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Against Sexual Discrimination in Sports



Torbjörn Tännsjö

Introduction

Sexual discrimination is a widespread and recalcitrant phenomenon. However, in Western societies, explicit sexual discrimination, when exposed, is seldom defended straightforwardly. There is one remarkable exception to this, however. Within sports sexual discrimination is taken for granted. It is assumed that, in many sports contexts, it is appropriate to discriminate (distinguish) between women and men and to have men competing exclusively with men, and women competing exclusively with women.¹ Even by radical feminists this kind of sexual discrimination has rarely been questioned. This is strange. If sexual discrimination is objectionable in most other areas of our lives, why should it be acceptable within sports?

The thesis of this chapter is that it is not. Even within sports, sexual discrimination is morally objectionable. No sexual discrimination should take place within sports. At least, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and the leading national sports organisations should give it up.

The reasons for giving up sexual discrimination within sports, and for allowing individuals of both sexes to compete with each other, is simple. In sports it is crucial that the best person wins. Then sexual differences are simply irrelevant. If a female athlete can perform better than a male athlete, this female athlete should be allowed to compete with, and beat, the male athlete. If she cannot beat a certain male athlete, so be it. If the competition was fair, she should be able to face the fact that he was more talented. It is really as simple as that. Sexual discrimination within sports does not have any better rationale than sexual discrimination in any other fields of our lives.

From: Values in sport: Elitism, nationalism, gender equality and the scientific manufacture of winners, Torbjörn Tännsjö and Claudio Tamburrini, Copyright 2000 Taylor & Francis. Adapted by permission of Taylor & Francis Books UK.

However, arguments against giving up sexual discrimination within sports are not hard to come by, and in this chapter I will focus on such arguments. My thrust here is that, in various different ways, these arguments against abolition of sexual discrimination within sports are flawed. However, I will not restrict my argumentation to a discussion of arguments for sexual discrimination.

One important argument against sexual discrimination, apart from the general observation that, from the point of view of sports itself it is irrelevant, will also be developed.

These are the main arguments *for* sexual discrimination within sports—some of them, no doubt, striking an indistinguishable (yet false) chord of special concern for women:

- Sexual discrimination within sports is no different from the use of, say, different weight classes in certain sports, intended to make the result *less* predictable. We use sexual discrimination because we seek, to use Warren Fraleigh's term, 'the sweet tension of uncertainty of outcome'.

- If women and men compete, and women defeat men, then this will cause violent responses from men. So we had better retain the discrimination.

- If we give up sexual discrimination in sports, then probably all women will find (because on average they perform poorly in comparison with men) that they are always defeated by some men. This will be discouraging for women in general and for female athletes in particular.

- Female sports are different from male sports. They represent a unique value, and if we gave up discrimination this unique value would be foregone. A similar argument can be devised with reference to male sports, of course.

I will discuss these arguments in order. After having done so I will give my positive argument in defence of giving up sexual discrimination, which is that the rationale behind sexual discrimination is simply too good. If we consistently hold on to it, we are led to all sorts of discrimination which, upon closer examination, we do not want to accept. So a kind of *reductio ad absurdum* leads us to the conclusion that sexual discrimination within sports should be given up.

I conclude the chapter by summing up the main tenets of my argument and by proposing, constructively, that sport as a phenomenon should not be conceived of as static. A development of various different sports takes place, and has to take place. We should consciously mould the phenomenon of sports in a certain desirable direction. We should mould sports in a direction of more moderation (in ways indicated by Sigmund Loland). If we do, then we will be able to abolish sexual discrimination altogether within sports, thereby gaining a great deal from the point of view of gender equality and fairness, without having to pay any price at all for this timely reform.

