

# Coubertin's Ideology of Olympism from the Perspective of the History of Ideas

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Healthy democracy, wise and peaceful internationalism, will penetrate the new stadium and preserve within it the cult of honour and disinterestedness which will enable athletics to help in the tasks of moral education and social peace as well as of muscular development.

Pierre de Coubertin, 1896.

The Olympic Games and the Olympic Movement differ from other sport events and sport organizations as they are officially linked to an ideology, that is, to "... a systematic set of arguments and beliefs used to justify an existing or desired social order."<sup>1</sup> In the *Olympic Charter*, the "rule book" of the International Olympic Committee (IOC), the official version of these arguments and beliefs is articulated in terms of the "fundamental principles" of Olympism. As it is stated in principles 2 and 3:

2.Olympism is a philosophy of life, exalting and combining in a balanced whole the qualities of body, will and mind. Blending sport with culture and education, Olympism seeks to create a way of life based on the joy found in effort, the educational value of good example, and respect for universal fundamental ethical principles.

3.The goal of Olympism is to place everywhere sport at the service of the harmonious development of man, with a view to encouraging the establishment of a peaceful society concerned with the preservation of human dignity.<sup>2</sup>

Similar to most ideological declarations, the "fundamental principles" are general in form. They are vague, ambiguous and open for interpretation. How can the principles be better understood? What is their historical background, and how can the ideology of Olympism be elaborated and systematically expressed? This essay attempts to answer these questions in a two step procedure. First, an analytic attempt is made to single out the most important Olympic ideas and their historical

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background. Second, a synthesis is suggested in which the goals of Olympism are systematized in a logical and consistent way and linked to a main tradition of thought: the Western humanist tradition. Hence, this essay is inspired by the perspective of the history of ideas which is given by Lovejoy the following classical description:

By the history of ideas I mean something at once more specific and less restricted than the history of philosophy. It is differentiated primarily by the character of the units with which it concerns itself. Though it deals in great part with the same materials as the other branches of history of thought and depends greatly upon their prior labors, it divides that material in a special way, brings the parts of it into new groupings and relations, views it from the standpoint of a distinctive purpose. Its initial procedure may be said - though the parallel has its dangers - to be somewhat analogous to that of analytic chemistry. In dealing with the history of philosophical doctrines, for example, it cuts into the hard-and-fast individual systems and, for its own purposes, breaks them up into their component elements, into what may be called their unit-ideas.<sup>3</sup>

Lovejoy is reluctant to give a formal definition of this key concept and describes unit-ideas in a variety of ways; "as:...types of categories, thoughts concerning particular aspects of common experience, implicit or explicit presuppositions, sacred formulas and catchwords, specific philosophic theorems, or the larger hypotheses, generalizations or methodological assumptions of various sciences."<sup>4</sup>

Unit-ideas, like the idea of "the great chain of being" on which Lovejoy wrote his main work, refer to the more general premises underlying different traditions of thought and are thus in his view not many in kind. Differences in philosophical systems and schools of thought are often due, according to Lovejoy, more to differences in application and/or combinations of existent ideas than to novel conceptions. The task of the historian of ideas is therefore: "...to go behind the superficial appearance of singleness and identity, to crack the shell that holds the mass together, if we are to see the real units, the effective working ideas, which, in any given case, are present."<sup>5</sup>

This methodological advice is intriguing but by no means unproblematic.<sup>6</sup> First, the statement that behind all systems of thought lie one or a few basic "unit-ideas," is, of course, philosophical in kind and must not be taken as an absolute premise. It serves here only as a working hypothesis in the search for new insights in, and better understanding of, the background and content of Olympism. In fact, the premise may even turn into a methodological prejudice. In the attempt to reveal hidden connections, discover new paths of thought and synthesize what was previously conceived as isolated elements, the efforts of the historian of ideas "... may easily degenerate into a species of merely imaginative historical generalization..."<sup>7</sup> Such generalizations may even turn into ideology itself, that is, into sets of arguments which can be used to justify particular interests and power structures. In a study of Olympism, the official ideology of a powerful, international movement, this point calls for particular caution.

Another possible pitfall is that the focus on “unit-ideas” can easily disguise or distort central intentions and motives of individuals and groups which can be of significant importance in the understanding of historical events. As we shall see, Olympism was in its original form to a large extent the product of one man's efforts. Even if the ideas upon which he built were not new, a decent historical survey cannot ignore the influence of this individual's imagination and organizational skills. Therefore, in this essay, the background and intellectual development of “the founding father” of Olympism will be used as a *leitmotif*: In this way, one will be able to examine the more general ideas and traditions of thought which permeated the social and cultural milieu in which the ideology found its form.

A few comments on the source material are appropriate at this point. A broad survey of important ideas rooted in Olympism and their connections to main traditions of thought necessarily implies that secondary sources play an important role in my analysis.<sup>8</sup>

As the latter half of this essay focusses on synthesis, in terms of a systematization of what is seen to be the main goals of Olympism and the unit ideas on which they are built, I depend heavily on primary sources.<sup>9</sup> Having clarified aims and perspectives, where are we to begin? The IOC Charter provides a first clue as seen in “fundamental principle” 1: “Modern Olympism was conceived by Pierre de Coubertin, on whose initiative the International Athletic Congress of Paris was held in 1894.”<sup>10</sup> Even if the scholarly literature in some ways considers Coubertin a tragic figure who suffered defeats and disappointments in both public and private life,<sup>11</sup> no one disputes his originality and organizing talent which led to the founding of the IOC in 1894 and to the realization of the first Olympic Games in Athens in 1896. Furthermore, as president of the IOC from 1896 to 1925, Coubertin played an important role in the development of the movement in the first decades of this century. Who, then, was Pierre de Coubertin?

## PIERRE DE COUBERTIN AND FRENCH INFLUENCES

Coubertin was born into the French middle aristocracy. De Fredys, the family on his father's side, was relatively wealthy, conservative, and religious royalists who traced their nobility back to the 15th century and their ancestors to medieval Rome. His mother, the daughter of Marquis de Mirville, was born and raised on the Mirville estate close to Bolbec, Normandy. Coubertin's father was a mediocre painter of religious, historical and patriotic themes; his mother was a pious woman with a strong sense for the values and traditions of the *noblesse*. In his own words, Coubertin had a happy childhood in an atmosphere of “... constant stimulation and amusement.”<sup>12</sup>

However, during Coubertin's childhood and youth, France experienced turbulent times socially, economically and politically. As most of contemporary *noblesse*, the Coubertins supported the royal Bourbon family and had little faith in Bonaparte's Second Empire of the 1850s and 1860s or in the weak Third Republic - “...one of the most confusing and paradoxical political regimes.”<sup>13</sup> The France-Prussian War in 1871, which led to a humiliating defeat at the hands of the technologically and strategically superior Prussian troops, left Coubertin, as the majority of the French,

with little trust in established power structures. As he later commented: "Three monarchies, two empires and three republics in less than a century, that was a lot, even for a people with the resources of the French ..."<sup>14</sup>

Coubertin received, *noblesse oblige*, a classical education in the traditional Jesuit school system. He was a bright student and excelled in the competitive system of his school, *Collège Saint-Ignace*. Still, except for a few teachers, such as *père* Caron, a connoisseur of ancient Greek and Roman culture who made a lasting impression on Coubertin, contemporary French education was not left much honor in his later writings. It was, in his view, unable to provide the youth with the necessary knowledge and skills to cope with the social and political challenges of the day. He criticized the conservative Jesuits for their repressive and competitive pedagogy; he was highly skeptical of their strict discipline and old fashioned curriculum, in which religion, classical languages and literature were given priority over modern natural and social science.<sup>15</sup> In addition, Coubertin pointed at what he found to be a total neglect of the values of physical education and sport: "In France ... physical inertia was until recently considered an indispensable assistant to the perfect of intellectual powers. Games were supposed to kill study. Regarding the development of youthful character, the axiom that a close connection exists between force of will and strength of body never entered anyone's mind."<sup>16</sup>

Coubertin made several attempts to conform to what was considered a suitable professional career for a young man of his class. In 1880 he attended the highly respected military academy *Saint-Cyr*, but left the school after only two months. After having returned from a trip to England in 1884, he made a last attempt to live up to the expectations of his family by enrolling in *Faculté de Droit* to study law. But the frequent examinations and the formal atmosphere represented an educational system from which he had tried to escape, and he quit after only one month.<sup>17</sup>

Young Coubertin, therefore, separated himself from his family's expectations of him in terms of education and career and in terms of political orientation as well. He had little respect for the old-fashioned conservative royalism of the *noblesse* and was replaced by the excessive *fin de siècle* life style of his own class and the upper bourgeoisie. Demonstrative wealth emphasized social inequality. Corruption and irresponsible political action undermined their status in society.<sup>18</sup> According to Mandell, Coubertin became a convinced republican in the early 1880s.<sup>19</sup> This, eventually, gave him important connections at high levels in the state bureaucracy and enabled him to move freely between the social classes in contemporary society. The relative success of his later ideas on educational reforms depended, to a certain extent at least, on his ability to utilize this wide range of contacts for his own self-directed purposes.<sup>20</sup>

Disappointed by the traditional school system, Coubertin was thrilled, when he in the early 1880's, he discovered what in his view was the only free and liberal school in contemporary France: *École Supérieure des Sciences Politiques*, which he attended more or less regularly from 1883 to 1886.

