

# MORE ON THE OLYMPIC SAYING, ITS MORE IMPORTANT... ITS USE IN 1896-1894 AND 1908.

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Everyone knows, in one form or another, the Olympic maxim “Its more important to participate than to win.” Pierre de Coubertin’s well-known 1908 version reads: “L’important dans ces olympiades, c’est moins d’y gagner que d’y prendre part” (“The important thing in these Olympiads is less to win than to take part in them”). 1)

In the past few years, several studies have sought to determine the exact source of this saying or “credo”. 2) I myself argued that Coubertin’s 1908 sentence goes back to his speech delivered in Athens, November 16, 1894. There, at a meeting of the Pamassus Literary Society, the baron said, with reference to the Olympics, “Le déshonneur ne consisterait pas ici à être battu: il consisterait à ne pas se battre” (“The dishonor here would not consist of being beaten; it would consist of not contending”). 3) Coubertin’s 1894 statement, I also suggested, was probably a subconscious recasting of a sentence from the ancient Latin poet Ovid, whom the baron would have read at school: *Nec tam turpe fuit vinci quam contendisse decorum est* (“It was not so shameful to be beaten as it is honorable to have contended,” *Metamorphoses* 9.5-6).

I have now found another nineteenth-century version of the same sentence; it is amazingly close to Coubertin’s 1894 version. This new version, written just a few days before the Games of IOC Olympiad I, Athens, April 1896, comes from an anonymous editorial in the *Century Magazine* (New York) published that same month. The writer first praises Coubertin’s noble motives in initiating the Olympic revival, then laments that “there is no prospect of participation...by large numbers of Americans. This is due to the distance, the unwonted season, and our consequent inability to send our best athletes. We are informed, however, that the United States will have a few worthy representatives. Apparently our amateurs have not realized just what they owe their

country, and some have not yet learned that *dishonor lies not in being beaten, but in refusing to struggle.*” 4)

That could well be a literal English translation of Coubertin’s *Le déshonneur* sentence spoken in Greece less than two years before.

What is the *Century* editor’s own source, and how does his 1896 version fit into the general debate over the origin of the saying? Despite Ovid’s wide popularity in the nineteenth century, it is not likely that Ovid’s sentence was echoed by both our anonymous editor and by Coubertin independently of one another - within two years, both in context of the new Olympic Games. There is an alternate explanation.

At the end of his editorial, the author states that, in a later issue of the *Century Magazine*, the pending Athens Games “will be the subject of an article by M. de Coubertin.” Indeed they are - it is Coubertin’s rather prominent article, “The Olympic Games of 1896, by their Founder, Pierre de Coubertin.” 5)

Obviously, the *Century* editors and Coubertin had already corresponded. And it seems certain that the baron had already sent to the *Century* a copy of his 1894 Athens speech, his most extensive statement on his Olympic philosophy to that date. In other words, our editor had, in fact, read Coubertin’s Athens 1894 *Le déshonneur* sentence and did indeed just translate it literally into English.

Although the *Century* editorial is brief, while Coubertin’s Athens speech is lengthy, there are so many parallels, of theme, phrase, and structure, with Coubertin’s 1894 speech that it appears that the baron’s 1894 Athens speech was in our editor’s mind when he wrote his piece. The *Century* editorial and Coubertin’s speech both focus on the twin themes of democracy and internationalism and stress that it should be a kind of internationalism which does nothing to efface

national identities. Then the editor explicitly cites Coubertin as a source: "...as M. de Coubertin has said ..." Can he mean something of Coubertin's other than the 1894 speech? No. There are clear verbal echoes. It is not by chance that many of the editor's words in that paragraph, such as "social peace," "muscular development," "ignorance," and "hate," all find their exact French counterparts in a single section of Coubertin's Athens speech: "*paix social, "développement musculaire," "ignorance," "haines."*" 6)

