

Nikolaos Patsantaras

*Department of Physical Education and Sport Science,
University of Athens*

Abstract

Olympic sports constitute an exceptionally complex and multidimensional social space, particularly in the framework of accelerated social transformations. The social meaning of Olympic communication has radically been transformed, principally during the last two decades. The influences of other social spaces such as the economy, the mass media and politics have lead to a notional heterogeneia of modern Olympic sports semantics. Today, Olympic institutions and organizational configurations direct their interests exclusively towards economic structures. In other words, implemented without reservations are all the processes that support the commercial profile of Olympic sports and promote it as a commercial-entertainment spectacle. As a result serious contradictions and inconsistencies arise between today's Olympic social reality and the values advocated by the Olympic movement and the Olympic Charter. Olympic communication practices are primarily connected to economic interests, and as a result it is difficult to define them as conveyors and as means of reflection for foundational social and ethical values. Consequently, the original messages advocated by the 19th century Olympic movement– and in particular by Coubertin with regard to Olympism and Olympic Education– are not reproduced and reactivated in today's Olympic social reality. Inevitably questions arise such as (1) What is the meaning of Olympic ideology, Olympism and Olympic Education? (2) Is there a discrepancy or a lack of correspondence between the social and ethical values advocated by the Olympic movement and Olympic social reality?

Key Words: *Olympism, Olympic social reality, Olympic spirit, anthropocentric ideas, world peace.*

The inspirational starting point for the founding members of the Olympic movement was ancient Greek philosophy, which the French baron Pierre de Coubertin –the principal founder of Olympic ideology– tried to adapt as best he could in 19th century society. According to Coubertin, Greek philosophy was not simply a theoretical explanation of life, but the nucleus and the meaning of life. In a continued dialogue with events of his period, Coubertin, developed the new «Olympic idea» (Mueller, 1998; Πατσαντάρας, 2007). In his quest for a deeper educational and ethical definition of modern sport competition, Coubertin, the pedagogue, repeatedly refers to the ancient Greek «Agonistiki» (Patsantaras 2005), since he believed that societies at the gate to the 20th century required navigation and orientation by a generally accepted and a practical philosophy which could penetrate easier into societies as a form of ideology. (Malter, 1969). The basic composing elements on which he structured, created and supported Olympic ideology were the ideas and intellectual currents of the age of Enlightenment such as: (1) ecumenicalism (2) progress, (3) individuality, (4) respect and acceptance of cultural diversity, (5) freedom in relation to human interactions, and (6) secularization, namely the process that functions repressively or as a restraining force against traditional religious power. Specifically, by including elements from firstly, ancient Greek Olympic reality –(as ancient Greek philosophy was extremely popular and dominated in the circles of European intellectuals of his period)– and in particular from its religious character which is expressed in the Olympic oath taken by athletes which includes ethical and moral commitment to honesty. Secondly, elements from the clearly anthropocentric character (humanism) of the age of Enlightenment. Explicitly, Coubertin conceived Olympic ideology through the correlation-interrelation of anthropocentric ideas with secularized transcendentalism.

The Ideological Foundation of Olympic Sports: Olympism and Olympic Education

Olympic ideology adopted, to a great degree, a pragmatistic version of ancient Greek idealism through the identification-association of good to beneficial, and useful to beauty. In this way Logos and the conscience of the individual determine where his/her benefits are placed or directed, namely what is beneficial for the individual. Accordingly, the prosperity of the whole is a priority, before the prosperity of individual members, while the responsibility for the realization of this plan or ideas is given to the individual. In this framework the individual is nothing outside of society, while at the same time, individual freedom emerges as a prerequisite for the realization of these ideas. Coubertin's Olympic ideology in this spirit, focused on the restoration of the appropriate balance between that which is good for the individual and that which is good for society. Here we encounter the pedagogy of the Philan-

thropists according to which the community or society is defined as the creating force for the completion of human nature, specifically the individual (Court and Krueger, 1998). Olympic communication practice attempted the emergence of a form of individualism dominated by collective representations, prototypes and benefits. The meaning of Olympic ideology is abridged or reduced into the term Olympism. Namely, Olympic ideology is identified in meaning to Olympism, and the purpose of Olympic Education is to socially activate the basic elements of Olympism.