If sexual discrimination within sports is abolished, this will not only be an advance from the point of view of feminism and the women's rights movement, I conclude, but from the point of view of sport itself. For the abolishment of sexual discrimination may render natural a development of sport in a direction which is, even if we put the matter of sexual discrimination to one side, of the utmost importance for sport itself, conceived of broadly as a cultural phenomenon. It may well be the case that, unless some sports develop in a direction where women and men *can* compete safely on equal terms, then there will be no future for these sports at all—or so I will argue, at any rate.

Sexual Discrimination As no Different to the Use of Weight Classes?

When I have proposed that sexual discrimination within sports should be abolished, I have sometimes met the objection that sexual discrimination in some sports is no different to the use of weight classes in, say, boxing. We have such weight classes in order to ascertain that the outcome of a competition is not too easily predictable. This (evasive) argumentative strategy is completely misplaced, however. I have no objection to weight classes in boxing and some other sports. As a matter of fact, I think we should develop this kind of system even within other sports. There should be weight classes even in running, and height classes in basketball, and so forth. Such classes are constructed with reference to crucial characteristics of the individual athlete, characteristics with relevance for the capacity to perform well in the sport in question, and they are created in the interest of making the outcome of the competitions less predictable. It is crucial that the classes are constructed on the grounds of characteristics actually exhibited by the people who get sorted with reference to the characteristics in question, and that these characteristics are of *immediate* relevance to the capacity to perform well within the sport in question.

Sexual discrimination is different: it takes place on the ground that, *on average*, women perform less well than men in certain sports. This is objectionable. First of all, this putative fact, that women perform less well than men, is hard to ascertain beyond reasonable doubt. Perhaps this is a mere statistical accident. Perhaps it is due to socially constructed gender differences rather than biological sexual differences and, hence, could be abolished. And even if the statistical correlation is due to biological sexual differences (more below about sexual differences, and how to define them), and even if it has a law-like character, it is still only a *statistical* difference. It is only indirectly, then, that sex is relevant to the outcome of a fair competition. It is relevant in the sense that it predisposes, statistically, for more or less of a certain characteristic, crucial to performing well in a certain sport. But then, if we should discriminate at all, we should discriminate in terms of this characteristic itself and not in terms of sex.

This means that some women, who are not (statistically speaking) 'typical', perform better than many (most) men do. They do so because to a considerable degree they possess the characteristics that are crucial to winning, and possess more of these characteristics than do most men. Consequently, there are some rare women who perform better than most men in the sport in question.

It is 'discrimination', then, not only in a factual sense (in the way the term is used in this chapter), when a competent woman, who can and wants to defeat a certain man, is prohibited from doing so, on the ground that women in general do not perform as well as men in general. But it is also 'discrimination' in a *moral* sense, and such discrimination is morally reprehensible.

So while there is nothing objectionable in having weight classes in boxing (a sport in which weight is of direct relevance to winning), it is objectionable to have sexual classes (sex is only indirectly and statistically relevant to winning in boxing).

If boxing should be allowed at all, it should be allowed in a form where individuals of both sexes can compete safely with each other. To render this possible we would have to retain weight classes, of course. We may also have to make some other improvements of this noble art of self-defence, but I will not elaborate on this point in the present context. However, I conjecture that, unless boxing can be performed

in a manner where men and women can compete safely against each other, there will (and should) not be any such thing as boxing in the future.

Sexual Discrimination Because of Male Aggressiveness?

What I have just said connects with a second argument against abolishing sexual discrimination within sports. Not only boxing, but also many other sports, are aggressive and involve a considerable amount of physical contact and encounter between competing athletes. Now, if women and men are allowed to compete against each other, and if some women defeat some men, then this would trigger violent responses from these men, or so the argument goes. In order to protect women against such outbursts of male aggressiveness, we had better let women and men compete apart from each other.

Is this a good argument? I admit that there is something to it, and it points at a real danger. However, it would be wrong to surrender to the argument, for there is another way of responding to the phenomenon of male aggressiveness against women. I am thinking here of the possibility of rendering impossible the aggressive response. This could be done if the rules of the game in question were changed. Aggressive assault on competitors could be punished much more severely than it is in many sports currently. One physical assault could mean a red card—and the aggressive male competitor would be out.