The school was founded in 1872 by liberal and republican intellectuals, among them Hippolyte Taine (1828-1893) who, after France's defeat in the France-Prussian War, felt the need for liberal, comparative social and political studies in the tradition of Comte and Tocqueville. By the mid 1880s, *École supérieure des Sciences*

*Politiques* had become a key institution in the education of young men from the upper social classes to higher positions in the civil service and diplomatic corp.

Both its political and intellectual profile and its relatively free organizational structure appealed to Coubertin. In a guest lecture at the school in the late 1890s, he described *École Supérieure des Sciences Politiques* as "... a school where students who are not regular students listen to professors who are not *regular* professors, and who dare to lecture on subjects which do not belong to the *regular* academic course..."<sup>21</sup> Moreover, the school strengthened Coubertin's interest in Anglo-Saxon culture - a favorite subject in its political studies. In the spirit of Taine's *Notes sur l'Angleterre* (1871), England was admired for its liberal political traditions and its educational system, ideals that were to become important sources of inspiration in Coubertin's later development of Olympism.

Even though Coubertin took a lifelong interest in history and social science, the systematic and critical work of a scholar was not primarily his bent. As a man of action, he gradually came under the influence of a related, but more practically oriented, social and political movement led by the mine engineer, sociologist and social philosopher Frederic Le Play (1806-1882).<sup>22</sup>

In 1856 Le Play founded *Société d'Économie Sociale* with the aim to better understand and deal with the problems of contemporary society. In several works from the 1860s and 1870s, Le Play developed a political and social philosophy in which, as MacAloon notes, "... the values of family, property, social peace, worker security, Catholicism, decentralization, and personal morality" were held high.<sup>23</sup> His social and political views were paternalistic and clearly anti-socialistic: employers ought to take responsibility for their workers' well-being by, in addition to providing them with necessary material resources, offering an education built on classical, humanistic ideals. On the other hand, the working class ought to understand and accept its role in society as providers of labour for which the workers got paid. According to Le Play, only cultivation through education based on traditional values could heal the wounds caused by industrialism, urbanization and secularization in society.<sup>24</sup>

After the Franco-Prussian War in 1870-71, Le Play felt the need for a more political organization and founded *Unions de la Paix Sociale* as "the propaganda arm" of the *Société*.<sup>25</sup> Coubertin joined the *Union* in 1883, but did not become active until he left *École Supérieure des Sciences Politiques* in 1886. A member of Le Play's followers, Coubertin received strong support for his thoughts on educational reforms. In 1887, at the age of twenty four, he had his first article on *le pédagogie sportive* published in the journal of the *Société: La Réforme sociale*.

What role did Le Play have in the development of Coubertin's thought? To a large extent, Coubertin adopted Le Play's political and social views. In the Parnassus Club at Athens in 1894, he echoed his former teacher in the following diagnosis:

If we begin to study the history of our century we are struck by the moral disorder, produced by the discoveries of industrial science. Life suffers an upheaval, people feel the ground tremble continually under their feet. They have nothing to hold on to, because everything around them is shifting and changing: and in their confusion,

as though seeking some counterpoise to the material powers which rise like Cyclopean ramparts about them, they grope for whatever elements of moral strength lie scattered about the world.<sup>26</sup>

Not only the diagnosis, but the treatment was inspired by Le Play. Coubertin was convinced that "...most great national questions can be reduced to educational questions..."<sup>27</sup> The idea of educating the masses through classical ideals and thus bringing about social harmony (and international peace) was, as we shall see later, to become a key thought in Olympism.<sup>28</sup>

Through the *Société*, Coubertin met Jules Simon (1814-1896), a former philosophy professor at the Sorbonne, republican politician, educational reformer, and Minister of Public Education.<sup>29</sup> In 1887 Simon gave a speech at one of their meetings in which he enthusiastically endorsed English sport and athletics as an important part of young men's education. Coubertin saw in Simon a possible ally who was highly respected and had influence in society. After having conducted an investigation into the role of physical education in the French *lycées*, Coubertin approached Simon to get support for his thoughts on educational reform. The result was the *Comité Jules Simon* (1888) which aimed at establishing an educational program in which physical education played a more important part. Coubertin was the leader by self appointment. The membership included several prominent French educators, politicians, scientists, sport leaders and an influential journalist. As MacAloon puts it, in this way Coubertin "...included prestige as well as conviction."<sup>30</sup>

The *Comité Jules Simon* never reached agreement on any important matters or educational policies. On the contrary, ideological conflicts became even more apparent. However, the discussions seem to have matured Coubertin's own ideas. After the Dreyfus affair and the rebirth of right wing nationalism in French politics, Coubertin distanced himself from the nationalist and chauvinist ideology promoted by his long time rival Paschal Grousset.<sup>31</sup> In addition, he became more critical of the hygienic ideals of German and Swedish gymnastics. In the discussion of the ideals and values of physical education, he rejected Juvenal's classical *mens sana in corpore sano* endorsed by the "hygienists," which, some years later, he suggested to be replaced by the slogan *mens fervida in corpore lacertoso*: "...an ardent soul in a trained body."<sup>32</sup>

In Coubertin's view, the valuable core of sport was to be found in its cultivating, moral force. Here, he found a passionate ally and close collaborator in another man who was to exert strong influences in the development of the Olympic ideology: the Dominican priest, orator and educator *Père* Henri-Martin Didon.<sup>33</sup> *Père* Didon (1844-1900) was a man of strong political and social opinions and with controversial theological views.<sup>34</sup> Conservative Catholics accused him of socialism and the Church was critical to his liberal views on such moral issues as divorce and theological understanding of the Trinity. At one time, Rome sent him to Corsica in quasi exile where he wrote a critical book on the background of the Franco-Prussian war. Didon pointed at the values of the German educational system (discipline, concern for public education with the right blend of physical and mental activities), and called for educational reforms in France.

In his later years, Didon became the head of *Collège d'Arcueil*, a Dominican *lycée* in Paris. His belief in the cultivation of moral character through bodily activity and sport inspired Coubertin's view of psychology, an influence that can be seen in his later development of *psychologie sportive*.<sup>3 5</sup> Moreover, chiselled in stone above the entrance of Didon's *lycée* in the heart of Paris, Coubertin found the words that later were to become the official Olympic motto: "The whole story of athletics is contained in the three words spoken by *Père* Didon in building up the sporting spirit of his pupils in a football game: "Citius, altius, fortius!"<sup>36</sup>

## Coubertin and Anglo-American Influences

As is evident, Coubertin's French background influenced the ideology of Olympism in several ways. His experiences with the school system led to a strong conviction that it was necessary to reform French education. The idea of education as solution to the problems of society was to become one of the core ideas in Olympism.<sup>37</sup>

It may seem strange, however, that a society with as little interest in sport and physical education as the French was to foster the founding father of the Olympic Movement. The explanation is simple. Coubertin's main ideas of sport were not particularly French. The most important inspiration in this respect came from England and North America.

Coubertin's fascination with English culture and educational systems was rooted in his childhood. At the age of twelve he read a French translation of Thomas Hughes' classic *Tom Brown's Schooldays* (1857) in a youth magazine, *Journal de la Jeunesse*. Hughes described public school life at Rugby with particular weight on the educational values of sport. As a former student of the legendary Thomas Arnold (headmaster at Rugby from 1828 to 1842), Hughes portrayed his headmaster with great respect. The idealized picture of the public schools and of Arnold became a main source of inspiration to Coubertin.<sup>38</sup> A few years later, at the age of seventeen, Taine's *Notes sur l'Angleterre* (1871), written during Taine's travels in England in 1859 and 1862, made a similarly strong impression. Taine discussed the English educational system, including public school athletics, and underlined their value as a preparation for life in a democratic society.