Coubertin, influenced by the ancient Greek views on Athleticism, attempted to give an educational character to the term Olympic athletics. His interest is not focused primarily on the Olympics games as athletic events, but in the in-between space, in the middle significant space and focal point of Sport and Pedagogy (Boulogne, 1975). In all probability, Coubertin conceived Olympism since he perceived that the educational and wider social targets that he attempted to approach through Olympic activity were impossible to realize due to unpredictable accelerated social developments, which influence and give Olympic sports their idiodynamics. As a pedagogic conception, Olympism, according to Coubertin stimulates and motivates, through its sport components, a redefinition and elevation of the vital powers of the human body and entity, namely salvation/deliverance from degeneration/decay. There is not doubt that for Coubertin, the centre of Olympic sports and Olympism is the individual and individual action. Coubertin attempted to incorporate ecumenically accepted social and ethical values which he defined as Olympic ideals, into incentives for human action. «Olympism is not a system, but a spiritual position/attitude», the French Baron P. De Coubertin wrote in November 1818 (Coubertin, 1967).

In this spirit Coubertin characterizes Olympism as an abstract theory, a new cosmo theory, that many researchers have incorporated into their views on urban idealism. (Malter, 1969) The ideological basis of Olympism –in relation to the social and cultural conditions and targets– are clearly associated to Olympic ideology. Specifically, Olympism is the expression of Olympic ideology, in which we find elements of the true form of ancient Greek idealism: an identification/association of good to beneficial and beautiful/beauty to useful. On this basis Coubertin defines Olympic activity and communication as a conveyor of ethical values aimed at social relations in Olympic sports in order to achieve social solidarity, whether through sport cooperation or team spirit, athletic competition an so forth. Accordingly, ethics determines where the benefits of the athlete are placed. The Other, the opponent is not conceived as an object or as a means, but as a co-subject of action (συναγωνισμός). The focal point here is the principle of fair-play, the maximum ethical principle of Olympic activity. Fair-play does not mean only an attachment or fixation to rules or regulations. The regulations of Olympic sports operate in such a manner so as to allow space for the development of subjective free will (Patsantaras, 2007). As a result, Olympic communication practices can be character-

ized as ethically correct when they are realized beyond fixation to rules and regulations and with consideration or reflection of the opponent as a person (Patsantaras, 1998). According to Coubertin, Olympism, as a basis for an educational model, could contribute both to the individual and to society as a whole, through the creation of adequate preconditions or prerequisites that will restore the necessary-appropriate balance between that which is good for the individual and that which is good for society in its totality (Kamberidou & Patsantaras 2006; 2007; Kamberidou 2008). This philosophy was adopted by the English educational system as well as the founders of German Gymnastics (Turnen) (Mueller, 1998). Physical exercise in the German model was based on neo-platonic views on attaining a state of harmony (Aigner, 1998). For the English, however, the German model was considered static, since such a static ideal was not easy to apply directly to the increasing trend or limitless demands for high performance. Modern Olympic sports could not be supported by the neo-platonic philosophy since the boundless or without restrictions demands for higher performances constitute a constituent element.

The popular European educational models of Coubertin's time maintained that the ethical powers of youth could be cultivated and developed through their personal experience with gymnastics and sport activity, namely activating or encouraging the ethical level in their broader social behaviour (Alfermann & Bussmann, 1998; Shields & Bredemeier, 1995; Eichberg, 1977). A systematic study of the works and initiatives of Coubertin indicates that he advocated a modern sport pedagogy which he perceived as a means for the resolution of many crucial issues of his time. Although in the beginning Coubertin did not use the term *Pedagogie Olympique* (Olympic Education), instead he advocated a general Athletic Education, he examined the educational goals that could be realized primarily through athletic events, such as the Olympic Games. There was an interrelation between Olympism, Olympic education and Olympic sports (Lenk, 1964). On this basis, Olympic Education or (*Pedagogie Olympique*), according to Coubertin in 1918, should look for its constituent elements in a meaningful space whose two poles are determined by the etiquette of excessive efforts and the etiquette of harmony. Namely, the pursuit of harmony and moderation, which comes through excessive efforts. A state of harmony and eudemonia (prosperity) in this framework, is not perceived as a static dimension, but as a dynamic, transformable and changing dimension since it is the result of an endless, excessive, and disciplined physical, spiritual and intellectual effort (Πατσαντάρας, 2007). This example is evident every four years during the Olympic games (Coubertin, 1967). On this notional basis Coubertin constructed his educational model and for the first time uses the term Olympic education (*Pedagogie Olympique*), perceiving Olympism as the basis and composing element of Olympic education (Coubertin, 1934).

With this vision Coubertin wanted to establish athletic spaces in all the cities of the world, athletic spaces that would have as a prototype the ancient

Greek Gymnasium. Moreover, he consistently stressed the significant role that athletic clubs could play in the democratization of societies (Coubertin, 1986; Coubertin, 1917). The Olympic movement's mission was not confined exclusively to the formulation of institutional frameworks for international sport competitions, but to the establishment of educational sport centers accessible to all citizens, independent of socio-cultural origins. Coubertin's aspiration was to use sport activity –as it was perceived in central western Europe of the 19th century– as a means for an Ecumenical Education, that would be based on the development of personal responsibility, personal ethics and values, with the final goal being the peaceful coexistence of the peoples of the world (Kamberidou, 2008).

