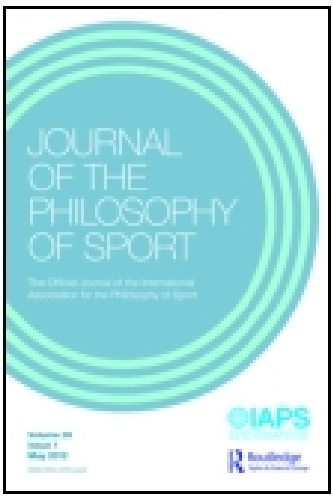

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THE HEIGHTS OF HUMANITY: ENDURANCE SPORT AND THE STRENUOUS MOOD

Douglas Hochstetler and Peter Matthew Hopsicker

In his article, 'Recovering Humanity: Movement, Sport, and Nature', Doug Anderson addresses the place of endurance sport, or more generally sport at large, as a potential catalyst for the good life. Anderson contrasts transcendental themes of Henry David Thoreau and Ralph Waldo Emerson with the pragmatic claims of William James and John Dewey, who focus on human possibility and growth. Our aim is to pursue the pragmatic line of thought championed by James and Dewey as a contrasting but not mutually exclusive motive to Anderson's analysis. We contend that movement can provide humanizing possibilities even more pronounced for those subscribing to pragmatic themes (i.e., growth and the strenuous mood). We will use running and cycling to demonstrate how the strenuous mood enhances the possibility for this humanizing condition. Specifically, we argue that moving in a committed fashion allows us to deepen our relationship with the respective practice and thus opens the possibilities for 'recovering our humanity'.

KEYWORDS transcendentalism; pragmatism; endurance sport

In their recent advertising campaign, sporting goods manufacturer Pearl Izumi drew a firm distinction between runners and joggers,[1] arguing that individuals in the former category hold privileged status. 'We are not joggers', their ads proclaim. 'At Pearl Izumi, we don't jog. We run. And we think that matters'. In another ad, they contend that 'Runners are wild' and that 'Joggers are runners who have been domesticated'. While the ads generated considerable discourse in the endurance sport community,[2] the copy also prompts axiological questions about the place of endurance sport, and more generally sport at large, as a potential catalyst for the good life. In his article, 'Recovering Human-

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ity: Movement, Sport, and Nature', Doug Anderson addresses this topic. Relying on the transcendental stream of American philosophy, most notably Henry David Thoreau and Ralph Waldo Emerson, Anderson argues for the humanizing potential of movement. He contends that 'sport and movement allow us to realize and re-create ourselves … [and through these pursuits] we bring our full range of powers and energies to life – we become fully human' (2001, 145).

Anderson contrasts the transcendental themes with the pragmatic claims of William James and John Dewey, who focus on human possibility and growth. 'The transcendentalists wanted to have us reawaken to our own humanity', Anderson writes, while 'the vendors of the strenuous life [the pragmatists] envisioned a more Spartan-like goal of preparing a hearty society to face the difficult contingencies of their booming industrial culture' (2001, 140). While Anderson claims that these two schools of thought are 'not mutually exclusive', he pursues the transcendental line of thought because he views it as more inclusive and radical. As a result, Anderson carves out room for joggers and weekend warriors to experience the humanizing potential of movement. In this sense, he chooses to focus on the breadth of human movement experience rather than the potential depth available through a more focused and committed approach.

Our aim is to pursue the pragmatic line of thought championed by James and Dewey as a contrasting but not mutually exclusive motive to Anderson's analysis. We argue that movement can provide humanizing possibilities even more pronounced for those subscribing to pragmatic themes (i.e., growth and the strenuous mood). Because of our own commitments to and experiences with endurance sport, we use running and cycling to demonstrate how the strenuous mood enhances the possibility for this humanizing condition. We acknowledge many paths to experiencing lives of significance and meaning. This caveat notwithstanding, we contend that endurance sport is notably different from other movement forms in terms of available experiential qualities and, as such, is emblematic of the depths of experience available through commitment to sporting practices. Here we concur with Anderson and Lally that, for us, endurance sport has provided 'one useful route to exploring our own personal possibilities and thus to exploring what makes *our lives* significant' (2004, 17).

Prior to examining these pragmatic themes, we will conduct a brief analysis of Anderson's main points regarding human movement and the potential for 'recovering humanity'. We will then contend that moving in a devoted fashion allows individuals to deepen their relationship with the respective practice (MacIntyre 1984) and thus opens the possibilities for 'recovering humanity' in a manner qualitatively different from the transcendental approach described by Anderson. The subsequent discussion of the pragmatic streams of American

philosophy will not only provide a vocabulary to both describe and understand the extreme commitment of endurance athletes, but also render insight into pragmatic qualities, such as growth and significance, useful in future examinations of endurance sport and the corresponding lived experience of these athletes.

