

## Toward The Essential Meaning of Fair Play as an Aspiration of Olympism

Deborah P. McDonald

The University of Western Ontario

### Introduction

Olympism is a philosophy of life, exalting and combining in a balanced whole the qualities of body, will, and mind. Blending sport with culture and education, Olympism seeks to create a way of life based on the joy found in effort, the educational value of good example and respect for universal fundamental ethical principles.

The goal of Olympism is to place everywhere sport at the service of the harmonious development of man, with a view to encouraging the establishment of a peaceful society concerned with the preservation of encouraging human dignity (9: p. 10).

This characterization or definition is intended by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) to represent the core structure or essence of Olympism. However, it may be said that definitions such as this serve only to identify general ideas underlying Olympism. Unfortunately, with general definitions, the meanings of the specific ideas contained within them are not always certain. Consequently, the core structure of Olympism, as represented by such denotations, is also not at all certain and will not be so until such a time when a clear, precise, and simple definition has been formulated.

In the search for clarity, some scholars (10; 12) have reduced Olympism, represented by general definitions such as the one presented above, into identifiable aspirations, values, or principles. These are believed to depict the supposed core structure or essence of the philosophy of Olympism. Segrave (12) offers what he believes to be the seven main aspirations of Olympism; education, peace and international understanding, cultural expression, the independence of sport, excellence, equal opportunity, and fair play. Similarly, Parry (10) identifies ten items to be considered as values or principles of Olympism; politics and

nationalism, peace and international understanding, character development or moral education, equality of opportunity, excellence, competition, amateurism, autonomy, cultural expression, and fair play.

It is expected by such authors that the identification of specific goals or aspirations will provide “the blueprint for conduct of the Olympic Games in particular, and for the conduct of sport in general” (12: p. 151). Since a “blueprint for conduct” presumes clarity, precision, concreteness, and prescription, it would seem that, by breaking down general definitions into specific aspirations, the essential structure of Olympism ought to be more apparent; that is clear and precise. Nevertheless, the precise meanings of the aspirations contained within the philosophy of Olympism are often not made clear in the literature. Consequently, there is often more than one plausible interpretation of the meaning of *each* specified aspiration. If various interpretations exist for many of the goals of Olympism, then it must be stated that the philosophy, as it stands, is a vague, imprecise, unclear, and abstract ideology. A vague philosophy can provide no clear blueprints for conduct of the Olympic Games or for sport conduct more generally.

If clarity of the essential meaning of the philosophy of Olympism is a priority, then the essential nature and meaning of each of the goals identified for it must be elucidated. Therefore, as an identified aspiration of Olympism, the precise nature and meaning of “fair play” ought to be apparent. The pursuit and subsequent delineation of an agreeable and workable definition of fair play is crucial to the understanding of the essential structure of Olympism. In other words, what does and does not count as fair play in sport? Prior to addressing the previous question directly, it is necessary to undertake two brief preliminary analyses. First, it is necessary to provide a depiction of the true nature of the concept of “sport.” An understanding of the essential meaning of sport, inclusive of course of Olympic sport, is required prior to a discussion of how fair play may be manifested therein. Second, it is necessary to address the specific types of rules to be found within all sports since “fair play” is very often characterized as a stance taken toward the rules defining and regulating sport.

Once the concept of sport and the nature of rules within

it are clearly delineated, it will then be possible to conduct an analysis of various classifications of actions within sport. Four classifications of actions are identified. These include fair play, good sportspersonship, bad sportspersonship, and cheating. These classifications are further defined, and incorporated into a suggested working model or paradigm delineating each as well as depicting the interrelationships between them.

Following the delineation of the working model, a discussion is undertaken pertaining to the moral judgments of actions that may be classified into each identified category. This paradigm is shown to be useful in that any distinct action may be first judged to be an act of fair play, good sportspersonship, bad sportspersonship, and/or cheating, and then, once classified, be judged to be morally right, wrong, obligatory and/or prohibited as such.

In the next section of the paper, the philosophy of Olympism is reintroduced into the discussion as the suggestion is furthered that the inclusion of fair play as an aspiration of Olympism may allow for actions that are judged to be morally undesirable. To demonstrate this possibility, Olympism is added to the earlier proposed paradigm.

Finally, the paper concludes with the presentation of a significantly modified paradigm delineating the philosophy of Olympism. This paradigm is intended to reflect an alternative, and perhaps more desirable, vision for Olympism which may foster an atmosphere void of morally undesirable actions.

### The Nature of Sport

To play a sport “is to attempt to achieve a specific state of affairs (prelusory goal), using only the means permitted by the rules (lusory means), where the rules prohibit use of more efficient in favour of less efficient means (constitutive rules), . . . where the rules are accepted just because they make possible such activity (lusory attitude)” (13: p. 41) and where the demonstration of physical skill and prowess is required (7: p. 26). The necessary and sufficient characteristics for an activity to be considered a sport include the following:

1. *it is a goal directed activity,*
2. *the rules limit the permissible means of goal*

*attainment,*

3. *the rules prohibit the more efficient in favour of less efficient means,*

4. *the rules are accepted to make the activity possible, and*

5. *it requires the demonstration of physical skill and prowess.* (7: p. 26)

The first four properties were originally proposed by Suits (13) as the necessary and sufficient characteristics for a game. Meier (7) added the fifth property to the list in order to depict the necessary and sufficient characteristics for a game. Meier (7) added the fifth property to the list in order to depict the necessary and sufficient characteristics for a sport. Thus, any given sport is also simultaneously a game.

The prelusory goal, according to Suits (13) is an end or aim of a sport that can be described before, and independently of, any sport of which it may be a part. In the sport of basketball, for example, the prelusory goal may be identified as the ball going through the opposing basketball hoop. In the sport of cross country running, the prelusory goal is crossing the established finish line.

Lusory means to specify legitimate ways that participants can go about attempting to attain the prelusory goal of a sport. In other words, the lusory means are those ways specifically *permitted* or *allowed* by the constitutive rules of a given sport in the attempt to achieve the prelusory goal of that sport.

Constitutive rules include proscriptions of certain means that would be useful in achieving the prelusory goal of any sport in a more efficient manner. These rules decide the kind and range of means permitted in seeking to achieve the prelusory goal. Anything is considered inefficient if it can be done in an easier manner. In a sport, the easiest, simplest, and most direct approach to achievement of the prelusory goal, is rarely permitted. Thus, the constitutive rules, taken with the specifications of prelusory goal, define many of the necessary conditions of any given sport.

