evidence to back up this knowledge. Nevertheless; coffee has been placed on the doping index relatively late<sup>2</sup>.

International doping control at Olympic Games in competition started in 1972. The amateur rules were relaxed by the IOC after 1981. Out-of competition doping control was started in different countries at different times, but e. g. in Germany in 1989. Krüger claims that the two series of events have not just a temporal but a causal coherence [Krüger (1998) 51-52]. In the times of amateurism, it was an open secret that many elite athletes were financed by companies or governmental agencies. Although the amateur rules were broken in a similar manner as the doping rules, the broken amateur code of very few athletes was made public and sanctioned then. The sport federations knew about the shaky amateur status of many of their athletes and kept silent, as a loss of their athletes would have been a loss for the federation as well. If the athletes wanted to be protected by their federation, they did not only have to be athletically good, but also be obedient to their sports governing body. In this way the amateur rules were useful for the sports federations, as they helped to maintain their power over the athletes. When the amateur rules were basically abolished by the IOC in Baden-Baden in 1981 and by the international and national federations in the following years, the sports governing bodies needed other instruments to discipline the athletes and maintain their power over them. According to Krüger the out-of-competition doping control fulfilled that function. Soon after the abolition of the amateur rules, the amount of substances on the doping index was increased, including such substances as caffeine which are included in such everyday products as coffee or Coca-Cola (one of the main sponsors of Olympic sports).

It is quite arbitrary which ergogenic substances are

on the doping list and which ones are not [Bahrke and Yesalis (2002)]. The more the athlete depends on the generosity of the sports governing body, the more the sports federation can maintain its power over its athletes, particularly its star athletes which it could otherwise hardly control. That control over the athletes is necessary, as it is the athletes who generate the surplus a sports governing body runs on. Nobody comes to watch sports functionaries at work – but the star athletes draw big crowds.

The power of the sports federation can best be seen in the out-of-competition doping controls. While in the in-competition control, the difference in time between the end of the competition and the doping control is almost identical for all (i. e. as soon as possible after the end of the event), an out-of-competition control is only theoretically "unannounced". Unannounced controls in free countries are very difficult to administer. The controller has to know where an athlete will be. Although the athlete has to give notice in many countries when he/she will not be at home but in a training camp, the sports governing body makes sure that the athlete can be reached by giving a short advance notice. The length of this advance notice makes quite a difference in the hiding of a doping case. Many sports governing bodies give their athletes 24 or 48 hours advance notice. This is one of the problems for preferential treatment, as it makes quite a difference whether one has 24, 48 or just half an hour and wants to counteract or mask doping substances in the body of the athlete. By having the power to decide the length of the advance notice, the sports governing body has maintained its power over the body of the athletes in the sense of Foucault [Krüger (2000) 25].

The examples show that the power to place substances on the doping list and to administer national out-of-competition doping control is beneficial for the power structure of the sports governing bodies<sup>3</sup>. Although sports federations are the guardians of health, fair play and humanism<sup>4</sup> one of the main function of doping control seems to be the maintenance of power in the hand of the

2 A certain degree of caffeine is permitted. Only 12 mg caffeine/ml urine and above results in a positive case of doping. In the case of a long distance runner of 50 kg body weight this would be about 4 cups of (relatively strong) coffee [Krüger (1998) 47]. Caffeine will no longer be on the new WADA doping index of 2004.

3 There are many more examples to demonstrate that the inclusion or exclusion of doping substances are arbitrary and only a means of the exertion of power [Krüger (2000)].

4 The reasons for a prohibition of doping by the IOC are : (1) Danger to the health of the athletes, (2) Injustice, (3) Bad influence as a model for society (particularly youth) [Kawahara(1999)]. Kimura has been critical about this as these three reasons are only used in the case of doping and not for sports in general, e. g. boxing is a bigger health problem than coffee [Kimura (2002)].

sports governing bodies. "Doping definitions do not have any logic or consequence, it is not a question of health or justice either, it is only a question of power" [Krüger (2000) 19].

Modern elite sports have developed according to the principle of boundless progress, or according to the Olympic motto "citius, altius, fortius" (always faster, higher, stronger). This boundless progress is not supposed to be archived by improper means. It is considered improper if you break rules, particularly under cover, e. g. if you arranged the outcome of a competition, if you were breaking the amateur code while it existed, or if you break doping rules which happen to exist at a given time.

Modern elite sport is caught in the trap that it has to achieve boundless progress and purity<sup>5</sup>. Only the athletes which are capable of following both principles (or at least do not get caught if they were cheating) have the possibility to become heroes. But today, when the athletic results have become ever so high, it is very difficult to follow both principles at the same time. As elite sports keeps developing with ever more records, many elite athletes are confronted by the dilemma to be either a winner but have a positive doping result and are stigmatized as villain or lose without doping and have no chance to become a hero at all. Who would be enthusiastic about elite sports if the top athletes were villains or losers? Without the support of the public elite sports would have a hard time to survive financially.

