

## Revisiting the Discourses of art, beauty and sport from the 1906 Consultative Conference for the Arts, Literature and Sport

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This essay, motivated partly from a desire to better understand Pierre de Coubertin's "grand Olympic initiative" in relation to other cultural movements of the same period, attempts to answer two questions that are pertinent to the early cultural history of the Modern Olympic Movement: (1) Did the 1906 Consultative Conference for the Arts, Literature and Sport enable the Modern Olympic Movement to articulate with other contemporary cultural movements? and (2) What was the content of Baron Pierre de Coubertin's claim that 'Olympism is, in part, an aesthetic idea'?<sup>1</sup> To answer these questions, my research incorporates ideas and concepts from several academic disciplines. The fact that Coubertin, himself, referred to the aesthetic idea of Olympism suggests that philosophical literature on the nature of art and beauty ought to provide some direction in the quest to answer these questions.<sup>2</sup> Introductory text books on the philosophy of art outline basic issues and ideas that are pertinent to this analysis.<sup>3</sup> They are, however, too general and too 'a historical' to be of much use in the analysis of Coubertin's aesthetic idea.<sup>4</sup> Alternatively, I have turned to another, more historically focused, body of literature. Today, libraries and university bookstores are swollen with monographs, essays and critiques of modern art and culture. Paramount among the scholars who have contributed to this provocative body of research are Raymond Williams, Pierre Bourdieu, Terry Eagleton, Peter Bürger and Art Berman.<sup>5</sup> A common thesis emerges for these critiques of modernity: An inextricable bond exists between the modern philosophy of art and the sociopolitical ideologies of modernity. These important authors expose issues and concepts that were particularly significant in the discourse of aesthetics during the period in which Coubertin launched and began to nurture the Modern Olympic Movement.<sup>6</sup> Although a body of literature on the aesthetic nature of sport also exists, it remains rigidly enveloped in the discourse of philosophy, and particularly essentialism, which is not especially useful for the concerns of this essay.<sup>7</sup> A number of historical papers that chronicle Pierre de Coubertin's interest in the relationship between art, beauty and modern sport provide a more relevant body of literature. In my opinion, Jean Dury, Rudolph Malter and Benjamin Lowe have written the most important contributions in this regard.<sup>8</sup> Among these scholars, Lowe has been the most successful at describing the philosophical content and historical context of Coubertin's aesthetic idea.

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In an attempt to subject Coubertin's aesthetic idea to a more comprehensive and critical historical interpretation, this paper focuses on a familiar moment in the history of the Modern Olympic Movement, the Consultative Conference for the Arts, Literature and Sport held in Paris in 1906. I argue that this Conference functioned as an event that signified the intersection of the discourse of aesthetics with the discourse of modern sport. This intersection hinged on shared ideas about the nature of art and the perception of beauty. Prominent themes that emerged from the Conference were: the aesthetic nature of the athletic body; and, the possibility of creating a new type of popular open-air festival through the integration of sporting activities into more traditional genre of public performance. Additionally, the Conference delegates were united in their aesthetic discourse as a result of pervasive faith in the late nineteenth century revival of Hellenistic cultural values.<sup>9</sup>

In his autobiography, *Olympic Memoirs* (1932), Coubertin explained that the union of art and sport at the Olympic Games, had been delayed until 1906 because of administrative problems associated with the Games of the first three Olympiads.<sup>10</sup> He insisted that the idea of fostering a union between art and sport had been part of the original scheme for the revival of the Olympic Games in modern times. Although not acknowledging the advantages of hindsight, Coubertin stated that during the first Olympic Games in Athens (1896), "the solemnity of this first contact of contemporary youth with Pericles's rebuilt stadium prevented the search for new artistic and literary works inspired by the idea of sport."<sup>11</sup> On the occasion of the 1900 Games in Paris, he claimed that "the Universal Exposition wallowed in a veritable plethora of new forms and ideas, far too abundant for there to be any point in trying to include an effort so detailed and of such a special nature (as the inclusion of art at the Olympic Games)."<sup>12</sup> The confusion surrounding the transfer of the 1904 Olympic Games from Chicago to St. Louis resulted, once again, in a delay in developing the artistic and intellectual character of Olympism.<sup>13</sup> Anxiety over the prolonged omission of this important element of modern Olympism, led him to take a more aggressive approach towards rectifying the situation. In the spring of 1906, Pierre de Coubertin took definitive action towards introducing the arts to the Olympic Games and thus initiating the second phase of his Olympic Revival.<sup>14</sup> With relatively little advertising or advanced notice for IOC members, he initiated a plan to host a conference for the artists, writers and sportsperson in Paris, May 1906.<sup>15</sup> The formal invitation to the Conference proposed a dual objective: (1) to study, in what form, the arts and literature could participate in the celebration of the modern Olympiads; and (2) how, in general, the arts and literature could benefit and ennoble the practice of sports.<sup>16</sup>

From histories on the Modern Olympic Movement, the most enduring product of the Consultative Conference appears to have been the Olympic Fine Art Competitions.<sup>17</sup> The idea of hosting art competitions at the Olympic Games, however, is not particularly relevant to the concerns of this paper. Generally, the Olympic Fine Art Competitions have an uninteresting cultural history in spite of the importance sport historians have placed on them as the 'cultural component' of the Olympic Games. Furthermore, a quick assessment of the archival and literary legacy from the Consultative Conference indicates that the Olympic Fine Art Competitions were, in fact, only a minor topic of discussion among the Conference delegates in

1906. To extract the philosophical content of this event, analysis must focus on the actual discourse that was produced in response to the event. Consequently, this discourse exposes specific ideas and themes about art, beauty and sport that engaged the participants of the 1906 Consultative Conference, ideas and themes that have been overlooked in most histories of the Modern Olympic Movement. In all, this research and analysis demonstrates that the Consultative Conference for the Arts, Literature and Sport provided an occasion for a moderately diverse assembly of individuals<sup>18</sup> to express their opinions on the philosophical relationship between sport and art and art and the Olympic Games. Several essays presented at the Conference were published in the *Revue Olympique* throughout 1906 and reveal that aesthetical concepts were, for the most part, not introduced into the discussions with the intention of constructing a new artistic conceptualization of sport. Instead, the aesthetic discourse that Coubertin nurtured and the Conference delegates embellished focused on innovations to the spectacle that envelops sport.

### **Resolutions from the Consultative Conference for the Arts, Literature and Sport**

Formally, the Conference delegates adopted seven resolutions.<sup>19</sup> In summary, they agreed that actions ought to be taken to enhance the artistic and aesthetic presentation of sport festivals. Four, of the seven, resolutions related specifically to the promotion and embellishment of sport festivals. In the area of architecture, the delegates unanimously adopted the principle that modern gymnasiums should accommodate all sports. Endorsement of five Olympic Art Competitions was presented briefly among the Conference's results along with some rudimentary guidelines intended to govern the competitions. The delegates also recommended that during the interval leading up to the inaugural Olympic Art Competitions, the IOC ought to try encouraging other large sporting events (annual sport festivals, automobile shows, horse races, regattas, championships, etc.) to incorporate some appropriate artistic and literary manifestations in their programs.<sup>20</sup> The results of the Conference, as expressed in the *Revue Olympique* and the unpublished transcripts, included the delegates' pledge of support for Coubertin's ambitious "Bartholdi Monument."<sup>21</sup> Two of the formal recommendations related to the conceptualization and possible construction of the sculptural monument intended to commemorate the "Renaissance physique" of the nineteenth century.

Immediately following the Conference, Coubertin wrote to important universities, federations and sports societies; he had been mandated by the delegates to communicate the resolutions established at the Conference. He summarized these resolutions in the following passage:

Elles nous a surtout demandé d'intervenir auprès des principales universités, fédérations ou sociétés de sport de l'univers à l'effet d'obtenir que, désormais, toutes grandes manifestations sportives puissent revêtir un caractère littéraire et artistique par l'adjonction de contours de poésies ou de représentations dramatique appropriées et surtout de musique chorale en plein air--insistant d'ailleurs

sur les nombreux avantages qu'il y aurait pour les sociétés de sport à créer dans leur sein même des sections chorales.

(Above all else, we have been requested to work closely with the major universities and sport societies, in effect, to ensure that in the future, all great sporting manifestations can be clothed in a literary and artistic character by the addition of poetry competitions or the presentation of appropriate theatre productions and above all else open-air choral music--and to emphasize the numerous advantages for sporting societies that create their own choral sections.)

