

A Man of His Time

Pierre de Coubertin's Olympic Ideology and the Via Media

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The current climate of scholarship within sport history and sociology includes both ideological tension and anticipation over future paradigmatic direction. Attempts at examining sport from an idealistic perspective have been labeled "uncritical celebrations of sport that have passed for social scientific, historical, and philosophical analyses."¹ In contrast, some view "revolutionary" critiques of modern sport such as Jean-Marie Brohm's *Sport: a prison of measured time*, though labeled as "greatly overstated" and "analytically troublesome," are a welcome break from tradition.² Certainly, sport history will benefit from research using multiple perspectives, including those other than the idealistic. However, the frequency of a particular type of research framework is not the measure of critical thought or lack thereof. Further, revisionist approaches are not synonymous with critical analysis. Resorting to *ad hominem* attacks will not usher in the understanding between social scientists of sport and their differing starting points that this and other authors claim is needed. More importantly, such arguments will not further the cause of writing sport history that is relevant to a broader audience. Whatever methodology is employed, be it traditional or revolutionary, concern ought to centre on relevance to contemporary issues and problems, and not on settling a lose-lose battle of paradigm supremacy.³

Olympic scholarship is not immune from this tension, as evidenced by John Hoberman's criticism that most scholarly work on Pierre de Coubertin's Olympic ideology amounts to "hagiographies and hagiolatrics."⁴ Within Olympic scholarship an element elevates the Olympic movement, and Coubertin himself, to an overly idealized and even "holy" status.⁵ However, there are those at the opposite extreme who criticize the movement in a manner unjustified by the historical evidence.⁶ Compounding the argument over methodology in Olympic scholarship is the sideline struggle between politically "left" radical Marxists and politically "right" capitalistic, idealistic conservatives.⁷ Recent scholars are beginning to examine a middle ground amidst these polemical and often unproductive tensions that can serve for realistic examinations of sport, and specifically Coubertin's Olympic ideology.⁸ Douglas Brown provides examinations of eurythmy and the aesthetic element that shaped political and social aspects of Coubertin's Olympic ideology, as well as

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the influence of sport themes in popular French literature on Coubertin during his primary Olympic campaign from 1892-1914.⁹ Especially relevant to the present work are Stephan Wassong's study on the influence of American "circles of acquaintances" on Coubertin's sport education and Olympic plan, and Yves Pierre Boulongne's analysis of the influence of American pragmatists on Coubertin.¹⁰



This paper complements more recent and moderate Olympic scholarship by suggesting a realistic and authentic view of Pierre de Coubertin and his Olympic thinking as consistent with contemporary turn-of-the-20th century philosophical thought. Central to the argument are particular parallels to the *via media* of William James, John Dewey, and other progressive thinkers of the era. This perspective is unique because it presents Coubertin as a moderate man of his times, in contrast with both the incurably idealistic persona presented by many Olympic scholars, and the ideological zealot presented by scholars especially critical of the Olympic movement.¹¹ Coubertin's seeking of a middle way provides a more compelling and satisfactory interpretation of his Olympic and educational thinking. Thus, what follows is an attempt to establish Coubertin and his Olympic thinking within a more moderate and liberal *fin de siècle* tradition.

Turn-of-the-century European and American thought is largely a surging of "isms" including but not limited to progressivism, republicanism, moralism, and internationalism. Particularly helpful in placing Coubertin within this tradition is the *via media*, a system of ideas born of necessity between 1870-1920, which espoused political leanings toward social democracy and progressivism. Mark Dyreson insightfully uses the concept of a *via media* to place Coubertin within the traditional-modern debate among historians. Recognizing Coubertin's "semi-progressive philosophy of the middle way," Dyreson sees the modern Olympics as Coubertin's attempt to create a symbiotic bridge between traditional and modern views of history.¹² While Coubertin's seeking of a *via media* between traditional and modern conceptions of history is both appropriate and helpful, the comparison between Coubertin and thinkers of the *via media* can and should be pressed further in order to demonstrate similarities in thought and intentions, as well as to arrive at an historical understanding of Coubertin's thinking. Coubertin's agreement with the basic tenets of this philosophy emerges through both his writings and his relationships with individuals who exhibited general agreement with the main ideas of the *via media*.