Bette and Schimank show another possibility of elite sports to survive: Sports governing bodies may hide doping, cover-up positive doping results and thus avoid to have any public villains. As (fortunately?) doping substances react deeply in the body, you cannot read on the forehead of an athlete whether he or she is doped. There are, of course, doping controls, but there are many example which show that it is possible to pass them successfully. Although doping is a reality, in many cases it does not indicate the actual clever doping case, but only some people with low technological skill are discovered. The "pure" image of elite sports is thus basically maintained [Bette and Schimank (1995) 360-376].

Mass media penalizes only the athletes,

sometimes the coaches and seldom the medical professionals as expert dopers. The principle of boundless progress itself by which society, industry and the sports governing bodies are driven, which is the causes of doping, is seldom sanctioned. The sports governing bodies profit from the undiscovered doping of their athletes, as it provides them with better results, more media presence, better sponsorship and boundless income. It is therefore probable that not everything is being done to discover doping in ones own ranks. If, however, an athlete is discovered as a doping culprit, the sports governing bodies behave as if it was only the athlete and his/her supporters (coaches, medical professionals) to make sure that the sports federation itself is never stigmatized (in Japanese: "To cut the tail of the lizard"). If we follow the argument of the German researchers we may, therefore, say that the reasons for many doping rules are neither fair play nor favor the health of the athlete, but the power structure of the sports federations.

### 3. The genealogy of "purity" in modern elite sports

If you follow the principle of "boundless progress" you obviously need the help of technology sooner or later. You may argue that doping is a part of that technology as it is closely linked to "substitution" a technological medical skill that uses legally substances. Only technology that is currently considered "doping" is currently discredited. While altitude training and pressure chambers are signs of a positive technology and legal, Erythropoietin and blood doping are illegal although all of the four systems have a very similar function in increasing the hematocrit level and by this aerobic endurance [Wilson and Derse (2000)]. While the first are considered pure, the latter are impure. I will try to show the differences at this example.

Blood doping has been banned as an illegal practice after American athletes discussed its results in the press after the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics. To blood dope, an athlete "donates" about one liter of blood which is then stored and re-injected shortly before an important competition<sup>6</sup>. Buytendijk (1956)

5 Bette and Schimank (1996) have identified the codes "victory/defeat" and "purity/impurity" as distinguishing features of modern elite sport. Although modern elite sports have difficulties with both codes, sports governing bodies have to cover up these contradictions. This results in organizational stress.

makes an interesting remark about the own (internal) and the foreign (external). Saliva is produced in one's mouth. As long as it is in the mouth it is part of the internal of a person. As soon as it is spat out, it is external and should therefore not be replaced into the mouth, i.e. it is now external and it would be very awkward to replace it into one's mouth.

It is possibly similar with blood doping, as blood transfusions are not a "physiological substance taken in abnormal quantity or taken by an abnormal route of entry". In fact they are done the very same way as blood donations and infusions are done for medical reasons in a hospital, but to put blood in one's body is breaking the self-containment of the body – although it was originally one's own it is now an external substance. As it improves results considerably in aerobic endurance events, it is considered a doping practice<sup>7</sup>. In altitude training or in training with the help of a pressure chamber, the self-containment of the body would not be disturbed, so it is not considered doping. The thought that "purity of the body" is identical with the "self-containment of the body" may have its roots in the traditional metaphysics of Western thought.

Nakayama (1996) points out that a human being is originally pure according to Plato and Aristotle. Of course, in reality that does not need to be the case, but it is expected from a modern athlete that he or she stays pure, i. e. many medical practices which are common in everyday life are prohibited for athletes in their competitions and often also in training<sup>8</sup>. Why? It is a product of the modern era in which sports originated in their present forms. Prior to the modern era human beings always had the transcendental – sometimes the idea of God or gods – and it was assumed that human beings were very frail and weak. But in the modern era man lives longer and becomes stronger. Man is no longer just an object of the power of divinity, but becomes a subject which is capable to change the world. Through this humans do not need the transcendental any longer. Thus a secular world develops [Inagaki et al. (1995); Koorsgard (1990)]. In this modern secular period, in

which man is active as subject, elite sports and their bodies can play an important role.

Modern sports may visualize the ethos of the modern era and become a symbol of the principles of modernity itself. In modern sports the stronger ones simply win. In modern capitalist societies there are no other fields so visible and spectacular which are dominated by competition. While cut-throat competition is socially problematic, in elite sports we celebrate the strong victors without reservations. Athletes have to be talented, have to overcome all sorts of difficulties, and have to train hard to be finally victorious. Top athletes, which bring spectacular victories home are considered almost transcendental and are celebrated like modern heroes. Their charisma is visible in their bodies and is demonstrated by their bodies. Elite sports thus have a quasi-religious function in the modern world [Bette and Schimank(1995) 62-67; Krüger(1990)].