The rules of the game could be modified in other ways as well, so that the assault would be made more difficult to perform in the first place. Then there would be little need for punishment. And the sports could be modified to render aggressiveness within the sports, even within the limits that are permitted, less rewarding and also never decisive.

Take tennis as an example. In modern tennis, the service is of enormous importance: an efficient service presupposes a lot of physical strength from the server. At the same time, an effective service tends to render the sport rather boring: it kills the game by taking the elegance out of it. An obvious solution to this problem would be to introduce a rule saying that a service is not successful unless the receiver has successfully returned it. Until it has been successfully returned, the server is granted a new opportunity. This would certainly reintroduce certain desirable qualities in tennis, and at the same time such a change in the rules of the game would mean better possibilities for women to compete successfully with men. Men would not defeat women merely by virtue of their superior strength and aggressiveness.

Were all this to be accomplished, I think we could make great strides in the general aim for sexual equality in society. *Some* women can defeat *most* men who perform any sport. Because of sexual prejudices, this is a hard lesson for a man to learn. It is hard even for me, a middle-aged man who regularly goes jogging, to be defeated now and then by a female jogger. As a matter of fact, I hate the defeat, and I go to considerable lengths to avoid it—but I sometimes fail. When I do, I get angry. I am enlightened enough to realise, however, when I do get defeated by a female jogger, that this teaches me a lesson. It is good for my mental development to be defeated by female runners: it teaches me to control my anger and it shows me something about the relation between the sexes. Some sexual stereotypes and (my) prejudices get exposed in the most efficient manner.

If this is correct, then we have good reasons not to surrender to this male aggressiveness argument regarding sexual discrimination within sports. We should allow

women to defeat men in sports, and we should render it impossible for men physically to punish the women who do defeat them.

If we do so, in the long run certain sexual prejudices will hopefully wither.

Women Will Be Discouraged?

The response to the argument relating to male aggressiveness may be considered overly optimistic. It is true that in most sports there are some women who can beat most men, but it is also true that in many sports some men can beat all women. So, even if it is a good thing from the point of view of sexual equality when a woman beats a man, is it not a bad thing, from the same point of view, when the best women in certain sports find that they cannot compete with the best men? Wouldn't this fact be disappointing for these women?

Well, I suppose this depends on whether (due to sexual differences) it is *impossible* for these women to defeat the best man, or whether there is something that can be done about this fact (the problem lies not in the sexual differences themselves but in socially constructed gender differences, which could be abolished). If there is something that can be done about it, if the problem is socially constructed gender differences rather than sexual differences, then these women may view the fact that they get defeated as a challenge. And they may take it as their mission to abolish the gender bias within sports.

This is basically the case in many other fields of society. There are men within certain sciences and arts, such as mathematics and musical composition, who perform better than all women (there is no female Gödel or Bach, for example). Should this be disappointing for women? I think not. I think rather it should be considered a real challenge, for we do not believe that it is because of their biological sex that no women solved logical problems like Gödel or composed like Bach. Typically, the lack of outstanding female logicians and composers is due to socially constructed gender differences, not to biological sexual differences as such.

There are reasons why women do not perform as well as some men do in these fields, of course, and these reasons, which are to do with gender rather than sexual differences, should come under close scrutiny; Angela Schneider describes many of the obstacles that meet female athletes. Such obstacles, when identified and publicly recognised, should come under severe attack. Schneider has correctly observed that these obstacles are the outcome of a deeply entrenched ideal, according to which, from inception, 'the ancient and modern Olympic Games, and the ideal Olympic athlete, applied specifically and exclusively to men'. This is how she describes this ideal:

From Pausanias' references to dropping women from the side of a cliff if they even observed the ancient Olympic Games, to de Coubertin's ideal that the goals that were to be achieved by the athletes through participation in the Olympic Games were not appropriate for women (de Coubertin 1912), one can easily see that the place of women in sport has been, for the most part, foreign at best. It is this basic idea, the idea that sport (or sometimes even physical activity), particularly high-level competitive sport, is somehow incompatible with what women are, or what they should be, that must dominate any discussion of the unique issues for women in sport. Philosophies of ideal sport, and ideal women, lie behind discussions of permitting women to compete, of choosing the types of sport in which women can compete, in developing judging standards for adjudicated (as opposed to refereed) sports—contrast gymnastics and basketball—in attitudes to aggression, and competition, and indeed to the very existence of women's sport as a separate entity at all.

I believe that, if such obstacles are eliminated, if new weight and length classes are introduced in many sports, if the rules are changed so as to render it impossible for aggressive athletes to punish their competitors, and if severe punishments are introduced for violations of the rules, then women can actually compete successfully and safely with men in many sports. In fact, they do so today in some sports, such as some shooting events, all the equestrian sports, parachuting, and so forth, and the list of these sports is growing all the time—and is likely to continue to get longer in the future.

But what if this belief is not borne out by realities? What if there are some sports where the elite is made up of men exclusively—would this be disappointing to women?

Yes, of course it would. But, for all that, this seems to me to be a kind of disappointment that should be acceptable as a natural part of life. Sexual distinctions are genetic in origin, and so are racial distinctions. After all, there may be all kinds of genetic distinctions of importance for how on average people of various different kinds perform in sports, and one of these is race. Perhaps black Africans perform better on average than Caucasians in some sports. This is disappointing to white people, of course, but is no reason to introduce racial discrimination within sports. But if this is not a reason to introduce racial discrimination in sports, then we should not retain sexual discrimination either.

To elaborate this point, allow me to return to the comparison with the sciences and the arts and take my own subject, philosophy, as an example. Women are poorly represented, not only among logicians and composers, but also within the philosophical world in general. Most people believe that the reason for this is to do with gender rather than with sex, and this is what I happen to believe. It is because women have been met with the wrong expectations, when they have taken up philosophy, it is because they have not been given proper credit for their achievements, and so forth, that they have had difficulties in performing well within philosophy. However, what if it turned out that, even after this kind of gender bias had been successfully abolished, women were still poorly represented within (a certain field of, say) philosophy, would this be disappointing for women?

Perhaps it would be (to some women), but then I think it should be possible for them to live with this kind of disappointment. It would be absurd, for this reason, to have sexual discrimination within philosophy and to have female positions and special journals for women in these fields of philosophy specially designed for them because they do not perform well enough to hold standard positions or to publish in ordinary journals within (these fields of) philosophy.

Maybe it would not be at all disappointing to (other) women however, if it turned out that a kind of philosophy exists that is just poorly suited to the female brain or heart. Another reaction from women (and many men) upon finding this out could be the following. If this philosophy is essentially without appeal to one of the sexes, if it does not fit women, then this indicates not that there is anything wrong with women but that there is something wrong with this kind of philosophy.

We could adopt the same stance towards the more plausible putative fact that there are some sports that simply suit (on average) men better than women; that is, we could say of these sports, 'So much worse for them!'

One of my colleagues, who likes to go to further extremes than I do,² has objected to my argument in the following way. If we should abolish sexual discrimination within sports, he asks, why not abolish species discrimination as well? Why not have men competing with animals? Why not have Carl Lewis running over 100m against a hunting leopard?

Well, the reason not to arrange such competitions is not only (or mainly) that it would be a difficult task to arrange them, or that such competitions are hardly likely to be rewarding to animals. Perhaps the difficulties could be overcome and perhaps some animals would take some pleasure in competing with men. The main reason for not arranging such competitions is that *no man can beat any* (healthy) hunting leopard. This is not merely a matter of a statistical generalisation. If there were a system similar to weight classes for running, then people and hunting leopards would have to compete in different classes.