Near the end of his editorial, the *Century* writer lists the sports - with their venues - that will be contested at the Athens Games. The phraseology of his list, I think, could only come from the next section of Coubertin's 1894 Athens speech, and the duplication of these lists clinches the argument beyond doubt: the *Century* editor had the text of the 1894 Athens speech in front of him (or else he had it well embedded in his mind). 7) Since he read these other parts of Coubertin's text so carefully, he surely had also read the Olympic sentiment, *Le déshonneur ne consisterait pas ici à être battu: il consisterai à ne pas se battre.*

This 1896 editorial tends to confirm my argument that our cherished Olympic saying comes not from 1908 and "the bishop of Pennsylvania" (Ethelbert Talbot), as Coubertin claimed, but from 1894 and the renovateur himself.

Yet the 1896 *Century* version presents a problem. The 'credo' statement ranking participation over winning seems rather irrelevant. Certainly to urge his fellow countrymen to be patriotic and to participate was relevant (even if, in April, a little late). But our author has just explained the real reasons why few Americans would compete: "the distance, [and] the unwonted season." 8) There is nothing in his context about American fears of losing; and diffidence was hardly a trait of American athletes at the time. Why does the editor cite the full credo? I confess that I do not know. I can only conclude that he found Coubertin's dictum so intrinsically attractive that, as he paraphrased, adapted-and-sometimes translate--other parts of the baron's speech, he also inserted, willy-nilly, what is now our Olympic credo even though it added little to his point. 9)

Now another question is posed. Why did Coubertin make the statement in the first place? How did it suit the 1894 setting? Not very well, in reality. In his Athens speech, Coubertin had only one goal: to countermand the Greek Prime Minister's opposition to the IOC Games by rallying

all the rest of Greece to favor holding them. In this Parnassus Society address, the baron first dealt with Prime Minister Trikoupis' only stated objection, money; he estimated the cost at a small fraction of what it would prove to be, and surely Coubertin himself knew his estimate was not realistic. It was mainly rhetorical. 10) He then sought to counter another objection, namely, that the Greeks balked at holding Olympics for fear their athletes would lose: "The second objection rests on your inferiority from a sporting point of view." This objection was Coubertin's own fictitious invention. There is no authentic historical item, anywhere, to suggest that such a fear lay behind any Greek reluctance to hold the Games. 11) But Coubertin counters that imaginary Greek objection here with the famous *déshonneur* adage; his motives are wholly rhetorical. He wished to shame the Greeks into holding the games by labelling non-participation as a national disgrace, even cowardice. 12) Thus both Coubertin and the *Century* editorialist express the credo not after the Games, but before they took place - urging 'participation' and focussing on that half of the two-part dictum. And they quote the whole adage mainly as a kind of rhetorical *bon mot*, even though the half about the shame of losing (or lack thereof) is only tangentially relevant to the actual situation at hand. Perhaps that is why the

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world took no notice at all of this now famous saying until its third utterance.

It is quite otherwise with Coubertin's speech in London, 1908. At first glance, it would appear that the baron's 1908 version is the most irrelevant of all - it no way suits its immediate context.

"It is true to say, however, that nowadays when the progress of material civilization...has magnified everything, certain irregularities which threaten the Olympic idea arouse disquiet. Yes, I will not try to conceal it, '**fair play**' is in danger; and this is due above all to the canker which has rashly been allowed to develop: the craze for gaming, betting, gambling. Very well! If a crusade against gambling is required we are ready to undertake it, and I am sure that in this country opinion would support us-the opinion of all who love sport for itself, for its high educative value, for the pursuit of human perfection... Last Sunday...the bishop of Pennsylvania recalled this in his felicitous words: 'the **important thing in these Olympiads is less to win than to take part in them.**'" 13)