The lusory attitude describes the acceptance of the constitutive rules by a participant simply to make the sport possible. This attitude is an explanation of the state, adopted by a sport participant, under which he or she accepts the rules which require the use of less

efficient means for reaching a specified end. It is suggested that in many things that are not sports, “the gratuitous introduction of unnecessary obstacles to the achievement of an end is regarded as a decided irrational thing to do, whereas in . . . [a sport] it appears to be an absolutely essential thing to do” (13: p. 39).

For Meier (7) any activity, to be regarded as a sport, must also include the additional property of requiring the demonstration of physical skill and prowess. This does not imply, however, that in order for an individual to participate in any given sport, he or she must play the sport well. “The degree of physical skill exhibited in a sport is simply not a defining characteristic or an essential component of the concept of sport” (7; p. 14). If any pursuit, meeting the first four criteria, also *requires* the use of physical skill and prowess, no matter to what degree, that pursuit is also a sport.

It is important at this point to mention that, in the ensuing sections of this paper, only those actions occurring “*on the field*” in sport are considered. What this means is that only those actions made in an attempt to attain the prelusory goal of a given sport, as defined by the constitutive rules of that sport, are appraised. Any action transpiring “off the field,” that is, before or after a sport occurrence, is omitted from this discussion since such actions are irrelevant to sport so defined.

### The Nature of Rules in Sport

“Rules specify the goal-within-the contest which all participants must necessarily pursue, the means all participants must use and are allowed to use in pursuing that goal, and the means all participants may not legally use to pursue the goal” (1: p. 268). Constitutive and regulative rules are those that provide the opportunity for any sport to occur.

Those rules that specifically permit and proscribe certain means of attainment of the prelusory goal of a given sport are identified as the constitutive rules of that sport. In other words, these rules specify actions that are allowed and not allowed in pursuit of the prelusory goal of any given sport. Constitutive rules allow for the possibility of a sport occurrence by providing “a descriptive, defining framework which specifies the fundamental aspects of, and determine exactly what it entails to engage in, a particular . . .

sport” (5: p. 6).

In addition to the constitutive rules, there are also regulative rules that apply whenever a particular constitutive rule is violated. “When one commits an act that is not in compliance with the [constitutive] rules, he [sic] is said to have committed a foul, and a proscribed penalty is meted out in punishment for that act” (11: p. 264). Regulative rules are those that “specify the type and severity of penalties to be applied when particular constitutive rules have been violated” (5: p. 7).

Constitutive rules are necessary in outlining the necessary and sufficient characteristics for an endeavour to be *considered* a sport; regulative rules are not. Regulative rules are added to the constitutive rules of a sport in order for that sport to be *practised*. Whether a particular constitutive rule is violated on purpose or by accident, the violation would be problematic for sport practice in that the sport would have to end the first time any constitutive rule was broken. The role of regulative rules is to allow a particular sport to continue after the violation of a constitutive rule. Any regulative rule accompanies a given constitutive rule and can only exist given that initial rule. In that sense, regulative rules may be said to be an extension of the constitutive rules added to a sport only so that it can continue once a constitutive rule has been broken.

It should, at this point, be recognized that the constitutive and regulative rules apply only to those actions that occur during “on the field” sport. It is the constitutive rules that limit the permissible means of goal attainment by specifying what is allowed and what is not allowed “on the field.” The regulative rules are added should an “on the field” action occur that fails to comply with these constitutive rules. Further, it is the constitutive rules that are accepted so as to make the sport possible and the prelusory goal itself is only attainable while “on the field.”

It is the auxiliary rules of sport that are intended to limit “off the field” conduct. Auxiliary rules are defined as “contingent, supplementary, external restrictions or qualifications appended to a pre-existing activity already defined by its constitutive and regulative rules” (5: p. T1). Auxiliary rules place

constraints beyond those specified for “on the field” action.

Auxiliary rules are said to have “*nothing whatsoever to do with the essence of sport*” (6: p. 71). Actions transpiring before or after a sport occurrence cannot be judged to violate any particular constitutive rule and/or regulative rule. The constitutive rules of sport, are silent on actions that occur “off the field” as these rules do not specify permissible and prohibited means that may arise before or after a sport occurrence. By extension, regulative rules, which are added to existing constitutive rules, are also not applicable to “off the field” conduct. Because the focus of this paper is on conduct that occurs *during* sport, only those rules necessary for *any* given sport to be *practised*, that is, the constitutive and regulative rules, are considered within the ensuing arguments of this paper. Auxiliary rules are omitted from any further discussion.

### The Nature of Evaluation of Sport Actions

There are several types of sporting participants who take part in sport. These include fair players, good sportspersons, bad sportspersons, and cheaters. A participant is classified according to any one given overt action committed within a sport endeavour. It is herein claimed that interrelationships exist between these actions (see **Figure One** in appendix).

Figure one indicates that, based upon any one given action, the following characterizations may occur: an act of bad sportspersonship may also be cheating; an act of bad sportspersonship may also be fair play; an act of bad sportspersonship is never good sportspersonship; and an act of cheating is always bad sportspersonship; and act of cheating is never fair play; an act of cheating is never good sportspersonship; an act of fair play may also be bad sportspersonship; an act of fair play is never cheating; an act of fair play may also be good sportspersonship; an act of good sportspersonship is never bad sportspersonship; an act of good sportspersonship is never cheating; and an act of good sportspersonship may also be, but is not necessarily representative of, an act of fair play. The remainder of this section will be devoted to an exploration of the necessary and sufficient characteristics of fair play, good sportspersonship, bad sportspersonship, and cheating.

### Fair Play

For an athlete to be acknowledged as a “fair player,” he or she must, of course, deliberately and obviously commit an act of fair play. The necessary and sufficient characteristic for any given action in sport to be considered one of fair play is that;

#### *1. it complies with the regulative rules of a given sport.*

The fair player always obeys the regulative rules of a sport. Consequently, if any particular constitutive rule is knowingly broken, the fair player always acknowledges that violation by accepting a penalty for it.

Actions of fair players fall into three subcategories. Comprising the first subcategory of fair play acts are those judged to be fair play and fair play only. The second subcategory of actions judged to be fair play are those also viewed to be good sportspersonship. Fair play actions falling into the third subcategory are those also considered to be representative of bad sportspersonship.