However, if the differences between men and hunting leopards were merely statistical, so that some men could beat some hunting leopards, then I am not sure that competitions between men and beasts would seem so outlandish; after all, they used to have such competitions during antiquity. It is a delicate question for the animal liberation movement, of course, whether they should promote (because of an interest in abolishing species discrimination) such competitions or oppose them (because they may fear that the animals would not take pleasure in them).

To return to the human case. It is hard to assess finally how important the statistical genetic differences are between human beings within sports. And the assessment should not be made in any simplistic manner, where gender gets conflated with sex, nor should it be taken for granted that sport is a static phenomenon. The sports evolve, to some extent in a natural way, and to some extent as the result of our active and intentional intervention. If we do not like the fact that statistical genetic differences, such as sexual or racial differences, are decisive within sports, there is a lot we can do about it.

This leads to the next argument.

Female Sports Represent a Unique Value

It may seem that female sports are different from male sports, and so they represent a unique value. To give up sexual discrimination would therefore be like giving up valuable existing sports. It would be like giving up soccer or baseball, or basketball or hurdles in running.

How should we assess this argument? The answer to it is that, largely speaking, it is false and, to the extent that there is a grain of truth in it, this grain of truth does not warrant the conclusion that we should retain sexual discrimination in sports. Rather, it does warrant the conclusion that many aspects of sports need to be reformed, so that 'female' qualities are exchanged for 'male' ones.

Let me first comment on the major aspect of this objection—the mere falsity of it. In many ways, female sports are no different from male sports.

To a considerable and frightening extent, in many sports the male is simply the ideal. The good athlete is the hunter, the warrior, the man. And the conception of the masculine warrior is a narrow and simplistic one. In most athletic sports, Achilles could easily beat Ulysses. The cunning of the latter counts for nothing, whereas the superior strength of the former is decisive. This is also true when women take up these sports, and this is why women have to compete against each other and not against men. To put it drastically, therefore, I think it is fair to say that, in many sports, women compete against each other in masculinity, narrowly conceived. It is hard to find any special feminine qualities in *such* competitions.

What is the appropriate reaction to this obvious but little-publicised fact? Of course, this is hard to say. Some may find it unobjectionable. For my own part, I have

to admit that I don't: I find the fact simply degrading, to both women and men. I also find that, if some women do want to compete in masculinity, why should they restrict themselves to a competition against each other? Why not compete also with men? After all, the best among them are capable of defeating most men even in masculinity. So why not do so?

It is not far-fetched to believe that, even if we *were* to do away with all kinds of gender bias within sports, in many sports a genuine sexual bias would remain. Statistically, men *are* better than women in many existing sports. I will return to this fact below and to the question of what to do about it.

However, there may still be a grain of truth in saying that women's sports in some aspects have unique qualities, I think, then of qualities that have less to do with mere physical strength and more to do with inventiveness, sensibility, cooperation, strategy, playfulness, wit, and so forth. There may be more room for these qualities in women's competitions. And, to the extent that this is true, I think we are dealing with genuine and unique (female) qualities. However, there exists an obvious and better way of retaining these qualities than to retain sexual discrimination within sports. These qualities should be introduced in *all* sorts of sport, and they should not only be added to existing qualities, but, in many cases, be exchanged for existing qualities.

It may be fruitful to speak of these unique qualities, which I suspect are more frequent in women's sport than in men's sport, as qualities of—to use Sigmund Loland's term—'moderation.' Moderation in terms of what, though? Here I would like to be a bit more specific, in terms of gender, than Loland is himself. The object of the moderation, that which ought to be moderated, is arrogant outbursts of (male) aggressiveness and (mere) strength. These phenomena need not go away altogether, to be sure, moderated in the direction of values such as inventiveness, sensitivity, cooperation, playfulness and wit.

