

Heidegger's Concept of Authenticity and Sport Experience¹

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Abstract

Carolyne Thomas regarded the aesthetic experience in sport as authentic in the meaning from Martin Heidegger's *Being and Time*. To examine the adequacy of the interpretation, the comparison between Thomas' concept of authenticity and the Heidegger's was attempted in this paper.

Thomas' concept of authenticity is opposite to accidentality. It is also positive realization of a self, positive movement toward a capable being, a unique self, a unique experience, and honesty in a sport situation. Authenticity of intent is intent-result matching.

On the other hand, Heidegger's concept of authenticity should be understood as follows: the terms, authenticity and inauthenticity, do not have such meaning as authenticity is higher or superior and inauthenticity is lower or inferior; our everyday life is inauthentic in general; authenticity is a distinctive and specific situation of ourselves; authenticity is self-realization and self-disclosure of Being-towards-death.

We cannot find any relationship between Thomas' concept of authenticity and Heidegger's. According to Thomas, authenticity of intent, that is correspondence between intent and result, is one of the criteria for the experiential sport aesthetic called perfect moment. But she also indicates that the perfect moment is a happening. This is nothing but a contradiction.

We cannot find any justification in the relationship between the authenticity of intent and aesthetic experience in sport, either. However, the sport experience does not seem to be inauthentic instead of authentic in Heidegger's terminology. We need to change and transcend our alternative view on the problem of the sport experience as authentic or inauthentic.

In terms of such transcendence, the conception of sports mood by a Japanese aesthetician Masakazu Nakai was suggested.

Introduction

Some theories of general philosophy, for example from Plato's dialogue to Derrida's deconstruction, are applied to the interpretation of sport in the sport philosophy. The attempt is appropriate as a method. Needless to say, however, we have to understand the general philosophy very carefully. The sport philosophy should be a genuine philosophy itself. It should not be a simple adoration of sport by easygoing understanding of the general philosophy. We sometimes face such inappropriate sport philosophy so far. I criticize such an attitude.

Now, I examine the concept of authenticity in the dissertation by Carolyne Thomas. Thomas counts "authenticity of intent" as a prerequisite for sport to be an aesthetic experience. She says, "the term 'authentic' is a translation of the German *eigentlich*... Its origin in a philosophic context was in Martin Heidegger's *Being and Time*."² But we cannot find any close relation between the Thomas' concept of authenticity and the Heidegger's one.

First, I investigate the Thomas' concept of authenticity as a character of aesthetic experience in sport.

Then I criticize her interpretation by an examination of the Heidegger's concept of authenticity. Finally, I suggest the conception beyond authenticity-inauthenticity schema by Masakazu Nakai, a Japanese aesthetician,

1. Authenticity as a Character of Sport Experience in Thomas' Dissertation

Thomas' dissertation entitled "The Perfect Moment : An Aesthetic Perspective of the Sport Experience" has an intent "to develop criteria in which sport, from the performer's perspective of the experience, may be considered as an aesthetic experience."³ She proposed "authenticity of intent" as one of the criteria. What is authenticity of intent? For this question, I examine the concept of authenticity and the concept of intent in her dissertation. Then I make it clear what it means that the authenticity of intent is one of the criteria in which sport may be considered as an aesthetic experience in her dissertation.

First, we look into the concept of authenticity. Thomas wrote :

The term "authentic" is a translation of the German *eigentlich* which contains the root "own" as in "my own." The term has become popularized in existential philosophy and humanistic psychology during the past two decades, sometimes with a clouding of the original meaning. Its origin in a philosophic context was in Martin Heidegger's *Being and Time*. Heidegger's authenticity of existence, which was his concern, i.e., an examination of Being, is, essentially, "the excellence of being what one is, the fulfillment of one's own particular functions ; true self-realization in the sense of self-disclosure and self-fulfillment."⁴

This is to say, she indicates that the concept of authenticity is originally from Heidegger's *Being and Time*. And she understands it as the fulfillment of one's own particular functions, self-realization, self-disclosure, and self-fulfillment. But her understanding is mostly from a guide book for phenomenology and existentialism by Edward Lee. She does not seem to have examined Heidegger's concept of authenticity in *Being and Time* very carefully.