Thus the baron's immediate context is gambling - 'gambling threatens "fair play"; we must stop this horrid gambling- for it's more important to participate than to win.' In the argument, this most notable use of our Olympic credo even seems a non sequitur. I, at least, cannot grasp how ranking participation over victory affects gambling; in a twisted way, it might even encourage it. Nor do I know of any special outburst of gambling in connection with the London Games. Surely it is not gambling that has clouded the 1908 Games in our Olympic histories. They are notorious for a wholly different reason: the ugly bickering between the American team and the British organizing officials. Yet there is no flaw in the baron's usually flawless rhetoric. Rather, he was the master rhetorician, making sure his comments were as diplomatic as they were timely. "Fair play" was in fact "in danger" at the time, but not from gambling. The credo sentence indeed referred to the matters at hand.

If we look at the larger context, and at the baron's previous paragraph in this speech, the aptness - the rhetorical brilliance - of Coubertin's "the important thing..." adage is immediately apparent. In the previous paragraph he had already raised the topic of "fair play"; and just before going off on the tangent about gambling, Coubertin sought to define the Olympic idea.

"The Olympic idea is...the conception of a strong physical culture based in part on the spirit of...'fair play', and in part on a cult of beauty and grace... This morning I was reading, à propos of an incident that occurred yesterday and which caused a certain commotion-I was reading in one of your great newspapers a cry of despair at the thought that certain features of our contemporary sporting morals forbid us to aspire to the classical level. Gentlemen! do you believe that similar incidents never decorated the chronicle of the Olympic...Games...of antiquity? ..Man has always been passionate, and heaven preserve us from a society ...in which the expression of ardent feeling were shut up for ever in the too-narrow confines of decorum.

It is true to say, however, that nowadays...fair play... gambling..." 14)

The key words here are "fair play" and "an incident...yesterday." For "yesterday" was July 23, 1908. There would come an even blacker day to Olympic history much later, but "yesterday" was the blackest to that date, and still one of the most dismal in Olympic history. July 23 was the day of

the infamous 400 metre race in which the American who finished first, John Carpenter, was disqualified for fouling the English runner Wyndham Halswelle. The Americans were immediately incensed at the decision and protested - loudly; they refused to participate in a later rerun of the race. The British officials refused to allow any Americans to be present at the formal hearing of their protest. The charges of cheating, the rancor - the poor sportsmanship - from both sides were unseemly. 15) Fair play was more than jeopardized; momentarily, at least, it had hit bottom. If there was ever a time when the sporting world needed to be reminded that winning is not everything, it was on July 24, 1908, the day of Coubertin's London speech. But, in the setting of this speech - a dinner given by the British government - the baron could not just blurt out his disapproval of

this conspicuous lack of 'fair play'. After mentioning the incident of "yesterday", had he appeared to censure the organizing committee's action, or to lecture his British audience then and there about 'fair play' and good sportsmanship, he might have appeared to favor the American side. So, explicitly raising the questions of 'fair play' and the nasty 'incident' that was on everyone's mind, Coubertin first defused those volatile topics by reference to similar incidents in antiquity, then distanced himself from those topics even further, to speak of gambling's ills - only to return to the point, fair play, by citing the credo. He thus blunted his attack

on poor sportsmanship by aiming it off to the side, deflecting it where it should offend no one and could apply to everyone, the Americans as well as the British, all the Olympians then in London, all Olympians yet to come.

If we consider the timing, July 24, there can be little doubt but that the furor over the 400 metre race - hanging heavily in the air that day - prompted Coubertin to say that 'winning is not so important as to take part'. 16) But the caution, obliqueness, and diplomacy with which the baron publically reproached both the Americans and the British for their conduct in this 'incident' are remarkable.

