

Sport & Modernity

RICHARD GRUNEAU



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For Shelley, Dani, Char, Jesse, and Martin

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Richard Gruneau

polity

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Bowen Island, 2017

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INTRODUCTION

In this book, I argue that the concepts “sport” and “modernity” share a roughly similar history. Both are conceptual abstractions, invented, debated, and refined between the seventeenth and twentieth centuries by upper- and middle-class individuals in Europe and the Americas. My goal is to provide a historical sociology of the making of these abstractions as well as of the competing narratives, struggles, ideologies, and changing practices associated with them. To narrow this very broad agenda, the book is loosely organized into snapshots of five moments in western history where sport and modernity can be conceptually intertwined: (1) the way ancient discourses, practices, and debates about athletics, body imagery, and spectacle selectively played a role in the making of modernity; (2) how sport became conceived as an autonomous “object” of modernity and as a distinctive field of practice within it; (3) how, along with international exhibitions, international sporting spectacles developed as part of the “staging” of modernity; (4) how sport emerged both as a “project” of modernity and of the critique of modernity; (5) how international sporting spectacles came to reference competing views of “modernization” and became significant features of “global” capitalist modernity – often resulting in increasing social and economic polarization in host cities and nations.

The study of sport and modernity is complicated by the fact that both terms have complex genealogies, multiple meanings, and contested histories. Some classical historians have argued that linguistic precedents for the word “sport” can even be found in Mediterranean antiquity, although this is not the majority view.¹ Most etymologies of the word “sport” trace its ancestry to a Latin root, *portare*, meaning to carry or to bear, and more specifically to *deportare*, to

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carry away. The Latin root is evident in medieval French in the verb *porter*, to carry, and in the verb *desporter*, to carry or move from one place to another, to transport, or to divert or distract. The French word *desporter* resembles the medieval English word “disport,” which was initially interpreted as the act of “carrying oneself in a different direction from that of one’s ordinary business.”² Disport thus connoted distraction in the pursuit of amusement, pleasure, or frolic. The actual word *sport* is evident in medieval English as early as the fourteenth century, with an initial emphasis on distracting amusements (by carrying the participant away from more serious daily tasks).

However, virtually from the outset meanings of the word evolved in multiple directions, referencing certain gaming practices and popular amusements, especially the field “sports” of the English upper classes, as well as a number of different social behaviors (e.g. the “sporting” behaviors of the betting gentleman; “sport” as a form of healthy exercise; being a good “sport;” making “sport” of something or somebody; wearing or “sporting” an item of clothing). By the early twentieth century, the word “sport” was emerging as a more coherent, but contested, category whose description often involved comparisons to (and contrast with) seemingly related practices such as play, games, leisure, and amusements.³ Within three decades of the end of World War II, attempts to classify sport as a cultural practice with unique characteristics were widely evident in disciplines as diverse as philosophy, history, sociology, and psychology.⁴ A notable concern for delineating sport as a distinctive category of analysis and evaluation continues in the present day. To cite just one of many examples, the classical historian Thomas Scanlon has recently argued that “sport” is a “culturally relative but universally present phenomenon, in local species difficult to define but in genus easy to recognize.”⁵ He goes on to cite his historian colleague Donald Kyle, who defines the genus – the overarching category – of *sport* as “public physical activities, especially those with competitive elements, pursued for victory and demonstration of excellence.”⁶

Physical exercise and training regimes, ritualized games, and physical contests of varying types have been found in cultures around the world for as long as humans have kept records. Many cultures have also had important traditions of disciplinary knowledge in areas such as medicine, military training, and pedagogy, and have promoted a variety of physical training and dietary regimens. Medieval and Renaissance European scholars inherited and reinterpreted ideas about health and physical exercise from Greco-Roman thinkers,

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Semitic, and Asian sources, as well as a variety of games and physical contests from the early Christian and Islamic worlds. Later European writers also resynthesized Hellenistic and Roman traditions of discussion and debate about the utility and morality of athletic contests and public spectacles, including considerations of their relations to commerce, culture, and politics. A number of these ideas were spread through colonial networks and influenced in turn by local customs and interpretations.