In 1883 Coubertin traveled abroad, *comme il faut* in the upbringing of young men of his class. In the tradition of anglophile Frenchmen before him (Voltaire, Montesquieu, Taine), he crossed the Channel to England, a voyage he repeated six times between 1883 and 1887.<sup>39</sup> He visited educational institutions like Beaumont, Harrow, Eton and Rugby and universities like Oxford and Cambridge. In 1886, as he sat down by Arnold's tombstone in the chapel at Rugby, Coubertin claimed he had a vision of the blessings which *le régime Arnoldien* and Arnold's thoughts on "muscular Christianity" would have in the French educational system. He was, in his own words: "... naturally led to consider how well it would be for France were we to introduce into our school system some of that physical vitality, some of that animal spirit, from which our neighbors have derived such incontestable benefits."<sup>40</sup>

In 1888 Coubertin published a book on the English educational system, and in 1889, another one on the possibilities of such a system in France.<sup>41</sup> He referred to the

English public schools as the bearers of ancient ideals in which "...the muscles are made to do the same work as a moral educator." Through physical education and sport, young boys could free their bodies from "...disordered passions to which it was often abandoned under the pretensions of individual liberty.... In this way, sport and athletics could be used to serve moral development. In a Europe marked by Victorian morality, education aiming at control and discipline over the passions and desires of the body fit well within the traditional framework. However, different from French education, Coubertin's program did not focus on bodily repression and neglect as he sought moral development through cultivation of the body in sport:

..., since the middle ages a sort of discredit has hovered over bodily qualities and they have been isolated from qualities of the mind. Recently the first have been admitted to serve the second, but they are still treated as slaves and made every day to feel their dependence and inferiority. This was an immense error whose scientific and social consequences it is almost impossible to calculate. After all, Gentlemen, there are not two parts of a man - body and soul: there are three - body, soul and character; character is not formed by the mind, but primarily by the body.<sup>43</sup>

The English sport ideology presupposed a certain attitude among the participants: the amateur spirit of the sport *aficionado* was expressed most clearly in the enlightened and benevolent sportsman and gentleman. Coubertin wanted to introduce into modern sport "... the spirit of gay candour, the spirit of sincere disinterestedness which will revitalise ... and make collective muscular exercise a true school of moral perfection.

Coubertin saw the English school system not only as cultivating individual moral qualities, but, similar to Taine, as social training for life in a democratic society. The public schools were considered to be ideal liberal meritocracies in which the boys were rewarded not on inherited privileges or fortune but on their own talents and efforts. Compared to the repressive discipline of the French *lycées*, pupils were given the possibility to form and organize their own leisure activities, a practice which strongly appealed to Coubertin.

The belief in the educational potential of Anglo-Saxon sport was strengthened during Coubertin's first trip to North America in 1889, a sojourn of some five months. The visit was a result of an official assignment from the Ministry of Public Instruction to study American universities, and, more in Coubertin's own interest, the role played there by physical education and sport. He visited institutions like Amherst, Harvard, Cornell, Tulane, John Hopkins and Princeton.<sup>46</sup>

Before returning home, he attended a Physical Training Conference in Boston with more than two thousand delegates. Here, he found some of the same disagreements as he had experienced in the *Comité Jules Simon*.<sup>47</sup> The disputes convinced Coubertin even more of the superiority of the English sport ideology. In his own conference speech, he argued emphatically for *le regime Arnoldien* and recommended English sport for young boys between the age of twelve and eighteen, not only to train the body, but the character and will as well.<sup>48</sup> In the fall of 1893 Coubertin returned to America as a representative of French Higher Education to the

Chicago World Fair. He stayed for four months and traveled across the continent to California where he visited "... the Olympic Club in San Francisco, with its prophetic name.

What, then, were the influences from America on Coubertin's later ideology of Olympism? As with England, Coubertin was by no means without previous knowledge of the country he visited. At *École Supérieure des Sciences Politiques* and in the *Société*, strong interest was taken in The New World. Moreover, he knew very well the work of Tocqueville (*De la démocratie en Amérique* (1835-40)). In his long report from his first visit (*Universités Transatlantiques*, 1890), Coubertin gave a characterization of Americans as being of a strong, innovative spirit and with admirable intellectual and scientific curiosity. He praised the American liberal democracy and the role of sport in the university system and returned to France as a great admirer of "the sporting character" of American life.<sup>50</sup>

Moreover, the New World gave Coubertin his first experiences with modern spectator sport. A certain skepticism to its "circus atmosphere" led him later to develop his own aesthetic view of the interplay between athletes and spectators in the Olympic Games." During his visits he met some of the men who were to become his closest collaborators in the years to come. In New York, he met the future president of the United States, Theodore Roosevelt. Roosevelt's strong will, his general belief in the educational value of sports, his initiative to start boxing clubs in the poor neighbourhoods in New York - all this made him one of Coubertin's life long heroes.<sup>52</sup> In addition, Coubertin met political science professor William Milligan Sloane who was to become one of the founding members of the IOC and an influential associate of the Olympic Movement.

### Anglo-Saxon Sport: Myth and Reality

**H**ow, then, did Coubertin's picture of the English sport ideology fit reality? How accurate was his interpretation of Arnold and Taine? What was 19th Century English public school life really like?

Coubertin's image of Arnold was idealized and built on descriptions of former students who admired their headmaster and later glorified him. Arnold was a complex man. He saw in his pupils imperfect, uncultivated human nature which ought to be disciplined and controlled. Moreover, sport and athletics were not his primary interest. Mandell writes: "Although Arnold was an avid walker, runner, and horseman, he viewed these activities as entirely apart from his work. He wanted the boys to be Christians, gentlemen and educated persons - in that order. In all his writings, he took the position of a staunch traditionalist, a man rigid in his prescribed morality, an irascible hater of his own times and a pessimist about the future."<sup>53</sup>

Coubertin's interpretation of Taine was rather eclectic as well. Taine's exposition of English culture was not without critical notes. Whereas he praised the industry, the work discipline and the stable, democratic political culture, he was critical towards class differences, the hard life of the lower classes in the cities, and towards what he found to be anti-intellectual and excessive sport practices that pervaded parts of society and the school system.

Coubertin's understanding of life in the public schools was an idealization. Other, and probably more historically correct, versions describe public school life as hard and to a certain extent repressive.<sup>54</sup> A power hierarchy based upon physical size and force, and corporal punishment, was the rule rather than the exception. In fact, in the 1870s several English commentators criticized the physical education at the public schools as "...bloody athleticism gone mad."<sup>55</sup> As MacAloon states: "Coubertin was a moralist, not a scholar, he wished less to study England than to transplant a piece of her to France."<sup>56</sup> Even if he argued with intensity and conviction for educational reforms, and even if his ideas were discussed with interest in France in the 1880s and 1890s, there was no definite breakthrough for the integration of sports in the school system.<sup>57</sup> It was Coubertin's increasing international orientation in the early 1890s and his linking of *le pédagogie sportive* to the ancient Olympic *mythos* that contributed to his later international success.

### Coubertin And Internationalist Influences

Originally, Coubertin's motives for establishing a sport ideology were, as we have seen, patriotic in character. At the same time, he was a man open to new ideas and possibilities. This attitude had been cultivated at *École Supérieure des Sciences Politiques*, during his travels abroad, and, perhaps most importantly, by the *Zeitgeist* of French *fin de siècle* - a time when "... change became the nature of life, novelty a part of the normal diet," a time of "change for the sake of change."<sup>58</sup> His patriotism, therefore, never developed to the hard core chauvinism of contemporary French right wing nationalism.<sup>59</sup> On the contrary, Coubertin was drawn to a European *fin de siècle* internationalism which, as Hoberman has pointed out, led to the founding of organizations like the International Red Cross (1863), the Esperanto Movement (1887), and the Scouting Movement (1908). These organizations shared a certain Eurocentric orientation; they were founded by and recruited members from the economic and social elite, they were concerned with peacemaking and pacifism, they carried in them a certain tension between national and international loyalties, and they used visual symbols, rituals and ceremonies to communicate their ideas.<sup>60</sup>

In his opening speech of the Sorbonne Congress, Coubertin linked the internationalism of the time to sport: "Modern athletics, gentlemen, show two trends to which I would draw your attention. It is becoming firstly democratic and secondly international. The social revolution already accomplished among men and perhaps shortly to be accomplished among things also, is the explanation of the first trend; fast transport and easy communications are the explanation of the second."<sup>61</sup>

This liberal internationalism and the strong belief in "the great idea of progress" of the late decades of the century were closely related to visions of international peace. The Society for the Promotion of Permanent and Universal Peace (also called The London Peace Society) was founded in London in 1816 by Quakers and sympathizers of the liberal and humanitarian ideas of the Enlightenment. The Second General Peace Congress, in which Victor Hugo gave the presidential address and Tocqueville hosted a gala reception, and of which Coubertin most certainly had heard and read, was arranged in Paris in 1849. In 1888-89, the international Interparliamentary Union was established on the initiative of, among others, Jules

Simon. The first of the annual Universal Peace Congresses took place in Paris in 1889. And, in 1892 a permanent headquarters for peace societies throughout the world, the International Peace Bureau, was established in Berne, Switzerland.