Coubertin's Eclecticism

Even a cursory reading of Coubertin's many Olympic writings and speeches strikes the reader with a variety of ideas and thoughts that are brought together. Coubertin's Olympic rhetoric often joined ideas that seemed to fit together awkwardly, if at all. A broad range of thinkers influenced Coubertin, and at times, it seemed that he borrowed from them in building his Olympism piecemeal. Philosophically, this tendency to be all-inclusive in thought without consideration of the logical consequences is eclecticism. The term eclecticism is a useful tool for historians of sport seeking to put the whole of Coubertin's Olympic thoughts

into perspective.¹³ Coubertin's particular eclecticism likely arose from his desire to understand life as a whole. Further, this framework provided a sense of stability to the unsteady nature of ideas existing during Coubertin's era. However, this desire often got him into trouble with colleagues and friends; as he wistfully admitted, "I have often disconcerted my friends . . . by superimposing, or rather relating one to the other, ideas between which it did not seem that there should be any worthwhile interconnections."¹⁴ No doubt Coubertin exhibited eclectic tendencies. However, eclecticism does not provide the best means of understanding Coubertin's unique thoughts on sport pedagogy, nor does it place him within the more contemporary philosophies of his era. The following discussion reinforces the insufficiencies of eclecticism in explaining Coubertin's Olympic ideology.

Eclecticism, as articulated most prominently by Victor Cousin, was a leading school of mid-nineteenth-century French thought. Interestingly, friends of significant influence on Coubertin, including Jules Simon, the French diplomat and Minister of Instruction from 1870-1879, adhered to eclecticism in some form or another. But this adherence normally involved an admittedly positive conception, and not a strictly philosophical one, which ignored the logical contradictions of combining elements from different philosophies.¹⁵ Housed within Cousin's eclecticism was a "common sense realism" that sought to protect the claims of religion against the growing emphasis on sensationalism characteristic of 19th century Europe. Like others of the "common sense" tradition of realism, Cousin struggled to find intellectual certainty in a world that had grown increasingly uncertain, largely because of the deep conflict between religion and science. As a philosophical system, eclecticism lacked systematic substance and enjoyed minimal acceptance in *fin de siecle* Europe. Eclecticism as a system of thought was more of a temporary fix for the epistemological struggles unique to the late 19th century than it was a rigorous philosophy.¹⁶ Thus, its effectiveness in analyzing Coubertin's Olympic thinking is both simplistic and lacking in explanatory power. Coubertin's agreement with a "middle way" of knowing, existing between the philosophical models of an emerging positivism and waning idealism that were prevalent in his era, provides a better analysis of his Olympic ideology.

The Emergence of a *Via Media*

It is difficult to understand the development of 19th and early 20th century philosophy without addressing the struggle for supremacy between science and religion. This struggle was primarily epistemological and addressed whether theology would continue to provide the answers to inquiries into knowledge and truth or if science would emerge with certainty in theology's absence. Philosophical uncertainty resulted from the separating of knowledge and belief by Enlightenment thinkers, most notably Immanuel Kant. This produced many attempts to proceed into philosophically unstable territory. Some of the more recognizable were the nihilistic philosophy of Nietzsche and the confident scientism of the positivists.¹⁷ The present discussion does not elaborate on either of these attempts; rather, another response to this philosophical uncertainty will provide an appropriate means for examining Coubertin's Olympic aspirations.

In his book *Uncertain Victory*, James T. Kloppenberg discusses the emergence of a *via media*, middle way, in response to the "oil and water" dilemma between religion and science within modern culture. Kloppenberg borrows the term from John Dewey's interpretation of the thinking of William James as "a *via media* between natural science and the ideal interests of morals and religion."¹⁸ Philosophers like William James, John Dewey, Thomas Green, Wilhelm Dilthey, Alfred Fouillee, and Henry Sidgwick whose shared

thoughts are not at first glance apparent, formed a system of thought, a *via media* that interconnected arguments about epistemology, religion, ethics, and politics. Corresponding over the decades from 1880-1910, these philosophers highlighted the supremacy of lived experience as the basis for knowledge, struggled over the metaphysical battle between science and religion, rethought the relationship between the individual and society, and emphasized ethical and social virtues as central to politics.¹⁹ Dewey, James, and other *via media* philosophers accepted the uncertainty of knowledge after the fallout between religion and science "without turning to philosophies of force or succumbing to despair."²⁰ Instead, they expounded ideas that led Dewey's generation toward the belief in social democracy and progressivism as viable political options promising social betterment. Certain later events such as the First World War undoubtedly lessened the effectiveness of this philosophy and its political programs; still, these thinkers offered a unique response in the midst of a philosophically tenuous period.