I think we are facing a happy coincidence here. Moderation is of great and growing importance within sports, not only as a means of rendering possible the abolition of sexual discrimination, but also as a means of saving sports as such, as a cultural phenomenon, from the most obvious threat to its continued existence.

The observation that moderation and sexual equality should go together is in accordance with a suggestion put forward in Jane English's much-discussed article, 'Sex Equality in Sports', even though (eventually) English reaches the conclusion that sexual discrimination within sports is necessary. She suggests that we develop a variety of sports in which an array of physical types can expect to excel:

We tend to think of the possible sports as a somewhat fixed group of those currently available. Yet even basketball and football are of very recent invention. Since women have been virtually excluded from all sports until the last century, it is appropriate that some sports using women's specific traits are now developing, such as synchronized swimming.

A similar view has been put forward by Iris Marion Young, with reference to Mary E. Duquin. Young describes Duquin's position eloquently as follows:

Androgyny in sport means for her the incorporation of virtues typically associated with women into the symbols and practices of sport—such as expressiveness and grace—along with a corresponding decline in the present overly aggressive and instrumentalist aspects of sport which are typically associated with masculinity.

Sports without moderation means competition in aspects such as mere strength. The problem with this is not that there is no public interest in competitions in strength; I think there is too *much* interest in such competitions. The problem with our fascination with strength is that it has a 'fascistoid' value basis. A further problem, of importance in the present context, is that mere strength, or the disposition for it, is a very simple and congenital quality, so mere strength is what we could call a *non-moral* virtue: either you have it or you don't. Moreover, there is every reason to believe that, not only is the disposition for strength congenital, but it has a rather simple *genetic explanation*. If this conjecture is borne out by realities, this means trouble for sports. For, certainly, once we can identify the genes for strength, which are really genes for winning in many existing sports, then it becomes possible genetically, not only to pre-select the winners, something that may seem frightening as such, but to *design* them. And, considering the enormous amounts of money and prestige that are invested in winning in sport, once the genetic design of winners becomes possible, it will take place. However, *if* we do design the winners genetically, then the public interest in sports competitions is likely to wither, or so I believe.

Genetic engineering, once it becomes possible, will be just as inevitable in sports as doping—unless we can render its application to sports impossible. And a way of rendering the genetic design of winners impossible is to change sports and to allow *moral* virtues to become crucial, for there are hardly any genes for inventiveness, sensitivity, cooperation, playfulness and wit in sports. All these virtues are true moral virtues: they can be learned (through training, to follow Aristotle) and, since there is a use for them outside the sports arenas as well, there is a point in learning them. To a considerable extent it is fair to say that these moral virtues, in contradistinction to the non-moral ones in sports, are typically 'female' (in the sense that there exist more of them in female sports than in male sports). So, at the same time, when we introduce more moderation into sports, in order to save sports from going extinct, we abolish the rationale behind sexual discrimination in sports, and we deepen the inherent value of sports as a cultural phenomenon.

All this means that, when we admire the winners of reformed (moderated) sports, our fascination for the winners will no longer bear a similarity to fascism, which is certainly an additional gain to be made.

Once we have reformed sports, by introducing more moderation into existing branches, and by adding new games to (and subtracting old ones from) the IOC list, we may safely give up sexual discrimination within sports and allow men and women to compete against each other on equal terms.

A Reductio Ad Absurdum of Sexual Discrimination

We have seen that the standard arguments in defence of sexual discrimination within sports are weak. Let me just add one more positive argument in defence of abolishing sexual discrimination; an argument that is a reductio ad absurdum of the rationale behind sexual discrimination.

What are we to test for, when we test whether a certain athlete qualifies as female or male? Three options are open to us. We could test for genitalia, for gender, or for chromosomal constitution.