1. Recovering Humanity and Endurance Sport

By using the terms 'humanity' and 'humanizing', Anderson has in mind the breadth of available experience and points towards qualities such as power, beauty, peace, freedom and opportunity – traits that characterize our capacity to become 'self-defining' and 'self-realizing'. Movement affords the potential to apprehend these humanizing qualities, Anderson argues, because it 'can provide a microcosm of the borderland existence' (2001, 142). Anderson describes the borderland existence as a place between the 'primitive' or 'savage' qualities of under-civilization and the 'mechanical' and 'settling down' notions of over-civilization. If our lives become 'either over- or under-civilized', he writes, 'we begin to lose touch with our humanity' (2001, 140). Thus, the border life – experienced through endeavors such as sport and physical activity – provides a certain amount of 'risk in context, of spontaneity within constraint' (2001, 142). The borderland provides a place for our 'inner wildness' to flourish where we might experience in full our 'freedom, agency, and creativity' (2001, 140). This wildness attained through movement represents not only 'letting off steam' but, more subtly and importantly, Anderson contends, notions of 'the felt or "had" sense of sheer possibility' (2001, 143), the potential for creativity, and a heightened sense of awareness (both to self and our surroundings). For many, endurance sport provides the space to carve out this border life, a respite from the work world and everyday obligations.[3] Through sport and physical activity, we set aside, at least temporarily, the restlessness of everyday life and engage in activities which provide the potential for sustaining meaning and significance.

Anderson is quite clear, however, that opportunities for experiencing the humanizing qualities of movement belong not only to elite athletes. To illustrate, he references two particular activities: the practices of the Tendai Buddhist 'marathon monks', who run 30 km a day for one hundred days in a row as part of a spiritual quest; and the 'weekend warrior', those who predominately participate in recreational physical activity on the weekends. The latter group (i.e., middle-aged soccer, baseball, and basketball players) participate, Anderson writes, 'because they feel the possibilities, they experience the creative moments, and they are, at least privately, aware that the practice is self-defining for them' (2001, 146). Anderson contends that even the 'tamest-looking sports, for example table tennis and badminton, can be the site of wild

performance' (2001, 142). Befitting the transcendental vein, he maintains that everyone has the potential to experience the good life through movement, regardless of commitment level or ability.

While we do not disagree with Anderson's transcendental analysis and the benefits such a perspective provides, his democratic claim points towards our pragmatic contentions through his choice of examples. Anderson argues for the inclusiveness of movement – and attempts to demonstrate that inclusivity through the diversity of ultra-marathoning monks and recreational sports participants – although other examples he cites favor more exclusive activities that demonstrate a greater level of commitment than representative of a 'weekend warrior'.

For example, he includes quotes from Roger Bannister – the first individual to run a mile in less than four minutes; and George Sheehan, notable runner-philosopher who ran a 4:47 mile in his late forties.[4] Even the marathon monks (who Anderson notes alongside the 'weekend warriors') demonstrate an intense commitment to the endurance sport discipline (albeit for spiritual reasons). As for the seemingly tame sports of table tennis and badminton, Anderson surely means adherents and not dabblers here, those who demonstrate considerable dedication and skill. Similarly, Anderson cites Fairchild who contends that 'sport deliberately creates *challenges to the limits of my possibilities* [italics added]' (2001, 143). From Anderson's examples, it appears that testing oneself and exploring the potential for growth through commitment is indeed quite compatible, and perhaps necessary, for experiencing the humanizing aspects that movement provides.

Yet our questions with Anderson's use of examples are best interpreted as a matter of degree. We concur that movement creates possibility for humanization and the benefits are open to all – not solely to the elite athlete. We agree with Anderson when he writes, 'Movement is a place where anyone might meet possibility, establish creativity, and in the process both learn about self and establish her or his "self"' (2001, 145). The individual who embarks on a casual workout program dedicated to weight loss opens herself to new experiences in ways similar to the serious athlete – yet only to a degree. In this sense, revisiting Anderson's quote, '*anyone* [italics added] might meet possibility [and] establish creativity' to one level or another. Yet we argue that runners and cyclists, those individuals committed to the practice, have the potential to experience a heightened sense of these possibilities. Because of their engagement, these athletes have a *heightened* chance of meeting possibility, a *heightened* chance of establishing creativity, and a *heightened* chance of learning about self.

Encountering movement in humanizing ways is not automatic, however, as Anderson contends: 'The possibilities such participation presents must be recognized and owned by the participants' (2001, 142). This means approach-

ing endurance sport not merely as a means for weight loss or as an activity to endure, but rather as an enterprise replete with novelty, challenge, and freedom. The runner realizes that the training process will, at times, be grueling and difficult to sustain. Rather than shirking from this test, however, the runner embraces the challenge because he realizes that only through these efforts will a heightened sense of growth be possible.