The following two-part discussion argues that ideas central to *via media* philosophers influenced Coubertin's educational and Olympic thinking. Coubertin shared common ground in philosophy, education, religion, and politics with these thinkers. Further, individuals who significantly influenced Coubertin shared similar views. The first section briefly overviews the main tenets of the *via media*. The majority of the argument that follows focuses on similarities between Coubertin's plans for societal reforms through sport pedagogy, one aspect of which was the Olympic Games, and the ideas put forth by thinkers of the *via media*. Specific themes including freedom and knowledge, educational reform, the struggle for metaphysical supremacy between science and religion, and political progressivism guide the comparisons between Coubertin and the *via media*.

Coubertin's exact relationship with *via media* thinkers was indirect. He was familiar with the writings of Dewey, James, and other thinkers who promoted a progressive view of philosophy, religion, and politics. Direct contact between Coubertin and the main thinkers of the *via media* through personal correspondence or formal meeting is not evident.²¹ What remain evident are the significant parallels between Coubertin's Olympic ideology and the main ideas put forth by *via media* philosophers.

Coubertin does not fit entirely within this philosophical "school." As other scholars studying this "Metaphysical Club" suggest, the thinkers associated with the *via media* differ dramatically in ideological starting points and personal idiosyncrasies. Through their personal correspondence they continually challenged particular aspects of each other's writings and, at times, agreed to disagree about certain nuances of a particular idea.²² While it would be inaccurate to assert Coubertin's agreement with all aspects of the *via media*, certain parallels are obvious. The overview of the *via media* presented here seeks to outline those ideas upon which the philosophers converged, and to examine how these ideas entered into Coubertin's Olympic ideology.

The thinkers of the *via media* distinguished themselves from their contemporaries primarily through their approach to epistemology and metaphysics. Faced with the challenge that knowledge was uncertain, these thinkers bravely debunked and discarded all previous claims to epistemic certainty and turned instead to the subjective and lived experience of the individual to provide meaning. They took particular interest in negating the metaphysical dualism of Descartes and his subject-object distinction that continued to pervade turn-of-the-20th century culture. Instead, they articulated a view of the supremacy of individual experience in creating knowledge and meaning. William James most clearly delimited this

idea of knowledge being experiential, a position he labelled "radical empiricism" because of its harsh break with materialism and rationalism in favour of reliance on the senses and experience. Especially important for the creation of meaning within this framework was the connection between knowledge and action.²³

Knowledge, Free Will, and Action

One of the results of the split between science and religion previously mentioned was the problem of human will. Positivists commonly ignored the idea of free will as foolish and relied instead on biological determinism. Thinkers of the *via media* envisioned humans as free to choose how to act. Further, they did not necessarily invoke the religious metaphysics that positivists generally shunned. These thinkers developed an explanation of the will that involved freedom, choice, and resultant action. As an individual practiced volition and freely decided to act in response to given choices, the lived experience that resulted would lead to knowledge and meaning. This renewed emphasis on the individual's ability to generate meaning through action and experience caused the spirit of the *via media* to be "resolute rather than hopeless or nihilistic."²⁴ That an individual's volition and rational choice ought to lead to action ran throughout the writings of these thinkers. While this thought-action relationship is emblematic of Dewey's instrumentalism, others within the *via media* also believed that we think and freely choose in order to act. In this way we "use the mind as an instrument to effect change."²⁵ Coubertin's agreement with this view of knowledge acquisition and freedom of choice is evident in his plan for sport pedagogy.

The influence of these philosophers of the middle way extended to the changing politics of the late 19th and early 20th centuries and specifically influenced the shift toward social democracy and progressivism. The embracing of progressive and democratic ideas by *via media* thinkers parallels the democratic tendencies in Coubertin's Olympic thought.²⁶ Of the *via media* thinkers, John Dewey articulated these political ideals most clearly.



John Dewey's writings bridged the gap between *via media* thought and progressive politics of the early 20th century. The epistemological and ethical positions of the *via media* influenced the political ideas of some progressive thinkers including Dewey, the Frenchman Leon Bourgeois, and Max Weber. Especially salient was the effort to reconcile science with religion, the relationship between knowledge and action, and the focus on immediate experience that broke down the subject-object distinction both for the individual and his relationship within society.²⁷ Before examining specific similarities in thought between Coubertin and the thinkers of the *via media*, some general similarities will serve as an entry point for the discussion.

