

theory. I think that Kirkland's contribution would have been strengthened had its methodology been more transparent; such a justification would have provided a more robust framework to support his ambitious interpretation of Nietzsche.

The Playing Fields of Eton: Equality and Excellence in Modern Meritocracy. By Mika LaVaque-Manty. Ann Arbor:

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— Andrei S. Markovits and Lars Rensmann, *University of Michigan*

This is a thought-provoking book in which the whole comprises less than the sum of its parts. We do not mean this as a slight because the parts are true gems. Mika LaVaque-Manty commences his work by introducing the reader to controversies among Enlightenment philosophers and reformers about the role of physical culture in educating children. Notions of intrinsic human dignity and autonomy—which are physical themselves—became salient in the Enlightenment. Immanuel Kant, for instance, viewed physical exercise, that is, “gymnastics in the strict sense,” as a moral duty. We also learn that Kant, concerned with raising children to become self-directed adults, rejected leading strings, walking carts, and other artificial tools; he thought they would undermine physical self-cultivation. However, while many thinkers agreed on equality of opportunity in terms of a physical “baseline autonomy,” plenty disagreed about the implications for moral autonomy and social mobility.

Chapter 2 delineates how modern claims to equality merge uneasily, and often in unpredicted ways, with ideals of autonomy and excellence. Here, LaVaque-Manty turns to the stubborn persistence of dueling—“dueling for equality,” as he calls it—within the bourgeoisie. We learn how even Max Weber was ready to duel in defense of his wife's “good name” after she had been publicly attacked for organizing a feminist conference. The peculiar “moral economy” of dueling, so LaVaque-Manty argues, hinged on the defense of a person's full equality and dignity within broader social strata. Duels among bourgeois men articulated claims to their honor and autonomy that challenged the social order by expanding such prized values from the aristocracy to all (male) citizens. Duels are modern by dint of their quest for equality and independence. More important still, they create a “space for extralegal politics,” where individuals exercise their autonomy and establish their personal dignity.

The second part of the book features themes that are central to our own work. Here, the author turns to a world in which the progenitors of professional sports, in upper-class England and beyond, modernized wild games into, well, sports. Chapter 3 deals with their rise in the nineteenth century, which was obsessed with physical culture. The author reconstructs disputes about “proper” phys-

ical prowess mirrored in athletes—Victorians, for instance, viewed the human body as a window to the soul—just as he uncovers the controversies surrounding the emerging ideal of the modern professional in offices and on the playing fields. Yet, especially to the aristocracy, the professional constituted a threatening figure because he [*sic*] represented social mobility and the struggle for a political “change in social values about respect-worthiness” (p. 103).

Amateurism, then, was an upper-class invention to exclude members of the lower social order from elite-defined games. But as Chapter 4 suggests, the working class had its own reason to be concerned about the professionalization of sports. Many socialists viewed sports as a capitalist leisure industry driven by competition—a tool for social control and a way to distract workers from egalitarian pursuits. However, this suspicion did not prevent the creation of working-class sports organizations that turned leisure activities into a political struggle for dignity and “made emancipation *physical*” (p. 115). Thus, sports emerged as a venue to disprove the alleged superiority of the ruling class by defeating it on the field.

The book's third part starts with a discussion of the contemporary politics of disability sports. LaVaque-Manty asks under which terms there can be a right to meaningful competition, given “that there are differences that make a difference in terms of excellence” (p. 133). Might “separate but equal” principles be the solution? He suggests that questions about the rules and classifications of competition cannot be settled by anything other than contingent reasons. Rules are, first and foremost, a matter of consensual agreement among participants.

Nothing, in our view, surpasses the book's final chapter featuring “the political theory of doping.” In it, LaVaque-Manty discusses performance-enhancing pharmaceuticals, an integral part of twentieth-century sports. The role of pharmaceuticals in athletic contests once again illustrates deep tensions in our modern thinking about autonomy, fairness, and equality of opportunity. The boundaries of “artificial” remain context dependent but never arbitrary. The use of drugs presents a problem in a world where fairness constitutes the most salient norm of sports. Thus, we are much less bothered by doping's many adverse effects than we are by its alleged violation of our sense of fairness.

LaVaque-Manty's study engages diverse philosophical and societal debates about physical culture and sports. In so doing, it shows not only how these seemingly peripheral controversies reflect the emergence of modern political values of equality, autonomy, and excellence. The study also demonstrates how sports furnish a crucial arena in which we resolve tensions between these ever-contested ideals outside “official” political institutions. *The Playing Fields of Eton* offers a multitude of wondrous details and fresh, sometimes unsettling insights. Above all, the author makes political theorizing intriguing—and relevant. The

book's language is clear, even elegant. Eschewing pretentious terminology, this study convincingly demonstrates that a simple, often colloquial, writing style offers the best medium for discussing the most complex of concepts in a fruitful manner.

