

Olympischer Sport by Ommo Grupe (ed.), (Schorondorf: Karl Hofmann Verlag, 1997). Reviewed by Allen Guttmann, Amherst College, Amherst, Massachusetts, U.S.A.

Ommo Grupe is by all accounts a central player in the great game of sports studies. He is the author of a number of books that investigate sports and *Bewegungskultur* from the perspective of cultural anthropology.¹ He has edited a whole shelf of *Sammelbände*. He is the founder-editor of the distinguished interdisciplinary journal *Sportwissenschaft*. As the director of Tübingen's prestigious *Institut für Sportwissenschaft* he has educated a strikingly large number of Germany's most important Sportwissenschaftler, many of whom are contributors to Grupe's *Olympischer Sport*, a book which examines, from a number of perspectives, Baron Pierre de Coubertin's dream of "Olympism" and its imperfect instantiation in the Olympic Games.

Grupe's book is an embodiment of his conception of sports studies. It is informative, critical, and - like the journal *Sportwissenschaft* - a demonstration of Grupe's conviction that there is but one "sport science" (that we must approach in an interdisciplinary manner). Although the focus of *Olympischer Sport* is on the present and the future, there are chapters on the ancient games (by Richard Kannicht) and on "Die olympische Bewegung der Neuzeit" (by Eilert Herms). In a thoughtful essay on the "Olympische Spiele in Deutschland," Michale Krüger asks if the German experience with the modern games is another illustration of the "Sonderweg" thesis. Has it been entirely accidental that the games of 1916, 1936, 1972, and 2000 were - in that order - cancelled, misused, overshadowed, and awarded to Sydney rather than to Berlin?

These historical essays are followed by a critical examination of the ethical crisis brought about by the widespread use of performance-enhancing drugs on the part of many elite athletes. The author, Helmut Digel, is the president of Germany's track-and-field association. It is difficult to imagine his American counterpart writing such as an agonizingly honest essay.

Two essays - by Hans-Hermann Dickhuth and Ulrich Göhner - discuss some of the physiological aspects of elite sports. To what degree do genetic factors explain the differences in the achievements of male and female athletes? Do genetic factors also play a role in the difference between black and white athletes? How far can improvements in technique and training push the physical limits of athletic achievement?

An essay on the IOC by Volker Rittberger and Henning Boekle concludes that "no other nongovernmental institution" has achieved "the fullness of power" (p. 155) that the IOC possesses in the political and social realm. This conclusion is reached without the polemics that often characterize the discussion of today's IOC. A similarly sober and reasonable essay by Wolfgang Maennig argues that, contrary to what is often assumed, the Olympics are an economic benefit for the city that hosts them. Maennig also observes that the Games have *not* been increasingly extravagant on a cost-per-athlete basis. In those terms, the 1964 games were six times as expensive as the 1996 games. Maennig suggests that the IOC save enough from its new sources of wealth, i.e., the sale of TV rights and corporate sponsorships, to finance one cycle of the games. Such a measure might protect the IOC from take-it-or-leave-it extortion.

Sports psychology is represented by Helmut Gabler, who looks at four Olympic

victors to see what they made of their lives *after* they acquired their medals. The answer seems to be that they did nothing very extraordinary. Some suffered psychic problems, some did not.

Olympischer Sport includes a set of thoughtful explorations of Olympic ethics by Hermann Bausinger, Dietmar Mieth, and Ommo Grupe. They ponder the degree to which the Games have realized their founder's ideals, without which the Olympic Games are just another world championship. While perfectly aware of the degree to which Coubertin's Olympism has been endangered by drugs and by dollars, Grupe, who has the last word in this fine collection of essays, remains cautiously optimistic. Perhaps the publication of *Olympischer Sport* can contribute just a bit to the realization of the Baron's dream.

Endnotes

1. The most important titles: *Bewegung, Spiel und Leistung im Sport* (Schorndorf: Karl Hofmann, 1982) and *Sport als Kultur* (Zürich: Interform, 1987).