The first subcategory of fair play actions include those committed by sporting participants who always *attempt* to obey the constitutive rules defining a given sport. Such players attempt to commit only those actions that are prescribed as *lusory* means permissible in the attainment of the *prelusory* goal of that sport. Never are attempts made to commit those acts that are proscribed by the constitutive rules. Because regulative rules function only when a particular constitutive rule is broken, obedience to the constitutive rules always represents compliance to the regulative rules as well. Nevertheless, sometimes a fair player may inadvertently commit an action that is in violation of a particular constitutive rule. If this occurs, however, the fair player, being aware of his or her violation, always obeys the regulative rule that is to be imposed whenever a particular constitutive rule is broken.

Some actions, included within the second subcategory of fair play, may be also labelled as good sportspersonship. Such actions are those made in an attempt to grant an advantage to a fellow competitor in the attainment of the *prelusory* goal of any given sport, but that comply with the regulative rules of the sport.

This subcategory of fair play/good sportspersonship actions will be discussed further in the ensuing section.

Some acts of fair play include those that are intentional violations of a particular constitutive rule, made in an attempt to gain an advantage, but that obey the accompanying regulative rule. Such actions, although judged to be fair play, are also appropriately labelled as actions of bad sportspersonship and constitute the third subcategory of fair play. This subcategory of fair play/bad sportspersonship actions will be delineated further in a later section of this paper.

### Good Sportspersonship

The good sportsperson, to be considered such, must commit an act of good sportspersonship. To be labelled good sportspersonship, the action must fulfill the following necessary and sufficient characteristic;

***1. it is committed in an attempt to grant an advantage to a fellow competitor in the attainment of the prelusory goal of any given sport.***

Thus, good sportspersonship may be said to “transcend the rulebook” (4: p. 287) by some act of altruism. There are two ways that a player may attempt to “grant an advantage” to a fellow competitor during sport competition. The first is by attempting to decrease one’s own chances of attaining the prelusory goal and the second is to commit an action in an attempt to improve a competitor’s chances of attaining that goal.

Fair play “is widely regarded as an essential ingredient of sportsmanship [sic]” (2: p. 241). However, good sportspersonship seems to require something more than adherence to the constitutive and regulative rules of sport. This “something more,” is the attempt to grant another with an advantage in achieving the prelusory goal. To be also a good sportsperson, a fair player must commit an action that complies with the constitutive and regulative rules of a sport *and* is a deliberate attempt to grant an advantage. Such actions are characteristic of the first subcategory of good sportspersonship. These actions also comprise the second subcategory of fair play mentioned in the preceding section.

As an illustration, suppose that Team A is highly skilled at basketball and that their opponent, Team B,

is not. A player on the highly skilled Team A may “let up” on a fellow competitor by dribbling with his or her nondominant hand and consequently decrease his or her chances at attaining the prelusory goal. This may be a deliberate attempt to grant a competitor an advantage in attaining the prelusory goal of putting the ball through the opposing hoop. Dribbling in basketball is a permitted lusus means and is therefore considered within the rules defining the sport of basketball. It does not matter whether or not a competitor dribbles with a dominant or nondominant hand; dribbling is dribbling. Dribbling with a nondominant hand is an act of fair play because it obeys the constitutive rules of basketball and, by doing so, complies also with the regulative rules. Also, it may be viewed as an act of good sportspersonship *if* it is intended as an attempt to grant an advantage to a fellow competitor in attaining the prelusory goal of basketball.

Another example of an action that is simultaneously judged to be good sportspersonship and fair play is provided, surprisingly, by the “good foul” in basketball. Under certain very select circumstances, it may be argued that a player who intentionally fouls in basketball is committing an act of good sportspersonship. Suppose that a player on the highly skilled basketball Team A, discussed in the previous paragraph, intentionally fouls a player on the less capable Team B only to accept the imposed penalty. Further, suppose that this player on Team A, being fully aware that Team B’s chances of attaining the prelusory goal are slim, fouls the player on Team B with the intent of granting an advantage to Team B. By intentionally fouling the Team B player, the Team A player may intend to improve his or her competitor’s chances of attaining the prelusory goal more easily. In other words, the Team A player may recognize the fact it may be easier for Team B to attempt a free throw to attain the prelusory goal of basketball rather than to do so by manoeuvring the ball through the highly skilled defensive Team A. The player who fouls in basketball yet accepts a penalty for that foul is acknowledged as a fair player because he or she has obeyed the regulative rules of the sport by mere acceptance of the penalty. However, the “good foul,” as committed by the Team A player in the delineated circumstances, is also an act of good sportspersonship, since it is committed as an attempt to grant an advantage to a

fellow competitor.

Other actions of good sportspersonship, constituting the second subcategory, are those judged to be actions of good sportspersonship in themselves. These actions are not considered at all by the constitutive and regulative rules of a sport; in fact, the rules are silent on such actions. What this means is that these actions are neither explicitly permitted nor proscribed by the constitutive rules of the sport and no regulative rules exist should such actions be committed.

This second subcategory characterizes many acts of good sportspersonship. As an example, consider the cross country runner who is trailing another runner and notices that this lead runner is taking a wrong turn in the course. As a good sportsperson, the trailing runner alerts the competitor to the fact that he or she is taking a wrong turn. Such an action reflects a deliberate attempt to grant that competitor an advantage in attaining the prelusory goal of crossing the finish line. Otherwise, the trailing runner could have remained silent because the rules do not require that fellow competitors alert each other to wrong turns. Now, alerting fellow competitors to wrong turns is not an act that is considered within the constitutive or regulative rules of cross country running. The rules, in fact, are silent on this action and, for this reason, such actions cannot be judged to be fair play or not. If there are no regulative rules to comply with concerning a specific action, then that action is beyond the requirements of fair play. In this way, actions fitting into this subcategory of good sportspersonship also are believed to transcend the rulebook.

### **Bad Sportspersonship**

To be considered a bad sportsperson, one must commit an act of bad sportspersonship. The necessary and sufficient characteristics for any given action in sport to be considered one of bad sportspersonship follow. More specifically, any action so labelled must demonstrate the following two characteristics;

- 1. it is not specifically permitted by the constitutive rules of a given sport, and*
- 2. it is committed in an attempt to gain an advantage over a fellow competitor in the attainment of the prelusory goal of that sport.*

Any sport participant who attempts to gain an advantage over another by executing an act that is not specifically permitted by the constitutive rules of a sport is said to have committed an act of bad sportspersonship.