There are obvious difficulties with all three options. However, we need to stick to some of them, otherwise we will not be able to guard ourselves against athletes who want to cheat—against athletes who are really men, but prefer to compete with women under the false pretext that they *are* women. Moreover, if we have a system of sexual discrimination, and do not perform tests, there is a positive risk that women who excel in sports are being mistakenly suspected of really being men rather than women. These excellent women need the chance to reject, once and for all, these kinds of rumours and false allegations, and only efficient tests can accomplish this task.

There are many problems connected with testing for genitalia. First of all, the criterion is vague. We are operating here with a continuum. After all, even if rare, there are examples of hermaphroditism. Second, it is not clear that the test for genitalia is a valid one. In what sense are genitalia relevant? In what sports *could* genitalia be relevant? I blush when I seek an answer to that question. Finally, genitalia can easily be manipulated: such tests are bound to be inefficient when it comes to people who (in an attempt to cheat) are prepared to undergo surgery.

The problems associated with testing for gender are even more obvious. First of all, this criterion is extremely vague. Perhaps the test should be the subjective sexual identification of the person in question, but this identification may be indeterminate. Furthermore, it may change over time. And then, once again, it is difficult to see any validity of such a test. In what sense does gender matter within sports? Finally, like a test for the appropriate genitalia, a test for appropriate gender would be only too easily fiddled with.

What, then, about chromosomal tests? These tests are what we rely on today, and I suppose that if we want to retain a system of sexual discrimination within sports, then chromosomal tests are what we have to rely on even in the future. The problem with chromosomal tests is not that they are vague or that they are easily manipulated. They rate high on measurements of specificity and sensitivity, if conducted in a meticulous way. They are also fairly easily conducted, they are not very invasive and, from the point of personal integrity, they are certainly less intrusive than tests for the appropriate genitalia.

Are chromosomal tests valid? Well, if we want to find variables that statistically speaking, correlate with sports performances, chromosomal tests may well be valid in some sports. I have argued that we should not discriminate on these grounds but, for the sake of the argument (for the sake of our *reductio ad absurdum*) let us assume that we should. Then a problem with our sex chromosomes is that, even if most people conform to a typical male constitution (they have the genotype XY) or a typical female constitution (they have the genotype XX), not everyone does. There are individuals with only one X chromosome (they have the genotype XO; that is, they suffer from what has been called Turner's syndrome), and there are individuals with two X chromosomes and one Y chromosome (they have the genotype XXY; that is, they suffer *from* what has been called Klinefelter's syndrome). Even these aberrations are of interest here. For it is natural to believe that, statistically speaking, people (women?) suffering from Turner's syndrome perform, in many sports, less efficiently than do 'ordinary' women, and it is also likely that, statistically speaking, people (men?) suffering from Klinefelter's syndrome perform less efficiently than do 'ordinary' men in many sports. There may also be sports where some of these groups have, statistically speaking, a slight advantage. This may have been true of a well-known Polish sprinter, Ewa Klobukowska, who turned out to have the

chromosomal pattern XXY. This person may well have had an advantage in certain sports over most people with the XX chromosomal pattern because of her extra Y chromosome (she held the world record for the women's 100m).

All this means that, if we want to be consistent, and if we want to be true to the rationale behind sexual discrimination, we should go a step further and even introduce new discrimination categories (people suffering from Turner's syndrome and Klinefelter's syndrome, and people exhibiting other aberrations such as XYY, to mention just three examples). And, as was alluded to above, we may even have to introduce other kinds of genetic discrimination, such as racial discrimination, within sports, for different human races may on average perform more or less efficiently in certain sports.

However, this may strike most of us as downright absurd. But if it does, it means that we must give up the premise that led us to this conclusion. We must give up the very rationale behind the idea of sexual discrimination within sports. We must drop the assumption we adopted, for the sake of the argument—that it is appropriate to discriminate on grounds of genetic characteristics that, statistically speaking, favour or disfavour certain kinds of individuals in a certain sport.