It is therefore understandable that elite athletes have to fulfill much harder norms as regular people, as elite athletes have the chance to become heroes for a nation. External substances (=doping) are a form of external help by which you break the self-containment of the body. If you receive help, how can you be a hero?

By this analysis the following becomes clear: In the norm of "purity" which reflects the traditional metaphysics of Western societies, the sports governing bodies try to maintain their power structure by all means. In the secular modern world, in which elite sports functions, a quasi-religious purity – in the sense of self-containment of the body – is demanded from the elite athlete.

#### 4. Critical Reflexions

The thinking of doping = evil, seems to be quite arrogant, as all substances which are illegal in sports are placed on a doping list which is to be followed. The elite athlete as an elite person can only be perfect in him- or herself. It is good to be pure to exclude all (illegal) external substances. The binary code

6 A certain amount of blood (about 1 liter) is taken from the veins of the athletes (as in blood donations), the red blood cells are separated from the plasma then preserved via glycerol freezing, allowing preservation for an indefinite period of time. The body reacts and rebuilds this blood within several weeks. During this time the endurance capacity of the athlete is reduced. Shortly prior to the competition the stored frozen red blood cells are reinserted into the veins of the athlete whose aerobic endurance potential is thus considerably improved.

7 It is not easy to draw the line between internal and external, inside and outside.

8 A prima ballerina may use cortisone if she has shin splints and thus difficulties and pain to do her jumps gracefully, if at all. If she jumps well (with cortisone) the spectators will applaud her grace and courage to overcome her pains. If a competitive figure skater uses cortisone for the very same reason, he/she will be banned from the sport for two years for doping [Krüger (2000) 26].

internal/external, my own/foreign, good/evil etc. has been included into the sports system – and while the former are celebrated the latter are detested. In the quasi-religious ceremonies of sports the former are placed on a pedestal as winners and the latter are excluded from the public sphere of sports.

The "self-containment" of the body is only a fictitious notion. We live by taking up and evacuate our bowls from food, water, air even a virus. The "I" is only a temporary unit of many changing things, although the genetic code may be identical over time, many different parts of the body are not – and so we are not the same physically over time<sup>9</sup>.

It seems to be quite brutal to prohibit the use of all substances on the doping list for all athletes at all times, even when they are not in training but in rehabilitation. Athletes are not given the best medical treatment in case of illness – even in the case of a simple flu an athlete has to be extremely careful which medication to take and which not. Very often athletes have a very restricted option how to cure an illness and stay inside the doping regulations. To assume that all substances are illegal for all athletes at all times, also assumes that all athletes have an identical body. For a living organism which is constantly changing this seems to be an unnecessary exertion of power.

The World Conference of Doping in Sport has passed the unified doping code proposed by the WADA. IOC-president Jacques Rogge has declared that sports federations which do not accept this code will not be permitted to participate in future Olympic Games. Countries which do not accept this code will neither be permitted to participate in the current Olympic Games nor organize future ones. They will thus also lose their financial subsidy by the IOC. The Japanese independent Asahi newspaper (2003) which has reported about the congress evaluates: "If all Olympic sports are sanctioned according to the same rules the feeling of injustice will disappear." But weight lifting, women gymnastics and Marathon running have very different characters. A unified doping code ignores the individuality of the different sports. It is thus a brutal form of reducing all sports to the same external rules.

If you take external substances and thus break the self-containment of the body, you should not be banned as evil. It may be ambiguous, i. e. the evil may be good. Substances which are mentioned on the doping list should only be such which definitely

undermine health, if everybody takes them anytime anywhere, e.g. hard drugs. The self reliability of the athlete should be strengthened. The coach and the doctor should create a situation with their adult athlete of "informed consent". They should communicate about how the individual health of the individual athlete can be maintained.

In the case of professional sport a professional inhibition of health may be the case. Boxing is a legal sport which certainly undermines the health of the boxer. The Coach, the medical professional and the athlete should discuss manners of rehabilitation in the case of medical substances, just as it is discussed in the case of other sports inflicted injuries such as in the case of boxing. Each rule may result in more or less brutality toward people. But brutality toward the athlete should be minimized by placing the athlete in the middle of all considerations. Athletes should not be seen in isolation, however, but in their cultural context. Under social pressure "informed consent" can also be brutal. We have, therefore, to work on the improvement of the social conditions in which our athletes grow up.

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9 Nancy (one of famous present French philosophers) has considered the relation between my own and foreign from his experience as a heart transplant recipient [Nancy (2000)].

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