He himself directly faulted neither side, no one. Herein we may finally find an answer to the most bothersome mystery about the early history of our credo. It has seemed almost inexplicable that the baron should attribute the words to Talbot, when he himself had expressed them in 1894 and Talbot had said nothing of the kind. 17) But now we can see a possible motive. Coubertin did not wish to

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offend his British audience, did not wish to seem accusatory toward them or anyone else. It was perhaps expedient to pretend that his reproach was not *his* reproach, that it had not, after all, been prompted by the ‘incident’ of the day before; it may have appeared safer to attribute the words not to himself but to someone else, and to feign that they were uttered long before the debacle of July 23 - on “last Sunday” - yes, even by a man of the cloth. Few would fail to see how well the words suited the uproar about the 400 metre incident. But no one could take offense at Coubertin’s quoting a clergyman who was supposedly quoting St. Paul in St. Paul’s Cathedral several days before the disputed race. 18) At any rate the “bishop’s” words from his sermon “last Sunday” (July 19) were both innocuous and effective. And on July 24 they were as “felicitous” as Coubertin said they were; they still are.

**T**he Olympic credo has now been invoked for decades, so guiding Olympic competition that it easily preponderates over the few unseemly incidents. Olympic history is full of incidents of magnanimous yet almost routine good sportsmanship.

And while the credo sentence in 1894 and 1896 focussed mainly on national participation, Coubertin’s 1908 call has beckoned generations of individual athletes to seek participation in the Games. 19) The great majority lose. Then the credo is not merely their solace; it is their rallying cry. Ovid placed his original 8 A.D. version in the mouth of a loser - the mythical river god Acheloüs who, defeated by the magnificent Hercules, is not ashamed to have lost to so great an opponent: “It was not so shameful to be beaten as it is honorable to have contended.” 20)

Coubertin wanted a flock of Acheloï at his games - and got them. I have heard countless Olympic losers on television (and a few in person) say, in effect, ‘I achieved my goals. I competed in the Olympic Games. It’s the thrill of my lifetime!’

Or a bronze medalist state, ‘They were both a little faster - but this is great. All I hoped to do was to make it to the finals; this is great! I’m proud; I’m elated!’ The Olympics are so monumental an institution, so exemplary of all that is good in mankind, that they are probably the only place on earth where even losers are winners. 21)

#### NOTES:

1) Norbert Müller, ed., Pierre de Coubertin, “Les ‘trustees’ de l’idée olympique,” *Textes Choisis II*, 448-450 [hereafter cited as “Müller”], Zürich, p. 449 (from *Revue Olympique*, July 1908, 108-110); original text in Official British Report, Th. A. Cook, ed., *Olympic Games, London, 1908*, London, 1909, pp. 792-3; English translation from: Coubertin, “Trustees of the *Olympic idea*,” pp. 18-20 in *The Olympic Idea* (Carl-Diem Institut, ed., John Dixon, transl.) Stuttgart,

1967, p. 20. Despite his total mastery of English, the baron gave his speech in French (I thank Ture Widlund for pointing this out to me.)

2. Ture Widlund, “Ethelbert Talbot: His Life and Place in Olympic History,” *Citius, Altius, Fortius: Journal of the International Society of Olympic Historians*, 2.2 (May 1994), pp. 7-14; see also Widlund, “Det olympiska valspraket,” *Svenska idrottshistoriska föreningens arsskrift* 1982, 45-71 (English summary, 68-71); cf. *Olympic Review* 187 (May, 1983), 294-295. John A. Lucas, *Future of the Olympic Games*, Champaign, Ill., 1992, pp. 96-98, with notes; and in a postscript to Widlund’s article in *Citius, Altius, Fortius* (above). David C. Young, “On the Source of the Olympic Credo,” *Olympika* 3 (1994), 17-25.” In that article - and now still - I reject Coubertin’s statement that he got the saying from the American bishop; for what Bishop Talbot actually said is not even close to what Coubertin said Talbot said (see the above articles). Later in this present paper I will offer a probable explanation for Coubertin’s misquotation and false attribution. Lucas calls the saying the Olympic “code”, Widlund, the Olympic “device”; for consistency’s sake, I here follow my *Olympika* editors in using the term “credo”. I also correct an error in my *Olympika* article; there, in my note 1, I wrongly stated that Father Henri Didon (author of the motto: *Citius, Altius, Fortius*) had been a “close friend of Coubertin from 1889 on.” We now know that Didon and Coubertin did not even meet until 1891 (see Alain Arvin-Bérod, *Enfants d’Olympie*, Paris, 1996, p. 122).