The meaning of the term «Olympic Education» appears in the pedagogy of sport and in Olympic research after 1970 (Mueller, 1975). The question concerning the meaning and the contents of Olympic education can be answered if we compare it and interrelate it to Coubertin's Olympic communication practice, the «*religio athletae*» (Nissiotis, 1987), namely the sport-religious idea. As a result Olympic education takes on the character of a clearly ethical education, which is based on athletic activity, and consequently physical activity. The value of the human body –that had already been revalued decades ago in the framework of the secularization of education, in other words the detachment of education processes from past religious dogmas and views– is reevaluated and redefined as a means of achieving «the completion of human nature», (Snyder, 1971) and as a means of state/civil and social prosperity. Olympic education, as a means for the cultivation of ethical values is perceived as a multidimensional educational tool aimed at exercising influence in all dimensions of human nature (body, mind, psyche). (Kamberidou, 2008) As an educational model it pursues the harmonization of the composing elements of human nature, and simultaneously the harmonization of nature and the cosmos – on the level determined by moderation and excess which differs according to time and space for each individual. This is how Olympic education appears and emerges today. It is a complex and multidimensional pedagogic method which could contribute to the development of the gnosiological complexity of the subject in order to make the subject capable of reflection with regard to the consequences of actions, and especially those that interfere with the future of others.

Olympic education, which attempts to activate Olympic ideology, adopts and is based on ecumenical values, namely ecumenical education that includes all peoples. However, one need point out that it would be useless to incorporate Coubertin's Olympism into today's educational systems, into today's schools, without first taking into consideration the complex social processes of change and transformation in Olympic values. Namely, one need examine the current Olympic games and primarily today's Olympic athletes since they serve as prototypes, as role models for young children. (Kamberi-

dou, 2008) Initially, sociological issues and questions need to be raised, such as: Do today's Olympic athletes and officials reflect or represent Olympic values. Are these values only expressed rhetorically? Before we introduce Olympic education into our school systems, we should ask if Olympic athletes and members of the Olympic movement today are in dire need of Olympic education, in view of the fact that Olympic education is an educational process that operates on the basis of prototypes (role models).

The Athletic – Religious Idea (Religio Athletae)

In the framework of the Olympic movement the terms Olympic sports and Olympism had acquired metaphysical dimensions and were defined as a form of religion, as Olympic religion or as the religion of sport. (Alkemeyer, 1996). In the spirit of Olympic ideology, the athletes do not participate in Olympic games exclusively for their desire for competition, performance, the game and movement, but also in order to create a higher social level through collective effort since they are perceived as conveyors of superior ethical and social values, such as the freedom of the individual, democracy, peace and Ecumenism (Aigner, 1998; MacAloon, 1981).

Coubertin's «religio athletae», the athletic-religious idea promoted by the Olympic movement, cannot be understood exclusively from a religious perspective, not of course with the strict theological meaning, but should also be considered from an anthropocentric dimension. A higher and superior form of social formation could emerge on the basis of Olympic ideology if the individual perceives the need to orient social activities towards ecumenically accepted ethical values and principles – not as a part or a means of forced or imposed collective processes and conditions, but one of free-will. In correlation with the ancient Greek prototype a sacred-virtuous, prototype is assigned to Olympic activity and as a result the Olympic games and Olympism take on the character of a «cosmic religion» (Coubertin, 1935). Specifically shared meanings and values regardless of cultural diversity.

Coubertin, in this framework, assigns the title of «councils of priests» to the officials of the IOC, while he refers to the athletes as «priest of muscular power» (Coubertin, 1966; Herms, 1990; Higgs, 1992). Consequently, both officials and athletes, primarily through good example (prototypes) are those who will contribute to the correct interpretation and social promotion of Olympic values, thereby enabling participants (spectators/audiences) to advance into the deeper meaning of life. Avery Brundage (1971), the fifth president of the IOC, in his speech at the 62nd IOC conference in 1964, stressed the «secular religiosity» of the Olympic movement and its world acceptance, as it incorporates and reflects in practice all religious values. He calls the IOC members «Apostoles» of this religion, of the religion of Olympism, «a religion

of the 20th century». Unquestionably the Olympic movement attempted to present Olympic activity as a sacred social action and as a religious activity. In this spirit, Coubertin's «citius- altius- fortius» could be perceived as an effort of transcending the meaning that symbolizes the human body, namely the finite of human nature, and Olympic activity is perceived as a means of transcending from dependence towards freedom.