The second characteristic of bad sportspersonship specifies that an action is made in an attempt to gain an advantage over a fellow competitor in the attainment of the prelusory goal of a sport. What is meant by “gaining an advantage” requires further delineation. There are two ways that one may attempt to gain an advantage in attaining the prelusory goal of a sport. The first is by attempting to improve one’s own chances of attaining the prelusory goal and the second is by attempting to decrease a fellow competitor’s chances of attaining the prelusory goal of the sport. This is contrasted with good sportspersonship and “granting an advantage” to a fellow competitor by attempting to decrease one’s own or to improve a fellow competitor’s chances of attaining the prelusory goal of the sport. Consequently, all acts of bad sportspersonship are never acknowledged as good sportspersonship.

What is entailed by “specifically permitted,” as contained within the first characteristic of bad sportspersonship, also requires some careful description. Remember that the constitutive rules of any given sport are intended to specify the permissible and proscribed means of goal attainment. Therefore, what is allowed and what is not allowed during sport competition is specified within these rules. An act is not *specifically permitted*, or allowed by the constitutive rules of a sport, if those rules specifically proscribe that particular action. If an action is proscribed by the constitutive rules of a sport, then there is usually a regulative rule that applies to specify that a foul has been committed and to describe the penalty that is to be meted out as punishment for the action.

There is another way by which the constitutive rules may not “specifically permit” or allow an action. If the constitutive rules do not consider a specific act at all, then it cannot be said that those rules specifically permit or allow its performance. On the other hand, it cannot be said that the rules specifically proscribe that action either. Because the constitutive rules are silent

on many actions occurring on the field in sport, such actions cannot be judged to be neither permitted nor proscribed therein. Nevertheless, and despite the fact that such actions are not necessarily proscribed, the claim can be made that such actions are not specifically permitted by the constitutive rules simply because the rules remain silent on them. An act not considered within the constitutive rules of a sport at all, but fulfilling the characteristic of being performed for gaining an advantage over another sporting participant, is considered an act of bad sportspersonship.

Trickery and deceit by the use of physical skills are part of many sports; “at the heart of every athletic activity is the attempt to successfully deceive one’s opponent” (11: p. 263). Consequently, one may argue that the execution of skills during sport competition is always an attempt to gain an advantage but that any individual who attempts to gain an advantage over another by performing a given skill is not usually viewed as a bad sportsperson. This is true; the use of physical skill during sport is usually done in an attempt to gain an advantage or to deceive one’s opponent. However, the constitutive rules of any given sport are usually directly applicable to most of the skills that are used within it. If the rules are directly applicable to the physical skills and these skills are permissible means of goal attainment, then the execution of skills is not deemed bad sportspersonship. “All [permissible skills] are efforts to mislead in order to gain an advantage. But, it is not these manoeuvres that make the activities in which they occur [sports] . . . ; it is the constitutive rules of those [sports] . . . which make these kinds of misdirection the useful manoeuvres that they are” (13: p. 152).

Similarly, some individuals or teams who successfully carry out well planned strategies are usually not considered bad sportspersons. Some strategies are usually carefully laid out sequences of physical manoeuvres intended to be as efficient as the constitutive rules will allow in the attainment of the prelusory goal of any given sport. These strategies may take opponents by surprise, but so long as each physical manoeuvre within the sequence represents skills permitted in the sport, such strategies are not considered bad sportspersonship. Many skills are useful as lusory means of attaining the prelusory goal of a sport. Permissible strategies represent sequences

of these permissible skills. Thus, many strategies are also encompassed as lusory means in a sport as they are considered within its rules. Attempting to gain an advantage, by the use of relevant physical skill and strategy, is permissible within the defining characteristics of sport.

Of course, there may be many skills and/or strategies that are either prohibited by the rules of any given sport or not considered by them at all. In either case, if a skill or strategy is performed with the intent of gaining an advantage, then that skill or strategy may be deemed an act of bad sportspersonship.

Acts of bad sportspersonship fall into three subcategories. The first subcategory are actions labelled as bad sportspersonship alone. These include actions that do not *violate* any of the actual constitutive rules of a sport yet are performed solely for gaining an advantage. Instead these actions are not considered to be permissible means within the constitutive rules of any given sport because the constitutive rules are silent when it comes to such actions. Because the constitutive rules are silent on these actions, it may be stated that they are *neither specifically permitted nor proscribed* by those rules. However, the fact that these actions are not specifically proscribed is irrelevant when judging an action to be bad sportspersonship. If the action is not specifically permitted *and* it is committed with the intent of gaining an advantage, then that action is appropriately labelled bad sportspersonship.

Suppose, for example, a player, just prior to attempting a lay-up shot, tells an opposing defender that his or her shoelaces are untied. Such an action may be labelled an act of bad sportspersonship falling into the first subcategory. The rules governing basketball are silent on the action of telling an opponent that his or her shoe laces are untied. This action is neither specifically permitted nor proscribed by the constitutive rules of the sport. If this action is committed with the intent of attempting to distract one’s opponent to allow for an improvement in one’s own chances of attaining the prelusory goal, then that action may be claimed to be committed as an attempt to gain an advantage. As an action committed in an attempt to gain an advantage that is not specifically permitted by the constitutive rules, this act of telling an opponent that his or her shoe

laces are untied is one of bad sportspersonship.

Consider also the following example depicting the first subcategory of bad sportspersonship. Suppose that a sport participant heckles a defender on an opposing basketball team while that player is attempting a lay-up shot. This may be viewed as an instance of bad sportspersonship. The rules of basketball are silent on the action of heckling during a lay-up shot. The constitutive rules do not permit nor proscribe heckling, and the regulative rules do not dictate the type and severity of penalties to be assigned should heckling be committed. Thus, heckling opponents is not a specifically permitted lusus means of attaining the prelusory goal of basketball which is to put the ball through the opposing team's basket. So why heckle? It may be claimed that, in most cases, there is no reason to heckle a fellow competitor during a lay-up shot *except* to gain an advantage over that competitor in attaining the prelusory goal of the sport. It's introduction into the sport, in most cases, is for no other reason than to attempt to decrease that fellow competitor's chances of attaining the prelusory goal. As an action not specifically permitted by the constitutive rules of the sport and made as an attempt to gain an advantage, the act of heckling reflects an instance of bad sportspersonship and the heckler can be appropriately labelled a bad sportsperson.