Thomas makes an extrapolation of Heideggerian authenticity in the development of an authentic intent and achievement of intent prior to and during the sport experience. That is to know what one is and capable of doing and becoming. She says, "One does not become lost in the anonymity or demands of others but remains free from unessential involvements, free to assess capabilities and realize what is accidental and inauthentic."⁵ So authenticity would be opposite to accidentality for her. And "the authentic intent ... is a positive realization of what I truly am and the positive movement of what I am toward what I am capable of being, a movement toward a unique self and a unique experience in a sport situation."⁶ Furthermore, Thomas says, "honesty becomes important and essential since intentional or subconscious self-deception will bring the individual into the realm of inauthentic existence."⁷ Therefore, we could understand that Thomas takes authenticity as a positive realization of a self, positive movement toward a capable being, unique self, unique experience, and honesty in a sport situation.

Secondly, let us look at the Thomas' concept of intent. "Intent... is the determination of the *most feasible* approach within the *individual's limitation*."⁸ She explains it by some examples. According to that, the intent is to select a route or ideal condition in mountain climbing, skydiving, sailing and the like, or to chose the slope and determine the speed given the snow conditions in recreational skiing. Quoting Ducasse, Thomas regards intent and reflection on intent as intrinsic and essential constituents in the "activity of art." So in the case of art, intent is almost equal to the meaning an artist attempts to express.

Now, what is authenticity of intent? Thomas suggests that "any determination of authenticity of intent or achievement presupposes a reflection on both the intent and the performance *after* the experience."⁹ In other words, authenticity of intent is that "the movements during performance match the athlete's intent at the outset of the movement or game, i.e., the result was not accidental."¹⁰ And this intent-result matching

is the first prerequisite for sport to be an aesthetic experience at the same time according to Thomas. Although the reason why the authenticity of intent could be the prerequisite for an aesthetic experience is not clear in her dissertation, it seems that Thomas' speculation is based on the objective self-expression theory by Ducasse. Thomas wrote that Ducasse maintained that art is not merely self-expression nor objective self-expression but *consciously* objective self-expression. And Thomas says, "he [Ducasse] cites the example of the poet reading the words he wrote, in which case if he obtains back the meaning he attempted to express, his activity of writing has been a successful objectification and could be considered aesthetic."¹¹ To say again, authenticity of intent means that "did the performer establish a performance goal which was feasible to accomplish, given his abilities and the conditions surrounding the performance."¹² And authenticity of intent is one of the criteria for the experiential sport aesthetic called the "perfect moment." So "if he [a performer] achieves, by accident, in a situation beyond his abilities or utilizes, pragmatically or inconsistently, techniques and strategies previously foreign to him, the experience shall be considered aesthetically invalid and inauthentic."¹³

2. Criticism : Examination of the Heidegger's Concept of Authenticity

We could find some problems in Thomas' dissertation. I take up here in this paper the questions as (1) the concept of authenticity (of intent) per se and (2) the relationship between authenticity of intent and aesthetic experience in sport.

Although Thomas made an extrapolation of Heideggerian authenticity in the interpretation of sport experience, she indicated clearly that the concept of authenticity was from Heidegger's *Being and Time*. She regards authenticity as a positive self-realization, the positive movement toward a unique self and a unique experience. Is such interpretation of the Heidegger's concept of authenticity really adequate? We need to look into the text of *Sein und Zeit* or *Being and Time*.