It took a unique conjuncture of events and social conditions in Europe and North America during the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries to prompt an interest among physical educators, philosophers, sociologists, and historians in defining sport and classifying its apparent characteristics. This project of definition and classification does not appear to have a decisive presence in European thought before the mid-1800s. For example, there is no entry for the word “sport” in the legendary *Encyclopedia* prepared in France by Denis Diderot and Jean le Rond d’Alembert in 1751–2. There are numerous references in the *Encyclopedia* to words that are often used today in association with the word “sport,” such as “leisure,” “pleasure,” “games,” “feasts,” and “festivals,” including occasional references to the Greek Olympics in entries pertaining to the “religion of the Greeks and Romans.”⁷ There are also references to individual activities that most people today would view as falling under the ambit of sport, such as athletics, gymnastics, pugilism, wrestling, hunting, and foot races.

Given their commitment to create a “universal encyclopedia,” why didn’t Diderot and D’Alembert commission a generic entry for sport? The obvious answer is sport was seen to be an English word and therefore outside of the linguistic reach of the *Encyclopedia*. There are no readily identifiable references to sport in French writing until the early nineteenth century. Moreover, even though the word was used in the title of a periodical magazine, *Le Sport*, as early as 1851, it was used inexactly, mostly with reference to activities associated with leisure and distraction. The first reference to “sport” in a French encyclopedia does not occur until 1872, where it is defined as an “English word to designate all outdoor exercise, such as horse racing, canoeing, hunting, fishing, archery, gymnastics, etc.”⁸ In Germany, as Jon Hughes points out, the word “sport” was not widely used until the late Wilhelmine era and tended to be “reserved for competitive Anglo-Saxon disciplines,” such as boxing, athletics, and team games that tended to emphasize individual performance and quantifiable results. This was in contrast to *Leibesübungen*, a term that encompassed “Turner” expressive gymnastics and dance.⁹

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Still, I think there is something else operating here beyond the perceived Englishness of the word. The absence of a reference to sport in Diderot and D'Alembert's *Encyclopedie*, or its restricted usage in Wilhelmine Germany, suggests that European intellectuals before the late nineteenth century did not yet have an agreed upon *single* category to describe, linguistically unify, and universalize a field of common qualities associated with physical exercise, game-contests, agonistic spectacles, or leisure pastimes. In this abstract and omnibus sense, sport had yet to be invented. In Pierre Bourdieu's phrase, it had yet to emerge "as its own object."¹⁰ The actual linguistic sign used here is not the relevant issue. The *object* Bourdieu refers to might well have been called something other than sport. The key point is the emergence of an inclusive classificatory term as a conceptual "thing" whose meaning and content were meant to describe a distinctive field of practice. I shall argue later in this book that it was a very short step from the invention of sport as its own object to the argument that the object of sport had certain *inherent* properties or qualities. This initiated a struggle of sorts to assert *what* those properties and qualities are, or what they *should* be.

There can be little doubt that formal or operational definitions of sport as a distinctive area of human practice have enabled useful comparative discussion and evaluation. For example, like many other similar recent attempts at definition and classification, Scanlon's assertions noted above and Kyle's definition share the virtue of providing conceptual rigor to the study of very complex phenomena. Nonetheless, *any* formal definition of sport invites discussion about what it includes and what it leaves out. The beast hunts of Roman antiquity, and many of the "blood sports" of medieval Europe, such as ratting, bear baiting, or dog fighting, do not fit easily into Kyle's definition without stretching our understanding of concepts such as "physical activities" and the "demonstration of excellence" so broadly that they become analytically useless. Similarly, the concepts *species* and *genus* that Scanlon uses have the effect of constructing a falsely imagined analytical standpoint: an imagined "view from nowhere" closely linked to the empiricist dream of identifying concrete historical objects to be analyzed, in E. H. Carr's famous analogy, "like fish on the fishmonger's slab."¹¹