Note that Coubertin emphasized the general, motherhood-type, resolutions as opposed to the very specific and tangible plans to hold Olympic Fine Arts Competitions. The discussions and resolutions of the Conference were predominantly concerned with the relationship between art and sport in common daily situations. In at least two instances, Coubertin received confirmation that these recommendations would be considered.. Le President de la Federation Française des Sociétés d'Avirons to Pierre de Coubertin, 30 July 1906. (IOC Archives, Lausanne).

### A Paternalistic View of 'Popular Culture'

The most erudite contributions to the aesthetic idea of Olympism, as evident from the historical legacy of the Consultative Conference, came from Maurice Pottecher, M. Bourgault-Ducoudray, Pierre Roche, Max d'Ollone, and of course Pierre de Coubertin. The lectures and essays of these men were reproduced in the *Revue Olympique* following the Conference and constitute the primary sources examined in the remainder of this paper.

Pierre de Coubertin founded his Modern Olympic Games at approximately the same time that a new type of theatre, the 'people's theatre', was gaining critical force across Europe. The 1906 Consultative Conference brought the 'people's theatre' movement and the Modern Olympic Movement together briefly in turn-of-the-century French culture. Maurice Pottecher, one of France's most prominent personalities in the 'people's theatre' movement, factored prominently in the discourse generated by the Consultative Conference. Pottecher was the founder of the *Théâtre du Peuple* in Bussang and was a respected advocate for this new genre of theatre. 'People's theatre' troupes were characterized by amateur actors, the production of locally or regionally inspired plays, and rustic outdoor theatres. Pottecher was insistent that the 'people's theatre' movement not be confused with other types of urban-based popular theatre such as vaudeville or the proletariat-based theatre movements associated with political socialism. His vision was clear:

..., j'en conçois un autre (genre du théâtre) plus vaste s'adressant à tous, capable à la fois d'émouvoir les cœurs les plus ingénus et d'intéresser les intelligences les plus cultivées, un théâtre aux vastes actions ou l'imagination fraîche et le jugement naïf mais sans part-pris et sans préjugés de la foule rajeuniraient le goût blasé de l'élite et se sentiraient en même temps guidés et soutenus par lui.

(I have conceived of another type of theatre, one much greater that is intended for everyone, capable at once of evoking the most unsophisticated hearts and interesting the most cultivated intellects, a theatre where grand actions from which fresh imagination and naive judgement, but without partisanship or prejudice of the masses, will rejuvenate the blase taste of the elite and at the same time be guided and sustained by it.)

Indeed, Pottecher was proposing a unique genre of cultural performance that incorporated the best elements of folk culture and traditional elite theatre. At the same time, a class-defined aesthetic paranoia is quite evident in Pottecher's theory. He stressed the importance of bridging social classes in culture pastimes, but without descending to the pathetic "vulgarity" of the lowest common denominator. The same top-down (paternalistic) reformist methodology that Coubertin expressed in many of his texts is apparent in the words of Pottecher.

Pottecher was not the only person at the Conference representing a new genre of turn-of-the-century performance culture. The theories of Professor Bourgault-Ducoudray paralleled those of Pottecher in the areas of art, sport and culture, but with an emphasis on the discipline of music. Bourgault-Ducoudray promoted the formation of popular choral societies (*sociétés chorales populaires*). The ideas expressed in the essays of Bourgault-Ducoudray and Pottecher provided a conceptual link between aesthetic ideals and social ideals. They emphasized a fusion between traditional elite culture and manifestations of popular culture. But, for Bourgault-Ducoudray and Pottecher, popular art culture--be it theatre or choral music--was not conceived as a method of resolving social class distinctions.<sup>32</sup> Instead, they wanted to encourage a sharing of enthusiasm for, and exaltation of, art between diverse social classes.<sup>33</sup> This particular theory of 'popular art' relied on the idea that universal ideals of beauty would evoke the same emotion and experience of pleasure in all social classes. Pottecher's aspirations for a new classless theatre culture required that new theatrical productions be written and performed that represented the spirit of the French nation.<sup>34</sup> Thus, a new popular repertoire was intended to produce theatrical and musical masterpieces that conveyed the most universal ideas, but within the context of burgeoning cultural nationalism. Expectations held that 'people's theatre' and popular choral societies would unite different social classes through the clarity, simplicity and grandeur of their innovative spectacles. In relation to the aesthetic idea of Olympism, the ideas expressed by Pottecher, Bourgault-Ducoudray and other representatives of the popular culture movement, such as René Morax and Romain Rolland, are significant because they represent an assimilation of aesthetic and social ideals that was particularly telling of French cultural politics of this period.<sup>35</sup> In short, they expressed an instrumental theory of art. This marked a distinct rejection of the disinterested theory of art espoused by adherents of the art-for-art-sake movement. The disinterested theory of art fuelled many of the diverse avant garde groups associated with French art of this period.<sup>36</sup>

Bourgault-Ducoudray, in his essay "La musique et le sport," proposed an interesting, but ambiguous theory of aesthetic perception. This theory considered both the participant and the spectator experience. In terms of pure spectatorship,

Bourgault-Ducoudray rejected the importance of man's intellectual faculty in the perception of the beautiful. Here, he explicitly rejected the notion that aesthetic perception ought to be exclusively focused on high art which, according to Bourgault-Ducoudray, would simply reduce all artistic spectating experiences to a boring process of judging, analysing and dissecting works of art. Both Pottecher and Bourgault-Ducoudray shared this critical view of modern bourgeois art culture and referred to "le gout blase d'élite" and "le spectateur blase," respectively. They romanticized the idea of naive (common) spectators who surrendered themselves entirely to the sensations and emotions evoked by great spectacles and defamed the extreme intellectualism of bourgeois art connoisseurs. Massive, open-air, choral concerts and the plays performed by 'people's theatres' were considered performative genre that could stir the most profound emotions of an audience in which all social classes participated. An important emphasis was placed on the ephemeral experience of these spectacles. The simplicity, clarity and grandeur of these performances was seen as a counter-point to the overly refined, intellectual and unemotional spectating experiences offered by the bourgeois theatre. Again, this must be interpreted as a rejection of an art-for-art-sake philosophy.

As cultural and social reformers, men like Pottecher and Bourgault-Ducoudray were not solely concerned with the aesthetic experiences associated with spectating. For example, a significant factor in Pottecher's *Theatre du Peuple* was participation of local amateur actors in the productions. Bourgault-Ducoudray also considered the aesthetic experience of the choir members and stressed the importance of a disinterested participant. In aesthetic theory, disinterestedness is a concept that connotes the valuing of a pleasureable experience for itself, done without external compensation. The perception of beauty, or experiences of pleasure lead to no other reward. Here, the discourses of art and sport overlapped on one very interesting concept: disinterested, and consequently, moral participation. Bourgault-Ducoudray's references to the "culte noble et désintéressé de l'art" evoked the essence of the amateur spirit that Coubertin and his sporting colleagues revered.<sup>37</sup> In the context of choral performances, the idea of disinterested participation was equated with the experience of profound joy--the wholesome sensation of the beautiful (l'émotion salubre du beau)--derived from singing in great choral ensembles. This disinterested pleasure was contrasted favourably against the type of pleasure derived from the external and material rewards that choral competitions offered singers and which Bourgault-Ducoudray decried as an undesirable occasion that promoted rivalries and antagonism.<sup>38</sup> Thus, within their instrumental theory of art, the notion of disinterestedness was linked to the production (and status of the producers) of art. This contrasted with the notion of the disinterested aesthetic gaze that was essential in the art-for-art-sake theory.

Bourgault-Ducoudray's comments on spectatorship also alluded to a philosophical conceptualization of beauty that was similar to what Coubertin developed in his 1901 essay, "L'Art dans l'éducation."<sup>39</sup> He described an ideal beauty and the relationship between the perception of beauty in art and the knowledge of worldly truths. In essence, Bourgault-Ducoudray shared Coubertin's desire to find a philosophical link between the perception of beauty and the perception of goodness.