Heidegger talks about authenticity in the several places in the whole of *Being and Time*. He says :

As modes of Being, *authenticity* and *inauthenticity* (these expressions have been chosen terminologically in a strict sense) are both grounded in the fact that any Dasein whatsoever is characterized by mineness. But the inauthenticity of Dasein does not signify any 'less' Being or any 'lower' degree of Being. Rather it is the case that even in its fullest concretion Dasein can be characterized by inauthenticity — when busy, when excited, when interested, when ready for enjoyment.¹⁴

First of all, we need to know that the inauthenticity does not mean "less" or "lower" degree of Being. Heidegger says at the another place that "on no account, ... do the terms 'inauthentic' and 'non-authentic' signify 'really not' ... 'Inauthenticity' does not mean anything like Being-no-longer-in-the-world, but amounts rather to a quite distinctive kind of Being-in-the-world — the kind which is completely fascinated by the 'world'.¹⁵ Furthermore, "the Self of everyday Dasein is the *they-self*, which we distinguish from the *authentic Self* — that is, from the Self which has been taken hold of in its own way."¹⁶

In these remarks, we could understand as follows : (1) the terms, authenticity and inauthenticity, do not have such meaning as authenticity is higher or superior and inauthenticity is lower or inferior, (2) our everyday life is inauthentic in general, (3) authenticity is a distinctive and specific situation of ourselves. Thomas says, "Heidegger's concept of authenticity, seemingly, is not intended to have a connotation of ethical rightness or wrongness."¹⁷ This view is completely right. But such characterization of authenticity by Thomas as self-realization, positive movement toward a unique self or a unique experience and so on includes problems. What is the distinctive situation and the specific state of Being as authenticity asserted by Heidegger?

"Idle talk, curiosity and ambiguity characterize the way in which, in an everyday manner, Dasein is its 'there'.¹⁸ The basic kind of Being which belongs to everydayness is called "falling" by Heidegger. As I mentioned before, however, the term "falling" does not express any negative evaluation. Heidegger uses the

term “disclosedness” to explain authenticity, and the disclosedness finally goes toward “death”. Because “death is Dasein’s *ownmost* possibility. Being towards this possibility discloses to Dasein its *ownmost* potentiality-for-Being, in which its very Being is the issue.”¹⁹ Therefore, authenticity as “true self-realization in the sense of self-disclosure and self-fulfillment” indicated by Thomas should be finally understood as self-realization, self-disclosure and self-fulfillment of Being-towards-death. Heidegger says :

Being-towards-death is the anticipation of a potentiality-for-Being of that entity whose kind of Being is anticipation itself. In the anticipatory revealing of this potentiality-for-Being, Dasein discloses itself to itself as regards its uttermost possibility. But to project itself on its ownmost potentiality-for-Being means to be able to understand itself in the Being of the entity so revealed — namely, to exist. Anticipation turns out to be the possibility of understanding one’s *ownmost* and uttermost potentiality-for-Being — that is to say, the possibility of *authentic existence*.²⁰

Authenticity of intent is a concept used by Thomas. It actually means that the performance goal which was set before the game matches with the result. How large the difference between the Thomas’ concept and the Heidegger’s concept of authenticity is! We cannot find any relationship between them. Therefore, we have to say that Thomas’ reference to Heidegger in her dissertation is inadequate. Heidegger’s authenticity is largely concerned with our own death. On the other hand, sport is a small world governed by some specific rules and separated from everyday life. In the sportworld, we do not have to think about our death for the time being. So the sport experience is not authentic in the meaning in *Being and Time* by Heidegger.

Thomas might say that Heidegger’s concept of authenticity was not the main theme in her dissertation and she just made an extrapolation of it to interpret the sport experience. She certainly regarded authenticity of intent as one of the specific criteria for considering sport as an aesthetic experience. Now I shall look into this viewpoint of hers. As I indicated earlier, Thomas’ thought is based on the theory of Ducasse concerning this problem. The outline of her thought is as follows : art is *consciously* objective self-expression ; so the intent of the artist for expression should match with the expression as a result ; it is important for artistic activity, and then the activity will be successful and aesthetic. We could understand that “the act of expression is creative of something ... such that in contemplation that thing yields back to him the feeling, volition, or meaning of which it was the attempted expression.”²¹ But, it is questionable that the art theory can be also applied to sport, because sport has no intent of conscious expression like art. And Thomas says at another place as follows :

The perfect moment, like the aesthetic experience, can be classified generally as Dionysian in nature. It is a highly affective and intense experience and is considered as a “happening ” rather than as a planned occurrence.²²

According to Thomas, authenticity of intent, that is correspondence between intent and result, is one of the criteria for the experiential sport aesthetic called the perfect moment. But she also indicates that the perfect moment is a happening. I suppose this is nothing but a contradiction. Furthermore, as Thomas noticed that “although he[Ducasse] does not discuss the aesthetic experience, *per se*, he does establish intent and reflection on intent as intrinsic and essential constituents in the ‘activity of art’,”²³ there is a gap between her concept of authenticity of intent and aesthetic experience.