Carr raises a major concern about analytic categories created in the present, but treated as if they were actually existing social objects; that is, the tendency to be insufficiently reflexive about the social and historical dynamics involved in their constitution. One of Karl Marx's most insightful observations was to note how the supposedly

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“objective” analytic categories used by bourgeois political economists – such as land, labor, and capital – were reified products of the very capitalist system they were meant to analyze. Pierre Bourdieu makes a similar point, by implication, when he invites his readers to consider how, and why, a distinctively modern *social* definition of sport came into being in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Europe and North America. The making of a modern social definition of sport, in Bourdieu’s view, has never been a neutral or objective enterprise. Instead, it has been “an object of struggles, in which what is at stake is the monopolistic capacity to impose the legitimate definition of sporting practice and the legitimate functioning of sporting activity.”¹²

When historians, sociologists, or philosophers have offered their interpretations and definitions about *what* sport is, let alone what it *ought* to be, or *how* and *why* it has allegedly changed from one state to another, their work becomes subtly implicated in such struggles. There is no pretense to academic objectivity that can disguise this. For instance, Johan Huizinga’s Christian religious convictions strongly influenced his famous understanding of play as freely undertaken, meaningful, and civilizing activity.¹³ He developed a view of play as a culture creating human essence in society that can be profaned through its association with excessive seriousness and constraint through the imposition of political and economic pressures. In contrast, Marxists of Huizinga’s era viewed the romantic idealization of human “essences” as the well-meaning failure of idealist philosophy. Their preference instead was to try to realize the promise of such idealizations in *practice*, through the promotion of revolutionary struggle that opposed the reduction of human life to the objectifications of the capitalist wage form and industrial technology in pursuit of meaningful artisanal work and “free” leisure activity. The religiously inclined humanist, Huizinga, in turn, called Marxism “a shameful misconception.”¹⁴

We can agree or disagree with Huizinga’s designation, but we can’t pretend that either Huizinga or the Marxists stood outside of history. Neither did the analytic categories they defined and preferred, nor the imagined content of these categories. This is why I am so interested in this book in the ideological dimensions of processes of definition, redefinition, and legitimation, not just in respect to sport but in respect to modernity as well. By using the term “ideology,” I don’t mean the attempt to identify “false” ideas in order to contrast them with “true” ones. Rather, like the sociologist John B. Thompson, I see the study of ideology as a social process wherein symbolic forms, and the institutions associated with their production, can be viewed

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to serve powerful interests and relations of domination.¹⁵ I argue in this book that one of the most notable ways this occurs is through the process of *reification* noted above, viewed most simply as a confusion of socially created human relationships and representations with the seemingly objective world of “things.”

I make no claim to stand outside the ideological processes and forms that I discuss. The chapters that follow have a narrative character shaped by my own biography, intellectual training, and political concerns. Having said that, I’ve drawn on historical examples and supporting theoretical and philosophical literatures to make the stories I tell, and the arguments I advance, as plausible, compelling, and persuasive as I can make them. One unifying theme throughout the book is the influence of the twentieth-century tradition of *heterodox* “western Marxism.” Proponents of this tradition argue that Marx’s work contains methodological and analytical insights which continue to be important and useful in the analysis of western capitalist modernity. But writers in the tradition have typically rejected orthodox Marxism’s teleological conception of history, pretense to science, and singular obsession with class struggle. Many years ago, I wrote an essay that criticized uses of the idea of “modernization” in the study of sport to make a case for Marxism – and especially the brand of Marxist analysis developed by Antonio Gramsci – suggesting this as a superior mode of thinking about sport and social development.¹⁶ I haven’t retreated completely from this view, but I broaden the perspective in this book to include ideas and arguments developed by Bourdieu and Michel Foucault, as well as research from certain branches of postcolonial theory, classical studies, literary theory, the history of art, critical urban geography, and a reconsideration of the “Frankfurt School” of western Marxism.