3. Coubertin, in Müller, p. 372. Müller (pp. 364-375) reprints (from the French language Athenian newspaper, *Le Messenger d’Athènes*, 1894, nos. 39 and 42) the full original text of this important speech. The version in Coubertin, *The Olympic Idea*, pp. 7-10 (from *Bulletin du comité international des jeux olympiques*, Jan. 1895, p. 4), just a snippet of the whole speech, omits almost all of this passage and much more, quoting the credo sentence wholly out of context.

4. “The New Olympic Games,” *Century Magazine* 51 [N.S. 291 (1896), 951 (emphasis added).

5. *Century Magazine* 53 [N.S. 31] (1896), 39-53. Olympic historians may be interested to know that the same volume, 53, contains a long article on modern Athens - signed by Demetrios Vikelas (378-392); while vol. 51 (with the Olympic editorial) has a book-length set of articles about Napoleon Bonaparte (3-53, 193-222, 364-396, 510-540, 669-700, 848-879) - by William Sloane.

6. I give Coubertin’s 1894 French beside the 1896 Century’s English, with emphasis on phrases which seem equivalent or to prove the editor’s borrowing:

“..démocratique et internationale ..internationalisme..dans le sens du respect et **non de la destruction des patries**..la sage et pacifique internationalisme.. faire oeuvre de perfectionnement moral et de **paix social** en même temps que de **développement musculaire** ..l’occasion d’une rencontre

heureuse **et fraternelle** dans laquelle s'effacera peu à peu cette **ignorance** ..ignorance qui entretient ..les **haines**" (Coubertin in Müller, pp. 369-370).

"international and democratic sport..the drift of our democratic age is either international or anti-national, [We] must struggle to substitute international for **anti-national..as M. de Coubertin has said**, that a well-regulated, honorable athleticism will be a factor not only in a wholesome **muscular development**, but in cultivating the finer sentiments of universal **brotherhood** and **social peace**. **Ignorance** is the mother of suspicion and **hate**" (Century, 951).

Both the order of the arguments here and the word-choice correspond too closely to be accidental (as might be the case when the editor identifies de Courcel, president of the 1894 Paris International Athletic Congress, with words [Century, p. 951] identical to Coubertin's [in Müller, p. 364]). With "as M. de Coubertin has said," this author openly cites Coubertin and his words; he does not simply plagiarize them.

7. Century: "...contests in **horsemanship at the cavalry school...those in fencing and wrestling in the fine rotunda of the Zappeion**, those of a **nautical** character on **the bay of Phalerum** ..sports.. **gymnastic and athletic**, will take place **in the stadium.**"

Although this paragraph reverses the order of presentation so that the preeminent stadium sports form its climax, Coubertin's section that directly follows his sentence about "ignorance" breeding "hate" is surely the editor's source for this list:

"**Sports athlétiques ..Gymnastique ..se feraient dans le Stade ..les Sports nautiques ..dans le baie de Phalère, l'escrime, ..la lutte ..dans la magnifique rotonde du Zappeion, ..concours d'équitation dans ..l'Ecole de cavalerie**" (Coubertin in Müller, p. 371). The first three issues of the *Bulletin de Comité International des Jeux Olympiques* have no comparable list; it seems it could only derive from the Athens speech.

8. Most American athletes were college students, who could not easily be absent from their classes, even if they had the money for the long journey to Athens. These factors did indeed reduce the number of American athletes at Athens. Had Coubertin's personal friend, William Sloane, not obtained extraordinary leaves for his Princeton athletes, the American track and field team would have totalled six (one of whom, James Connolly, was expelled from Harvard for leaving classes to attend the Games).