Although peace societies differed in beliefs and political orientation, they had in common the basic idea that, in an enlightened age, conflicts between nations ought to be settled with reason, not with weapons. Western civilization was seen to have entered an era of advanced development in which there was no more need for war. To use a nation's wealth on armament and military hostility was considered not only morally repugnant, but a waste of resources leading to economic decline which again increased the chance for social unrest and revolution.<sup>62</sup>

Dietrich Quanz has argued convincingly that the impact of the peace movement on Coubertin and on his later ideology of Olympism was critical.<sup>63</sup> In the 1880s Paris was an international centre for pacifists. In 1896, the same year as the first modern Olympic Games were conducted in Athens, a national council to coordinate peace activities (*Bureau Francais de la Paix*) was founded in Paris. Coubertin had extensive contacts with leading personalities in the movement. According to Quanz, the list of participants at the 1894 Sorbonne Conference included "the entire power structure of the International Peace Bureau" in addition to presidents of the Universal Peace Congresses in 1889, 1890 and 1891.

What, then, was the main inspiration from the Peace Movement on Coubertin? Quanz lists three important points. First, in the Peace Movement Coubertin found organizational models which he later utilized in the establishment of the IOC: the formation of an international committee with a permanent secretariat, the arrangement of seminars and conferences, and the establishment of voluntary organizations in major cities with links to the secretariat. Second, Coubertin's ideas of Olympic internationalism echoed the views held by the Peace Movement. He focused on an "enlightened patriotism" which was built on positive national sentiments and which abstained from discrimination of other countries and from the glorification of war. Coubertin talked frequently about "...a 'civilized humanity' characterized by the pursuit for the maturity required by international peace."<sup>64</sup> Third, the Peace Movement considered education as an important instrument in the promotion of its ideology. The practice of arranging annual student conferences with artistic and sport activities is similar to what we find in the later Olympic Movement.

The belief in progress, internationalism and peace found perhaps its most distinct expression in the international expositions which were arranged in the last half of the 19th Century. Starting with London's Crystal Palace in 1851, world expositions grew increasingly popular and were arranged in France in 1867, 1878, 1889 and 1900. Already in 1851, the British newspaper *The Spectator* wrote of the Crystal Palace exposition as "this Olympic Games of Industry..."<sup>65</sup> At the 1867 "Universal International Exposition" in Paris, 7-8 million spectators attended. By 1878 the number had increased to 16 million, among them fifteen year old Coubertin. The Paris Universal Exposition in 1889, famous for its Eiffel Tower, took place in a year that marked the centennial of the Revolution and attracted 32 million visitors. Coubertin's teacher Le Play was the commissioner of the event, as he had been in 1878. This time Coubertin took part actively through a five session programme in which practical demonstrations of how to utilize sport in the educational system were

given - his first experiences with sport in an international setting. In fact, at the 1900 Paris exposition, which attracted approximately 100 million people, the second Olympic Games were included.

The exposition tradition thrilled Coubertin. In the *grandeur* of the opening ceremonies, which in 1889 included speeches, singing of the Marseillaise and military parades, and in the tribute to progress and international understanding, the expositions had some of the same characteristics that later were to become parts of the Olympic Games. In a speech preceding the Olympic Games in Athens in 1896, Coubertin said:

... the great inventions of the age, railroads and telegraphs, have brought into communications people of all nationalities. Easier intercourse between men of all languages has naturally opened a wider sphere for common interests. Men have begun to lead less isolated existences, different races have learnt to know and understand each other better, they have compared their powers and achievements in the fields of art, industry and science, and a noble rivalry has sprung up amongst them, urging them on to greater accomplishments. Universal expositions have collected together at one point of the globe the products of its remotest comers. In the domain of science and literature, assemblies and conferences have united the most distinguished intellectual laborers of all nations. Could it be otherwise, but that sportsmen also of diverse nationalities should begin to meet each other on common ground?<sup>66</sup>

### Coubertin and Ancient Greek Inspirations

**A**t the *Palais des beaux Art* during the 1889 exposition, the architect Victor Laloux presented a vivid reconstruction of classical Olympia which most certainly must have drawn the attention of the classically educated Coubertin. Through providing the English sport ideology and contemporary internationalism with a mythical framework inspired by the ancient Greeks, Coubertin's Olympism found its final form.

The Olympic *mythos* has been a recurrent theme in European culture since the Renaissance.<sup>67</sup> The term "Olympia" can be found in Latin texts from the early middle ages and referred to the classical four year period between the Games. The term *olympiën* was used to refer to the gods of Mount Olympus in Northern Greece. Among German classicists such as Lessing, Goethe, Schiller, Herder, Kant and Humboldt, the ancient Olympic Games have been known and cherished.<sup>68</sup> Winckelman's *History of the Art of Antiquity* (1764) emphasized not only the aesthetic beauty but the moral force in the experience of classical art, an art which subsequent ages could do no better than imitate. Winckelman's work became a significant source of inspiration in the strong interest taken in classical antiquity in the 19th Century.

During the last decades of the 18th Century, several Northern European travelers visited the Greek town Elis in search of the location of the ancient Olympic site. In 1766 the English antiquary Richard Chandler found a wall and a Doric capital after

having examined the area with the second century AD traveler Pausanias's description in hand. In 1829 the French Morea-expedition partially excavated the temple of Zeus. After having gained its independence from Turkey in 1830, Greece began to place severe restrictions on potential exploiters of its ancient cultural legacy. Excavations were limited until the last decades of the 19th Century. Between 1875 and 1881, German archeologist Ernst Curtius agreed with Greek authorities on conditions for excavations, and found large parts of the old sites of archaic Olympia, among them the *altis*, the sacred site which had been the centre of the Olympic cult. Curtius' findings were reported in scientific journals in Europe and America during the 1880s and 1890s. In 1887 the French historian, former minister of education and former member of the *Comité Jules Simon*, Victor Duruy wrote a larger work on Greek history. Duruy's detailed description of the cultic character of the ancient Games found resonance in the classically educated Coubertin. He later wrote of the impression the excavations had made on him:

Nothing in ancient history had given me more food for thought than Olympia. This dream city, consecrated through a task strictly human and material in form, but purified and elevated by colonnades and porticos unceasingly before my adolescent mind... Germany had brought to light what remained of Olympia; why should not France succeed in rebuilding its splendors? It was not far from there to the less dazzling but more practical and fruitful project of reviving the Games, particularly since the hour had struck when international sport seemed destined once again to play its part in the world.<sup>69</sup>

Even if Coubertin first publicly suggested the revival of the ancient Olympic Games in 1892, the idea was by no means new.<sup>70</sup> The "Cotswold Games," initiated by the Catholic English lawyer Robert Dover early in the 17th Century, also called "Olympick Games," were probably the first athletic festivals in modern times to be linked to the ancient Games. However, other arrangements in other countries strove to establish connections to these noble roots as well. In Germany, philanthropic educational theorists and physical educators of the Enlightenment, such as Johann Guts Muths (1759- 1839) and Friedrich "Turnvater" Jahn (1778- 1852) had suggested the revival of the classical Olympic Games. In the 1830s, Gustav Schartau, the successor of Ling as a gymnastic and fencing instructor at the University of Lund, took the initiative to arrange folk festivals called the Olympic Games in Ramlösa in southwestern Sweden. In the county of Shropshire, England, the Much-Wenlock Games had been held regularly as "Olympic festivals" since 1849. Coubertin personally attended the Much-Wenlock Games in 1890 on the invitation of their founder, the local surgeon and judge, William P. Brookes.<sup>71</sup> Finally, the Greeks had had their own Olympic Games in Athens, arranged four times between 1859 and 1889 and patronized by the wealthy businessman Evangelos Zappas.

It is important to underline, however, that these "pseudo-Olympics" were not direct predecessors of the modern Games. They are best characterized as local folklore within a neoclassicist framework. Coubertin's originality consisted not in

reviving the idea of the Olympic Games, but in using the idea to establish an international movement with global pretensions.

