Simon examines whether the condemnation of performance-enhancing drugs is justifiable.

Exactly why is the use of performance-enhancing drugs impermissible?
What Is a Performance-Enhancing Drug?

- It is difficult to give a definitive definition of what counts as a performance-enhancing drug (PED)
- If we include steroids, then why not include caffeine, special diets, or blood doping?
- The natural versus artificial distinction provides no help
- Steroids and one's own blood are natural
- Despite the difficulty, Simon thinks there are paradigm performance-enhancing drugs that one can point to

Paradigm Performance Enhancers and Borderline Cases

- Simon thinks that paradigm performance-enhancing drugs meet the follow criteria
  1. Belief that the drug enhances performance
  2. Drug poses health risks
  3. Not a prescribed medication needed to address an injury or illness
- Steroids and amphetamines meet these criteria
- Blood doping is a borderline case
- Caffeine does not meet these criteria
- The question is whether the use of such paradigm performance enhancers is "morally questionable or impermissible" (247)
Drugs and Harms

- A common argument against the use of performance-enhancing drugs is that these drugs pose a health risk to the user. Since these drugs pose a health risk, it is impermissible to use them.

- Assuming these drugs are harmful, do we have a right to prohibit their use?
  - Is one justified in interfering into another's business just to protect that person from harm?

- **Paternalism**: the view that it is permissible to limit another's freedom and autonomy to keep them from harming themselves or others

Mill's Harm Principle

- Mill thinks that paternalism is unjustifiable, except in certain cases

- **Harm Principle**: interference in someone's actions is justified only to prevent that person from harming another
  - If an athlete wants to take harmful drugs, then s/he can as long as it causes no harm to others.

- **Libertarianism**: the view that individual's should be free to express themselves and act without interference
Two Concerns

- Libertarian views and the Harm Principle raise to issues:
  1. Is there informed consent and a lack of coercion?
  2. Is there harm?

Informed Consent

- Is that athlete who takes PEDs consenting (not coerced)?
  * On the surface, it appears they are.
  * What about athletes who feel they have to take PEDs or else they won't be competitive?
  * Problem: no one forces an athlete to compete at an elite level. They could settle for less.
  * Analogy: Do professors coerce their students to study for exams?

"While the issue of coercion and the distinction between threats and offers is highly complex, I would suggest that talk of coercion is problematic as long as the athlete has an acceptable alternative to a continued participation in highly competitive sport." (248)
Harm To Others

- Competitive pressures coerce others to become PED users
- Problem: The same argument could be used to talk about the coercive pressures to engage in intensive training techniques in order to stay competitive
- The argument implies that the pressure to use PEDs is morally suspect in ways that other types of competitive pressure are not
- But, this assumption seems to beg the question
- What is needed is a principled basis showing that some competitive pressures are illegitimate while other competitive pressures are legitimate

Principled Basis

- Simon thinks there is such a principled basis for determining when risk is improperly urged upon another
- His answer depends on assumptions about the nature of athletic competition
- Competition is a mutual quest for excellence between persons
- "The good competitor, then, does not see opponents as things to be overcome and beaten down but rather sees them as persons whose acts call for appropriate, mutually acceptable responses. On this view, athletic competition, rather than being incompatible with respect for our opponents as persons, actually presupposes it." (250)
Principled Basis and Drugs

- Given that competition is a mutual quest for excellence between persons acting with respect for each other as opponents, then the purpose of competition is to test one's athletic abilities

- But, if PEDs are involved, then competition is not about testing one's athletic abilities against a worthy opponent but about "the way bodies react to drugs" (250)

- PEDs change the purpose of athletic competition

Counter: PEDs Do Not Radically Change Athletic Competitions

- PEDs don't radically change athletic competitions
  - Athletes on PEDs have to work just as hard as those not taking PEDs. It is the quality of the athlete the determines results and not the PEDs.
    - But, when PEDs are used, it is not the qualities of the athlete that are being tested but the athlete's ability to process the drugs
  - Simon wants to stress that the point of athletic competition is to test one's abilities
    - "Capacity to benefit from training techniques seems part of what makes one a superior athlete in a way that capacity to benefit from a drug does not." (251)
Counter: Moral Force of Competition

- Even if one admits that competition is the testing of one's abilities against a worthy opponent, there is no moral force or resulting moral obligation with respect to the use of PEDs
- Simon's response is not to show that there is a moral obligation to not use PEDs
  - Instead, he insists that drugs in sports restrict the opportunities to respect others as persons
  - Using PEDs in competition undermines treating persons respectfully
  - Given we have a moral duty to respect others as persons, then PEDs in competition undermine our respect for our opponents
  - Respect for others imposes a moral obligation upon athletes to not use PEDs

Respect for Persons

- “The use of performance-enhancing drugs in sports restricts the area in which we can be respected as persons. Although individual athletes certainly can make such a choice, there is a justification inherent in the nature of good competition for prohibiting participation by those who make such a decision. Accordingly, the use of performance-enhancing drugs should be prohibited in the name of the value of respect for persons itself.” (252)