Avant tout, il s'agit de ramener l'ame populaire à une conception plus haute de la mission de l'art, et assigner pour récompense à nos chanteurs, non plus une medaille d'or ou une somme d'argent, mais la joie profonde, incomparable que procurent à l'homme l'émotion du beau et la perception de l'idéal.<sup>40</sup>

(Before everything else, it is a question of restoring the popular spirit to a conception more elevated than the mission of art, and to assign as reward to our singers, no more gold medals or sums of money, but an incomparable profound joy that will procure for man a sensation of beauty and the perception of the ideal.)<sup>41</sup>

The texts of Pottecher and Bourgault-Ducoudray intersected with some of the concepts that characterized fin de siècle progressivism. In other words, their ideas about art, beauty and sport were bound to the moral and social reform beliefs of Republican-minded Frenchmen of this era. This was especially evident in the repertoire performed by the *Théâtre du Peuples* in Bussang, that consisted primarily of Pottecher's own morality plays. As an example, his play *Le Diable Marchant de Goutte* (1895) examined the social problems associated with alcoholism.<sup>42</sup> The nature of Bourgault-Ducoudray's social reform was more directly aligned with the physical education and hygiene interests of Coubertin. The popular choral societies were intended to promote open-air singing as a fitness and hygiene practice. The physical exertion of singing in the gymnasium or out-of-doors was regarded as a viable activity for the healthy development of respiratory organs.<sup>43</sup> Thus, the popular choral societies defined themselves, in part, within the context of the hygienist, or open air movement of the period. Infatuation with the out-of-doors reflected a common concern over the decrepid effects of urban industrialization on national health and welfare. The idea of moving traditional cultural practices out-of-doors became a unifying concept that drew different cultural institutions together in the broader discourse of popular culture.

Pottecher described, in practical terms, a new type of sporting festival. He explained specific ways of integrating sport into a cohesive, and yet multi-faceted spectacle. Although he claimed to extend his theories of popular spectacle to the Modern Olympic Games, his true commitment lay in the realm of local and regional festivals. In spite of this, he suggested that the Olympic Games provided the greatest occasion in which to unite the arts and sport on a grand scale. He was insistant, however, that the production of local and regional festivals was essential to the ultimate unification of art and sport. He proposed that communities organize sporting competitions and theatrical presentations over the duration of a day long open-air festival. These 'fête sportif' did not integrate into theatrical presentation. Instead, this was a theory of spectacle that preserved the distinctiveness of sport and theatre. The aesthetic experience was dependent on recognizing the complimentary nature of sport and theatre as opposed to identifying or creating shared elements.

Pottecher did more than simply theorize about this type of open-air festival. On 5 August 1906, he coordinated a 'fete sportif' in Bussang as an experiment to apply

the theories that were discussed at the Consultative Conference with the mandate of his *Theatre du Peuple*:

Ce pittoresque spectacle, on avait associé une récréation sportive destinée à réaliser l'idée émise au dernier Congrès olympique: l'union des plaisirs intellectuels et des jeux où le corps déploie son adresse et sa vigueur.<sup>44</sup>

(This picturesque spectacle, was associated with a sporting element destined to help realize the idea proposed by the latest Olympic Congress: the union of intellectual pleasures with games in which the body displays its dexterity and vigour.)<sup>45</sup>

Coubertin, himself, who was given the honour of presiding over the Bussang festival, described the event in the introduction to Pottecher's Conference paper.<sup>46</sup> The festivities began with an automobile race around the mountain. Other activities included a balloon ascension, gymnastic demonstrations, fencing matches and running races, all contested in a 'gaily decorated field'. The day's festivities culminated at the rustic open-air theatre where athletes and spectators united for the debut of Pottecher's play, *Sotré de Noel* which was followed by group singing and dancing.<sup>47</sup> Pottecher's efforts to integrate sport with art into a single festival-type experience for the 'people' was relatively conservative as he saw sport as sport and theatre as theatre.

### Athletic Bodies and Ideals of Beauty

This discussion of Pottecher's and Bourgault-Ducoudray's contributions to the aesthetic discourse generated at the 1906 Consultative Conference, illuminates a cultural bond between Modern Olympism and aspects of France's nationalistic popular culture movement. This association has been overlooked by historians of the Modern Olympic Movement. As theorists of the performing arts, Pottecher and Bourgault-Ducoudray struggled awkwardly to incorporate the athletic body into their dialectics between sport and arts, and sport and beauty. The sculptor Pierre Roche and the composer Max d'Ollone were more successful when they discussed the 'plastic', or physical, beauty perceivable in sport and sporting bodies. They also developed theories out of aesthetical concepts that had been, at least traditionally, implicit in theories of the visual arts. Thematically, d'Ollone's "Le sport et la beauté plastique" and Roche's "Sculpture et sport" examined the human body as a source of aesthetic contemplation and artistic inspiration. These men justified their theories with the historical *a priori* established by the ancient Greeks. Max d'Ollone described the relationship between beauty and sport in ancient Greece in the following passage: "Une lien logique et puissant--la beauté plastique--unissait chez les Grecs la <gymnastique> aux arts et tous les entre eux"<sup>48</sup> (Physical beauty provided a logical and powerful link that unified gymnasium exercises with the fine arts and all of the other arts in between).<sup>49</sup> Elaborating on this historical connection, he stated that the incontestable influence of the gymnasium on cultural production in ancient Greece was facilitated by two conditions that he hoped would be returned to the practice of

sport in modern times. These conditions were, specifically, practising and competing in sport in the nude (or possibly even semi-nude) and practising and competing in sport with proper musical accompaniment. In promoting exercise in the nude, d'Ollone addressed the philosophical concept of beauty more directly than any of the other participants of the Consultative Conference for the Arts, Literature and Sport. For d'Ollone, the perception of beauty was achieved most effectively by contemplating the naked human body, and specifically the male body. He explained the implications for art with reference to the theories of John Ruskin: 'the beginning of art consists of unveiling the beauty of people'.<sup>50</sup> He also qualified his comments by paraphrasing the French author, Renan: 'the reign of sculpture ended when man stopped going about his daily business half naked'.<sup>51</sup> By describing the human body as an object of aesthetic perception and artistic inspiration, d'Ollone expressed an objective theory of beauty that was not contingent on his theory of art: Man's nudity gave artists an occasion to contemplate the grand and eternal ideas of all humankind. He did not see the source of the beauty--the athlete--as the producer of art or even, necessarily, as the participant in an aesthetic experience. In a sense, at least, d'Ollone appeared to be developing his arguments around a theory of beauty in nature, as opposed to a theory of beauty in art. His essay described the benefits artists could reap from observing naked sportsmen, but did not address the benefit that sportsmen could reap from the experience of their own nakedness. D'Ollone, like Coubertin, seemed to have difficulty distinguishing the idea of beauty in nature from the idea of beauty in art. Consequently, the suggestion that the beauty of the human form can evoke knowledge of universal truths, or metaphysical-type ideals, is confusing.

D'Ollone also discussed the idea of 'orchestrating physical exercise' with music as a way of increasing the aesthetic experience for the spectator. In this sense, he reiterated and developed ideas that Bourgault-Ducoudray expressed when justifying the union of popular choral societies and sporting societies. D'Ollone, however, distinguished himself by stipulating that the athletic body could be appreciated aesthetically if movement was accompanied with rational rhythmic music. Unlike Pottecher, and even Bourgault-Ducoudray, he seemed more committed to conceptualizing a homogenous multimedia-type performance in which the combination of sport and the rational mathematical art form, music, would produce a unique 'rational' aesthetic experience. He illustrated this point with references to the system of body movement developed by Émile Jaques-Dalcroze which he described as the fusion of poetry, music and pantomime. He also discussed Richard Wagner's innovations in modern opera as prototypical. Dance was not d'Ollone's focus. In fact, he was extremely critical of modern ballet; calling it 'acrobatics unworthy of the name, art'.<sup>52</sup> His emphasis remained on the development of a 'rational physical culture that would encourage the normal development of force and suppleness and the production of harmonious proportions that constitute *la beauté*'.<sup>53</sup>

