

# Olympic Meddling

By Theodore Dalrymple

Men are to be allowed to box against women at the Olympic Games. Admittedly, they will have been men who have undergone—subjected themselves to—certain changes, surgical and hormonal, and are therefore different from average men, but still they are men and in fact cannot be made into women. They can dress as women, act as women, talk as women, be treated every day as women, but the difference remains and is inextinguishable. We are not total masters of the universe and J.K. Rowling is right.



I am aware that this will offend transsexuals, and I am sorry for it. I shall be particularly sorry if the small number whom I have known and found agreeable enough socially were to read what I have written and conclude that the person with whom they

spent a pleasant time was a monstrous bigot. But the desire not to offend, laudable as it is, cannot require people to twist their minds to accommodate obvious falsehoods and repeat them as if they were true. The falsity of the transsexual ideology (if I may so call it) is established by the fact that there is no controversy surrounding the participation of women-to-men transsexuals in men's sport. There is an obvious reason for this.

The male transsexual amateur boxers who will be allowed to

compete in the Olympics were refused such permission at previous boxing competitions. I have to admit that I find the very idea of women boxing repellent in any case but am prepared to admit that I am now a dinosaur in a world of mammals, and my feelings are irrelevant to my theme.

What was interesting to me was the self-justification of the International Olympic Committee in its decision to let men box women. Its spokesman as reported in *The Guardian* (not *spokesperson* as printed) said, "I would just say that everyone competing in the women's category is complying with the competition rules. They are women in their passports and it is stated that is the case."

So that's all right, then: Official lies must be accepted as the truth, and we are not allowed to demur or think for ourselves. Once officialdom has spoken somewhere on the Earth's surface, no further questions are to be permitted. But even Stalin, no stranger to the dark arts of historical falsification, would have thought it impossible to change a person's sex retrospectively. It is easier to remove an erstwhile colleague or henchman from a photograph than to remove chromosomes from all his cells.

The spokesman (who would, of course, have said exactly the opposite if called upon to do so) said that it was up to the controllers of each individual sport to make up their own minds on the question. In other words, it was not up to the IOC, albeit that it was in overall charge. The IOC wanted power but not responsibility, as of course do ambitious persons everywhere.

Somewhat in contradiction, however, the spokesman said that the IOC's position was to balance fairness in women's sport with inclusivity. He said, "Federations need to make the rules to make sure that there is fairness, but at the same time with the ability for everyone to take part who wants to."

The utter weaselliness and incoherence of this hardly needs elaboration. The whole point of the Games is not to be inclusive, but exclusive. It is to find out who is best at certain things (not very important things, in my opinion, but others may differ on this point) on what may for once be called almost without cliché a level playing field. There is a certain inherent contradiction in the existence of national teams, of course, insofar as the 100 best pole-vaulters in the world may all be in America or Outer Mongolia, but each nation is limited in the number of athletes it may send, so that we shall never find out by this means who is fourth or fifth best in the world, if we were interested in doing so.

In sport, surely, fairness is all and inclusivity is nothing. Besides, the word "inclusivity" is itself a lie, a code word for certain categories of favored persons, a bit like endangered species, which does not include the infinite number of categories into which humanity can be divided. Although between one-sixth and one-seventh of the Western nations' population is over the age of 65, not a single person over that age is competing in, say, the skateboarding competition, however much one or other of them may wish to do so. The Olympics must exclude the vast majority of the people who want to participate in them, or they would simply be a Walpurgisnacht of incapacity and incompetence, especially in an age such as ours of personal exhibitionism, when people feel that to be is not only to be seen, but to be seen in public.

One of the consequences of the epidemic of ludicrous ideology with which the West has infected the world is the divorce of words from their previous meaning. Institutions whose whole purpose is elitist now claim to be inclusive. Elitism and social exclusivity are confounded, as if they were precisely the same. In the real world they may overlap, of course; there is a tendency of parents to model their children on themselves, especially if they are successful. Elites thus

have a tendency to reproduce themselves, but in open societies they are not utterly impervious to newcomers. The world will never be a completely level playing field, but it need not be a world of impenetrable barriers, either, as if there were nothing between a level playing field on the one hand and apartheid on the other.

As to the Games themselves, the ever-increasing number of sports included strikes me as a prelude to their eventual collapse rather than a sign of greater inclusivity. A man's legs swollen with edema are not stronger because they are of greater circumference. An interesting party game would be to invent new Olympic sports: dose of fentanyl withstood, attack with baseball bats, number of genders distinguishable by their comportment, stabs in the back, jumping from high windows? The possibilities are endless.

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