The second subcategory of bad sportspersonship includes actions whereby "a participant knowingly violates a [constitutive] rule to achieve what would otherwise be difficult to achieve, but violates the [constitutive] rules so as to expect and willingly accept the penalty" (1: p. 268). This subcategory also comprises the third subcategory of fair play mentioned earlier. Some bad sportspersons/fair players violate, intentionally, the constitutive rules of a sport with the intent of accepting the consequences specified by the regulative rules. An example is provided from the "good foul" in the sport of basketball "where a defensive player, moving behind an offensive player with the ball who is dribbling for an easy lay-up shot, intentionally holds the player, forcing him [sic] to shoot two free throws to make the same number of points" (1: p. 268-269). In other words, the foul is judged to be tactical in that it is committed "in front of the referee or umpire because he [sic] considers that it is better to break the rules and suffer the penalty rather than not

commit the foul at all" (3: p. 278).

Holding is not a permitted lusus means in the attainment of the prelusory goal of putting the ball through the opponent's basket, in fact, holding is proscribed by the constitutive rules. In addition, this action is made in an attempt to decrease the opponent's chances of attaining the prelusory goal; that is, in an attempt to gain an advantage. Since this action is not specifically permitted by the constitutive rules of basketball and it is made in an attempt to gain an inappropriate advantage, the "good foul" may be viewed as an instance of bad sportspersonship.

The "good foul," as described above, may also be acknowledged as an instance of fair play. Fair play requires only that any given action comply with the regulative rules of the sport in which it occurs. If the penalty is accepted whenever a particular constitutive rule is broken, then the action must be acknowledged as an instance of fair play regardless of the fact that a constitutive rule was intentionally violated.

Bad sportspersonship also includes a third subcategory of actions that violate both the constitutive and regulative rules to gain an advantage. Because this last subcategory of bad sportspersonship includes those actions that violate regulative rules, players who commit such actions are also labelled cheaters. Actions judged to be cheating are always also actions judged to be bad sportspersonship. These points will be elucidated in the section that follows.

### Cheating

The cheater is a sport participant who commits an act of cheating. An act is considered cheating if it fulfils the necessary and sufficient characteristics presented for bad sportspersonship, and in addition, the action;

#### *1. violates a regulative rule of a given sport.*

Cheaters are always attempting to gain an inappropriate advantage over other sporting participants. They do so by knowingly committing acts that are specifically proscribed by the constitutive rules of a sport and further, by not accepting the normal mandated penalties for the proscribed actions. Although all cheaters are bad sportspersons, not all bad sportspersons are cheaters. The bad sportsperson, to be also considered



a cheater, must fulfil the additional characteristic of avoiding a regulative rule that should have been accepted once a particular constitutive rule was knowingly violated. What this means is that the cheater violates both the constitutive and regulative rules of a sport.

There are two ways in which a player can violate both the constitutive and regulative rules. The first is for a player to violate accidentally yet knowingly a constitutive rule of a sport but not acknowledge that violation by accepting a penalty for that action. As a demonstration, consider the basketball player who accidentally commits a foul, holding for example, yet does not receive a penalty for that action. Holding in basketball is not a specifically permitted lusus means of achieving the preliminary goal of basketball because the constitutive rules proscribe it. Because holding is proscribed by the constitutive rules of basketball, a regulative rule is included to dictate what is to transpire should holding occur. If this regulative rule is not applied, for any reason other than ignorance to the fact that a foul was committed in the first place, then the fouler has not acknowledged the initial violation and has violated a regulative rule. Assuming adequate knowledge of the rules of basketball, a player who is aware that he or she has committed a foul is also aware that a penalty should be accepted for the violation. In not acknowledging the known violation of the constitutive rule by accepting a penalty, the accidental fouler has made an attempt at gaining an advantage over another sporting participant. What this means is that the accidental fouler, being aware of the foul, attempts to gain an advantage by not taking a penalty for his or her proscribed action. As a consequence, the player has simultaneously committed an act of bad sportsmanship and an act of cheating.

It should be pointed out that had this player not recognized the fact that an initial violation of a constitutive rule occurred, he or she could not be appropriately labelled either a cheater or a bad sportsperson. Cheating requires the knowledge that a rule has been violated. This factor is assumed in the necessary and sufficient characteristics provided for cheating. The reason for this is that the accidental yet unaware fouler makes no attempt to gain an advantage. If a rule is unknowingly violated, the fact that an advantage *may have been* gained by not accepting a

penalty for that action is irrelevant. An act of cheating and/or bad sportsmanship requires the *intent* to gain an advantage, not that an advantage be gained per se.

The second way that a player can violate both the constitutive and regulative rules is for that player to violate intentionally a constitutive rule and further not to accept a penalty for that proscribed action. A player who intentionally holds in basketball, just like the player who accidentally holds, violates a constitutive rule. It is irrelevant whether the constitutive rule was violated accidentally or intentionally since holding is a proscribed means of goal attainment. The intentional fouler, again like the accidental fouler discussed above, violates a regulative rule if a penalty is not accepted for the proscribed action. In both of these cases, attempts are made at gaining advantages over fellow competitors. If not, then the players who commit known fouls in basketball would acknowledge these fouls by accepting penalties for their actions. The only reason for not accepting a penalty in a sport is to attempt to gain an advantage.

There is a one difference between the intentional fouler who does not accept a penalty and the accidental fouler who does not accept a penalty. The intentional fouler attempts to gain an advantage *first* by committing a proscribed action, and *second* by not accepting a penalty for that action. The accidental fouler, on the other hand, makes no attempt at gaining an advantage in his or her initial violation of a constitutive rule. However, being aware of his or her violation, the accidental fouler does make a deliberate attempt at gaining an advantage simply *by* not accepting a penalty for the initial violation. In this way, the accidental fouler may *inadvertently* violate a constitutive rule yet *intentionally* attempt to gain an advantage by not obeying the accompanying regulative rule.

### **Moral Judgements Associated with Actions of Fair Play, Good Sportsmanship, Bad Sportsmanship, and Cheating**

It is herein claimed that any action in sport can be judged to be morally wrong if it is not specifically permitted or allowed by the constitutive rules of a sport, *and* it is committed as an attempt to gain an advantage. Recall that an action is not “specifically permitted” by the constitutive rules of a sport if those

rules actually proscribe that action *or* if those rules are silent on the action in question. If any action fulfils this criterion, in one or the other of these two identified ways, and is intended as an attempt to gain an advantage in attaining the prelusory goal of the sport, then that action is appropriately judged to be unethical.