Pierre Roche (author of "Sculpture et sport") emphasized many of the same themes addressed by Max d'Ollone.<sup>54</sup> In other words, he was predominantly concerned with an objective theory of beauty and an instrumental theory of art in which athletes provided a source of beauty for artists to study and interpret in their art. Unlike d'Ollone and many other participants at the Conference, Roche elaborated on specific ways that artists might interpret the plastic (physical) beauty of sporting

bodies. Particularly revealing were his comments on the variety of physiques modern sporting specialization produced. He suggested that the variety and perfection of these different human forms signified a new and emerging modern aesthetic.<sup>55</sup> He accepted and condoned the effects of specialization in modern sport on the human body. Thus, the ideas of specialization and utility associated with the sporting body factored integrally into his theory of physical beauty. In examining the unique demands of modern sport, he discussed several aesthetic concepts that were central to his own theory of art and beauty,

Ce n'est plus là l'inutile beauté mais la beauté conciliée avec l'action. On trouve là sans s'écarter du beau ce qui lui donne au premier chef sa valeur, à savoir le caractère. Les Grecs l'avaient bien compris. A côté du type parfait de l'Apollon, ils avaient l'Achille, l'Hercule; ils ne reculaient ni devant le Faune ni devant Marsyas.<sup>56</sup>

(It is no longer simply useless beauty but beauty reconciled with action. We find there, without turning aside the beautiful, that which gives value to the true master, knowledge of his character. The Greeks understood this well. Along with the perfect-type of Apollo, they had Achilles and Hercules; they did not recoil in front of the Faune or in front of the Marsyas.)<sup>57</sup>

While conceding that modern sport was not the source of a singular physical ideal of beauty, Roche proposed that each sport produced an ideal type that reflected the demands of the sport and the inherent natural human physique intended to excel in a particular sport. In this sense, he suggested that art and sport were mutually beneficial; sportsmen would provide artists with an "anatomie artistique" that conveyed an equilibrium between the human body and the modern world; artists would fix the aesthetic type of each sport and in turn help identify those physiques naturally suited to excel in particular sports. Although Roche clearly accommodated the diversification of the embodied human experience in modern life and disposed with the singular ideal as an expression of man's harmony with nature, he still attempted to convey a particular humanism in his explanation of the modern aesthetic. This was certainly a theory of earth-bound beauty, but one in which nature and modern man contributed to the ideals.

Pierre Roche also commented on the artistic interpretation of athletic effort.<sup>58</sup> For Roche, paintings and sculptures based on sporting bodies ought to convey an artistic interpretation of effort. The body, itself, was not the sole mimetic challenge. Thus, the painter or sculptor was required to study sport and identify and capture those brief movements of pause in athletic performance that signify departure or completion of a great exertion. Roche described these specific moments in terms of balance and equilibrium between action and non-action. Thus, while he spoke in terms of static physical beauty, the artistic expression of effort in sculpture demanded a vivid depiction of the human energy either completely garnered or completely and instantaneously expended.<sup>59</sup>

The theme of physical beauty (beauty in the round) presented in the essays of d'Ollone and Roche signified an articulation of a number of concepts that shaped the

aesthetic idea within the discourse of modern Olympism. Coubertin, himself, reinforced these aesthetic concerns when describing the fencing match that was incorporated into the closing ceremonies of the Consultative Conference: “..., c’est prise d’armes s’est ainsi distinguée par des allures inusitées au point de vue du geste et de la plastique” (this call to arms was also distinguished by the rare allure the movement [gestures] and the poses).<sup>60</sup> For Coubertin and Pierre Roche the beauty of sporting bodies was associated with the demands of the sport and was, therefore, associated with the idea of earth-bound beauty and a moral and social utility. In other words, they were not concerned with human form that was beautiful in, and of, itself. When incorporating this idea of beauty into a theory of art, Roche emphasized the responsibility of the artist to portray the harmony between physical or plastic attributes of the body and the movement that it was intended to perform. Thus, as a theory of art, the concept of mimesis was important as the perception of harmony was contingent on the artists ability to represent the proportion of the body and allude to its athletic utility.<sup>61</sup> Here, the emphasis on utility—even if it is only specific to sporting proficiency—must be attributed to the pervasive positivism in European culture at this time.

### Hellenistic Ideals and the Beauty of Modern Sport

The greatest cohesion in the aesthetic discourse generated by the Consultative Conference for the Arts, Literature and Sport was provided by the frequent references to ancient Hellenistic culture. Hellenism was a pervasive theme in almost all of Coubertin’s early theoretical literature on the Modern Olympic Movement. Historians have acknowledged the inherent Hellenistic ideals in Coubertin’s efforts to forge a relationship between art and sport at the Olympic Games. However, as far as I know, no one has examined the nature, or even the validity of Coubertin’s reliance on the historical discourse of Hellenism in order to justify a claim that Olympism is, in part, an aesthetic idea. Consequently, no one has commented on the voluminous literature on ancient and modern Greek culture that was published in the *Revue Olympique* during the same time period that Coubertin was accelerating the aesthetic discourse by hosting the Consultative Conference for the Arts, Literature and Sport.

In 1906 Coubertin began weaving the history of ancient Greek culture more emphatically into the theories of modern Olympism.<sup>62</sup> Coubertin dedicated the entire April 1906 issue of *Revue Olympique* to the study of Hellenistic culture.<sup>63</sup> In its own right, this special issue of the *Revue Olympique* represented a distinct and singular discursive event. It also symbolized Coubertin’s acknowledgement of the Intercalary Olympic Games that were hosted by the city of Athens in 1906. The historical and philosophical content of these articles established the fundamental aesthetic concepts that seemed to guide the discussions about art, beauty and sport at the Consultative Conference. Evidently, Coubertin’s sense of timing was impeccable when it came to promoting new ideas to the readers of the *Revue Olympique*. Just one month prior to announcing the Consultative Conference for the Arts, Literature and Sports in the *Revue Olympique*, Coubertin laid the groundwork by proposing that the Hellenistic dialectic between art and sport ought to be adopted as a central objective for modern sporting culture. The following paragraphs examine how ideals of Hellenism

contributed to, and emerged from, the aesthetic discourse generated at the 1906 Consultative Conference.

In an article entitled “A travers l’histoire grecque” Coubertin established that Hellenism was a timeless humanist philosophy that had survived, albeit tenuously at times, since its birth in antiquity.<sup>64</sup> He defined Hellenism as the quest for human harmony (“l’harmonie humaine”). This could be achieved through a tripartite equilibrium between the “morale” (the moral or good), “la cité” (society), and “l’individu” (the individual). Success in achieving this harmony was dependent on balancing another trilogy of variables: “la conscience” (conscience), “la solidarité” (mutual responsibility) and “l’intérêt personnel” (self-interest). Here, Coubertin described a puzzling combination of philosophical, psychological and social concepts.

In the same issue of *Revue Olympique*, an article entitled “Propos sur l’art grec” represented Coubertin’s theories about ancient Greek art and the Hellenistic ideals of beauty.<sup>65</sup> He explained that Greek art exalted humanity and not unearthly divinities which are immaterial and incomprehensible.<sup>66</sup> ‘Greek art emanated and represented Hellenism, and thus, was above all else, humane’. Accordingly, Hellenism was both spiritual (a quality that could emanate from the work of art) and physical (a quality that could be represented, depicted). The beauty of ancient Greek art was linked to the truths of earth-bound human experiences which were both physical and spiritual. Notice the philosophical leap from positivism to spiritualism that Coubertin made in order to justify the association of art and sport as a tool of social reform.<sup>67</sup>

Coubertinian essays from the April 1906 issue of *Revue Olympique* complimented the essays of Pottecher and Bourgault-Ducoudray. For the artists and people of letters who participated in the Consultative Conference, their effusive Hellenism was conveyed in the explanations of their respective cultural missions. Coubertin, of course, set the tone in his plenary address when he used a marriage metaphor to explain the necessity of uniting the arts and sport in modern culture: “We are here to reunite in the bonds of legitimate wedlock a long-divorced couple--muscle and mind.”<sup>68</sup> In this speech, Coubertin only alluded to Hellenistic ideals. Greece and Other participants at the Conference were much more direct in citing the ancient Games as the inspiration for the art/sport alliance. Maurice Pottecher reiterated Coubertin’s objective with a slightly different metaphor, but a more direct reference to ancient Greek ideals:

Je crois cette assemblée trop convaincue d’avance de l’intérêt qu’il y a à rapprocher deux mondes trop longtemps séparés et regardés comme ennemis, le monde des artistes et le monde des athlètes--à réaliser dans la nation ce bel équilibre du corps et de l’esprit qui, dans l’individu, constitue seul l’être vivant, ...<sup>69</sup>

(I believe this assembly has already been convinced of the interest in bringing together two worlds that have too long been separate and regarded as enemies. The world of artists and the world of athletes--in realizing in the nation this beautiful equilibrium of body and spirit that, in the individual, constitutes entirely, the living being...)