Admittedly, adherents face the same activity in a multitude of ways with varying motives and levels of engagement. One person may disdain a daily bike commute while the next revels in the discipline. For one individual, the ride may provide for meditative quality of thought, a way to let one's thoughts roam with the rhythmical nature of pedaling. For another person, who must negotiate narrow roads and unfriendly automobile traffic, the journey may be harrowing and anxiety-filled. Furthermore, some forms of physical activity foster greater possibilities for engagement than others – the difference between riding a bike along the California coast versus riding a trainer indoors comes to mind, or between running through the Patagonia region of Chile as opposed to completing the same mileage on a treadmill (Hochstetler 2007). In addition, the jogger engages with her surroundings in a way qualitatively different from the runner.[5] Yet those who are more engaged in the activity, like the dedicated runner or cyclist, are more inclined to claim an increased ownership.

Both the jogger and runner may find their respective movement outlets enticing as a way to combat the restlessness of routine life. However, the runner has even more reason to anticipate movement and endurance sport, not only as a respite from the work world but also in the recognition that through these efforts one gradually develops an identity as an endurance athlete. Through an investment in the practice, runners and cyclists slowly take on the characteristics of the practice community and slowly develop an identity that is central to the way they see themselves and how others view them. Further, these endurance athletes build a coherent narrative of lived experiences, with training programs dedicated to improved performance, and a life story full of encounters while on the move. In contrast with sports that require speed and strength, for example, endurance sport performance requires patience developed through years of training. In fact, many runners and cyclists can achieve their personal best times during their 30s and even into their 40s.[6]

Still, the commitment levels of some athletes result in a structure and framework that, at face value, appears in opposition to the freedom, agency, and creativity championed as the humanizing components of sport. Anderson notes that some activities 'can be mechanical and uninspiring' (2001, 146). It is certainly true that sport can become mechanistic, and on occasion a setting where individual agency becomes squelched. A pre-teen who exhibits cycling promise may become blinded by the self-absorbed ambitions of an overly aggressive coach. In the process the youngster may submit personal autonomy

to the 'mentor'. When pushed too far, movement and sport can take committed athletes away from the balanced, borderland experience. This is one risk of committing oneself to a particular task or calling, an issue which we address in a subsequent section.

Yet a life of organization and planning does not necessarily entail an over-civilized life. Anderson is correct that a structured existence may become constricting and limit individual autonomy. A balanced sense of structure, on the other hand, has the potential to produce deeply meaningful experiences for those athletes called to sporting practices. Even Thoreau's sojourn at Walden Pond entailed a modicum of organization – he lived in a modest cabin and created a writer's daily routine. His aim was to 'drive life into a corner' – to explore the extent of his agency, to focus on his personal transaction of writing regardless of the outcome. The committed athlete makes similar decisions, structuring life in such a way to pursue challenge and growth. Ultra running extraordinaire Dean Karnazes represents an extreme example of a driven existence focused around endurance sport. Karnazes has been able to simplify his life to a degree by combining family and business interests that enable him to run (and write) in an extremely concentrated and deliberate manner.[7]

It is this latter point – the 'driving of life into a corner' through a commitment to an endurance sport practice community – that we see as a catalyst to a heightened sense of creativity, freedom, and agency. The 'weekend warrior' may experience the 'felt possibility' of creativity, but this potential is enhanced as she acquires the requisite skill set for excellence. Anderson acknowledges this point when he writes, 'creativity occurs against a background of discipline and practice – the civilized side of the border' (2001, 150). Other writers (i.e., Hopsicker 2009; Polanyi and Prosch 1975) support this contention that tacit knowledge, built through myriad practice opportunities, provides the context for creative acts to arise. Once grounded in the fundamentals, the participant moves towards openings to explore new territory and creative acts. Dedication and skill development expand the movement possibilities in many sporting practices, affording the opportunity to experience freedom and human agency. Endurance sport is no exception. This quality of being is expressed as runners explore uncharted road loops or trails, advance towards personal fitness goals, and make decisions related to training and racing that mesh with personal responsibilities and commitments.

While the committed athlete's movement may become mechanical, those who only dabble in sport may find the activities uninspiring as well. They simply may not have given themselves to the practice community in ways that create sustained, engaging moments. The jogger, for example, may view movement as, borrowing from Thoreau, 'taking one's medicine' rather than as the 'enterprise and adventure of the day'. From this viewpoint, it appears that the risk of missing the humanizing qualities of movement through either excessive

or sporadic participation is present in both the transcendental and pragmatic perspectives. Perhaps this is one place where these two perspectives are, as Anderson notes, 'not mutually exclusive'.

In short, we agree with Anderson's claim that movement can help us 'recover an inner wildness that is a condition of our humanity' (2001, 140). Yet we claim, in contrast to Anderson, that the pragmatist themes encourage us to deepen our sporting commitments, to go beyond the occasional weekend basketball game or leisurely jog during the appropriate seasons of life. To glean the full humanizing potential of sport and movement, specifically in terms of depth, requires a commitment to one's respective sporting practice, an endeavor consistent with the pragmatic themes of growth and the strenuous mood found in the writings of Dewey and James. Put another way, Martin writes that 'the *aesthetic* character of experience is derived from the *intensity* of this vitality' (2007, 176). It matters not only that we are engaged in movement but also the extent of this engagement.