What this implies is that any act of bad sportspersonship is wrong. Notice that the criteria specified for an action to be considered morally wrong correspond with the necessary and sufficient characteristics for any action to be judged as one of bad sportspersonship. In all instances of bad sportspersonship an attempt is made to gain an advantage by using means not specifically permitted by the constitutive rules. These acts may actually be proscribed by the constitutive rules or may not even be considered within the rules at all. Because all actions of cheating are considered to be actions of bad sportspersonship, all acts of cheating are appropriately judged to be morally wrong. Further, because some actions judged to be fair play are simultaneously considered bad sportspersonship, some actions of fair play may be judged to be morally wrong.

If the criteria for any action in sport to be considered unethical include, first, that it is committed in an attempt to gain an advantage, and second, that it is not specifically permitted or allowed by the constitutive rules of a sport, then any action that is, one, committed as an attempt to grant an advantage, or two, specifically permitted by the constitutive rules of a sport, must be judged to be morally right. All acts of good sportspersonship are made in an attempt to improve another competitor's chances of attaining the prelusory goal or decrease one's own chances of attaining the prelusory goal. In all cases of good sportspersonship there is an attempt at granting an advantage to a fellow competitor; consequently, all such actions are judged to be ethical. Those acts of fair play that are simultaneously good sportspersonship, are consequently also judged to be morally right by association.

What is left is a moral judgement to be associated with actions of fair play that are not simultaneously either bad or good sportspersonship. Recall that these actions are committed by sport participants who always attempt to comply with the constitutive rules and

regulative rules. Every attempt is made to commit only those actions that are specified as lusory means and, when a constitutive rule is inadvertently violated, the ensuing regulative rule is always accepted. It may be that many, or even most, of these actions can be said to be made in an attempt to gain an advantage. However, if every attempt is being made to commit only those actions specifically permitted by the constitutive rules, then it must be concluded that such actions are ethical.

Beyond moral judgements in sport concerning right and wrong are those pertaining to obligation and prohibition. "On the field" conduct in any sport, as previously discussed, is governed by the constitutive and regulative rules of that sport. The constitutive rules specify the permissible and proscribed means of goal attainment while the regulative rules specify the type and severity of a penalty should a particular constitutive rule be violated. Both are necessary for any given sport to be practised. The lusory attitude describes the necessary acceptance of the constitutive rules, by any sport participant, to make a particular sport possible. Now, because the regulative rules are necessary in addition to the constitutive rules so that any given sport can be practised, these rules must also be accepted by each and every sport participant. Acceptance of these rules is demonstrated by obedience during on-the-field sport conduct; that is, in the acceptance of penalties whenever a particular constitutive rule is violated. Thus, the lusory attitude may be extended to also include the necessary acceptance of the regulative rules so that any sport may be practised.

It is obligatory that the lusory attitude be adopted during "on the field" sport because it is this attitude that makes the sport possible. What this means is that it is required that each and every sporting participant comply with the regulative rules of a particular sport as this compliance demonstrates the acceptance of the constitutive rules governing it. In other words, it is the duty of every sport participant to accept a penalty whenever that participant knowingly violates a particular constitutive rule. It is irrelevant *why* a constitutive rule might be broken, the obligation of the sport participant lies only in accepting a penalty whenever that might occur. Recall that the necessary and sufficient condition for any action to be considered fair play includes that it complies with the regulative

rules of a given sport. Since it is the obligation of every sport participant to comply with the regulative rules of sport, it can be concluded that it is the moral duty of every sport participant to play fairly. It cannot be said that it is the duty of each sport participant *not to violate* the constitutive rules of a sport. This is impossible to ensure as many constitutive rules are inadvertently violated. However, it can be stated that it is morally required *not to knowingly violate* the regulative rules of a sport. Actions of cheating are never fair play as they are in violation of regulative rules of a sport. Therefore, it is morally required that all sport participants not commit actions labelled as cheating. If it is morally required that a participant *not* commit certain actions, then those actions may be said to be *prohibited*. Therefore, cheating is *prohibited* during “on the field” sport competition.

Moral judgments concerning obligation and prohibition cannot be associated with actions of bad sportspersonship or good sportspersonship. The reason for this is that the regulative rules of sport are irrelevant in judging whether any given action falls into either one of these categories. Bad sportspersonship is defined as any action that is not specifically permitted by the constitutive rules of a given sport, and is committed in an attempt to gain an advantage over a fellow competitor in the attainment of the prelusory goal of that sport. Good sportspersonship is defined as any action made as a deliberate attempt to grant an advantage to a fellow competitor in attaining the prelusory goal of any given sport. Although it is possible that some acts of good sportspersonship comply with the regulative rules of sport, this is not a necessary characteristic for those actions to be considered good sportspersonship.

Cheating is morally prohibited; that is, it is morally required that an action in sport not violate the regulative rules of that sport. Acts of cheating are also judged to be morally wrong. Consequently, all actions of cheating are morally reprehensible. Actions of bad sportspersonship, although not morally prohibited, are judged to be morally wrong and therefore undesirable.

Fair play is morally obligatory; in other words, it is morally required that any specifically permitted or prohibited action in sport comply with the constitutive and regulative rules of that sport. This is where

confusion begins to arise. It is morally required that any action specifically permitted by the constitutive rules of a sport comply with the regulative rules of that sport. However, some of these actions are judged to represent bad sportspersonship and actions of bad sportspersonship are appropriately judged to be morally wrong and undesirable. Therefore, it would seem that some acts of fair play are judged to be morally obligatory yet wrong and undesirable and it doesn't seem appropriate to claim that an action, judged to be morally wrong, can also be required. This needs to be clarified. It is morally required that *whenever* any action violates a particular constitutive rule, the accompanying regulative rules be obeyed. Thus, it is morally required that, *if* a particular constitutive rule is intentionally violated to gain an advantage, *then* a penalty always be accepted. This does not imply that the identified action cannot also be judged to be morally wrong and undesirable.

Actions of good sportspersonship, because they go *beyond* the call of duty, cannot be claimed to be morally required. Nevertheless, such actions are often judged to be morally good and thus worthy of praise.

### **Questioning Fair Play as an Aspiration of Olympism**

Figure two (in appendix) depicts the possible inclusion of fair play as an aspiration of Olympism. However, there are obvious problems here. Recall that there are three types of actions that can be judged to be fair play: actions that are fair play in themselves, actions that are both fair play and good sportspersonship, and actions that are simultaneously fair play and bad sportspersonship. All of these actions, except for those contained within the third subcategory of fair play, are judged to be morally right. Actions judged to be both fair play and bad sportspersonship are seen to be morally wrong and thus undesirable.