Olympic Ideology, Olympism and Olympic Reality

Olympic ideology advocates social equality and peaceful coexistence, however it leads us away from social reality, from the real world. As a conveyor of ideology, Olympic sports assign the control of social coexistence to an ethical elite which through its example or prototypes dictates a practical philosophy (πράττειν) for human conduct and behaviours. If we examine Olympic sports from an ideological perspective, the focus is placed on transcendence, on the metaphysical and ideal elements of the Olympic phenomenon and not on the understanding of its real meaning. Efforts for the ideologization of the Olympic phenomenon have led it, and continue to lead it, towards socio-ethical impasses and deadlocks. In this framework, K. Manheim (1995), argues that when we refer to ideologies we are obliged to accept the parallel meaning of utopia. Consequently Coubertin's ideological vision for social equity and justice and the peaceful coexistence of the peoples of the world, could also be characterized as a utopia (Diekmann & Teichler, 1997).

In today's societies –dominated by economic priorities and values, commercialization and consumerism– the incentives for Olympic performance are not the incentives that activate Olympic values. Coubertin's «citius- altius- fortius», which he interpreted as an incentive for social progress in order to attain ecumenical universal values –such as world peace– has been transformed into a means of virtual ethics (Patsantaras & Kamberidou, 2004; Patsantaras & Kamberidou, 2006), namely securing commercialization on a global scale. The magnitude of commercialization reflects the level of a society's progress (consumer society), while it defines and determines the success of the Olympics, according to the views of the members of the Olympic movement. The success or failure of the Olympics is determined, not by the activation of Olympic values, but exclusively and one-sidedly on economic terms (Patsantaras, 2006). The Olympic games clearly reflect this social reality and comprise a system of education for societies in this direction. In this spirit, one could conclude that participants in any form of the Olympic processes, and primarily the members of the Olympic movement and athletes who exercise an influence on the social environment as role models, are in dire need of Olympic education (Pedagogy Olympique).

The official economic interrelations-relationship of the IOC, the Olympic movement, the Olympic games with the Economy began in 1981 with the cancellation-annulment of the article concerning amateur sports/non-professionals. The problem is not the commercialization of the Olympics but under what conditions they are realized and where the funds are allocated. Incontestably, the Olympic movement has not used the enormous funds it receives in order to socially activate Olympic values. To illustrate, since the Olympic movement advocates that one of its central missions is to promote world peace –and certain indicators determine as a state of peace the battle against starvation– then the greatest percentage of the profits of the Olympic movement should go primarily to countries such as Africa and Asia, where thousands of children die from starvation. This would mean the active social presence of Olympic values and ethics, as opposed to the rhetorical and abstract speeches and lectures of sport officials.

Conclusion

The Olympic movement is responsible for today's Olympic reality. The IOC, especially after the Varna conference (1974) –that theoretically led to its partial democratization, but primarily after 1981 when the relationship between the Olympic movement and the Economy was institutionalized– has not used Olympic values, Olympic ideology as a basic structure in the decision making processes. As the historicity of the Olympic movement has shown us, including the Olympic games, rarely in the last years can a member of the IOC or even an Olympic athlete be defined as an «elite» in the spirit of Coubertin (Patsantaras, 1994). The accelerated processes of change in Olympic values require a redefinition, a reevaluation, a rethinking of the social and ethical meaning of Olympic values, including the mission of the Olympic movement.

Ethical rhetoric has distanced sports from social reality, altering and corrupting its meaning, in a way that is ethically inappropriate and wrong because it has been attempted through the manipulation of the sport environment of the past, and many times through a non-existent past, in order to crystallize and develop an athletic presence fragile to manipulation or demagoguery exploitation. The advocated by today's sport officials Olympic ideals do not need the imaginary and extraordinary rhetoric of sport officials in order to preserve their identity and their continuity. New institutional organizational forms are required as well as the implementation of immediate measures and policies through which their redefinition can be achieved in today's social reality (Kamberidou & Patsantaras, 2007). It is time for the IOC to put into practice the ideals of the Olympic Charter, especially in view of the fact that the Olympic Games capture the attention of over one-third of the world's population, and could be used for something more than global marketing and the political agendas of wealthy na-

tions that can afford to produce medal-winning athletes. Undeniably, new prototypes, role models and mentors are needed – to teach pro-social attitudes and values through sports, instead of the obsessive competitiveness that leads to the use of substances (doping), gender discrimination and racial violence in sports (Patsantaras, Kamperidou & Panagiotopoulos, 2007).

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Address for correspondence:

Nikolaos Patsantaras
41 Ethn. Antistaseos Str.,
17237, Daphne
Athens, Greece
e-mail: npatsant@phed.uoa.gr