

ABSTRACT

Performance Enhancement Drugs in Sports: An Inquiry into the Freedom and Responsibility of Athletes

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Human beings in various cultures engage in various recreational and competitive activities for entertainment, building endurance for rites of passage, testing competence and determining prowess for belonging to guilds and societies. These activities express the cultures of human beings. It can be surmised that it was from these recreational, entertainment and competition activities that more organized and structured games and sports were developed. This dissertation seeks to offer a philosophical investigation of performance enhancing drugs (PEDs) and substances in competitive sports, with a focus on the freedom of athletes and their responsibility for their choices. A focus on freedom is important chiefly because humans, by nature, have a high regard for autonomy and would like to know that this autonomy, which is a marker of our humanity, is protected. We acknowledge, however, that individuals do not always use freedom responsibly and as a result, the individuals who fail to use freedom in this way impose undue limitations on their own freedom. We will argue that all human beings are free beings, with reflective capacity to discern and discriminate between options. As reflective free beings, they are also responsible for the choices they make. Since doping is a free choice, athletes who dope choose to do so in light of their free nature. Therefore, athletes who dope ought to be held responsible for doping. By their actions doping athletes impose undue limitations on their freedom: freedom releases and confines. It is with this in mind that we will argue that since human beings are free, hence, responsible agents, the ban on performance drugs in sports is justified from a moral/ethical perspective. A duty is owed to maintain and display certain ethical traits that are beneficial to the self as well as others.

Keywords: Sandra Ann Marie McCalla; performance enhancing drugs; freedom; competition.