3. Conception beyond Authenticity-Inauthenticity

We cannot find any justification in the relationship between the authenticity of intent and aesthetic experience in sport. However, the sport experience does not seem to be inauthentic instead of authentic in Heidegger’s terminology. I think we need to change our alternative view on the problem of sport as authentic

or inauthentic. For that, the theory of Masakazu Nakai (1900-1952), a Japanese aesthetician, will be suggestive, because Nakai also considered the aesthetic experience of the sport performer in terms of the theory of Heidegger.

Masakazu Nakai did not refer to the concept of authenticity. He borrowed a concept "mood" from *Being and Time* and described the aesthetic experience of the sport performer by a concept "sports mood". He wrote a paper entitled "The Structure of Sports mood" in 1933, and took up the problem of the aesthetic experience of the sport performer in the paper. The view of a *kinaesthetic* perception as an *aesthetic* perception, which is asserted by some sport philosophers in England and America now, had been already noted by Nakai in the early 1930's.

The concept of mood in Nakai's sports mood derived from the fundamental ontology in Heidegger's *Being and Time*. Heidegger says: "[In the mood] Dasein is disclosed to itself *prior to* all cognition and volition, and *beyond* their [cognition and volition] range of disclosure."²⁴ Nakai thought that Being expresses itself first in mood according to Heidegger. We, however, need to know that his essay "The Structure of Sports mood" was written just in the style of thinking borrowed from Heidegger's ontology. He also depended limitedly on the theory of Heidegger with regard to the content of his essay. The concept of mood by Nakai took notice of the "disclosure of mood"; at the same time, however, all of the key thoughts in his essay were simply able to be collected into this point.

According to Heidegger, mood is the most familiar and everyday sort of thing indicated ontologically by the term "state-of-mind". "The possibilities of disclosure which belong to cognition reach far too short a way compared with the primordial disclosure belonging to moods, in which Dasein is brought before its Being as 'there'."²⁵ And the basic state-of-mind as a distinctive way in which Dasein is disclosed is anxiety. Anxiety is related to Dasein as Being-towards-death.

The disclosedness of Dasein ... is ... constituted by anxiety as state-of-mind, by understanding as a projection of oneself upon one's ownmost Being-guilty, and by discourse as reticence. This distinctive and authentic disclosedness, which is attested in Dasein itself by its conscience — *this reticent self-projection upon one's ownmost Being-guilty, in which one is ready for anxiety* — we call "*resoluteness*".²⁶

On the other hand, the concept of sports mood by Nakai is concerned with the actual situation in sport experiences. There is a big difference between Heidegger's concept of mood and Nakai's concept of sports mood. Nakai's consideration was directed to the place opposite to Heidegger's. Then Nakai disregarded the theory of Heidegger further. He just borrowed the style of thinking from Heidegger as he himself noted.

Both Thomas and Nakai used the concepts originally from Heidegger for the interpretation of the sport experience. They applied only the terms to their own problems. Although Thomas failed in the characterization of sport using the term "authenticity," Nakai showed a keen insight into the performer's experience with the concept of mood. The concept has a deep range of consideration to grasp the thing which cannot be grasped easily like the performer's experience. Unlike the experience of contemplation of a work of art, the experience of the sport performer is not intentional in the sense of observing an object for an aesthetic experience. The concept of mood adequately reaches, so to speak, the non-objectiveness of the aesthetic experience of the sport performer. But we have to notice that Nakai was able to accomplish such study of sport, not because he closely followed the conception in Heidegger's *Being and Time* but because he disregarded and leaped, as it were, pleasurably and unconsciously over the existential philosophy of Heidegger in a certain aspect.