But what of the book's whole? We discern four major points. First, the study aptly shows that the meanings of modern political values such as equality, fairness, and excellence—and the relationships among them—are not fixed but contingent and path dependent. Indeed, they exhibit “indispensable fictions” that are profoundly conventional and controversial and that get settled in ever new ways. Second, the book demonstrates that political norms always involve struggles and competition in civil society. Here is the locus in which ideals such as equality of opportunity emerge, become contested, and are (re)defined. While, as LaVaque-Manty argues, a stable democratic state makes it easier to raise claims to political and human dignity than a weak or undemocratic one, it can never make people autonomous and stipulate their respect-worthiness; this requires human agency. Third, the study informs us that we must pay attention to the scope of constraints set by “nature.” It is clear that natural constraints exist, but their exact nature remains forever part of political controversy (gender struggles being a case in point). There certainly exists no neutral boundary between the natural and the human side of sports. Fourth, the author does suggest that modernity's cherished, yet often conflicting, ideals of equality and excellence can coexist. They are not zero sum but can be mutually reinforcing. Excellence in sports and elsewhere is necessarily positional, as competition and difference are part of its constitutive norm. But equality also furnishes one of the most compelling preconditions of excellence.

All good and fine—but is this all there is to the fascinating arguments that this book displays? We find it simpatico not to be bombarded by prefabricated omniscience, and we agree that it is not the role of the contemporary political theorist to act as a philosopher king. Abstaining from thick normative prescriptions is a good thing. LaVaque-Manty deserves much praise for relativizing our modern concepts and ideals without being a political relativist. Yet precisely because of the book's overall quality, we were a bit disappointed by its circumspection about getting at least some normative clarity as to where the author stands on some of these important issues.

For example, we detect LaVaque-Manty's faint melancholic praise for the idea of “honor,” which in our contemporary world no longer has much cachet as a political ideal. But he never delineates with his otherwise impeccable clarity what exactly honor—or any of the other qualities highlighted in this book—means to him (and should mean to us) in the here and now. Likewise, he states that women's excellence as athletes shows that “emas-

culatation” does not entail any “dumbing down” of quality and competition, and that some laments about such are deeply problematic. But he fails to draw further consequences from these insights. Also, he finds claims that ignore the inherently competitive nature of sports “politically unfortunate.” However, we would like to learn what the author values about meritocracy. True enough, things are contingent, much in flux, and we appreciate any scholar's normative modesty. Yet precisely because we find LaVaque-Manty such an insightful thinker, we would have appreciated reading his views on these matters with a bit more boldness. In a way, he is aiming too low: In light of the exciting material presented, we view the cautious goal to “better understand our own values” somewhat dissatisfying.

The work's strength also constitutes its weakness. Still, this is a rich book. LaVaque-Manty takes the study of sports from the margins to the center of political theory. His work initiates a new dialogue about the tensions of modern democracy's ideals. He thereby moves the way we think about politics literally into different public arenas.

Gaming the World: How Sports Are Reshaping

Global Politics and Culture. By Andrei S. Markovits and Lars Rensmann. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010. 368p. \$29.95. doi:10.1017/S1537592710003749

— Mika LaVaque-Manty, *University of Michigan*

If your friends' Facebook behavior is at all like that of mine, you will find the conclusions of *Gaming the World* compelling. Facebook status updates during the recent soccer World Cup, regardless of the location of one's friends, seemed to confirm that in “postindustrial societies today, professional team sports are not just a crucial part of (global) popular culture but also significant agents of cultural change and global communication” (p. 26).

Consider this: By watching Facebook status updates, you could tell that the soccer World Cup does grip the world's attention, as Andrei S. Markovits and Lars Rensmann argue. Moreover, one can tell that fandom can be local and simultaneously cross national and ethnic boundaries (Chapter 2). That many Americans seem to breathe and eat and live soccer during the World Cup but *not* at other times, however, supports their argument that soccer's current status in North America is still merely “Olympianized.” That means it is an object of immense interest every four years but not at other times (Chapter 3). And, finally, that one can make these observations on Facebook is inextricably tied to the authors' argument that this is a phenomenon of “the second globalization” (p. 26): It is fostered by the economic, political, and technological developments of the last couple of decades. It is significant, though, as the book shows, that this kind of globalization is a *cultural-political* phenomenon and not reducible to political economy.