We could add an even simpler argument to this. If we have sexual discrimination in sports, then (in order to avoid cheating and fraud) we need to have tests for sex. We have seen that these tests need to be chromosomal tests. However, it runs counter to a highly plausible idea of genetic integrity that information about a person's genetic constitution should ever be forced upon him or her (Schneider and Skirstad both seem to agree about this). We have a right *not* to know our genetic makeup, if we do not *want* to know it. Compulsory chromosomal tests for athletes violate this right.³

Conclusion

I have argued that, if we reform sports in the direction indicated by Sigmund Loland, and introduce more moderation into all kinds of sports, then we may safely give up sexual discrimination within sports. This is something that the IOC and the national sports organisations should do. And even if moderation in sports will prove to be utopian, I think we should give up sexual discrimination. But then the appropriate reaction from women may be to turn their backs on those kinds of elitist sports where males (on average and for simple genetic reasons) have the upper hand.

Certainly, this abolition of sexual discrimination is consistent with there remaining a possibility for those who like to arrange sports competitions for one sex exclusively, just as there exists a possibility for arranging special sports competitions for certain races, political beliefs or sexual orientations. However, in more official settings there should exist a strict ban on *all* such sorts of (from the point of view of sports itself) irrelevant discriminations. It should be incumbent upon the sports organisations themselves to make sure that such a ban becomes a reality. And it should also be a condition of obtaining public funding that a sport organisation does not discriminate between women and men.

The reform of sports indicated here does not guarantee that there are no branches where, statistically speaking, men will perform better than women (just as there may exist sports where, say, black people perform better than Caucasians), but this does not warrant that we retain a system of sexual discrimination, nor that we

introduce racial discrimination within sports. We should all be perfectly capable of living with the truth that such differences exist—and freely allow them to surface in sports competitions. Yes, there are also likely to exist examples of sports where the order is reversed. This is certainly true of some equestrian sports, such as dressage. There has been only one male Olympic winner in dressage since 1968 but surely this is no reason to reintroduce sexual discrimination in dressage.

What should the reform of sports look like in more detail? I will leave this as an open question. The examples I have given (additional weight and height classes, the abolition of the winning service in tennis, and so forth), are mere speculations on my part. To develop this line of thought takes a kind of expertise that I do not possess. And the method of reform must of course be piecemeal rather than utopian. The various different sports events should be put under scrutiny, one at a time. However, the direction of change should be the same all over the field of sports events. Three desiderata of moderation should be met, when interventions in the development of sports take place:

- Non-moral virtues (such as strength) should be given a less important role, and moral virtues, (such as playfulness, inventiveness, sensitivity, cooperation and wit) a more important role, within sports.
- Sports should be developed in a direction that renders our admiration for the winners of sports competitions more decent.
- Sports should develop in a direction that makes it possible to abolish without any cost all kinds of sexual discrimination within sport.

If, and only if, these desiderata of moderation are met, will sports be able to thrive and flourish in the future and continue to add to the quality of our lives.

If these desiderata are (arrogantly) rejected, then, in a world where genetic engineering is quickly becoming a reality, the future prospects for athletics are bleak.

Arrogance and continued sexual discrimination will mean the marginalization of athletics, or so I suggest here. In particular, unless women are given an equal chance to compete with, and defeat, males within elitist sports, they have a good reason to turn their backs on elitist sports. And unless sports are made immune to the threat posed by genetic engineering, they will be looked upon with little interest by the general public, and will lose their role as important cultural phenomena.

Notes

1. I use the word 'discrimination' in a neutral, purely descriptive sense. Sexual discrimination takes place whenever men and women are treated differently, no matter whether or not this difference in treatment is warranted.
2. Hans Mathlein, Stockholm University
3. I defend the right in this strong form—which forbids insurance companies and employers to ask for information about the genotype of people or to use such information for any purposes whatever—in my book *Coercive Care*, London and New York; Routledge, 1999.