2. Growth, the Strenuous Mood, and Endurance Sport

How can endurance sport participants experience the humanizing potential of movement while sidestepping the potential mechanization that Anderson notes? To what extent can running and cycling enable individuals to experience the borderland existence in a way that becomes deeply significant? Furthermore, to what extent does this experience involve the ability to reach externally measurable goals of human performance achievement or, perhaps conversely, the ability to recognize how one's physical activity fits into the grander scheme of things such as work, family, and place in life? In the following section we examine pragmatic themes, focusing primarily on the works of John Dewey. We begin by highlighting Dewey's conception of continual growth as compared with the nineteenth-century conception of progress.

Thoreau, and Anderson too, caution against seeking 'progress' in part because such efforts potentially lead towards a life of over-civilization. The danger in chasing progress appears to be two-fold: first, pursuing ambitions that are not of our own choosing, particularly when one follows others blindly; second, striving towards progress which subsequently results in de-humanization. Thoreau, for example, had harsh words for his contemporaries who pursued this mode of being: 'We are in great haste to construct a magnetic telegraph from Maine to Texas; but Maine and Texas, it may be, have nothing important to communicate' (1964, 307). In our own culture, Thoreau might criticize the trend towards 'improved' forms of communication – instant messaging, texting, Skype, smartphones, for example – without any discernable growth in the substance of these efforts. We concur with Thoreau and Anderson in viewing progress with suspicion.[8] It seems to us, however, that this notion of progress

differs in key ways from Dewey's conception of growth, which ultimately compliments the humanizing potential of our endeavors.

For Dewey, growth is a continual project, never a particular fixed state or endpoint to be achieved. It is the antithesis of stagnation. He defined growth as 'the ability to learn from experience; the power to retain from one experience something which is of avail in coping with the difficulties of a later situation' (1944, 44). Throughout the growth process, individuals cultivate habits and a certain degree of plasticity. These habits, writes Dewey, 'take the form both of habituation, or a general and persistent balance of organic activities with the surroundings, and of active capacities to readjust activity to meet new conditions' (1944, 44). When individuals stake their claim on endurance sport, for example, they develop this commitment through a series of daily decisions. In one sense, developing a habit 'furnishes the background of growth' (1944, 52). The runner intent on improvement lays the groundwork day after day – planning a route, checking the weather, laying out clothes, setting and rising to the alarm, staying hydrated, completing the run, finishing a flexibility and core regimen, and so forth. Taken together, these daily actions provide the context for growth to flourish.

In another, more active sense, Dewey contends that these habits 'involve thought, invention, and initiative in applying capacities to new aims' (1944, 52–53). By establishing and following a training program, the endurance athlete improves physiological systems and psychological confidence such that goal attainment is possible. As a result, the athlete may set a personal record, complete a particularly strenuous training workout, and persistently work towards creating a narrative centered on endurance sport. Growth occurs not only in a linear fashion but also in fits and starts, through plateaus and setbacks. Despite the challenge of such efforts, the creation of habits increases the likelihood of growth as well as the corresponding humanizing potential.

The requirements for growth involve significant effort and risk, commitment and immersion. Too often, as Dewey contends,

> We become uneasy at the idea of initiating new courses; we are repelled by the difficulties … In this way, we withdraw from actual conditions and their requirements and opportunities; we contract and harden the self. (1998, 353)

In other words, to avoid challenging opportunities leads to a life of stasis rather than growth. At times an athlete's individual 'season of life' may encourage him to seek growth through concerted and constant attempts at self-improvement. He may purchase a gym membership, find a training partner, or extend himself by embarking on a marathon training program or joining a cycling team. A cyclist may routinely win Category 4 races and contemplate taking the necessary steps and challenges of entering Category 3 events.[9] The

individual who is repelled by the potential difficulties and therefore dodges the 'move up' could demonstrate a hardened and protracted self, one reluctant to strive towards continual improvement because of fear or uncertainty. Conversely, the individual who acknowledges the potential risks and ascertains that these may coincide with other responsibilities (i.e., as a spouse, employee, or community member) demonstrate the growth Dewey has in mind.

To a certain degree, Dewey appears to extend the possibilities of growth to individuals at various points of commitment – to the recreational athlete as well as the committed practitioner. He contends that the good person 'is the most concerned to find openings for the newly forming or growing self; since no matter how "good" he has been, he becomes "bad" … as soon as he fails to respond to the demand for growth' (1998, 353). The individual alert to finding Dewey's 'openings' faces life in such a way that the humanizing aspect of sport is possible. In this sense, athletes (regardless of fitness level) who seek growth are 'good' *because they seek growth* and thus open themselves to the possibility of experiencing the freedom and creativity of human movement. These qualities are available in degrees depending on the level of commitment. Thoreau, too, championed this quality:

> As for the comparative demand which men make on life, it is an important difference between two, that the one is satisfied with a level success, that his marks can all be hit by point-blank shots, but the other, however low and unsuccessful his life may be, constantly elevates his aim, though at a very slight angle to the horizon. I should much rather be the last man. (1964, 637)

Here we should remember, however, that viewed within the broader context of growth, Dewey emphasizes persistent efforts in a *continuous* and *heightened* manner. James, too, argues that to attain a depth of experience requires a level of rigor and commitment. While the recreational athlete may train for an isolated event, these are brief periods of exertion, episodic moments rather than sustained narratives. By virtue of their immersion in the practice, the runner and cyclist create more opportunities 'to learn from experience' (1944, 44) and develop habits which 'furnishes the background of growth' (1944, 52). Furthermore, the daily devotion to these habits entails significant 'thought, invention, and initiative' (1944, 52–53). The cyclist spends significant time thinking about possible rides, exploring various training programs, and pondering ways to improve. Similarly, the runner strives to learn from previous failure or disappointment with hopes for 'applying capacities to new aims' (1944, 53). Again, these differences between the less-committed and more-committed athlete vary in terms of degree but, nonetheless, differ in important ways.

Striving towards our human potential does not discount sedentary activities – we certainly recognize how practices such as music, the arts, and so

forth, contain opportunities for seeking growth. We simply contend that endurance sport is one particularly pertinent human endeavor conducive to the borderland existence. To cash out these conceptual themes regarding growth, we now move to endurance sport examples which highlight what we have in mind.

3. Growth and Endurance Sport

Endurance sport advocates experience growth through a commitment to the respective endurance sport practice community. An increased commitment level leads to increased growth – up to a point. The jogger who carves out three workouts per week encounters growth, as does the Tour de France rider who logs five hours or more per day. Both types of individuals face challenges, test themselves alongside teammates and competitors, and endure the pain of endurance sport in spades. While each endurance sport community may foster growth to an extent, those individuals who commit themselves more fully to their endeavor experience growth in shades depending on levels of commitment.

In the most obvious sense, the endurance athlete's pursuit of growth involves physiological development and striving towards excellence. These physiological benefits increase with deepened commitment. Beyond physiological growth, devotion to endurance sport fosters other aspects of development as well, including revelations of personal limits. For those who race, these efforts become public information, enshrined on websites for all to see.[10] The high school runner discovers, over the course of four years, how fast he can cover a 3.1 mile cross-country course. Similarly, the dedicated cyclist learns that she is able, through extensive training and effort, to summit a climb she initially believed to be insurmountable. In addition, these individuals face existential questions such as how to cope with the inevitable performance plateau or the aging process. These individuals may move for any number of reasons (i.e., health, social, psychological), may enjoy an aspect of struggle, and yet may not be driven towards the commitment levels of their more competitive counterparts. This relatively limited commitment manifests itself in relatively limited growth.

Conversely, runners and cyclists plan their training schedules and follow it, at times to a fault. They circle races on the calendar and set their goals and fitness schedules accordingly. Day after day they complete workouts emphasizing endurance, speed, strength, flexibility, core, or recovery. These individuals are just as fastidious about their nutritional habits, seeking out plentiful amounts of carbohydrates in bagels and pasta, sipping on recovery drinks or electrolytes while eschewing fatty foodstuffs or other items detrimental to performance. As compared with their partially committed colleagues, the more

dedicated athletes encounter heightened possibilities for growth and corresponding humanizing aspects. These individuals learn what it means to strive for excellence, to make autonomous choices, and to structure their lives consistent with their respective goals. The runners and cyclists focus their efforts in a way that emphasizes depth over breadth of experience. They can, through significant effort, 'drive life into a corner' in the sense of discovering personal capabilities as a runner or cyclist. This might include spending seasons of life dedicated towards focused training efforts and discovering just how good one might become through commitment.

Similar to the humanizing components outlined by Anderson, striving towards growth entails a particular stance. 'The growing, enlarging, liberated self', writes Dewey, 'goes forth to meet new demands and occasions, and readapts and remakes itself in the process. It welcomes untried situations' (1998, 353). Endurance sport advocates, individuals both fast and slow, note the importance of one's stance towards the activity. Bingham (2007), a *Runner's World* magazine writer self-described as 'The Penguin', argues he is a runner despite his pace or relative finish time:

> I am a runner because I am willing to lay it all on the line. I know that every finish line has the potential to lift my spirits to new highs or devastate me, yet I line up anyway. I am a runner because I know that despite my best efforts, I will always want more from myself. I will always want to know my limits so that I can exceed them.

This growth-focused mindset includes themes also present in William James' works, most notably the willingness to take risks, to become involved in projects with a degree of uncertainty, precipitousness, and potential danger. The runner intent on not only finishing a marathon, but doing so in a way that demonstrates the strenuous mood, undergoes a training regimen without guarantees. She dedicates herself to this daily training, slowly building mileage over several months. On race day the runner steps to the line wondering if she has trained enough or too much, whether she is adequately hydrated, has chosen the appropriate clothing for the weather conditions, or if the nagging heel pain she has felt during the taper week will become an issue during the race. Throughout her training and even on race day she realizes that her dedicated efforts may not necessarily translate into personal records – the race results may in fact be disappointing, discouraging, or even humiliating.