It is interesting to note the down-to-earth nature within parts of the *via media* philosophy, especially in James' thought and his pragmatic theory of truth. James often incurred challenges from colleagues because of his practical manner of speaking and writing and his common sense approach to discussing his ideas, especially regarding truth as being essentially what "works" in a given situation. His concept of truth "working" involved more

than simple usefulness; in fact, James thought that any claim to truth should "mediate between all previous truths and certain new experiences. It must derange common sense and belief as little as possible, and it must lead to some sensible terminus or other that can be verified exactly."²⁸ James argued that his theory presupposed rather than ignored the correspondence of truth to objective reality. And while this conception of truth corresponding to past experience provided some anchoring, his lack of systematic clarity regarding this aspect of pragmatism often required him to defend it among his critics, including some within the *via media*.²⁹ Interesting similarities exist in Coubertin's down-to-earth conception of philosophy in general and his lack of systematic clarity regarding Olympism.



Coubertin regarded philosophy as "this virtue, difficult to acquire but for day-to-day use, to which a happy people undoubtedly owes a large part of its happiness."³⁰ This view of philosophy as essentially practical echoed the general feeling of many of Coubertin's contemporaries in France at the turn of the century.³¹ Coubertin's conception of Olympism also provides some parallels with the ontology of *via media* thinkers.³²

These shared views influenced a practical philosophy of daily life as well as a view of education that was socially transforming. Coubertin outlined Olympism in his typically eclectic fashion through a series of Olympic letters beginning in October of 1918:

I will take the opportunity...to clarify misunderstandings...concerning Olympism...[Olympism] corresponds to the fourfold duty of the educator...the great defect of modern education is that it has lost the art of harnessing—i.e. of coordinating different forces so that they converge harmoniously...Each force works in isolation without link or contact with its neighbor. Where muscles are considered, only their animal functioning is taken into consideration. Where the brain is considered, it is furnished as though it were leak tight compartments. Conscience is related exclusively to religious training. As for character, no one wants to bother with it...we make no attempt to hide the fact that Olympism is a reaction against these ill-started trends. It refuses to consider physical education as a purely physiological affair...It refuses to catalogue the perceptions of the mind and to classify them in categories which are strangers one to the other...Olympism is an over thrower of partitions. It demands air and light for everyone. It advocates a comprehensive sporting education accessible to all braided with manly valor and chivalrous spirit implicated in aesthetic and literary manifestations.³³

Within this seemingly convoluted definition, certain elements are especially worthy of discussion. First, the holistic nature of the individual drew Coubertin's comment consistently

throughout his Olympic writings. Coubertin addressed the Paris Congress in 1894 that revived the Olympic Games:

In the end, Gentlemen, man is not made up of two parts, the body and the mind, There are three: body, mind, and character. Character is not formed by the mind; it is formed above all by the body, That is what the ancients knew, and that is what we are relearning, painfully.³⁴

Like James, Dewey, and other middle way philosophers, Coubertin rejected the traditional and Cartesian dualistic idea of the individual in favour of a holistic view. An example of this occurs in the above definitions and the quality of a balanced whole or "art of harnessing" that Olympism seeks to create in the individual. Coubertin consistently expressed the idea of perfect harmony between body and spirit as *enrhythmy*. This conception joins holistic harmony with an aesthetic component involving the arts. Thus, Coubertin's efforts at uniting sport and the arts provide a direct example of his attempt to realize the "balanced whole" of "mind and muscle" alluded to in Olympism.³⁵ The emergence of psychology during this era provides another example of the holistic view of man that Coubertin and thinkers of the *via media* shared.

Via media thinkers, and especially James, Dewey, and Fouillee, developed an epistemology that sought to refute the "deadening separation of mind and body."³⁶ Each of these men developed theories of human experience where mind and body intersected and interacted in producing knowledge. Each sought to balance emerging views on psychology with the commonly accepted principles of physiology. Dewey suggested that experience was largely an "Organic Reflex Arc" that joined subjective and objective phenomena through a process of stimulus and response.³⁷ Central to James' radical empiricism was the idea that experience includes "the entire process of phenomena, of present data considered in their raw immediacy, before reflective thought has analyzed them into subjective and objective aspects or ingredients."³⁸ The writings of these and other early psychological theorists interested Coubertin. Perhaps the strongest evidence of this is his decision to organize a scientific congress in 1916 to discuss the relevance of psychology for his Olympic Games.

