



Sport and Political Ideology

John M. Hoberman

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Across the modern political spectrum, left-wing and right-wing political theorists have invested sport with ideological significance. That significance, however, varies distinctively and characteristically with the ideology—a phenomenon John Hoberman terms "ideological differentiation." Taking this phenomenon as its point of departure, this provocative work interprets the major sport ideologies of the twentieth century as distinct expressions of political doctrine.

Hoberman argues that a political ideology's interpretation of sport is shaped in part by the value it assigns to work and play as modes of experience; the political anthropologies of right and left can be distinguished by examining their resistance to—or affinity for—sportive imagery of their leaders and of the state itself; there exists a fascist temperament that shows an affinity to athleticism and the sphere of the body that is not shared by the left.

Tracing modern sport ideology back to its premodern antecedents, Hoberman examines the interpretations of sport that have been promulgated by European political intellectuals, such as cultural conservatives and contemporary neo-Marxists, and by the official ideologists of Nazi Germany, the Soviet Union, the German Democratic Republic, and China before and after Mao.

As a form of mass theater, sport can advertise any ideology. But the deeper relationship between sport and political ideology has never before been explored with such vigor. Presenting the first general theory of sport and political ideology to appear in any language, Hoberman's groundbreaking work is a unique and invaluable contribution to the intellectual and political history of sport in the twentieth century.

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