What, then, are the basic ideas from the ancient tradition on which Coubertin built? As in the case of "the Anglo-Saxon connection," his views on the classical Games were based on an idealization.<sup>72</sup> Here, he thought he found the very highest of human ideals. The modern Olympic Movement should, in Coubertin's view, foster men who had the characteristics of the ancient scholar-athlete with the Aristotelian virtue of *eutrapelia*: "...- an idealized concept of vitality, versatility, and, above all, a sense of proportion."<sup>73</sup> This ancient ideal found its historical counterpart only in the English sportsman and gentleman. Moreover, Coubertin wanted the modern Games not only to be celebrations of athletic excellence but cultural events including elements of art and beauty as well. In ancient times, extraordinary feats in fair and equal contests were immortalized through artistic interpretations of sculptures, vase paintings and poetry. In a speech "To the 'Trustees' of the Olympic Idea" during the 1908 London Games, Coubertin rhapsodized that ... "the Olympic idea is in our view the conception of a strong physical culture based in part on the spirit of chivalry, which you so attractively call "fair play," and in part on an aesthetic idea, the cult of beauty and grace."<sup>74</sup>

Coubertin thought arts could elevate and enoble modern sport. In turn, sport had its own beauty, and could serve as an inspiration for artists within all art disciplines.<sup>75,76</sup> To emphasize the elements of cult and beauty, he suggested a framework with ceremonies and rituals. He wanted to give the Games an overall expression of the ancient idea of *eurythmy*, the classical harmony of proportion:

It is primarily through the ceremonies that the Olympiad must distinguish itself from a mere series of world championships... Nowadays scarcely any public cult is possible ... As for lay festivals, nobody has anywhere succeeded as yet in giving them an appearance of true nobility and eurythmy ... It is their (the restored Olympiads) function and their lot to unite across the fleeting hour the things that were and the things which are to be. They are preeminently the festivals of youth, beauty and strength. In this key-note we must seek the secret of the ceremonies to be adopted.<sup>77</sup>

Finally, Coubertin found the ancient Games to have been one of the strongest binding forces of Greek culture. As forthcoming Games were announced, a sacred truce for a defined period before and after the Games was declared. The truce was not based on a (modern) understanding of war as morally repugnant, but rather on pragmatic reasons: to prevent war from disrupting the Games and threaten the thousands who travelled to take part in the cult.<sup>78</sup> Having evolved in the ancient sociopolitical context of the Greek city states in ongoing conflict, Coubertin saw a parallel in the emerging nation states in contemporary Europe. Whereas the ancient Olympic Games were devoted to a cultic celebration of the unity of Greekness, Coubertin saw the new Olympic Games as a possible cult of human progress, international understanding and peace.

The Coubertinian interpretation of the Olympic *mythos* became the last piece of the puzzle which was now about to be finished: the ideology of Olympism.

## Coubertin's Ideology of Olympism

So far I have attempted to cut into "the hard-and-fast individual system" of Olympism through an account of its historical roots and basic ideas as interpreted Coubertin. For a more systematic discussion of Olympism's component elements, or, in Lovejoy's terminology, of the unit-idea(s) on which the ideology is built, I turn now to deeper analysis. This is by no means an easy task. Coubertin never organized his ideas into a strict system of norms and values. He characterized Olympism not as a system, but as "a state of mind" (*une attitude spirituelle*) which "advocates a comprehensive sporting education accessible to all, braided with manly valour and chivalrous spirit, implicated in aesthetic and literary manifestations, serving as a motor to national life and a focus to civic life."<sup>79</sup>

Moreover, Coubertin's ideas developed over time, and in his voluminous writings on Olympism there are both contradictions and inconsistencies. At the same time, there are stable elements such as the view of Olympism as an educational philosophy of "... religion, peace and beauty."<sup>80</sup>

What follows here, then, is an attempt to systematize these stable elements in terms of four main goals and to link Olympism to one central unit-idea which seems the very basis of the ideology. First of all, Olympism builds on a belief in the possibility of cultivating the individual through education of both mind, soul and body. A main goal is to educate and cultivate the individual through sport. The vision of cultivating the individual through (bodily) education is old - with roots in Greek antiquity at least - but finds its link to Olympism primarily as a result of Coubertin's fascination with the English sport ideology. As a child of his time, he believed sport to be an arena for men only and for the development of traditional masculine virtues:

Sport plants in the body seeds of physio-psychological qualities such as coolness, confidence, decision, etc... The educator's task is to make the seed bear fruit throughout the organism, to transpose it from a particular circumstance to a whole array of circumstances from a special category of activities to all the individual's actions.<sup>81</sup>

But the aim here is not primarily an equilibrium ideal. In sport, man can transcend his previous borders. Sport could thus become a paradigmatic example on one of the predominant ideas of the late 19th century, 'the great idea of progress'.<sup>82</sup> The term 'Olympic' quite wrongly conjures up an idea of placid equilibrium, of perfectly compensated forces, of a balance with evenly-weighted scales. *Mens sana* ... the old refrain for prize-day speeches. But look, all that isn't human, or at least it isn't young. It's an old buffer's ideal. Equilibrium occurs in life as a result and not as a goal, as a reward and not as a search. It is not obtained by a piling-on of precautions but by an alternation of effort.<sup>83</sup> And:

... (Sport) needs the freedom of excess. That is its essence, its object, and the secret of its moral worth... Daring for the sake of daring, and without real necessity - it is in this way that our body rises above its animal nature.<sup>84</sup>

Consequently, the sport record plays an important part in Olympism. In the last paragraph of his "Olympic Memoirs" from 1931, Coubertin defended the ideal of record breaking stronger than ever.

Thus the athletic record stands inescapably at the very summit of the sports edifice, like the "eternal axiom" referred to by the French writer Taine concerning Newton's law. You cannot hope to remove it without destroying everything else. Resign yourself therefore, you partisans of the unrealistic Utopia of moderation - which is quite against nature - to seeing us continue to put into practice the motto Father Didon used to quote to his students, and which has since become that of Olympism: CITIUS, ALTIUS, FORTIUS.<sup>85</sup>

In this way, Coubertin developed a strong elitist sport philosophy. The Olympic Movement could establish top level athletes as "a new aristocracy. . . whose origin is completely egalitarian, since it is determined only by the bodily superiority of the individual and his muscular possibilities, multiplied to some extent by his will to train."<sup>86</sup>

At the same time, it is tempting here to point at one of the more fundamental contradictions in the Olympic ideology. Coubertin's perhaps best known aphorism is really a quote from a bishop of Central Pennsylvania, Ethelbert Talbot, who, in a pulpit sermon during the 1908 London Games, claimed that "...the important thing in these Olympiads is less to win than to take part in them."<sup>87</sup> In other words, Olympism praises the ethos of excess while at the same time prescribing participation in sport with the disinterested attitude of the English gentleman amateur. Coubertin wrote on this point also:

Formerly the practice of sport was the occasional pastime of the rich and idle youth. I have labored for thirty years to make it the habitual pleasure of the lower middle class. It is now necessary for this pleasure to enter the lives of the adolescent proletariat.... All forms of sport for everyone; that is no doubt a formula which is going to be criticised as madly utopian, I do not care. I have weighed and examined it for a long time; I know it is accurate and possible.<sup>88</sup>

According to Lucas, however, Coubertin's harmonizing attempts were not particularly successful. He was never able to unite ideas of the Olympic Movement as a new twentieth-century humanistic "sport for all"-movement and the movement behind "the world's most important competitive, and therefore, exclusive sporting event - the Olympic Games."<sup>89</sup>

To Coubertin, the first goal of cultivation of the individual naturally led toward a second main goal in Olympism. As his teacher Frédéric Le Play, Coubertin was a firm believer in the possibility of reforming society through education. If sport could cultivate the individual, it ought to be able as well to cultivate the relation between men in society. Coubertin found sport to be an efficient means in developing *le*

*respect mutuelle*: mutual respect between persons irrespective of social status and wealth.<sup>90</sup> Sport could be an important arena for the democratic education of the masses:

Inequality in sport is based on justice, because the individual owes what success he obtains only to his natural qualities multiplied with his will power... These are the interesting data for Democracy... Thus the sportsman has before his eyes a permanently-valid lesson in the necessity to command, control and unity, while the very nature of comradeship around him obliges him to see in his comrades both collaborators and rivals - which from the philosophic angle seems to be the ideal principle of any democratic society. If we add that to this that the practice of sport creates an atmosphere of absolute frankness, since it is impossible to falsify results which are more or less numerical and whose only value lies in being open to general scrutiny (even with himself a sportsman cannot cheat successfully), we shall reach the conclusion that the little republic of sport is a sort of miniature of the model democratic state.<sup>91</sup>