9. Perhaps the anonymous *Century* editor deserves some credit for being the first to promulgate the credo apart from Coubertin and outside of Greece; but he obviously attracted little historical notice (unless, as is possible or even probable, Coubertin read his sentence, which then recalled and reinforced the original in the baron's mind).

10. He estimated the total cost as 150,000 francs, or about

125,000 drachmas (Müller, p. 372, Athens newspaper *Nea Ephemera* Nov. 11/23, 1894); the actual expense for renovating the stadium alone was about a million drachmas.

11. I conjecture that, if anyone has asked him the relevance, Coubertin would have cited Dragoumis' claim that sports did not yet really exist in Greece ("la notion exacte de ce que vous appelez les 'Sports athlétiques' n'existe pas," quoted in Coubertin, *Une campagne de vingt-et-un-ans*, Paris [1908], p. 110). Dragoumis' statement itself, of course, was a rhetorical fabrication. And no one queried Coubertin about the source of his strange notion (for which the original is: "La seconde objection repose sur votre infériorité au point de vue sportif" [Müller, p. 372]; the above translation is mine).

12. His rhetoric compares the holding of Olympic Games in Athens with the Greek war of independence against the Turks; to refuse to hold the Games 'for fear of losing' would be as if the present Greeks' forefathers had refused to fight for their freedom on the grounds that they might lose! See this section of his 1894 speech in Müller, p. 372, or my article (above, n.2), p. 19, or my *Modern Olympics: A Struggle for Revival*, Baltimore and London, 1996, p. 112.

13. Dixon's translation, *Olympic Idea*, pp. 19-20 [emphasis added]; the original French (see above, first paragraph) is perhaps a little more felicitous and forceful. For proof that the above words cannot be a direct quotation of the bishop's English see Talbot's actual words, as quoted in Lucas and in Widlund (above, n. 2).

14. *Olympic Idea*, p. 19 (emphasis added).

15. I need not elaborate on the incident itself, for ISOH members already have summary of the whole affair: Stan Greenberg, "What special relationship?" *Citius, Altius, Fortius* 3.1 (Winter 1995), 27-29. Greenberg notes that things got so bad that the British committee issued a booklet, *The Olympic Games of 1908 in London, A Reply to Certain Criticisms*; more pamphlets and rebuttals were later issued by both sides. There are excerpts from some of these recriminations from both sides published in *Outing* 53, 244-249 (Gustavus Kirby, representing the American side) and 643-646 (the British side) - published by the *Outing* editor, Caspar Whitney. They make most unpleasant reading. In his own assessment of the affair (52, 761-766), Whitney himself seeks to take a moderate course, deploring the poor sportsmanship and recriminations from both sides, but, in the main, blaming the IOC (see n.16, below).

The head of the American team, James E. Sullivan, had been complaining about the British almost from the start. On June 17 he voiced his suspicion that the British organizing committee was cheating in making heat assignments; he even blamed the London committee for the abominable English weather! (*New York Times*, July 18).

After the 400 metre race, he said, "Never in my life, and I have attended athletic meetings for thirty-one years, have I witnessed a scene...so unsportsmanlike and unfair (*New*

*York Times*, July 24, p. 6). Another source says, ‘The feeling that British ‘fair play’ toward the Americans was conspicuous only by its absence seems to be practically unanimous among our contestants, their trainers, and the American newspaper correspondents. ‘This meeting,’ says James E. Sullivan ‘..was not made for friendly relations athletically between the United States and Great Britain.’ The British athletes, say our representatives, are cheerful winners, but poor losers.” But the same reporter notes that there is another side to the story: “On the other hand, *The London Times* asserts that the American representatives are ‘better athletes than sportsman”’ (“A Review of the World,” *Current Literature* 45 [1908], 244-248). Thus both sides passionately accused each other of being sore losers, and the charge probably applies to both.