Pottecher claimed that the inspiration for the *Théâtre du Peuple* derived from his knowledge of ancient Greek theatre. As he explained the goals of his innovative theatrical company, the Hellenistic ideals that provided the philosophical basis of art and beauty became apparent. According to Pottecher, ancient Greek theatre demanded a reconciliation between art, nature and the 'people'(society). To establish this reconciliation in modern times, he proposed the following:

En rapprochant l'art de la nature et du peuples, en le dédiant au peuple tout entier sans exclusion de classe, j'ai pensé qu'il devait sortir de là (...) une cause de rajeunissement pour l'art étouffé et anémié dans les salles trop étroites ou la lumière du jour ne pénètre jamais. Au contact de la nature, cet art retrouverait une force et une grandeur nouvelles; au contact du peuples, une simplicité et un santé qu'il n'a plus.<sup>70</sup>

(In bringing together art, nature and the people, in dedication to the entirety of humankind without exclusion of class, I thought that it would be necessary to pursue (...) the rejuvenation of an art that has been suffocated and made anemic in rooms that are too cramped where the light of day never shines. In contact with nature, this art found a new force and grandeur; in contact with the people, a simplicity and health it no longer had.)

Pottecher referred to ancient Greek ideals to justify the practical (stylistic) innovations that characterised his theatrical productions. For Pottecher, Hellenism prescribed the ideal equilibrium within the individual (body and spirit) and an ideal equilibrium between the individual, society, and nature. This was virtually identical to Coubertin's interpretation of Hellenism. Ultimately, Pottecher's Hellenism was expressed most vividly in the motto that adorned the proscenium arch of his open-air theatre: "Through Art for Humanity."<sup>71</sup>

For Bourgault-Ducoudray, the Hellenistic quality of modern popular choral societies was described in rather more ambiguous terms. He praised the initiative to create new forms of art for the embellishment and ennoblement of modern sporting festivals. This, he referred to as an objective appropriated from the poetic age of antiquity.<sup>72</sup> He revered ancient Greek culture because (according to his interpretation) it embraced a disinterested theory of art and beauty. What he described as the 'popular soul' was an aesthetic experience, the perception of beauty, void of any material compensation: He wanted the singers in his choir to experience the profound joy procured through the sensation of the beautiful and the perception of the ideal. He also recommended that 'popular art' be inspired, as was the art of ancient Greece, by the most profound emotions derived from the experiences of real life. These ideas were, of course, consistent with those expressed by Coubertin and Pottecher. From a philosophical perspective of art and beauty, idealized images of man and nature helped to reveal the truths about the real world.<sup>73</sup>

In the literary legacy of the Consultative Conference, aesthetic concerns and Hellenistic ideals merged with themes of nationalism. For representatives of the people's theatre movement and the popular choral societies, popular culture was

synonymous with strong national identities. Pottecher, for example, emphasized that the word “people” (as applied in “Théâtre du Peuple”) signified the broadest possible assemblage of humankind; in other words, the entirety of the nation.<sup>74</sup> He drew his inspiration from a belief that the ancient Greeks expressed the genius and spirit of their nation through their art. The idea that art represented the soul or genius of great nations certainly reinforced the philosophy of scientific positivism in the theories of art and beauty developed by Hippolyte Taine<sup>75</sup> in the middle of the nineteenth century and, of course, those developed by Coubertin in “L’Art dans l’Education”<sup>76</sup> (1901) and “Propos sur l’art grec” (1906).

In his 1906 speech to the delegates of the Consultative Conference for the Arts, Literature and Sports, Pottecher claimed that the concept for the *Théâtre du Peuple* was appropriated from the model of ancient Greek theatre but adapted to contemporary ideas and preoccupations.<sup>77</sup> While these social and cultural reformers allowed the past to inspire them, they did not make thoughtless claims to be reviving ancient institutions.<sup>78</sup> This delineation between cultural imitation and ideological inspiration is an important revelation for the context of this paper. It confirms that Coubertin and his colleagues were not simply attempting to give modern sport a neo-classical veneer; that is, Hellenism was not a stylistic innovation intended to make the Olympic Games and sport, in general, more attractive. Their aesthetic idea was truly a product of philosophical discourse, and even more specifically, aesthetic discourse.

## Summary and Conclusions

The 1906 Consultative Conference for the Arts, Literature and Sport signified a moment in time when the Modern Olympic Movement articulated with a variety of contemporary cultural institutions; it was a unique intersection in the history of sport, theatre, music and art. The delegates who represented a variety of cultural interests, including the plastic and performing arts, participated in an event in which specific shared ideas about art, beauty and culture provided unifying elements in the deliberations that resulted. In other words, this was a discursive event: It reflected a broad social, cultural and philosophical discourse that subsumed contemporary ideas about art and sport as sources of beauty. In simple terms, the Consultative Conference produced an aesthetic discourse that Coubertin subsequently attempted to apply, in practical terms, to the cultural production associated with the Modern Olympic Movement.

This analysis of the Consultative Conference reveals that delegates expressed homogeneous views on a number of topics. Specifically, incorporating sport into ‘popular’ theatrical festivals was a common interest among the delegates. This cultural context seemed a viable method of beautifying modern sport for the betterment of individual spectators and society in general. Theories on the aesthetic and social benefit of ‘popular’ sport festivals were also entrenched in an historical discourse on Hellenistic philosophy. Among the prominent participants attending the Consultative Conference were artists, writers and musicians who were ardent French nationalists and Republicans. As a genre of public performance, the popular festivals that the Conference delegates proposed were very much a part of the cultural agenda

of the dominant political forces in French society during the first decade of the twentieth century. This political culture hinged on an instrumental theory of art and a normative theory of beauty.

The delegates also examined the athletic body as a site of aesthetic discourse. The athletic (and especially the nude) body, was discussed as an object to be gazed upon aesthetically. Thus, the beauty of the athletic body was an object that could serve as inspiration for the production of art. In the context of the philosophy of art and beauty, the Consultative Conference was dominated by a theory of objective normative (or universal) beauty. On the other hand, consideration of the athletic body as a discursive site of aesthetic subjectivity (that is, experiencing beauty through one's own embodiment) was merely alluded to by a couple of the participants, specifically Bourgault-Ducoudray and d'Ollone. The dominant perspectives on the beauty of the athletic body were also rooted in the pervasive Hellenism that brought cohesion to the Conference deliberations. The beauty of an athlete's body, as interpreted by artists, was regarded as a cultural ideal that conveyed the values of society. In other words, the athletic body converted conveniently into a plastic symbol of rationale, scientific social progress. Furthermore, the idealized athletic body promoted a disinterested--as opposed to an erotic-- perception of the body.

Although the delegates of the Conference may not have proposed many practical solutions for integrating the arts into the Olympic Games, their discussions certainly revealed unique and timely ideas about the nature of art, sport, beauty and cultural production. As cultural theorists, the participants of the 1906 Conference were preoccupied with the idea of creating an aesthetic spectator experience that would reinforce the tenets of nationalistic social reform. This paper reveals how theories of sport were greatly influenced by theories of art and beauty. This research is significant because it attempts to move the historical interpretation of sporting and physical recreation practices closer towards the field of cultural history. Identifying the intersection of aesthetic concepts in the theoretical foundations of modern sport, reveals how individuals like Coubertin, and institutions like the International Olympic Movement, believed sport would serve their social and political missions. In other words, this research examines how people believed sport created meaningful experiences.

## Notes

1. Pierre de Coubertin, "The 'Trustees' of the Olympic Idea" (Address delivered by the President of the International Olympic Committee at the dinner given by the British Government on the 24 July 1908), *The Olympic Idea: Discourses and Essays*, Stuttgart: Carl Diem Institute, 1967, p. 21.

2. Aesthetics is a branch of modern philosophy that studies the nature of art and beauty. For a basic historical introduction to aesthetics, or the philosophy of art, see M. H. Abrams, "Art-as -Such: The Sociology of Modern Aesthetics," *Doing Things with Texts: Essays in Criticism and Critical Theory*, New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1985; and, Paul Otto Kristeller, "The Modern System of the Arts," *Renaissance Thought and the Arts*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985, pp. 163-227.