A third goal expresses even more general aims. If sport can develop the individual and society, it should have a cultivating potential in the relationship between societies and nations as well. The Olympic Games are intended as an arena which takes no account of social, economic, national or cultural borders and in which all nations can communicate and understand each other. Inspired by internationalist and pacifist thoughts and the idea of a sacred truce in the ancient Games, Olympism includes the goal to use sport to promote international understanding and peace:

...the revived Olympic Games must give the youth of all the world a chance of a happy and brotherly encounter, which will gradually efface the people's ignorance of things which concern them all, an ignorance which feeds hatreds, accumulates misunderstandings and hurls events along a barbarous path towards a merciless conflict.<sup>92</sup>

Coubertin's special blend of patriotism, peace and international understanding merged into what he called "internationalism:"

...the state of mind of those who love their country above all, who seek to draw to it the friendship of foreigners by professing for the countries of those foreigners an intelligent and enlightened sympathy.<sup>93</sup> . . . During the Games, "... national sentiments must be . . . suspended, so to speak sent on a temporary holiday."<sup>94</sup>

These goals are underlined in what is seen as a very important aesthetic framework consisting of symbols, rituals and ceremonies.<sup>95</sup> . . . Whereas the Ancient Games were part of a cult to the honor of Zeus, a key goal in their modern version ought to be to worship human greatness and possibility:

The first essential characteristics of ancient and of modern Olympism is that of being a religion. By chiseling his body with exercise as a sculptor chisels a statue the athlete of antiquity was "honoring the gods." In doing likewise the modern athlete exalts his country, his race, his flag. I therefore think I was right to recreate from the outset, around the renewed Olympism, a religious sentiment transformed and widened by the Internationalism and Democracy which distinguish the present age, but still the same as that which led the young Greeks, ambitious for the triumph of their muscles, to the foot of the altar of Zeus.<sup>96</sup>

The "new aristocracy" of top level athletes could serve as ideals for the masses and as a motivating force to more sport activity and thus moral development of individuals in all layers of society. Hence, the Olympic Games could become the most important cult in what Coubertin called a *religio athletae*, "a philosophico-religious doctrine," a new humanistic religion for the 20th Century.<sup>97</sup>

Is it now possible, from what has been stated above, to sum up the content of the ideology in terms of one or a few unit-ideas? Is it possible to link Olympism to other and more general traditions of thought?

Clearly, the answer seems to be yes. Through the widening of perspectives in the goals of Olympism from individual development to visions of universal happiness and peace, one finds variations over the central theme in what is sometimes called "the humanist tradition of the West."<sup>98</sup> With roots in antiquity and with its constitutive period in the Renaissance, the humanist tradition offers an alternative to theological views which see human beings as a parts of a divine order, and to scientific outlooks in which humans are seen as parts of a natural order. The humanist vision is to launch an alternative to authoritarianism and intolerance and offer a non-reductionist and non-determinist view of the individual human being. The basic assumption is that it is possible to mold human personality by (classical) education, and that, through such education, human beings can realize their potential of being free and thus able to shape their own destinies and histories. This again opens up the possibility of what the Renaissance humanists called a *regnum hominis*; a future kingdom ruled by the belief in the autotelic worth and infinite possibilities of each individual human being.<sup>99</sup>

One can now see how the four goals of Olympism mirror the unit-idea of humanism. More specifically, we can characterize Olympism as a secular, vitalistic "humanism of the muscles." Intellectually speaking, the ideology is by no means among the strongest representatives of the humanist tradition. Coubertin's philosophical anthropology hardly comes close to the works of vitalists like Nietzsche or Bergson, and his somewhat simplistic political and social analysis are far removed from the originality and depth found in his contemporaries Durkheim and Weber. Nevertheless, as the official ideology of the Olympic Movement, Olympism is perhaps the version of the unit-idea of humanism which has had the greatest impact on the lives of ordinary men and women in the 20th century.

## Concluding Remarks

From the perspective of the history of ideas, I have tried to answer the questions posed initially on the origins and content of the ideology of Olympism. My aim has been to provide a better understanding of the ideology both in terms of content and historical roots. A final, critical question could be this: What is our perspective of relevance in the understanding of the current status of the Olympic Movement and the Olympic Games? Does knowledge of the origins and basic unit-idea of Olympism provide insights to the understanding of the enormous growth and popularity of the Olympic Movement in our century?

At first glance, Olympism and its history seems rather unimportant. The founders of the Olympic Movement are sometimes described as "... congenial, well-meaning, second-ranked intellectuals, academicians and bureaucrats"<sup>100</sup> who sought stability and social peace in a changing world they did not really understand. In less than a decennium, the Olympic Games have grown to be one of the most popular products on the international entertainment market. In today's commercial and professional world of top level sport, Olympism appears as an anachronism. Its "fundamental principles" provide little action-guiding force; inconsistencies and contradictions reduce its value as a system of ideas. Critics even argue that Olympism is the false, manipulative ideology of a movement whose driving force is the search for power, prestige and profit.<sup>101</sup> Its main ideas, its ceremonies and rituals are all blendwork. Hoberman characterizes the Olympic Movement as based on an "amoral universalism" which "... strives for global participation at all costs, even sacrificing rudimentary moral standards."<sup>102</sup>

A brief look at Olympic history supports such claims. Olympic athletes seem to be highly specialized entertainment artists to whom prestige and commercial pay off are more important than fair play and moral development. The values of friendship and mutual respect seem unimportant in the all-consuming quest for victory. Moreover, the Games have been an arena for political and nationalistic struggle from the very beginning. Hence, its peace-promoting functions can indeed be questioned. One could argue that the global success of the Olympic Games is easier to explain by the spread of aggressive Western market economy on all continents than by increased international understanding and harmony.

On the other hand, even if such critique is to the point, it provides no deeper understanding of the apparently global fascination with the Olympic Movement and its Games. In fact, one is sometimes left wondering how, what is described as a destructive and degenerated movement, can survive and grow at all. Here, then, Coubertin more or less intuitively offers clues to understanding which might be more to the point than his critics like to admit. In a modern society characterized by secularization and rationalization, by *die Entzauberung der Welt*, to use Weber's description of the process, the Olympic Movement represents an alternative. Every Olympic year, it offers to a world wide audience strong and deep experiences in a setting of rituals and ceremonies in which human possibility and freedom, at least in a symbolic form, is celebrated and cherished. As cultural performances, the Games are, in John MacAloon's words: "... more than pure entertainment, more than didactic

or persuasive formulations, and more than cathartic indulgences. They are occasions in which as a culture or a society we repeat upon and define ourselves, dramatize our collective myths and history, present ourselves with alternatives, and eventually change in some ways while remaining the same in others.

This is why, from my point view, Olympism is an interesting ideology. And this is why knowledge of its basic ideas and the history of those ideas have had an important role to play in the understanding of the development of the Olympic Movement in the 20th Century.

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## Notes

1. *Dictionary of Political Science* (1964, p. 250).
2. *IOC*, 1994, p. 10.
3. Lovejoy, 1964, p. 3.
4. Quoted in Mandelbaum, p. 199. For a more in-depth discussion of the characteristics of unit-ideas, see Lovejoy, pp. 7 ff.
5. Lovejoy, p. 6.
6. Lovejoy's characterization of the history of ideas was first published in 1936. Since then, the discipline has developed in many aspects. For an informative overview, see King (1983), in particular Mandelbaum's article (pp. 198-210). See also Hayden White (1982, pp. 280-290) for a discussion of traditional and alternative approaches in intellectual history.
7. Lovejoy, p. 21.