From this, it should be evident that the identification of fair play as an aspiration of the philosophy of Olympism is problematic in two significant ways. The first is that such inclusion carries with it the possible implication that morally wrong and undesirable actions are part of the essence of the Olympic philosophy. The second is that it excludes any morally good and extraordinary generous actions beyond what fair play demands; that is, it excludes all actions of good

sportspersonship that are not simultaneously fair play. How can a philosophic position that purports to be aimed toward the harmonious development of humankind through sport, and toward the creation of a way of life based on a respect for universal fundamental ethical principles, justify the allowance of actions that are judged to be morally wrong and undesirable and exclude actions that are judged to be morally praiseworthy? Should Olympism not seek to eliminate morally wrong actions from *any* implication within its structural core and to include all morally generous acts within it? What can be done in response to these problems? The subsequent concluding section of this paper attempts to provide an alternative paradigm of Olympism which may lead to the discovery of resolutions and further result in change.

### **Toward an Alternative Vision of Olympism and Fair Play**

Rather than associate Olympism with fair play (as previously depicted in figure two); an alternative, and perhaps more ideal, vision for Olympism might include some limitation on what kinds of fair play are appropriate, as well as an extension to include a wider range of those sport-related actions that are seen to be morally praiseworthy yet not required. Figure three represents one version of this potential idealistic vision.

Figure three depicts an elaboration of the philosophy of Olympism to include the actions classified as good sportspersonship but not fair play. In addition, the aspiration of fair play is qualified to exclude those actions that can be judged to be fair play yet morally wrong. This alternative vision for Olympism implies that *all* actions classified as bad sportspersonship are prohibited by the Olympic sport competitor, including those that are also considered to be fair play. Good sportspersonship, on the other hand, is encouraged within Olympism.

It is the moral responsibility of all sport participants to comply with the constitutive and regulative rules of sport, therefore, for all actions that are encompassed within these rules, it is *required* that such actions be judged to be fair play. Because good sportspersonship denotes conduct over and above what is required, it is not obligatory that such conduct occur. However, because good sportspersonship is viewed as ethical and

altruistic, and thus desirable, it is *encouraged* by the alternative vision for Olympism as proposed. Earlier it was stated that acts of bad sportspersonship could not be judged to be morally prohibited because the regulative rules were irrelevant in determining whether or not any given action could be judged to be bad sportspersonship. However, it is herein claimed that the postulated alternative vision for Olympism appropriately implies that bad sportspersonship is *prohibited*. The reason for this claim is that the alternative vision herein proposed purposefully limits what is to be included within its essential core. Conduct displaying bad sportspersonship is undesirable and inappropriate within this core. Therefore, Olympism may seek to exclude bad sportspersonship specifically *prohibiting* such conduct; that is, by claiming that Olympism *requires* not committing actions that are not specifically permitted by the constitutive rules of a given sport in an attempt to gain an inappropriate advantage.

Two necessary and sufficient constraints are implied in the alternative vision for Olympism as proposed. The first is that whenever a constitutive rule is violated the corresponding regulative rule must be obeyed. This condition automatically rules out acts of cheating while requiring fair play. Recall that the requirement of fair play is interpreted as meaning that *if, and only if, any* action violates a particular constitutive rule, *then* the accompanying regulative rules must be obeyed. The second constraint is that any action, made in an attempt to gain an advantage, must be a specified lusive means. Limiting the means of goal attainment to only those means specified by the constitutive rules as permissible, serves to eliminate all acts of bad sportspersonship from the core of Olympism. These two constraints serve to highlight all acts of good sportspersonship as permissible within the core structure of Olympism, as well as all acts of fair play not simultaneously judged to be bad sportspersonship.

### **Conclusion**

Olympism is a general, imprecise, and abstract ideology. Much of this vagueness is due to the lack of clarity in meaning of each of the ideology's identified aspirations. Thus, clarification of the essential components of Olympism may serve to transport it beyond generality and vagueness. Fair play is one

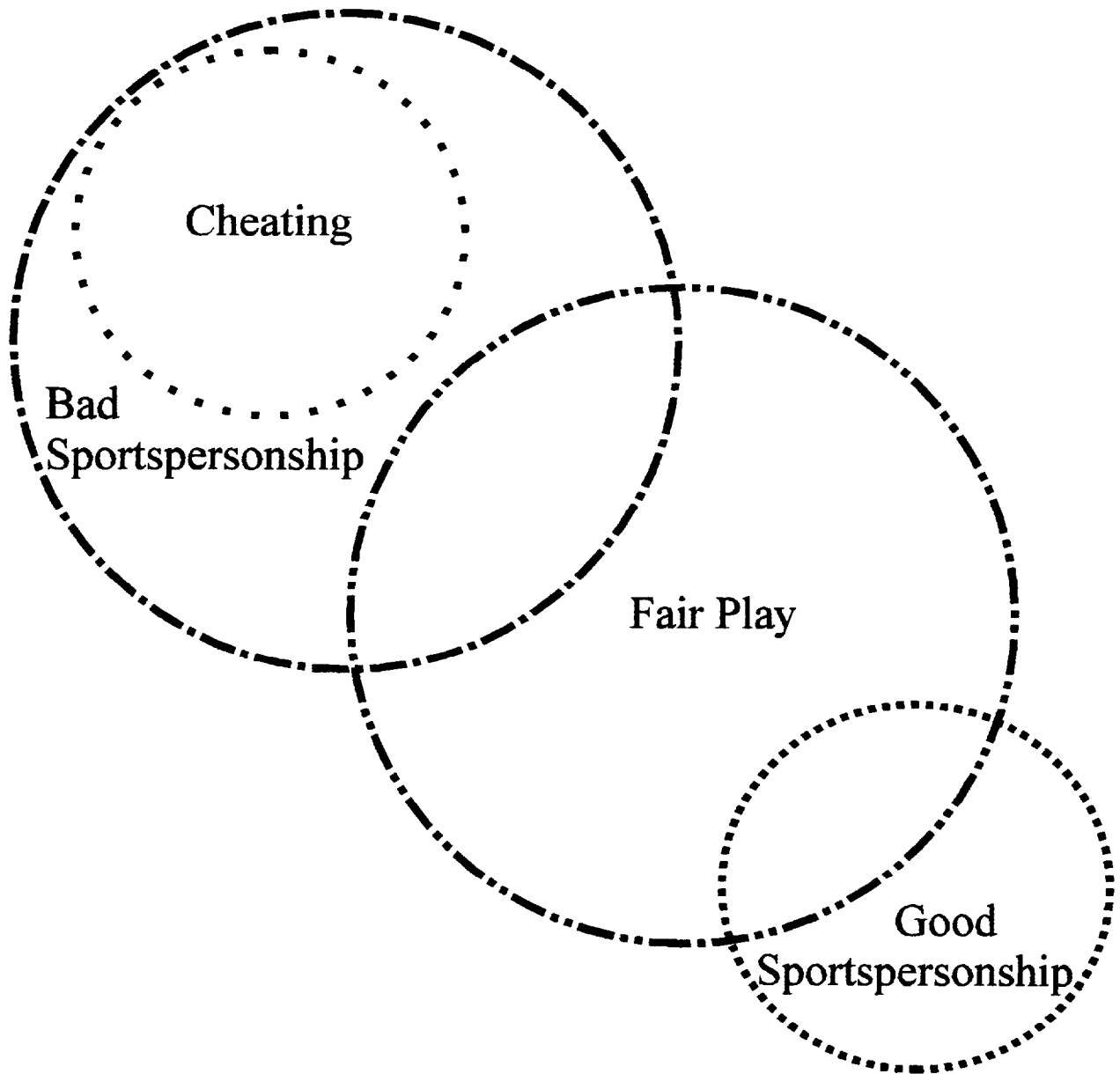
identified aspiration of Olympism. The purpose of this paper was to attempt to clarify the essential nature and meaning of **this** concept so as to begin to illuminate some essential components of the core structure of Olympism.

