

## BOOK REVIEWS

*FUTURE OF THE OLYMPIC GAMES* by John A. Lucas (Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics Books, 1992). Reviewed by Jay Coakley, University of Colorado at Colorado Springs, USA.

This is an “insider’s book.” John Lucas is deeply committed to Olympism and the Olympic Movement. He directs his words to “those inside the vast international Olympic family” and others who “love” the Olympics and wish to share the “Olympic ideal of universal brotherhood and sisterhood through sport” (p. xi). The family metaphor, used to present a desired image of the connections between the IOC, NOC’s (national Olympic committees), and ISF’s (international sport federations), runs throughout the book. It has been used as a management and public relations tool by IOC president Juan Antonio Samaranch, and it is picked up by Lucas who shares Samaranch’s vision of the Olympic Movement. This probably accounts for the fact that the book begins with a praiseworthy Foreword by Samaranch himself, an imprimatur from the current patron of the Olympic family.

Lucas’ acceptance and use of a family metaphor is interesting since it comes at a time when romantic but distorted images of family life motivate impassioned pleas for a return to “family values” in some western societies. Lucas has a romantic vision for the Olympic family and argues that the Olympic Movement will thrive in the future only if it is grounded in time-tested, “fundamental ideas that are universally humane, idealistic, and spiritually enlightened” (p. 20). In other words, he calls for a return to what might be called “basic Olympic family values” informed by a belief in progress and the possibility of global harmony.

Since Lucas uses the family metaphor over 30 times throughout the book, and even refers to “the Olympic household” when he calls upon “family members to urge and help implement a new-old worldwide educational moralism” (p. 96), it seems fitting to maintain this metaphor in an overview of his discussion of the Olympic Games and their future. Lucas writes about the fate of “the Olympic family” as a loving and concerned adopted son might talk to his relatives and close friends about the future of his family. He talks about the spirit and ideals of family forefathers (“Ancient Hellas and the Ether of Pierre de Coubertin,” Ch. 1), and about how their spirit and ideals can be combined with diplomacy and commercial pragmatism to safely and successfully preserve the family in the future (“Olympic Games Ideology,” Ch. 2). He emphasizes the need for family members to work together (“The Olympic Games as Metaphor,” Ch. 3) and uses a strong sense of togetherness to mediate their own pride and passions and calm the political turmoil that often swirls around them (“Nationalism,” Ch. 4).

Lucas is also aware of family problems. He expresses concern that family gatherings have become unmanageable due to their size (“The Olympic Games Program,” Ch. 5), and that the children in the family, often ignored in the past, should be the primary focus of everyone’s attention (“The Athletes,” Ch. 6). He cautions fathers about the subversive potential of commercialism and advises them to remember family values as they take advantage of new, unique opportunities to

build family wealth (“Olympic Entrepreneurship,” Ch. 7). He also asks them to remember to use some of that wealth to assist poor family members (“Olympic Solidarity,” Ch. 8). He reminds all family members, especially the children, about the importance of using the family’s ethical code to guide their quest for excellence (“Olympic Games Overkill,” Ch. 9) and to refrain from violating that code and its spirit of fairness by using chemical substances that are banned by family leaders; to his credit, Lucas does not try to scare the children (“The Olympic Drug Crisis,” Ch. 10).

Lucas gives only passing reference to criticisms of family history, and he ignores the analyses of those who have deconstructed family traditions and events. Instead of dwelling on skeletons in the closet, he urges family members to emphasize balance and democratic representation as they enter the 21st century (“The High Tide of Olympic Criticism,” Ch. 11). Lucas laments how women have been ignored and excluded by powerful men in the family and calls for laws that would “harness the brain power and physical energies” of women (p. 135) — not so that women might “present a woman’s view, but rather a universal and Olympic face to their knowledgeable work” (p. 137, “Women in the Olympic Movement,” Ch. 12). There is no uncertainty underlying the glowing praise given to Juan Antonio Samaranch, the family patron. According to Lucas, Samaranch exudes an “aura” (p. 152) and possesses unmatched administrative skills that have not only enabled the family to survive recent infighting and external threats, but which will guide the family into the future (“Samaranch’s Presidency,” Ch. 13) and through upcoming family events (“Albertville and Barcelona Beckon,” Ch. 14).

Lucas closes his book with thoughtful advice about a number of matters: how to socialize family members and recruit new family friends (“The International Olympic Academy,” Ch. 15), how to preserve family traditions (“Preservation of the Olympic Heritage,” Ch. 16), how to celebrate and reproduce family ideals at the next big reunion (“The Centennial Year 1996,” Ch. 17) and how to modify and change family norms so the future will bring improved reunions, better family relations, and more consensus about family goals (“The 21st-Century Olympic Games,” Ch. 18).