Taken together, however, these pragmatic themes provide a vehicle for conceptualizing the humanizing aspects of movement. Engaging in sport and physical activity provides the building blocks for inspiring narratives and drama, helping to remedy what James viewed as a 'flatness coming over the world' (1915, 273). For example, on race day, the committed cyclist tests her

personal fitness level and contests with other enthusiasts. On one particular day, the cyclist may achieve greatness, winning a stage race; on other occasions she may fall to the back of the peloton or even withdraw from competition. Because of the uncertainty involved, endurance sport projects necessarily entail a degree of risk. Without risking failure one does not create the possibility for success.

The challenge for endurance sport athletes is developing and retaining a sense of balance between the seemingly tame jogging existence and the overmechanized lifestyle perhaps characterized by the elite-level athlete. The occasional jogger, even one who finishes a marathon by walking a majority of the route, quite likely misses the potential humanizing fruits of a committed pursuit towards excellence. These individuals see only glimpses of their latent potential and possibilities for agency and creativity. Conversely, those on the other end of the spectrum – professional runners or cyclists, or even the overly dedicated master's athlete – risk alienating friends and family members, acquiring chronic overuse injuries, and generally approaching their sport in mechanistic ways. The joy of movement may recede and these individuals may have difficulty fully appreciating the freedom and creativity of their craft. Given the challenges presented, in our final section we move to pragmatic strategies for approaching sport in a manner that negotiates this complexity, most notably how James' pragmatic theme of significance bears upon our broader theme of the humanizing potential for sport and physical activity.

4. Striving for Growth: Endurance Sport and Lives of Significance

How might we experience endurance sport in a manner promoting a borderland existence conducive to the humanizing potential Anderson has in mind? Here we contend that the pragmatic themes of James provide conceptual clarity in both understanding and living in this manner. James' notion of risk is especially fitting with regards to the broader society. He perceived late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century American culture as one of relative ease. The common individual, James wrote, 'energizes below his maximum, and he behaves below his optimum. In elementary faculty, in coordination, in power of inhibition and control, in every conceivable way, his life is contracted' (1907, 18). Despite his pessimistic tone, James believed in the human capability for growth and development given the right conditions and attitude.

Endurance sport activities engender possibility for the human potential James champions. But modern times have somewhat curtailed the risk in these activities and some 'wild' pursuits have become more civilized in the process. Anderson points to the commercialization of endurance sport events with 'media, fans, technological groupies, and support teams [which] serve to dimin-

ish the wilderness effect, to eliminate risk' (2001, 148). In response to this apparent tameness, increasing numbers of endurance sport athletes have moved to non-traditional race environments such as trail running, mountain biking, and adventure sports.[11] Others choose to create their own, risk-filled, personal endeavors – running an ultra-marathon distance with minimal support, or similarly cycling over difficult terrain in harsh weather conditions.

James would view these wild pursuits as poignant examples of the strenuous mood, lives including both precipitousness and risk. James clearly identifies the importance of these qualities in his essay, 'What Makes a Life Significant?' Here, James reflects on his time spent at Chautauqua Institute, an educational and retreat center in New York. While at Chautauqua, James and other attendees had the opportunity to take a wide range of educational courses, listen to engaging speakers and enthralling orchestral concerts. At this pristine location, James wrote, 'you have culture, you have kindness, you have cheapness, you have equality, you have the best fruits of what mankind has fought and bled and striven for' (1915, 269). Nonetheless, James found himself ready to leave this version of utopia, concluding that while at Chautauqua he 'sorely missed the element that gives to the wicked outer world all its moral style, expressiveness and picturesqueness, – the element of precipitousness, so to call it, of strength and strenuousness, intensity and danger' (1915, 271). For James, this pastoral setting was much too tame, restricting personal growth that comes through dedication to challenging pursuits.

James believed individuals who committed themselves to practice communities demonstrate a particular self-knowledge. 'The best practical knowers of the human soul', he wrote, 'have invented the thing known as methodical ascetic disciplines to keep the deeper levels constantly in reach. Beginning with easy tasks, passing to harder ones, and exercising day by day' (1907, 9). For the runner and cyclist, this process happens over time with a gradual investment in the sport. Our own relationship with these pursuits, for example, matured over the course of many months and years. We steadily took on the characteristics of a runner and cyclist, pursuing 'the richer marrow of life lived *in extremis*' (Anderson and Lally 2004, 18). We accepted invitations from friends to join their training runs and rides. We purchased gear, entered races, set training goals, and adjusted our daily schedule to carve out workout time. Over time, we began to take on increasing characteristics of our respective practice communities. Our investment in running and cycling provides a certain level of intimacy with the activity, with other participants, and potentially with the broader world. One only learns of running and cycling by virtue of pursuing these activities in intentional ways.