3. For basic, and easy to comprehend, introductions to the philosophy of art and beauty, see Marcia Muelder Eaton, *Basic Issues in Aesthetics*, Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1988; and, Alan H. Goldman, *Aesthetic Value*, Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1995.
4. This is especially true in view of the fact that Coubertin never formally articulated a concise treatise outlining his philosophy of art.
5. For this research, I have consulted Terry Eagleton, *The Ideology of the Aesthetic*. Cambridge, MA.: Basil Blackwell, 1990; Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature* (Randal Johnson, Ed.), New York: Columbia University Press, 1993. Art Berman, *Preface to Modernism*, Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1994; Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society, 1780-1950*. London: Chatto and Windus Ltd., 1958; Raymond Williams, "When was Modernism?" *Art in Modern Culture: An Anthology of Critical Texts* (Editors, Francis Frascina and Jonathan Harris), New York: Phaidon Press Ltd., 1992, pp. 23-27; and, Peter Bürger, *The Decline of Modernism* (Nicholas Walker, Translator), University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992.
6. Discourse refers to the existence of knowledge without the necessity of specifying the knowing subject. I have found that Charles C. Lemert and Garth Gillan (*Michel Foucault: Social Theory and Transgression*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1992, 129-130) have offered one of the most readable explanations of the Foucauldian concept of discourse: "In the lexicon of modern linguistics, discourse is distinguished from the formal aspects of language (Saussure's la langue) and the specifics of actual speaking (la parole). Discourse is understood to have its own rules of operation and, empirically, to have its own forms. However, as a more inclusive instance of language use, its analysis is limited neither to the customary elements of linguistics (semantics and grammar) nor to linguistics basic units (the sentence, the preposition, or the speech act). Discourse, therefore, is susceptible to analysis in relation to the other aspects of social life: politics, culture, economics, social institutions."
7. Prominent contributions to the philosophy of sport, and especially aesthetics and sport are: Donald W. Masterson and Whiting (Editors), *Readings in the Aesthetics of Sport*. London: Kimpton, 1974; and, Dave Best, *Philosophy and Human Movement*, George Allen and Unwin, 1978.
8. See, Jean Durry, "Pierre de Coubertin: l'esthétique et le sport," *The Relevance of Pierre de Coubertin Today*, Report of the Symposium 18th to 20th March 1986 at the University of Lausanne (Norbert Müller, ed.), Taurus: Schors-Verlag Niedemhausen, 1987, pp. 265-275; and Rudolf Malter, "L'Eurythmie, l'idéal de vie selon Pierre de Coubertin" *The Relevance of Pierre de Coubertin Today: Report of the Symposium 18th to 20th march 1986 at the University of Lausanne* (Editor, Norbert Müller), Taurus: Schors-Verlag Niedemhausen, 1987, pp. 171-178; and Benjamin Lowe, *The Beauty of Sport: a cross-disciplinary inquiry*, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1977. Donald Masterson has also written on Coubertin's aesthetic concerns. See, Donald W. Masterson, "The Relationship of Art and Sport: The Relevance of Coubertin's View Today" in *The Relevance of Pierre de Coubertin Today: Report of the Symposium 18th to 20th march 1986 at the University of Lausanne* (Norbert Müller, Editor), Taurus: Schors-Verlag Niedemhausen, 1987, pp. 277-288.
9. The Hellenistic ideals that shaped the aesthetic discourse at the Consultative Conference and ultimately contributed to conceptualization of modern Olympism are identifiable in almost every facet of French culture in the nineteenth century and early

twentieth century. European interest in ancient Greek culture was stimulated by the great archeological expeditions of the century. Coubertin was a young and aspiring historian during the era of Heinrich Schliemann, the amateur archeologist who discovered the tombs of Mycenaean culture as well as the ancient city of Troy. As archeologists became media celebrities the knowledge of ancient culture became integrated into the language and systems of thinking in popular culture. The great universal exhibitions of the late nineteenth century also helped to popularize images from ancient culture. MacAloon states that: "(t)he archeological finds of the late nineteenth century represented the coalescence of classical humanism, modern science, and heroic, individual prouesse. According to John J. MacAloon, "Schliemann so succeeded in bringing the classical past to life in the public imagination that he became one of the most celebrated men in the late nineteenth century." John J. MacAloon, *This Great Symbol*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981, p. 144. MacAloon speculates that Coubertin gained his knowledge of ancient Greek culture prior to 1892 at which time he proposed the revival of the Olympic Games in modern times (Ibid., p. 143). In terms of applied aesthetic theory, Hellenistic values were transcribed into a style of nineteenth century and early twentieth century art commonly referred to classicism, or neo-classicism. Classicism signified a style of art and a theory of normative aesthetic perception. "The normative concept of art had long been associated with classicism. A correspondence had existed, or was believed to exist, between the ideal vision of the natural order found in Greek art and the uncorrupted nature of the Greek people's moral character and social organization." Miriam R. Levin, *Republican Art and Ideology in Late Nineteenth-Century France*. Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1986, p. 155.

10. Pierre de Coubertin, *Olympic Memoirs* (originally published in French in 1931), Lausanne: International Olympic Committee, 1979, p. 49.

11. *Ibid.*

12. *ibid.* Brackets mine.

13. In this historical interpretation of the early years of the Olympic Movement, Coubertin indicated that the Chicago organizing committee had expressed a sincere and enthusiastic desire to develop the artistic and intellectual aspect of Olympism. See *Olympic Memoirs*, p. 40 and p. 49.

14. Pierre de Coubertin, "Deuxième étape," *Revue Olympique*, May 1906, p. 67.

15. *Ibid.* p. 50.

16. "Invitation, Conférence consultative," International Olympic Committee, April 1906, IOC Archives, Lausanne.

17. This Olympic Conference has been studied primarily by historians with an interest in the Olympic Fine Art Competitions. See for example, Susan J. Bandy, "The Olympic Celebration of the Arts," *The Olympic Games in Transition* (Jeffrey Seagrave and Donald Chu, Editors), Champaign, Illinois: Human Kinetics Books, 1988, pp. 163-169; Suzanna Halpert Levitt, "The 1984 Olympic Arts Festival: Theatre," PhD Dissertation Davis: University of California, 1990; Andrea Petersen, "The Olympic art competitions 1912-1948," *Sport Science Review*, 1989, pp. 44-51; and, Norbert Müller, *One Hundred Years of Olympic Congresses, 1894-1994* (Ingrid Sonnleiter-Hauber, trans.), Lausanne: International Olympic Committee, 1994.

18. Approximately sixty individuals participated in the event. Apart from Coubertin, himself, only four of these participants were IOC members. The Reverend Courcy Laffan of England, Count Brunetta d'Usseaux of Italy, Hébrard de Villeneuve and

Ernst Callot of France represented the IOC at the Conference. Pierre de Coubertin, "Les séances de la Conférence consultative" *Revue Olympique*, June 1906, pp. 83-87. Although Coubertin listed a number of individuals who participated in the Conference at the beginning of this summary, one finds that throughout the article new names also appear. I have tried to determine the number of participants based on a full reading of documentation pertaining to the Conference. The number that I have arrived at concurs, approximately, with that derived by historian, Norbert Müller, *One Hundred Years of Olympic Congresses*, 1994, p. 69.

19. To qualify this statement, I have analysed the transcribed minutes from the different sessions and counted only those decisions that were clearly adopted in a voting process. Although numerous assertive statements are evident in this document, only seven statements can be definitively categorized as group decisions. This archival documentation is a true transcription of verbal discourse and therefore includes the commentary of individuals as well as the opinions of the assembly.

20. Pierre de Coubertin, "Les décisions prises," *Revue Olympique*, June 1906, pp. 87-93. Curiously, the unpublished record of the deliberations do not indicate that the delegates participated in any formal discussion pertaining to the establishment, or even regulation, of Olympic Art Competitions. Perhaps the transcript of the session has been lost, but more than likely, formal discussions never transpired. Thus, the question of who exactly set the rules remains unanswered.