This suggests that what is called sport could get out of that depressed situation in our time which so-called existentialism must have faced, and get into another direction. The direction was an aesthetic

direction for Nakai. Thomas also regarded the experience of the sport performer as an aesthetic experience. But we pointed out that her understanding of aesthetic as authentic was inadequate. Consequently, we should go beyond the authenticity-inauthenticity schema by Heidegger, and we could do that in the direction toward "aesthetic" indicated by Nakai. His view that the experience of the sport performer is a mood experience and sport is an essential aesthetic area will be quite suggestive for us a half century after him, nay, especially for us in modern times. Why? Because his view makes us notice the aesthetic playful world of closed absoluteness, namely sport, in our time when all the values are going to be broken up under the relativity of values.

Conclusion

To conclude, I have argued that Heidegger's concept of authenticity does not correspond to the character of the sport experience. The sport experience cannot be characterized as authentic in the meaning by Heidegger. The sport experience, however, cannot be inauthentic either. So I proposed that we should transcend the schema of authenticity-inauthenticity. The direction of the transcendence is the one of "aesthetic" indicated by Nakai.²⁷ According to Heidegger, inauthenticity is "falling" in everyday life. The sportworld is a small and closed world constituted by sports rules and separated from everyday life. Man could refuse the falling in everyday life by playing in the sportworld. But it would be possible not in the authentic state, because Heidegger's authenticity essentially means resolution toward our own death.²⁸ The nature of the sport experience is neither authentic nor inauthentic, but aesthetic, which means specific experience of self-realization free from the everyday tiredness. I shall close my paper with a suggestion. Existentialism was severely criticized by Adorno.²⁹ Especially the concept of authenticity was charged as a jargon. We could propose a criticism of existentialism in a different way, that is in the aesthetic point of view which includes the consideration on the playworld like sport.

Notes

¹I read this paper at the annual conference of the Philosophic Society for the Study of Sport in Washinton D.C. in 1989. It was fortunate for me that we had Professor Thomas as the presider and discussant in our session. I could get the reaction paper from her. In that paper, Thomas says, "My intention in using the concept of authenticity was to demonstrate that the individual must separate himself from expectations of 'they' and move toward a sense of 'my own'. To this end I made not application of Heidegger to intentionality except to argue that intent in sport must be one's own free from external expectation, ... The *German language* word not the *Heideggarian* word for authentic is 'eigentlich' which does have as its etiological root 'own'." My critique might have been too strict. She was just interested not in Heidegger but in the meaning of 'own.' What I would insist is that the aesthetic experience in sport is never authentic in the meaning by Heidegger's terminology.

²Thomas, C.E., "The Perfect Moment : An Aesthetic Perspective of the Sport Experience." Dissertation (The Ohio State University), 1972. pp.79-80.

³*Ibid.*, p.4

⁴*Ibid.*, pp.79-80.

⁵*Ibid.*, pp.80-81.

⁶*Ibid.*, p.81.

⁷*Ibid.*, p.82.

⁸*Ibid.*, p.82.

⁹*Ibid.*, p.84.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, p.7.

¹¹*Ibid.*, p.84.

¹²*Ibid.*, p.146.

¹³*Ibid.*, p.83.

¹⁴Heidegger, M., trans. by Macquarrie, J. & Robinson, E., *Being and Time*, Harper & Row, 1962. p.68. I shall show the German originals of the quotations. I think it is more than useful for our text critique. I feel the lack of such text critique would be a fault of American philosophy. The indication of the fault is one of the intents of this paper.

“Die beiden Seinsmodi der *Eigentlichkeit* und *Uneigentlichkeit* - diese Ausdrücke sind im strengen Wortsinne terminologisch gewählt - gründen darin, daß Dasein überhaupt durch Jemeinigkeit bestimmt ist. Die Uneigentlichkeit des Daseins bedeutet aber nicht etwa ein “weniger” Sein oder einen “niedrigeren” Seinsgrad. Die Uneigentlichkeit kann vielmehr das Dasein nach seiner vollsten Konkretion bestimmen in seiner Geschäftigkeit, Angeregtheit, Interessiertheit, Genußfähigkeit.” (Heidegger, M., *Sein und Zeit* (1927), Max Niemeyer Verlag Tübingen, 1979.S.42-43.)