8. Important secondary sources have been Mandell (1979), Lucas (1978), MacAloon (1981), Hoberman (1986), Sandblad (1985), Weber (1986) and Zeldin (1973 a, b).
9. Coubertin published more than 60,000 pages and 1,100 titles. This study is based on a selection, first and foremost on Coubertin's work as selected by Rioux, Müller and Schantz (Coubertin 1986 a, b) and c)). Most of the English quotes are taken from *The Olympic Idea* (1967), and some from *Olympic Memoirs* (1979).
10. IOC, 1994, p. 10.
11. There are, of course, different views on Coubertin's talents and the role he played in the Olympic Movement. See for example Mandell 1976, pp. 65ff, MacAloon 1981, pp. 1-8. As Mandell (1976, pp. 180-181) ironically notes, one biographer claims Coubertin to be a significant philosopher in the great vitalistic tradition of Nietzsche and Bergson, whereas a critical study links Coubertin's dreams of establishing a new humanistic religion to the positivistic tradition of Auguste Comte.
12. MacAloon, 1981, p. 32.
13. Zeldin, 1973a), p. 571.
14. Quoted in MacAloon, 1981, p. 27.
15. In fact, in some French universities Newtonian mechanics was not introduced as a field of study until the end of the 19th Century. See Zeldin (1977 b, pp. 317-345) for an overview of higher education in France in the last half of the 19th Century.
16. Coubertin, (1896), 1967, p. 11. The quote is from a speech given in Athens in 1896. For the original French version, see Coubertin, 1986, pp. 124- 128.
17. As MacAloon (1981, p. 38) notes: "After 1880, Coubertin never spent more than a year in any of the public institutions he attended."
18. Coubertin's skepticism towards the conservative and royalist political values of his own class seems to have developed at an early age. At twelve years old, he is supposed to have shocked a family visitor by claiming that the radical republican Léon Gambetta was a true French patriot. In 1879, he found out that an uncle of his mother, the black sheep of the family whose name was never mentioned, had been a supporter of de Lammenais (1782-1854), who had been accused by conservative Catholics of being a free thinker and a socialist, and the early rallie-movement which "... urged moderate social reform and proposed that the Church end its hostility to the (by then) established republic" (Mandell, 1976, pp. 53, 63). In 1888 Coubertin made a pilgrimage to his relative's overgrown grave and had an "...intensely emotional and richly symbolic experience" which seems to have played an important part in his search for alternative values and identity (MacAloon, 1981, pp. 29, 93-96).
19. Mandell, 1976, xi.
20. Mandell (1976, p. 67) writes: "For the programs at his banquets and for his letterheads, Coubertin assembled lists of 'honorary members' who had titles before their names, particles in the middle of their names, and lots of initials (indicating decorations and academic honours) after their names. His organization charts had grandeur: at the top of each was the name of a distinguished president, when possible a king, a prince or the elected leader of a nation."
21. Quoted in MacAloon, 1981, p. 58.

22. For Coubertin's own views of Le Play, see Coubertin, (1887), 1986 a), pp. 543-559, and Coubertin, (1906), 1986 a, pp. 560-566.
23. MacAloon, 1981, p. 85.
24. For a discussion of the social and political views of Le Play, see also Zeldin (1973, b), pp. 953-959.
25. MacAloon, 1981, p. 86.
26. Coubertin, (1894) 1967, p. 8.
27. op. cit.
28. Moreover, here Coubertin probably found ideas for the later organizational structure of the IOC (MacAloon, 1981, p. 89). Following an idea from the *Société*, he prescribed a "reversed deputation" in which the members were seen to represent not national interests but are "... the representatives of Olympism in their respective countries" (Coubertin 1931), 1979, p. 12). For a selection of Coubertin's writings on the structure and organization of the IOC, see Coubertin, 1986 b), pp. 592-653.
29. For a lengthy presentation of Simon by Coubertin himself, see Coubertin, 1986 a), pp. 588-596.
30. MacAloon, 1981, p. 103. For a thorough discussion of Coubertin's thoughts on pedagogy, see the introduction by Georges Rioux in volume I of Coubertin's collected works (Coubertin 1986 a), pp. 1-34).
31. Grousset, an old communard, had been in exile in England, and after his return home in the 1880s he established *Ligue nationale de l'éducation physique*. Grousset even introduced the idea of establishing the French Olympic Games. His sport ideology came to represent a direct opposition to Coubertin's increasing internationalism (Sandblad, 1985, p. 214).
32. This became the motto for the Olympic Institute in Lausanne. See Coubertin, (1911), 1986 a), pp. 603-604.
33. For the influence of Père Didon, see Andrieu, 1989, pp. 179-189, and Mandell, 1976, pp. 62-63. For a short presentation of Didon by Coubertin, see Coubertin, [1900], 1986, a), pp. 586-587.
34. Père Didon was a strong defender of the *Ralliement* movement as was Coubertin's relative whom he as a young man had so much admired (see note 18). Coubertin even wrote a novel on the theme: *Le roman d'un rallié*, published under the pseudonym George Hohrod (1902).
35. See for example Part 4 in Volume I of Coubertin's collected writings: *Psychologie sportive* (Coubertin, 1986 a, pp.371-430). See, too, his resume from the Sports Psychology Congress in Lausanne, 1913 (Coubertin 1979, pp. 81 ff).
36. From Coubertin's *Souvenir d'Amerique et de Grèce* (1897) quoted in Henry 1948, p. 28.
37. In addition, of course, Coubertin's intellectual development and his political views were influenced by his family and the milieu into which he was born. In spite of his apparent rebellion against family values (he even married a Protestant, Marie Rothan, in 1895), he never really abandoned the political conservatism and elitism of

the noblesse. MacAloon (1981, pp. 15-16) offers some deeper, psychological speculations on the shaping of Coubertin's mind. The ethos of his class - the virtue of *prouesse*: "... a search for spontaneous, irreproducible, unique, and conspicuous moral acts, undertaken for honor and not for utility" was deeply rooted in his personality. However, Coubertin attempted to combine the virtue of *prouesse* with social responsibility and action; with patriotic patronage: "... organized acts of *prouesse* in which the lower orders serve as direct objects and not as merely validating spectators." His plans of reforming the French school system, and later, of the revival of the Olympic Games, became acts of *prouesse* and patronage to which Coubertin devoted much of his life.

38. Arnold remained one of Coubertin's life-long heroes. In a lecture on Olympia five years before his death, Coubertin expressed his idealized view on Arnold thus: "... Arnold makes the muscles more educated, more meticulous and more constant servants of character formation. He draws up - very quickly - for his career is short - fourteen years only to transform the Rugby school of which he is headmaster - the fundamental rules of the pedagogy of sport. From Rugby he affects the other public schools by the contagion of his example, without resounding phrases or indiscreet interference; and soon the keystone of the British Empire is laid." See Coubertin, (1929), 1967, pp. 113-114. See "Rugby" (Coubertin, (1888), 1986a, pp. 48-56.

39. Lucas, 1978, p. 15.

40. Coubertin, (1896), 1967, p. 11. Quote from a speech given in Athens in 1896. References to its original version in French is given in note 16.

41. *L'éducation en Angleterre* (1888) and *L'éducation Anglaise en France* (1889). For excerpts, see Coubertin, 1986 a), pp. 40-112.

42. op. cit.

43. Coubertin, (1894), 1967, pp. 6-7.

44. The question of amateurism has been a recurring topic of discussion in the Olympic Movement and has at times been given a rigid interpretation, particularly during the presidency of Avery Brundage (1952-72). For an exposition of the history of amateurism, see Glader (1978). Coubertin seems to have had a less rigid attitude to amateurism than many of his colleagues. As he wrote in 1931 (1979, p. 65): "Today I can admit it. The question (of amateurism) never really bothered me. It had served as a screen to convene the Congress (of 1894) to revive the Olympic Games. Realising the importance attached to it in sports circles, I always showed the necessary enthusiasm, but it was an enthusiasm without real conviction. My own conception of sport has always been very different from that of a large number - perhaps the majority - of sportsmen. To me, sport was a religion with its church, dogmas, service... but above all a religious feeling, and it seemed to me as childish to make all this depend upon whether an athlete had received a five franc coin as automatically to consider the parish verger an unbeliever because he receives a salary for looking after the church." See also the selection of Coubertin's writings on amateurism in Coubertin, 1986 b, pp. 544-590.

45. Coubertin, (1906), 1967, p. 15.

46. After having arrived in New York, Coubertin went to New England, Montreal, Quebec, Toronto; Chicago, down the Mississippi to New Orleans, thereafter through Florida and Virginia, via Washington and Baltimore and back to New York.

47. As Coubertin later described the situation: "Everywhere I found discord, civil war was raging between the partisans and the adversaries of one particular kind of sport. This state of affairs seemed to me to be caused by a tendency to excessive specialisation. Those who went for jumping, despised rowing, fencers were against cyclists, marksmen looked down on lawn tennis players, even amongst the adepts in one and the same sport there existed no more harmony. The admirers of German gymnastics denied all merits to the Swedish method, and American football rules seemed to the English player devoid all common sense." See Coubertin, (1896), 1967, p. 12. The revival of the Olympic Games, then, could demonstrate to all athletes their common identity as sportsmen.