The family metaphor represents both the major strength and the major weakness of this book. If you are an insider who, like Lucas, believes in Olympism and the Olympic Movement, you will appreciate his respectful references to family values, traditions, spirit, idealism, loyalty, and leadership. You will also appreciate the fact that the book contains numerous quotes from other insiders—aunts, uncles, and family friends—and generally ignores outsiders who have raised questions about the existence of the family and the hidden meanings underlying its activities and events. You will take heart in his advice that the future will bring wealth, success, and harmony if family unity can be preserved and strengthened amidst global change.

If you are not an insider all the talk about family will either leave you feeling excluded and out of touch or bewildered with questions about the reality of family life, past and present. These feelings will be especially intense if you have ever critiqued the Olympic Games or entertained ideas about alternatives to sport events that privilege certain family members over others and marginalize almost everyone

who is not a relative or who is not ready to accept family traditions, rules, and organization as a prerequisite for participation.

Lucas says little about the tendency for many families to be exclusive and partial. Unfortunately, he ignores this tendency when he discusses the challenges presented by the Olympic Movement's new-found success in raising huge amounts of money. Lucas wants a portion of this money to fund IOC philanthropy and he hopes that the Olympic family will model itself after other wealthy and powerful families. He explains in the following manner:

During the titanic years of money making in American history (1880-1910), men like John D. Rockefeller, J.P. Morgan, Charles Schwab, Andrew Mellon, George Pullman, and Andrew Carnegie spent their vigorous years accumulating wealth, rose in power almost equal to that of the federal government, and then, without exception, moved to unprecedented generosity (p. 80).

Unfortunately, Lucas does not critically assess the ways in which these fortunes were amassed, how power was used, nor the full implications of the generosity of these men and their families. This is forgivable, but then he is similarly uncritical in his assessment of IOC wealth, power, and generosity. This is not so forgivable. His only advice is to call for a commitment to "excellence and integrity" (p. 6), to "the timeless attributes of honesty and fairness" (p. 8), and to "balance, control, and historic perspective" (p. 80).

This advice strikes me as flimsy. It would be naive to bet your allowance that such vague guidelines would consistently bring Olympic family members, especially those in leadership positions, to ignore self-interest, to be willing to respond to the need to transform the family itself, or to avoid neo-colonialism as they deal with those who have been socially marginalized by the family through its history. For example, Lucas' discussion of the Olympic Solidarity fund, a philanthropic program through which scientific and technical assistance to develop athletes is given to "poor, struggling nations," is naive. He never questions the social, cultural, economic, and political implications of "millions of dollars in equipment and a blizzard of scientific and technical information" donated by "shoe companies and the international sporting goods industry" (pp. 88-89). Introducing billions of people to Euro-American style consumerism driven by international capitalism and providing them with seductive forms of science and technology controlled and distributed by a handful of post-industrial nations is not easy to pass by without raising at least one critical question about specific social and cultural implications of the Olympic Movement.

It is clear that Lucas does not intend a critical analysis of the Olympic Games and their future. His goal is to offer advice for the growth and reform of the Olympic Movement as it enters the 21st century. He argues that the future of the movement depends on its ability to adapt to external changes in global affairs while preserving a commitment to its ideals. From this perspective he makes 21 insightful observations, many of which I will reference in classroom discussions of Olympic issues. For example, his call for gender equity is commendable (although he ignores issues of gender relations that lead to questions about the very existence of the Olympic family and its activities). His discussion of the dangers of accepting

without question the motto, “Citius, Altius, Fortius,” and the need for a new Olympic motto is informative (despite the unquestioned essentialism that pervades his conception of sport). His warnings about the use of technoscience in the pursuit of excellence are also important, along with his suggestions about revising Olympic award ceremonies to defuse nationalism, and his advice about dropping sports associated with the “very rich or the military” from the Olympic Games program (p. 212).

Lucas aspires to guide the Olympic Movement into the future, but his overall formula for success emphasizes a return to the “classic values” that “need to be reborn into the 21st century” (p. 210). He explains his vision for the future in the final chapter:

The Olympic Games of the future can become much better only if the IOC is made up of better men and women; if the 168 national Olympic committees have international and humane agendas that balance their admirable desire to send honest athletes in search of gold, silver, and bronze; if the several score sport federations moderate their natural parochialism with a touch of altruism and team spirit (pp. 209-210).

Better people, humane agendas, altruism, team spirit—the Lucas formula for a better future. From the perspective of an insider this sounds commendable, even motivational. From an outsider’s perspective it sounds like a pep talk based on an overly romanticized conception of social relations. Overall, Lucas was not as sensitive as he might have been to issues of perspective; he should have at least pretended every now and then to be an outsider as he considered the Olympic family and the future of its Games.