¹⁵*Ibid.*, p.220. “Un- und nichteigentlich bedeutet aber keineswegs ‘eigentlich nicht’, ... Uneigentlichkeit meint so wenig dergleichen wie Nicht-mehr-in-der-Welt-sein, als sie gerade ein ausgezeichnetes In-der-Welt-sein ausmacht, das von der ‘Welt’ ... völlig benommen ist.” (*Sein und Zeit*, S.176.)

¹⁶*Ibid.*, p.167. “Das Selbst des alltäglichen Daseins ist das *Man-selbst*, das wir von dem *eigentlichen*, das heißt eigens ergriffenen *Selbst* unterscheiden.” (*Sein und Zeit*, S.129.)

¹⁷Thomas, *op. cit.*, p.80.

¹⁸Heidegger, *op. cit.*, p.219. “Gerede, Neugier und Zweideutigkeit charakterisieren die Weise, in der das Dasein alltäglich sein ‘Da’.” (*Sein und Zeit*, S.175.)

¹⁹*Ibid.*, p.307. “Der Tod ist *eigenste* Möglichkeit des Daseins. Das Sein zu ihr erschließt dem Dasein sein *eigenstes* Seinkönnen, darin es um das Sein des Daseins schlechthin geht,” (*Sein und Zeit*, S.263.)

²⁰*Ibid.*, p.307. “Das Sein zum Tode ist Vorlaufen in ein Seinkönnen *des* Seienden, dessen Seinsart das Vorlaufen selbst ist. Im vorlaufenden Enthüllen dieses Seinkönnens erschließt sich das Dasein ihm selbst hinsichtlich seiner äußersten Möglichkeit. Auf eigenstes Seinkönnen sich entwerfen aber besagt : sich selbst verstehen können im Sein des so enthüllten Seienden : existieren. Das Vorlaufen erweist sich als Möglichkeit des Verstehens des *eigensten* äußersten Seinkönnens, das heißt als Möglichkeit *eigentlicher Existenz*. (*Sein und Zeit*, S.262-263.)

²¹Thomas, *op. cit.*, p.84.

²²*Ibid.*, p.116.

²³*Ibid.*, pp.83-84.

²⁴Heidegger, *op. cit.*, p.175. “... in der[Stimmung] es[Dasein] ihm selbst *vor* allem Erkennen und Wollen und *über* deren Erschließungstragweite *hinaus* erschlossen ist.” (*Sein und Zeit*, S.136.)

²⁵*Ibid.*, p.173. “... die Erschließungsmöglichkeiten des Erkennens viel zu kurz tragen gegenüber dem ursprünglichen Erschließen der Stimmungen, in denen das Dasein vor sein Sein als Da gebracht ist.” (*Sein und Zeit*, S.134.)

²⁶*Ibid.*, p.343. “Die ... Erschlossenheit des Daseins wird ... konstituiert durch die Befindlichkeit der Angst, durch das Verstehen als Sichertwerfen auf das eigenste Schuldigsein und durch die Rede als Verschwiegenheit. Diese ausgezeichnete, im Dasein selbst durch sein Gewissen bezeugte eigentliche Erschlossenheit - *das verschwiegene, angstbereite Sichertwerfen auf das eigenste Schuldigsein* - nennen wir die *Entschlossenheit*.” (*Sein und Zeit*, S.296-297.)

²⁷I did not talk over Nakai's conception in detail in this paper. I need another paper for that.

²⁸Farwell shows almost same viewpoint as mine, cf. Farwell, P. “Can Heidegger's Craftsman Be Authentic?” *International Philosophical Quarterly*, 29 (1) : 77-90, 1989.

²⁹Adorno, T.W. trans. by Tarnowski, K. & Will, F. *The Jargon of Authenticity*, Northwestern University Press : Evanston, 1973.