16. And on that very day, July 24, just a few hours before this evening dinner speech, there had just occurred the perhaps equally infamous Marathon finish, where the British officials lifted up the collapsed Italian, Pietri, and helped him across the finish line ahead of the American Hayes. The Americans again protested wildly, again claiming that the officials cheated in order to nullify an American victory. Pietri was later disqualified and Hayes declared the winner; but the British continued to regard the American protest as more bad sportsmanship. Coubertin probably had no time between the Marathon and the dinner to work on his speech; but the hubbub over the Marathon surely added to the uncomfortable atmosphere of the dinner, already made tense by the controversy over the 400.

This July 24 speech has another item no doubt prompted by the incident of the 400 metres (and other similar, if lesser disputes). On the same page, Coubertin states that it is not the “role” of the IOC to “[issue] strict regulations, which it were intended to make compulsory.” Surely this is a response to criticism, especially by the Americans, in the midst of the furor, that the IOC, not the local organizing committee should have its own rules to decide such questions as a runner’s disqualification on the track (American and British rules in fact differed *some* in this respect, and each country cited its own rule). The current IOC, its critics said, was weak, ineffective, non-representative, and should be wholly replaced by another. The American Caspar Whitney (himself a member of the IOC from 1900-1905) defended the British organizing committee’s honesty (saying they were not evil, just incompetent and “stupid” [*Outing* 52, 764]) and chastised the Americans for poor sportsmanship (they “should have kept their mouths shut and abided by [the officials’ 400 metre] decision,” 52,765). He states there were faults on both sides; but he places almost all the blame on Coubertin and the IOC: “The fundamental fault was lack of a real international

committee... We should have long ago insisted on reconciliation of conflicting rules and upon the appointment of an international body competent to handle such an event... My suggestion is the dismissal of the present so-called International Olympic Committee and formation of a new one..” (53,247). “[There is a] need of reorganizing the whole International Olympic Committee in personnel and method of conduct. At present it is a clumsy affair, chosen quite after the fashion that obtains in nominating patronesses to smart garden parties...” (52,763). Though these passages are published weeks or months after the 1908 Games, the same opinions had been voiced in London as they took place. It is not surprising that this speech of Coubertin’, “Trustees of the Olympic Idea” (above, n. 2), was mainly a defence of the IOC and its method of choosing its own members.

17. In my 1994 article (above, n. 2) I posed this question (p. 19, with n. 15), and confessed, “I see no sure answer.” I then took refuge in the fact that Coubertin sometimes forgot exactly what he had done when. I now believe that the answer given here is more likely; that is, his wish to reprimand without giving personal offense - explains the false attribution. Who could forget, having once said this particularly dynamic sentence to an audience, that he once said this sentence?

18. For Talbot’s misquotation from St. Paul see my article (above, n. 2), p. 18.

19. In 1908, the baron significantly edited his statement of 1894, changing the passive “to be beaten” to the active “to win”, and the virtual negative “dishonor” to the positive “important”. His original version, like its model in Ovid *Metamorphoses* 9.5-6, was couched in a military context. In 1908 he changed the rather warlike verb of his 1894 speech, *se battre*, “fight, do battle” (and Ovid’s contentious *contendere* [=“struggle” in *Century* 1986]) to the much milder “y prendre part”, “participate, take part in”. But in the next breath he returned to those original, more martial contexts (and the same martial verb, *se battre*) in the following sentence, “The important thing in life is not victory but struggle; the essential is not to have won but to have fought well (= *se battre*, Müller, p. 449).

20. The exact date of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* is not known, but it was certainly written sometime within the first decade of the A.D. period, and 8 A.D. is a date preferred by many classical scholars. For a fuller account of Ovid’s context and passage see my article (above, n. 2).

21. Although there is no losing in the Olympics, there are degrees of winning: that is why we have the other saying, the motto, *Citius, Altius, Fortius*.

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