21. Some time between 1896 and 1904, Coubertin decided that the founding of the Modern Olympic Movement ought to be commemorated with a permanent sculptural monument. In his typically outgoing manner, Coubertin sought to recruit the famous sculptor Frederic Auguste Bartholdi for the project. Bartholdi was famous for designing the "Statue of Liberty" in New York City Harbour. Due to the cost and lack of enthusiasm among most IOC members for fund raising, the monument was never constructed. Nevertheless, Coubertin's choice of Bartholdi is very telling of his own personal tastes. Bartholdi was a conservative academically-trained sculptor who was exceedingly popular among the prominent politically-minded citizens of the early Third Republic. For introductory readings on Bartholdi, see Pierre Provoyer (with the assistance of Jacques Betz), "Bartholdi in His Context," *Liberty: The French-American Statue in Art and History*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Perennial Library, Harper and Row, Publishers, 1986, pp. 40-63; Pierre Provoyer, "Bartholdi and the Colossal Tradition," *Liberty. The French-American Statue in Art and History*, *Ibid.*, pp. 64-76; and, Marvin Trachtenberg, *The Statue of Liberty*, New York: Viking Press, 1976.

22. Although the question of erecting such a monument was not listed on the original program, the delegates did form a special commission of architects and sculptors to ensure the future progress and development of the project. The minutes from the meeting held on Wednesday 23 May (at 2:30 PM) describe the formation of two commissions. One is described as a provisional commission for the realization of the 'Project du Monument Bartholdi à la glorification de la Renaissance Physique envisagée comme une caractéristique des temps modernes.' Three individuals were appointed to the commission, Jourdain, Segoffin and Vauthier. The other commission was intended to be a permanent group within France that would help direct all manifestations of sport towards a more artistic and aesthetic ideal. See "Compte-rendu: Seance de Commission du Mercredi 23 mai, 2h1/2," IOC Archives, Lausanne.

23. Pierre de Coubertin, "Bulletin officiel du Comité International Olympique," *Revue Olympique*, July 1906, pp. 111-112.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 112.

25. Translation mine.

26. The President of the Federation Française des Sociétés d'Aviron assured Coubertin that his federation would inform member association that 'in the future, all nautical festival ought to reflect an artistic and literary character by including contests in poetry, appropriate dramatic production and choral performances in the open air. See Le Président de la Federation Française des Sociétés d'Avirons to Pierre de Coubertin, 30 July 1906, IOC Archives, Lausanne. Similarly, the Chairman of the Athletic Committee of Harvard University, H. S. White, assured Coubertin that he would introduce the question of "uniting poetical competitions and dramatic representations with the various national athletic contests" to the athletic committee. See H. S. White (Chairman of the Harvard Athletic Committee) to Pierre de Coubertin, 20 August 1906, IOC Archives, Lausanne

27. The essays to which I refer in this analysis are: Maurice Pottecher, "L'Art dramatique et le sport," *Revue Olympique*, August 1906, pp. 117-122; Pierre Roche, "Sculpture et sport," *Revue Olympique*, September 1906, pp. 135-137; M. Bourgault-Ducoudray, "La musique et le sport," *Revue Olympique*, July 1906, pp. 104-107; Max d'Ollone, "Le sport et la beauté plastique," *Revue Olympique*, December 1906, pp. 181-186; Pierre de Coubertin, "Les décisions prises," *Revue Olympique*, June 1906, pp. 87-93.

28. For a brief introduction to the theories and development of the "people's theatre" movement, see, David Bradby and John McCormick, *People's Theatre*, Totowa, N.J.: Rowman and Littlefield, 1978.

29. *Ibid.* Brackets mine.

30. Translation mine.

31. These ideas were expressed most succinctly in an autobiographical essay from 1913. "Although on a more modest scale, the Bussang experience could be said to bring a new note of artistic sincerity, natural freshness, and if I may so say, rustic ingenuity, which appealed not only to the local spectators, but also to the artists and critics who happened to notice it ... People's theatre, I say and not popular theatre. Notice this distinction. Popular theatre addresses itself to the poorest and usually the least cultured class. The people's theatre, on the other hand, attempts to mingle the classes, and far from excluding the elite, assumes it to be a necessary part of the audience, to ensure that artistic quality of the performance remains high, and the effects do not descend into vulgarity, banal melodrama, rough farce." See Maurice Pottecher, "Lessons of the Bussang Experience" (1913) in Robert White, "A Chronology of People's Theatre since 1870," *Theatre Quarterly*, Volume VI, No. 23 (Autumn, 1976), p.15.

32. In this sense, Pottecher and Bourgault-Ducoudray reflected the same philosophical understanding of society that Coubertin shared with many Fin de Siècle French Republicans. For an interesting summary of the secondary literature that critiques this particular class-based paternalism, see Patrice Cholley, *Pierre de Coubertin: La deuxième croisade; Améliorer la condition humaine par le sport et l'éducation, fucteurs de paix universelle*, Lausanne: Comité International Olympique, 1996.

33. M. Bourgault-Ducoudray, op. cit., p. 106.

34. Maurice Pottecher, op. cit., p. 118.

35. Although I have not analysed the individual histories of each participants in the Consultative Conference to determine their affiliations with specific arts organization, my attention was drawn to the names of René Morax and Romain Rolland. Morax was one of the organizers of a well-known popular festival in Switzerland. In the IOC Archives, I was fortunate to find a newspaper article written by Morax that Coubertin had clipped and saved. Morax's motivation to write this rather lengthy article most likely stemmed from his participation in the Consultative Conference. The article examines the phenomenon of the fête sportif in ancient Greece, in contemporary Switzerland and in the modern revival of the Olympic Games. From the published results of the Consultative Conference (*Revue Olympique*, June 1906, p. 85), Morax appears to have been an active contributor to the discussions. Romain Rolland, who did not attend the Consultative Conference but gave his support, was the most influential French proponent of People's Theatre in the first decade of the twentieth century. Another personality associated with the popular culture movement was Pierre Roche, who was the president of an organization called "Arts populaire." Romain Rolland, who wrote the most influential treatises on people's theatre in 1903 was, in fact, a disciple of Pottecher. See David Bradby and John McCormick, op. cit., p.32. For additional biographical information on Rolland, an historical summary of his contribution to the theory of people's theatre see Robert White, "A Chronology of People's Theatre since 1870," *Theatre Quarterly*, Volume VI, No. 23 (Autumn, 1976), pp.17-23. As well, see Miriam R. Levin, *Republican Art and Ideology in Lute Nineteenth-Century France*. Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1986.

36. For an introduction to the fin-de-siècle cultural dialectic between the instrumental and disinterested theories of art, see, Debora L. Silverman, *Art Nouveau in Fin-de-Siècle France: Politics, Psychology and Style*, Berkley, CA.: University of California Press, 1989, pp. 1-13; and; Charles Harrison and Fred Orton (eds.), *Modernism, Criticism, Realism: Alternative Contexts for Art*, London: Harper and Row Publishers, 1984, pp. Xi-xxviii.

37. M. Bourgault-Ducoudray, op.cit., p. 106.

38. *Ibid.*, p. 106. The popular choral societies, and the aesthetic experiences that they provided, were intended to combat, what was apparently a contemporary affinity for large choral competitions.

39. Pierre de Coubertin, "L'Art dans l'éducation," *Textes Choisis*, Tome I, *Revelations* (Georges Rioux, ed.), Zurich: Weidmann, 1986, pp. 268-273. Published originally in *Notes sur l'Education publique*, Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1901, pp. 297-310.

40. *Ibid.*, p. 106.

41. Translation mine.

42. For comments specific to Pottecher's moralism see, David Bradby and John McCormick, op.cit., p. 32.

43. "Musique," *Compte-rendu*, Seance de Commission au Touring Club, Mercredi 23 mai 2h1/2, p.2, IOC Archives, Lausanne. One can not help but notice the frequent use of the expression "en plein air" in the minutes of the Consultative Conference.

44. Maurice Pottecher, "Spectacles d'Été: Le Théâtre du Peuple," *Les Annales*, No. 1207, 1906. I obtained this newspaper clipping from the Maurice Pottecher Collection at the Archives Départementales des Vosges in Epinal, France.

45. Translation mine.

46. Beginning with his participation in the Consultative Conference for the Arts, Literature and Sports and followed shortly afterward by the organization of the Bussang fete sportif, Maurice Pottecher sustained an intellectual and creative relationship with Pierre de Coubertin that lasted nearly ten years and peaked with their collaboration on the special celebrations held in honour of the winners of the International Architecture Competitions in 1911. The duration of their friendship and the nature of their collaborations indicates that Coubertin and Pottecher shared many common ideas about art, sport, beauty and politics.