This knowledge is not limited to physiological limits of endurance, however, and extends to other areas. For example, Anderson and Lally posit that endurance sport is the kind of precipitous experience which opens 'onto the

general terrain of our lives: our reading, our thinking, our relationships, our inheritances, and our bequests to other persons and the world' (2004, 17–18). Activities like endurance sport provide the opportunity to engage in a certain element of this precipitousness and risk within a growing culture of docility. Running over single track trails through the woods, cycling in driving rain or oppressive heat – these are examples of the activities and disposition James praises:

> Sweat and effort, human nature strained to its uttermost and on the rack, yet getting through alive, and then turning its back on its success to pursue another more rare and arduous still – this is the sort of thing the presence of which inspires us (1915, 272).

The requisite commitment, one fostered in concert with a particularly engaging task, enables the participant to explore personal autonomy and challenge within a culture of docility and ease.

5. Significance and Endurance Sport

Despite the humanizing elements potentially available through endurance sport, there are perils at both sides of the endurance sport continuum. At one end, we find joggers and riders who move enough to enter a 5k run or benefit ride once a year but apart from brief moments experience very little precipitousness. As one jogger recounted, 'We didn't go out in the rain or anything silly like that' (Smith 1998, 180). She continued that her jogging was a 'seasonal thing' and over time she moved on to step-aerobics. Because they choose other lives, joggers and riders never stake their claim in the way runners and cyclists do (Hopsicker and Hochstetler 2010). They may miss opportunities to develop friendships over the passing miles on the road or through the trails. Furthermore, they may not experience the self-defining quality of movement that arrives as part of its humanizing potential. Their lives may be, in the broader sense, quite meaningful – filled with other deep engagements with family, friends, and career or community activities. Yet these individuals risk little in the context of endurance sport and therefore are not privy to the experiential depths of endurance sport or their own latent potential.

While joggers and riders may live without enough risk, runners and cyclists may, at times, pursue their activity in ways that tip the balance too far, placing themselves in extreme risk for injury and danger, or damaging relationships in the process. They may become so compelled to move that they neglect jobs, family, and friends. On the one hand, this sense of focus may allow for rigorous training such that the participant is able to taste the fruits of endurance sport. The strenuous mood limits freedom in the sense that it

enables a more profound experience. Someone who competes in ultra-distance races or Race Across America, for example, brackets her life in a way that allows for this singularity of purpose. On the other hand, this focus may also result in a narrowly focused, self-absorbed lifestyle completely predicated on achieving personal excellence. In these cases the runner or cyclist who becomes driven towards training and racing goals may make decisions which ultimately harm others: spending money on travel or new equipment rather than family purchases; training and racing at the expense of work or friends; and becoming obsessed with progress and results to the extent that one is never content with the overall process.

Participating in endurance sport requires a vigilant effort with regards to balance, finding ways to navigate between the personal and social selves. Most people are not elite athletes. However, those committed to the endurance sport practice community at their own level, given their current situation, can represent lives of strenuousness in this context. While the elite athlete may struggle with balancing a training regimen coupled with travel commitments or media engagements, the majority of endurance sport participants face other challenges – how best to meet running and cycling goals amidst other life responsibilities. How does the married, thirty-something software engineer fulfill commitments to family and employer while pursuing running or cycling goals? To a large degree, time spent training means time away from other commitments and obligations. For endurance athletes, this means approaching sport opportunities in such a way that makes sense with one's broader lives. Some may seek out careers that compliment endurance interests, spouses or partners who support these pursuits, or find ways to include friends and family members as part of training and racing.

Working towards growth entails attentiveness towards the ever-changing nature of human life. Endurance sport participants move through various 'seasons' – not only in terms of their own training and racing schedules but additionally in how their respective sport intersects with other aspects of their lives. Thoreau spent two years of dedicated time at Walden Pond and then returned to Concord for he had 'other lives to live'. Similarly, we recognize that there are times for committing oneself fully to a practice community and other periods when additional commitments (i.e., family, job, community) take priority. The single, college student-athlete may approach endurance sport in a manner much different than the 35 year-old, mortgage-carrying, single father of two children. As these individuals encounter change they may cross the boundaries between jogger and runner, rider and cyclist. In fact, Dewey's theme of growth opens the possibility for this vacillation as individuals remain attentive to their respective contexts. The master's age group runner may determine that an ailing parent's care supersedes personal running goals. Conversely, the novice rider who becomes uninterested in solo training rides may

decide to join a cycling team and test himself against other budding Category 5 athletes. These decisions have social implications as well, as the individual abandons one set of companions (joggers or riders) for another (runners or cyclists) – or vice versa. Despite the contextual challenges which may arise, we still maintain that our committed efforts built over time allow for the greatest exploration of our humanity.