It was a reconsideration of the “critical theory” of the Frankfurt School, developed in parallel with some ideas from Bourdieu, which led me back to a consideration of modernity, as opposed to simply focusing on the critical analysis of capitalism alone. The Marxist tradition has mostly had little interest in the concept of modernity, seeing it as a bourgeois mystification that hides the dominating causal significance of capitalism behind an emphasis on the influences of secular rationality, science, or industrialism. In the 1980s, Marxist writers, such as T. J. Clark, Fredric Jameson, and David Harvey, some of whose ideas are discussed in later chapters, began to engage more creatively with the concepts of modernity and modernism. But a somewhat similar engagement was a feature of the Frankfurt School tradition as early as the late 1930s. I argue in chapter 4 of this book

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that writers associated with the Frankfurt School identified with Marxism, but they understood the task of “critical theory” to *fuse a critique of capitalism with a critique of modernity*. That dual focus is something I try to maintain throughout this book.

This is an appropriate point to return to a discussion of complications arising from diversity in the meanings of terms. For if “sport” is a term with a diverse and complicated history, the concept of “modernity” is arguably even more diverse and complicated. As Ulrich Beck, Anthony Giddens, and Scott Lash argue, the increasingly “reflexive” character of modernity that developed in the latter decades of the twentieth century is a large part of the reason for this.¹⁷ In etymological terms, the English word “modern” has a Latin root, from the words *modernus* and *modernitas*, which simply referenced what was contemporary, new, or novel, often in an implicit and unfavorable contrast to what was older and venerable. In later chapters, I discuss how the idea of the “modern” began to change in medieval Europe to embrace the idea of *progress*. By the late nineteenth century, reflexive consideration of the nature, meaning, and character of modernity had become a notable trope within *modernism* – the cultural expression of modernity. It also began to develop as a significant feature of early twentieth-century sociology in the work of writers such as Max Weber and Émile Durkheim.

However, there is something undoubtedly distinctive about the intensity of critical reflection on modernity that developed in the 1980s and 1990s. This reflexivity was prompted by growing sociological interest in *globalization*, the apparent shift away from industrialism to a more knowledge-based economy, and the new importance of media and cultural industries across the world. During these years, revisionist discussions of modernity seemed to be everywhere, as were concepts that many people linked to modernity, such as “postmodernity” or “postmodernism.” As this occurred, the term “modernity” was revised, stretched, reinterpreted, and sometimes rejected to accommodate what many saw as a new moment in human history.

By the end of the twentieth century, it was possible to identify at least six sometimes-overlapping conceptions of modernity. At the risk of immense simplification, I call these *epochal*, *epistemological*, *experiential*, *instrumental*, *relational*, and *discursive*. In the *epochal* conception, modernity is understood as a distinctive period in time and space, one most often associated with the advent of capitalist industrial societies in Europe and North America. Giddens summarizes this viewpoint concisely when he suggests, as a “first

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approximation,” that “‘modernity’ refers to modes of social life or organization which emerged in Europe from about the seventeenth century onwards and which subsequently became more or less world-wide in their influence.”¹⁸

From this perspective, the major features of modernity are identified as a series of institutional and cultural transformations that are said to have “swept us away from all traditional types of social order, in quite unprecedented fashion.”¹⁹ A diverse range of ideas, practices, and values are alleged to have been associated with these transformations, including the spread of individualism, liberalism, and universalism; the growth of industrial society and a belief in progress through the applications of reason, science, and technology. Many of the analyses of modernity that became popular through the latter years of the twentieth century were variations on this epochal perspective, suggesting a new set of transformative social, economic, and cultural dynamics in human life. Capitalist modernity was said to have entered a new phase, variously described as “postindustrial,” “postmodern,” “informational,” “post-Fordist,” “disorganized,” “fast,” and “liquid,” among many other descriptors.²⁰