The identification of fair play as an aspiration of Olympism poses two significant difficulties. The first is that the philosophy of Olympism allows for actions classified *both* as fair play and bad sportspersonship. This is problematic in that all actions appropriately labelled as bad sportspersonship are commonly judged to be morally wrong and undesirable, while actions judged to be fair play are seen to be morally required. The second difficulty is that Olympism excludes many morally praiseworthy actions classified as good sportspersonship. The ideas furthered in this paper propose a restriction on the scope of Olympism so as to prohibit *all* actions of bad sportspersonship. In addition, Olympism is expanded to include *all* actions of good sportspersonship.

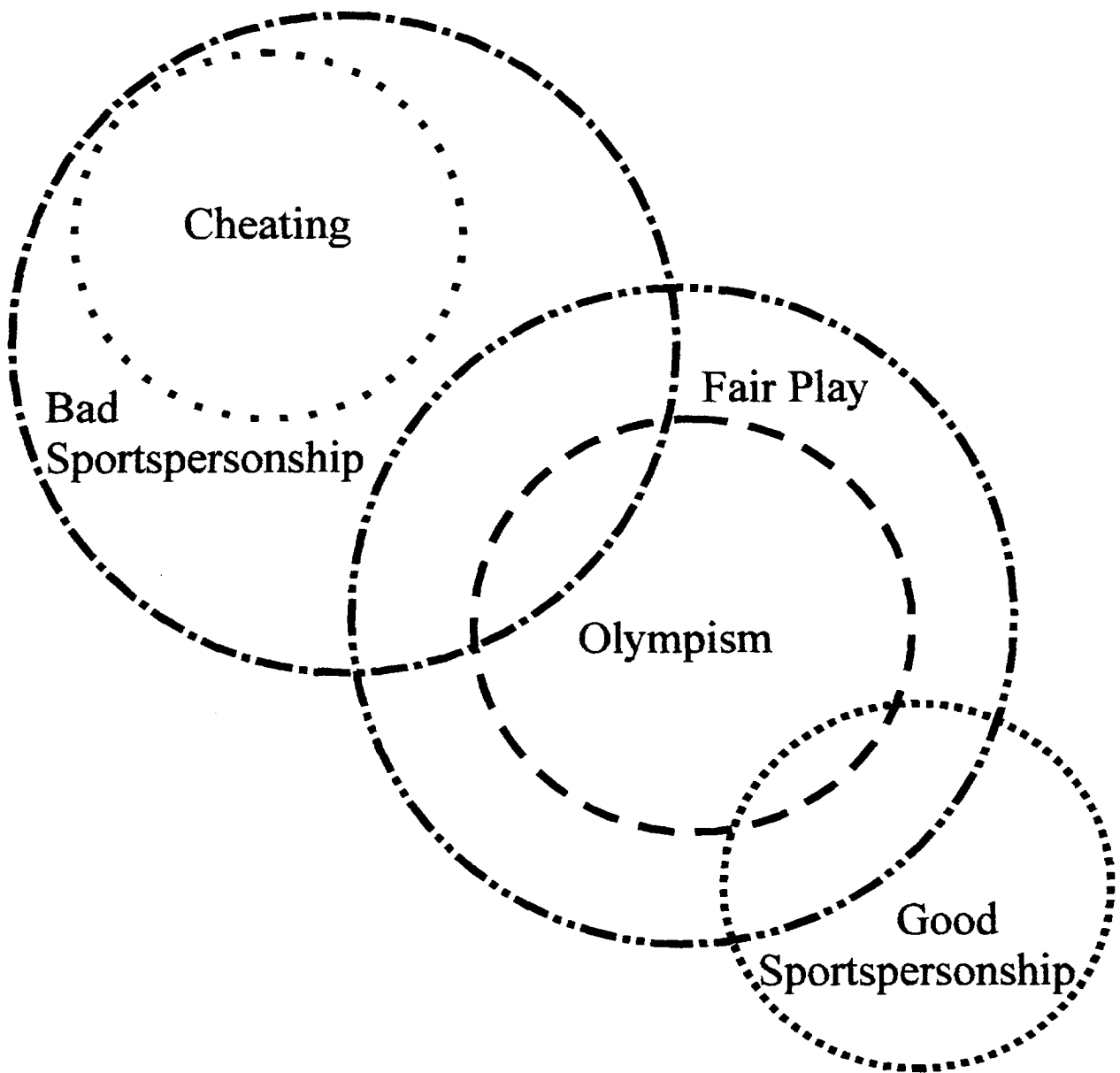
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**Figure One:  
The Interrelationship of Fair Play, Good Sportsmanship,  
Bad Sportsmanship, and Cheating Within Sport**



**Figure Two:  
Fair Play as an Aspiration of Olympism**



**Figure Three:  
An Alternative Vision of Olympism**