The strenuous mood vis-à-vis human movement should not be overlooked, discounted, or underprivileged for it is in this type of adjustment and change, the growth which Dewey supports, where virtue resides. In other words, our objective as athletes and as humans is to continually find ways to challenge ourselves in order to promote growth and human flourishing. Our efforts to become better runners and cyclists may correspond, and even contribute to, similar efforts to become better humans. It is the growth of the individual and the corresponding humanization through strenuous activity that should be pursued. Adjustment and change are necessary throughout one's lifetime. Stagnation, flatness, and complacency are antithetical to this idea. While one may experience the freedom and creativity through a transcendental perspective, such potential may also be experienced – perhaps even to a greater degree – through the strenuous striving championed by the pragmatists.

The growth process requires an intentional commitment to a particular practice, in this case jogging, running, riding or cycling. It is crucial to stake one's claim on movement, realizing that the level and extent of this commitment may change over time. In general, the particularities do not matter so long as the activity enables the participant to tap into the vital stores of energy of which James spoke. Some encounter significance by completing benefit rides to promote cancer awareness while others strive to best a personal record or win an age-group award. Through sport and physical activity, we become 'reanimated' and develop the latent potential that we possess as humans, striving for positive change and shunning lives of complacency. While sedentary practices may serve as catalysts for humanization too, endurance sport and other movement forms are particularly apropos for our largely over-civilized, sedentary contemporary culture. Within our given resources, individual contextual differences, and season of life, an investment in endurance sport and other movement forms enables our human capacity for growth.

In sum, Anderson makes an important claim regarding the humanizing potential of sport and physical activity. When we move, we set aside, at least temporarily, the constraints of the work-world and enter places where 'freedom, agency, and creativity' reside. While these qualities are available to the weekend warrior, we contend that physical activity, conducted in the strenuous vein, is a fertile ground for experiencing the depth of our humanity. Upon committing oneself to a particular practice community, in our case endurance

sport, it is possible to encounter these aspects of humanization to a greater degree. The challenge is to maintain a sense of balance throughout this pragmatic pursuit towards growth and significance.

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Notes

1. While Pearl Izumi focuses on distinctions between running and jogging, similar splits arise in other sports as well, such as cycling and riding. In our recent essay (Hopsicker and Hochstetler 2010) we highlight the experiential differences and similarities between various aspects of endurance sport. Drawing from the Pearl Izumi ad campaign terminology, we refer to those whose commitment levels tend towards sporadic and relatively low-level efforts as joggers and riders while referring to those who take seriously and stake a claim on the sports as runners and cyclists. For more on Pearl Izumi please reference: http://www.wearenotjoggers.com/
2. For an example of this discussion see: http://www.runnersworld.com/community/forums/runner-communities/beginners/not-joggers
3. In a contemporary vein, Pearl Izumi supports this contention with their ads, stating that when runners 'disappear into remote wooded areas . . . they are acutely aware of their surroundings because running brings their senses to life'.
4. For more information on the life, running and writing background of George Sheehan see: http://www.georgesheehan.com/welcome/bio.html
5. At first glance it may appear that some transcendental themes ascribed to Thoreau, such as simplicity, conflict with the pragmatic themes of strenuousity and growth. Is it the case, for example, that joggers and riders experience more simplicity by virtue of appreciation for their surroundings? Space does not allow for a complete explication of Thoreau's notion of simplicity here but suffice to say that Thoreau's time at Walden encompassed a certain degree of both simplicity and the strenuous mood of James. By virtue of removing potential distractions from his life (simplicity) Thoreau could write from a more passionate and reflective position in a manner that pushed him to his full potential (strenuous mood). Joggers may be more in tune with the aesthetic qualities of nature in an outward sense while runners potentially more aware of the inner workings of self (i.e., breathing rate, muscle sensations).

6. For an example on the impact of age on performance see 'Age Matters' by Christie Aschwanden in the online version of Runner's World Magazine at: www.runnersworld.com
7. As an example of his running feats, Karnazes has won the Badwater Ultramarathon (a 135-mile race which includes portions through Death Valley and Mt. Whitney, CA) and completed 50 marathons on 50 consecutive days in every US state. For more on Karnazes see: www.ultramarathonman.com
8. For more on the Progressive Movement of the nineteenth century and its relationship to sport and physical activity, see Mark Dyreson, (1999). Nature by design: modern American ideas about sport, energy, evolution, and republics, 1865-1920. *Journal of Sport History*, 26(3), 447–69.
9. Cycling races are categorized 1 to 5. Category 5 is the lowest category that allows entry-level riders to compete. Riders move up in categories by winning races or earning a set number of points over the course of several races. See here http://www.usacycling.org/news/user/story.php?id=580 for the USA Cycling guidelines.
10. As an example of race information online see: http://athlinks.com/
11. One example of this type of event is the Tough Mudder which proclaims itself as 'Probably the Toughest Event on the Planet . . . [it is] not your average lame-ass mud run or spirit-crushing "endurance" road race. It's Ironman meets Burning Man'. For more information go to: http://toughmudder.com/

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