A related analysis took a more *epistemological* turn, joining some of these sociological observations to the resurrection of critiques of modernity that had longstanding connections to older debates within modernism. These included arguments reminiscent of the anti-Enlightenment criticisms of nineteenth-century romanticism, and those of iconoclastic philosophers, such as Friedrich Nietzsche. A new “postmodern” culture had seemingly arrived, where the allegedly modernist pursuit of universal principles and ideals, essential identities, and totalizing classifications or theories was challenged by the breakdown of older forms of social and political association and identity; a widespread rejection of universal histories and metanarratives; a new celebration of difference and diversity; a collapse of distinctions between “high” and “mass” culture, often involving cultural recombination; collage, pastiche, playfulness, and preferences for “surfaces” over “depth.”²¹

An *experiential* approach to modernity by contrast, focuses on the lived experiences of modernity in its various (including, for some, its so-called “post”) stages. Marshall Berman’s book from the early 1980s, *All that is solid Melts into Air*, is the work most commonly associated with this perspective.²² In chapter 3 of this book, I discuss Berman’s view of capitalist modernity as a Faustian world of constant, disrupting change: a world of “creative destruction” that enabled the formation of new subjectivities, freedoms, and new urban cultural

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forms, as well as new forms of domination. But I think any work that dedicates itself to the exploration of the phenomenology of modern life, or to shifts or splits in the subject positions that modernity in its various stages has created, can be described as an experiential approach. For example, Giddens identifies four “frameworks of experience” in modernity, and David Harvey tries to delve into the social experience of modernity in nineteenth-century Paris, using a diversity of documentary and literary sources.²³ Berman suggests that mapping the experience of modernity should also include literary representations, such as those provided by Goethe, Baudelaire, or Gogol, who developed fictional characters and scenarios meant to convey *what it feels like* to experience modernity.

It is also often argued that modernity can be understood as a range of *instrumental* projects of different types. Some of these projects are directly associated with readily identifiable economic, political, and cultural initiatives, such as the pursuit of free trade and empire, the colonization of parts of the world outside of Europe, the development of new forms and disciplines of work, and the pursuit of new technologies. Jürgen Habermas also proposes the idea of modernity itself as an overarching project aimed at the rational organization and improvement of human life.²⁴ Habermas suggests that the project of modernity can be criticized for its constraints on human action but, against the views of many postmodern critics, he argues it should also be acknowledged for the opportunities it provides.

In contrast to epochal or instrumental approaches that objectify modernity in various ways, Arif Dirlik argues “modernity is not a thing” but a “*relationship*,” where being “part of the relationship is the ultimate marker of the modern.”²⁵ In Dirlik’s view, and in the pioneering work of Samir Amin, the concept of modernity cannot be separated from western imperialism and colonialism.²⁶ That is, modernity cannot be conceptualized as a project without reference to the capitalist and imperialist projects led by the European powers and their colonial children in the Americas. Understanding modernity as a relationship rather than as a temporal object created by epochal change, or as a bourgeois project, created a meeting ground in the late twentieth century between *postmodern* theory’s rejection of metanarratives; the emphasis on “difference” and discourse in poststructuralist philosophy; and the postcolonial critique of modernization as an ideological category.

In early postcolonial theory, modernization was criticized as a Eurocentric universalizing discourse based on an imagined separation between “primitive” and “advanced,” or “undeveloped” and

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“developed” civilizations. Modernization, the argument ran, simply meant westernization. Yet, in one important line of thinking, the idea of modern subject positions had to be severed from earlier humanist and “essentialist” viewpoints. This set up a tension that still runs through postcolonial theory between poststructuralist writers who focus on difference, discourse, and culture, and who reject Marxist analysis as *inherently* totalizing and Eurocentric, and writers such as Dirlik or Amin, who want to retain a connection between the critique of modernity, materialist political economy perspectives, and socialist politics.²⁷