47. Pierre de Coubertin, "Introduction: L'art dramatique et le sport" (Maurice Pottecher, Author), *Revue Olympique*, August 1906, p. 117. See, also, *Le Petit Journal*, 21 July 1906 (clipping), Archives Départementales des Vosges, Epinal, France.

48. Max d'Ollone, "Le sport et la beauté plastique," *Revue Olympique*, December 1906, p. 181.

49. Translation mine.

50. D'Ollone paraphrased John Ruskin [cited in a French source entitled *Ruskin et la Religion de la Beauté* by de la Sizeranne] and noted the ideas of several other modern philosophers of art including Hippolyte Taine. These footnotes enabled d'Ollone to contextualize his own ideas with those of other, perhaps better known theorists of art and beauty from this historical period. In particular, his explanation of the relationship between plastic beauty of the athletic body with rhythmical movement brought about a discussion of contribution also signified the emergence of one particular concept (idea) that pervaded the aesthetic discourse of Olympism, that of physical culture. *Ibid.*, p. 82. Sport historians have dropped Ruskin's name into the conventional summaries of Coubertin's cultural meanderings. Generally, these references are absolutely uncritical reiterations of Coubertin's own mention of Ruskin. Recently, however, two scholars have started to question Coubertin's references to Ruskin as an inspiration in the development of his theories. See, Patrice Cholley, *Pierre de Coubertin: La deuxième croisade; Améliorer la condition humaine par le sport et l'éducation, facteurs de paix universelle*, Lausanne: Comité International Olympique, 1996; and, Arnd Krüger, "Pierre de Coubertin's Ruskianism," *Olympic Perspectives: Third International Symposium for Olympic Research*, London, Ontario: International Centre for Olympic Studies, The University of Western Ontario, 1996, pp. 31-42.

51. Le commencement de l'Art, a dit Ruskin, <<consiste à rendre le peuple beau>>; and, <<Le règne de la sculpture est fini, écrivait Renan, du jour ou l'on cesse d'aller à demi-nu>> *Ibid.*, p. 182

52. *Ibid.*, p. 185

53. *Ibid.*, pp. 185-186.

54. Pierre Roche, "Sculpture et sport," *Revue Olympique*, September 1906, pp. 135-137.

55. Sporting specialization refers to the habit of practising one sport intensely as opposed to practising many sports adequately.

56. *Ibid.*, p. 136.

57. Translation mine.

58. *Ibid.*, p. 136.

59. Not surprisingly, he illustrated his theory of physical beauty with evocations of (what must have been) Myron's "Discobolus" and a well-known sculpture of a wrestler from the Louvre collection.

60. Pierre de Coubertin, "Le festival de la Sorbonne," *Revue Olympique*, June 1906, p. 94.

61. Utility was a very important concept that was integrated into Republican theories of art and beauty at the turn of the century. See Miriam R. Levin, *Republican Art and Ideology in Late Nineteenth-Century France*. Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1986.

62. Theories on the art and culture of ancient Greece bridged the aesthetic and historical discourses that shape the contemporary understanding (the discourse) of Olympism. Of course, the history of ancient Greece had always factored prominently in the way Coubertin, his IOC colleagues, the press and the general public contextualized the Modern Olympic Movement. This was deliberately orchestrated by Coubertin from the very beginning in 1894. Here, I refer to the year that the public was formally notified of the Movement and not the moment when Coubertin first conceived of the idea of reviving Olympic Games in modern times. Ironically though, prior to 1906 few formal studies on the history of ancient Greece found their way into the ideological and intellectual discussions and publications on Modern Olympism. During the first decade of the Modern Olympic Movement, the link between the ancient Olympics and the modern Games was reinforced with a variety of symbolic currencies. For example, holding the inaugural Olympic Games in Athens and creating the Marathon race were efforts to symbolically contextualize the modern Games within the historical a priori established by historians who wrote on the ancient Olympic Games. Prior to 1906, Coubertin had published few articles in the *Revue Olympique* in which the significance of ancient Greek culture was used explicitly to justify the modern revival of the Olympic Games. The exceptions to this were: a Coubertinian speech published in *Bulletin du Comité International des Jeux Olympiques*, 2ième Année, No. 3, 1895 and a two part article "La gymnastique chez les anciens" by Professor Strehley published in the *Revue Olympique*, July and October 1903.

63. The titles of the articles in this special issue were: "La Valise de l'Esprit," "A travers l'histoire grecque," "L'Hellénisme," "Propos sur l'art grec," "En fait d'athlétisme," "Livres à emporter," "Itinéraires et excursions," "Le devoir d'un philhellène."

64. Pierre de Coubertin, "A travers la vie grecque," *Revue Olympique*, April 1906, pp. 51-57.

65. Pierre de Coubertin, "Propos sur l'art grec," *Texte Choisis*, Tome II, *Olympisme* (Norbert Müller, Editor), Zurich: Weidmann, 1986, p. 53. Originally published in *Revue Olympique*, April 1906, pp. 57-58.

66. Pierre de Coubertin, "Propos sur l'art grec," *Revue Olympique*, April 1906, p. 57.

67. "Propos sur l'art grec" did not elaborate on the practical implications of Hellenism and its importance to ancient Greek life in relation to the aesthetic idea of Modern Olympism. It was presented as a historical essay.
68. Pierre de Coubertin, "Un <<grand mariage>>," *Revue Olympique*, June 1906, p. 83.
69. Maurice Pottecher, op. cit., p. 118.
70. Maurice Pottecher, 1906, op. cit., p. 118.
71. Robert White, op. cit., p. 15.
72. M. Bourgault-Ducoudray, op. cit., p. 105.
73. *Ibid.*, p. 107.
74. Maurice Pottecher, op. cit., p. 119.
75. Hippolyte Taine has, of course, been identified as a prominent influence on Coubertin's fascination with England and its sporting culture. Few, if any, of the biographies on Coubertin in which Taine is credited as an influence examine the philosophy of art that likely added to Coubertin's aesthetic idea about sport. Taine was, after all, a professor of the philosophy and history of art history. See, Hippolyte Taine, *Lectures on Art: First Series The Philosophy of Art, The Ideal in Art* (John Durand, Trans.), New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1889. The work by Taine that Coubertin cited, *Notes on England*, contained several chapters on the function of art and art criticism in English society. See, Hippolyte Taine, *Notes on England* (W. F. Rae, Translator), New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1876.
76. Pierre de Coubertin, "L'Art dans l'éducation," *Textes Choisis*, Tome I, *Revelations* (Georges Rioux, ed.), Zurich: Weidmann, 1986, pp. 268-273. Published originally in *Notes sur l'Éducation publique*, Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1901, pp. 297-310.
77. Maurice Pottecher, op. cit., p. 118.
78. Coubertin and his colleagues were not naive about the hermeneutical problems inherent in reviving the Olympic Games in modern times. Consequently, they were cautious in justifying the appropriation of Hellenistic ideals as the basis for contemporary theories of modern art and beauty. For Coubertin, replicating all aspects of the ancient festival was not part of his intention; he stated explicitly that his interest lay in the ideas upon which the ancient games were developed rather than on the tangible replication of the festival itself. This theoretical delimitation was expressed early in the history of modern Olympism. In 1894, the *Revue de Paris* published an article entitled "Le rétablissement des Jeux Olympiques" in which Coubertin emphasized that his initiative was not a pretension to revive the beautiful 'things' of the past, because 'things' die and cannot be revived. He claimed that 'only ideas can be revived when they are appropriate to the needs and tastes of a new period'. The sentiment that the Olympic Games be revived according to the needs and tastes of the current epoch was expressed in numerous other articles and commentaries by Coubertin. See Pierre de Coubertin, "Le rétablissement des Jeux Olympiques," *Textes Choisis*, Tome II, *Olympisme* (Norbert Muller, ed.), Zurich: Weidmann, 1986, p. 564 (this article was published originally in *Revue de Paris*, 15 June 1894, pp. 170-184); and Pierre de Coubertin, "Chronique" *Bulletin de Comité International des Jeux Olympiques*, Ire Année, No. 2, October 1894, p. 1. Although

this article was published without a "by-line," one may safely assume that Coubertin was the author.