48. MacAloon, 1981, pp. 115 ff; Lucas, 1988, p. 92. For a discussion of Coubertin's views on the relationship between sport, education and society, see Schantz and Müller in Coubertin, 1986c, pp. 6 ff.

49. Coubertin, 1931 and 1979, p. 10.

50. For excerpts, see Coubertin, 1986 a), pp. 113-139.

51. Sandblad, 1985, pp. 234-235.

52. MacAloon 1981, p. 127, Sandblad 1985, p. 215.

53. Mandell, 1976, p. 60.

54. For an elaboration of the ideology and practice of the English public school of this period, see Mangan (1981).

55. Lucas, 1976, p. 33.

56. MacAloon, 1981, p. 58. MacAloon (1981, p. 79) interprets Coubertin's fascination for Anglo-Saxon culture in psycho-dynamic terms. Coubertin wanted to fulfill his noble duty of *prouesse* in a way that benefited his countrymen. In his search for an own identity, he found in Arnold a father figure and in the public school boys new family ties. Arnold became "... an illusion in the Freudian sense of the term: a deep and multiply determined wish fulfilled."

57. See Weber, 1986, p. 213 ff for a sketch of the situation of school sport in late 19th Century France. In 1896 Coubertin himself offered a more optimistic picture of the situation: "The task of doing so (introduce sport in the French school system) ... has thrived rapidly. *L'Union des Sports Athlétiques* whose beginnings were very modest, already included in 1892 a considerable number of school sporting societies, formed and governed by the pupils themselves." (Coubertin, 1967, p. 11).

58. Weber, 1986, p. 6.

59. Right wing nationalism, as represented by Maurice Barrés *Action française*, and, in terms of physical education, by Paschal Grousset, was hardly compatible to Coubertin's increasing internationalism.

60. See Hoberman's (1995, pp. 1-37) article for a detailed discussion of the origins and development of Olympic internationalism. According to Boulouge (1976, pp. 90-91), up to 1914 Coubertin still held racist and imperialist views. He regarded the developed European powers as being natural leaders in the world and with the right to colonialize and rule Africa, Asia and the far East. However, in a letter to the French youth which he published in 1915, he advocated to treat all cultures and societies with the same respect. France ought to show its superiority through cultural performances,

not through colonialization and war. The sincerity of Coubertin's democratic and pacifist conviction is doubted by some observers. Hoberman (1986, p. 35) regards Coubertin as a cultural conservative who "was a 'democrat' who listed 'the triumph of democracy' as one of four innovations history would be better without, and as a 'pacifist' who referred to antimilitarism as 'a form of neurosis, a kind of weapons' phobia, infantile and pitiful.'"

61. Coubertin, (1894), 1967, p. 9.

62. For informative introductions and a collection of original essays from the internationalist and pacifist movements of the 19th century, see Cooper 1976.

63. Quanz, 1993, pp. 1-23.

64. Quanz, 1993, p. 10.

65. Quoted in MacAloon, 1981, p. 131.

66. Coubertin, (1896) 1967, p. 10.

67. As Mandell (1976, pp. 29ff) notes: Already Shakespeare referred to the Olympic Games in his historical dramas of the early 1590s such as *Henry VI* and in *Troilus and Cressida*, Milton did similarly in *Paradise Lost* from 1667. In 1727, Voltaire described an athletic festival in England which he compared with the Olympic Games. Renson (1991, p. 6) has given additional information here: In 1732, the work of the Dutch clergyman Theodorus Antonides (1647-1715) entitled *Olympia: dat is de Olymp-Speelen der Grieken*, was published in Dutch, and is probably the first work on the ancient Games in modern times.

68. Ueberhorst, 1976, pp. 14-15.

69. Coubertin, (1908), 1967, p. 1. MacAloon (1981, pp. 139 ff) expresses his doubts about the accuracy of Coubertin's memory here, and explains Coubertin's interest in the ancient Games primarily with his reading of Duruy.

70. For an overview over the so-called "pseudo-Olympics," see Redmond, 1988, pp. 71-87.

71. See Coubertin's own description in Coubertin, (1890), 1986 b, pp. 78-84. See also Hill (1992, pp. 9-17) who discusses in detail Brooke's connection to Coubertin and Brooke's role in the revival of the Modern Olympic Games.

72. For Coubertin's interpretation of the ancient Olympic mythos, see Coubertin, 1986 b), pp. 24-76. See also Young (1984, pp. 57-75) who argues convincingly against Coubertin's "Olympic myth of Greek amateur athletics."

73. Lucas, 1976, p. 27.

74. Coubertin ,(1908), 1967, p. 19.

75. The IOC agreed upon having art competitions as parts of the Games, and in Stockholm in 1912 "the pentathlon of the Muses" was introduced for the first time. The arts festivals were to include architecture, dramatic art, dance and choreography, decorations, literature, music, poetry, painting and sculpture. Coubertin himself won the first prize in the poetry competition with his "Ode to Sport," written under the pseudonym "G. Hohrod and M. Eschbach." For Coubertin's own views, see Coubertin, 1986 b), pp. 478-543. For a discussion of the history of the Olympic art festivals, see Bandy (1988, pp. 163-169).

76. As Sandblad (1985, pp. 234-235) points out, Coubertin's vision of the role of the arts was inspired not only by classical ideals, by the British philosopher John Ruskin, a cultural critic who regarded art as a possible way to a higher spiritual life and as an alternative to modern civilization and the materialistic urban life. See for example Coubertin, *Décoration, pyrotechnie, harmonies, cortèges - Essai de ruskinianisme sportif*; Coubertin (1911) 1986 b) pp. 517-535.
77. Coubertin, (1910) 1967, p. 34.
78. Finley and Pleket, 1972, p. 98
79. Coubertin, (1918) 1967, p. 54.
80. Lucas, 1978, p. 78. For a selection of essays and articles on Olympic philosophy and pedagogy ranging from *Jeux Olympique. Discourse à Athènes* (1894) to *Les Assises philosophiques de l'Olympisme moderne* (1935), see Coubertin, 1986 b) pp. 359-590.
81. Coubertin, (1918) 1967, p. 48.
82. This view fits well within Coubertin's more general anthropology: "Man has always been passionate and heaven preserve us from a society in which there were no excess, and in which the expression of ardent feelings were caught up forever in the too-narrow confines of decorum." (Coubertin, (1908) 1967, p. 19).
83. Coubertin, (1918) 1967, p. 48.
84. Coubertin, (1924) 1967, p. 96.
85. Coubertin, (1931) 1979, p. 139.
86. Coubertin, (1935) 1967, p. 131.
87. Coubertin, (1908) 1967, p. 20. See Widlund (1994) for more information on E. Talbot and his connections to the Olympic Movement, and Young (1995) for a discussion of the origins of the ideal which Young in fact attributes to Ovid.
88. Coubertin, (1919) 1967, p. 60.
89. Lucas, 1980, p. 23. Lucas continues: "Throughout his writings, Coubertin fluctuated between egalitarian concern for the physical wellbeing of all peoples and also for that tiny fraction - the world's greatest athletes. His writings are frequently a tortuous labyrinth of inconsistencies - and I believe the main reason for such obtuseness was his life-long inability to deal with each phenomenon separately."
90. Coubertin published a book with this title in 1915. For a presentation of the content and excerpts, see Coubertin, (1915) 1986 a), pp. 316-350.
91. Coubertin, (1918) 1967, pp. 48-49.
92. Coubertin, (1894) 1967, p. 9.
93. Coubertin, (1935) 1967, p. 132.
94. See Coubertin, 1986 b), pp. 442-477 for his discussion of the principles and symbols of Olympism.

95. See Coubertin, 1986 b), pp. 442-477 for his discussion of the principles and symbols of Olympism.

96. Coubertin, (1935) 1967, p. 131.

97. Coubertin, (1918) 1967, p. 43.

98. For a study of this tradition, see Bullock, 1985. For a discussion of humanism as an attitude towards life, see von Wright, 1979, in particular pp. 159 ff.

99. Bullock's (1985, p. 155) description of the humanist tradition as being echoes Lovejoy's understanding of a unit-idea: It is "... not a school of thought or a philosophical doctrine, but a broad tendency, a dimension of thought and belief, a continuing debate within which at any one time there will be found very different - at times opposed - views, held together not by a unified structure but by certain shared assumptions and preoccupation with certain characteristic problems and topics, which change from one period to the next."

100. Mandell, 1976, p. x.

101. For example, the Olympic Charter devotes two pages to general "fundamental principles" whereas the following 117 pages deal with legal, organizational and economical matters.

102. Hoberman, 1986, p. 2.

103. MacAloon, 1984, p. 1.