From the 1960s through to the present day, many critical sociologists and political economists also endorsed a *relational* view of modernization, albeit with less attention paid to issues of racial and cultural marginalization, hybridities, and fragmented subjectivities than many late twentieth-century postcolonial theories. From the standpoint of radical political economy, modernization was a mystifying ideological category masking the core–periphery relations that had developed in the world system after the sixteenth (some argue the thirteenth) century. Socialist and postcolonial revolutionaries were first to unmask modernization as an ideological strategy that reproduced political, economic, and ideological conditions favorable to the imperialist regimes of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Europe and North America. Similar arguments were later developed in more theoretically and historically sophisticated ways in radical political economy during the 1960s and 1970s – especially in the “world systems theory” of Immanuel Wallerstein and the “dependency theory” developed by Andre Gunder Frank.²⁸

Finally, modernity has also been viewed as a powerful *discursive* category central to the history that the “West” has written about itself. As Fredric Jameson argues: “The trope of ‘modernity’ is always in one way or another a rewriting, a powerful displacement of previous narrative paradigms.”²⁹ This is another kind of relational perspective, but one where the discourse of modernity only achieves its meaning in relation to a discourse that preceded it. In Jameson’s work, the discourses of both modernity and postmodernity are developed in the “superstructure” of capitalist societies, but are powerful enough on their own terms to act as determining features of social organization.³⁰ Other writers, especially those inspired by poststructuralism, have resisted the idea of reducing discourse to material determinants. Still, in each instance, viewing modernity as a narrative or discursive category lends itself to focus on the role played by representation in the “staging” of modernity as both an object and a project.

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Epochal conceptions of modernity have arguably had the greatest presence in historical and sociological writing on sport. Allen Guttman's discussion of modernization in his 1978 book, *From Ritual to Record*, is the best-known example. Drawing on a loosely Weberian model of ideal types, Guttman views the modernization of sport as a reflection of broader institutional transformations associated with the decline of traditional societies and the advent of modern industrial societies. Most notable in his view are growing secularism, equality, specialization, rationalization, bureaucratization, quantification, and record keeping as defining features of modern sport.³¹ Somewhat similar comparisons of the characteristics of traditional folk games versus modern sports are provided in Eric Dunning and Kenneth Sheard's work in the 1970s on English rugby, as well as in Melvin Adelman's work in the middle 1980s on the modernization of sport in New York.³²

These early works stimulated considerable discussion and criticism resulting in more complex theories and more finely grained and historically nuanced understandings of sport's relationships to modernity in various social contexts. Critics also questioned the ideological underpinnings of such models of modernization, resulting in a dampening of enthusiasm in the late twentieth century about unreflective epochal approaches to sport and modernity.³³ Nonetheless, in a very different way, epochal conceptions were also widely evident during the late twentieth century in more critical work that sought to explore the nature of sport in societies where postmodernism was an emerging historical condition, supposedly leading to a new type of society.³⁴ Postmodern analyses of sport also drew on epistemological criticisms raised by writers such as Michel Foucault and, in some instances, by relational views of modernity associated with both radical political economy and postcolonialism. Some writers have also sought to explore postmodern experiences in sport, especially in respect to the fragmentation of modern subject positions and the play of differences associated with gender and race.³⁵

At varying points this book is influenced by all six of the conceptions of modernity described above. However, the discussion that follows is especially influenced by epistemological, relational, and discursive perspectives on both modernity and sport. I am less interested in writing a history of either concept than in *historicizing* them while exploring their interconnections. Changing historical circumstances since the beginning of the twenty-first century have also shaped my perspective in the book. For example, in hindsight it is hard not to be struck by the breathless and sometimes tacitly celebratory character

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of some of the writing on modernity, postmodernity, and globalization during the 1980s and 1990s. To an extent, this can be explained by the liberal triumphalism that crept into certain branches of social analysis after the collapse of state socialism in Europe.³⁶ In other instances, a positive and exuberant tone in the literature seemed related to the anticipation of a truly global economy and global public culture.³⁷ It should come as no surprise that this exuberant tone has occasionally found its way into writing on sport, especially regarding the role that sporting “mega-events” have played in creating global culture and their “legacies” for technological, economic, and social development in hosting nations. One of my arguments in this book is that the exuberance has been overstated, to say the least.

Something similar might also be said for many branches of postmodernism, whose obsessions with difference, discourse, and anti-essentialism in the 1980s and 1990s now seem far removed from some of the most pressing problems of the twenty-first century: environmental degradation and global warming; the persistence of regional, sometimes genocidal, conflicts; a striking gap between the world’s rich and poor and the reassertion of patterns of “primitive accumulation” throughout many parts of the world; an unstable “financialization” of the global economy; a digitally networked world of instantaneous communication, extending knowledge, entertainment, and opportunities for self-expression, *but* also linking these to surveillance and capital accumulation in new ways; an upsurge in religious fundamentalist, racist, and politically reactionary thinking; a return to nativism and hyper-nationalism, and the ongoing domination and degradation of women.

The chapters that follow are loosely organized to address the selected historical snapshots of intersections between sport and modernity noted at the outset of this introduction. The opening chapter prepares the way historically and theoretically through a critical examination of practices and discourses surrounding athletics, body imagery, and spectacles in Greco-Roman antiquity. One of my objectives in the chapter is to reveal the complications, hybridities, and contradictions of “sport” in antiquity, in contrast to the often-polarized conceptions of idealized Greek athletics and “barbaric” Roman spectacles evident in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries’ “modern” discourse. The chapter concludes with a speculative commentary on the ways that these, and other related debates and perspectives from antiquity, played a role in later European formulations of modernity itself.

The second chapter turns to an examination of the objectification

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of sport in the making of English modernity. Throughout the chapter, I focus on the significance of linguistic and visual representations as constitutive elements in the processes whereby sport became disembedded from earlier European social and cultural logics to become viewed as an autonomous and universal cultural realm with its own distinctive set of practices and qualities. The chapter also examines how representations of sport became sites for articulating a range of instrumental discourses about English national character, appropriate moral behavior, and the legitimate uses of time, space, and the human body.

The third chapter addresses the “staging” of modernity in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century international exhibitions and international sporting competitions, with specific emphasis on their contradictions and ideological dimensions. Along the way, I discuss several relational aspects of the making of European modernity through the establishment of temporal contrasts between so-called ancient and modern civilizations, as well as spatial contrasts between allegedly “primitive” cultures versus modern ones. The chapter also explores how the making of European modernity was constitutively associated with colonial and capitalist creative destruction and accumulation by dispossession, and how international exhibitions and international sporting competitions both exhibited and displayed many of the most significant contradictions of the modern era

By the early twentieth century, there was growing concern in Europe and North America about both the possibilities and the limits of modernity. The fourth chapter explores the rise of German modernism during the Weimar era, including a growing enthusiasm for sporting practices. But the Weimar era was also characterized by debates about the social uses and values of modern sport, including a criticism of rationalization and a reduction of the body to the logics of the market and the machine. The chapter moves from a discussion of these debates to the rise of so-called Nazi “anti-modern” approaches to sports and sporting spectacles. At the same time, I discuss the critique of sport that emerged in the “critical theory” promoted by selected members of the Frankfurt Institute for Social Research. After World War II, Frankfurt School critical theory provided inspiration for some of the most trenchant critiques of sport to emerge during the 1960s and 1970s. The chapter concludes with a critical appraisal of the limitations and strengths of this tradition of social criticism.

The book’s concluding chapter examines changing relations between sport, modernization, and globalization in the twentieth century, with specific reference to the challenges posed by escalating

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urban inequality and slums. The chapter begins with a discussion of postwar Keynesianism, liberal capitalism, and “modernization theory,” then moves to consider the limits and possibilities of “civil society” approaches to sport and development to meet the challenges of urban inequality and slums in the early twenty-first century. The discussion then turns to a critical analysis of the factors that have led to the increasing size, scale, and economic importance of sporting mega-events in the era of neoliberal globalization, as well as their attraction to cities and nations outside the West. I argue that any consideration of these factors must rethink the widespread use since the 1980s of international sporting mega-events, such as the Olympics or the World Cup, both as claims to “modernity” and as vehicles for economic and social development.