Coubertin states his motive for organizing the congress: "I wanted to see medicine, which to my mind was fast becoming too predominantly physiological, take greater interest in psychology."³⁹ Like *via media* thinkers, Coubertin was frustrated with the determinism inherent in a strictly physiological view of medicine and the body. Coubertin also shared the struggle of suggesting a view of knowledge that was alternative to the scientific positivism of the period. He mentions that his psychology program "had to be defended against the medical profession and, on the other hand, put over convincingly to the philosophers and teachers."⁴⁰ Coubertin based his particular psychology of sport on personal observation rather than any systematic analysis.⁴¹

Outlining his philosophy of physical culture in 1909 Coubertin explained that,

Culture of the body produces three categories of strength: physical strength, obviously the primary, key strength; followed by moral strength and social strength... All these are different but interconnected sides of the same issue. The point of view is beginning to be accepted fairly generally. It is not the physiological, but rather the psychological, aspects that tend to be neglected in terms of the culture of the body.⁴²

Like *via media* thinkers, Coubertin viewed individuals as more than merely physiological. Similarly, he viewed moral and social development of individuals through sport to be as important as physical development. Besides sharing similar views of knowledge and human nature, Coubertin's sport pedagogy parallels certain educational components of *via media* thought.

Educational Reform

The famed English schoolmaster Thomas Arnold died before the thinkers of the *via media* formulated their ideas. Still, Arnold introduced Coubertin to the importance of sport education, specifically to the freedom necessary for its success. This idea of the individual's freedom to act was central to Coubertin's plans for sport education; moreover, it reflected an integral part of the epistemology of the *via media*.

Coubertin's first introduction to the educational philosophy of Thomas Arnold came through his reading of Thomas Hughes's *Tom Brown's School Days* at the impressionable age of twelve. No doubt, Coubertin was delightfully entertained as he read about young Tom Brown's adventures and educational experiences while attending Rugby School. While touring England in 1883, Coubertin arranged to visit the famous public schools of Rugby, Harrow, and Eton as well as the universities at Oxford and Cambridge "in a desire to attach [his] name to a great pedagogical reform."⁴³ The educational system he found in the public schools bore the lasting imprint of a man who served as the headmaster of Rugby school from 1828-1842, the clergyman Dr. Thomas Arnold. Coubertin called this headmaster "the father of modern English education."⁴⁴ Coubertin observed two fundamental components in Arnold's system of education that he would seek to incorporate into French secondary schools, as well as the revived Olympic Games: freedom and sports.

Coubertin greatly admired the freedom granted to English children at the secondary level, especially with respect to playing games and sport. By affording them freedom, Arnold created a miniature society that became "a preface to life. The man will be free; the child must be so also. The point is to teach the child to use his freedom and to understand its significance."⁴⁵ With this freedom came responsibility and accountability. The punishments for misdeeds under Arnold's watch were primarily physical and often administered by upper class *monitors*, the 15 top students in whom Arnold invested power. In this way, children were independent and yet ultimately accountable to each other.⁴⁶

Coubertin regarded the role of sport in English education as its most noteworthy aspect. He saw this freedom to organize and engage in athletic sport as leading to physical, moral, and social education "all at the same time."⁴⁷ Coubertin saw a similar freedom in the organization of American sport during his transatlantic travels in 1889 and 1893. Commenting on his time at Harvard, Coubertin notes that the freedom granted in American universities was even greater than in England, "The shady yard [at Harvard] is the center of university life...my thoughts turn to the quadrangles of Oxford and Cambridge. How much greater is the freedom here!"⁴⁸ This freedom extended into the athletic arena as students organized team sports and contributed to the rapid growth of college sport in the late 19th century. Coubertin confirmed his excitement about the freedom of English and American school and university sport and his plan to implement a similar program in France and abroad through the Olympic Games, "Therefore let us pursue our reforms, strengthened by the example of England and America. Let us attempt to implement the program summed up in these words: 'sports and freedom'"⁴⁹

In America, Coubertin developed a "circle of acquaintances," including college presidents and notable progressives like William Milligan Sloane and Teddy Roosevelt, who encouraged him toward his educational campaign to "grant pupils and students more freedom and leisure for organizing extra-curricular activities."⁵⁰ Sloane and Roosevelt also introduced Coubertin to progressive political ideas similar to those of the *via media* philosophers that Coubertin infused into his sport pedagogy. Sloane and President William Rainey Harper of the University of Chicago also proved to be invaluable beginning in 1894 as Coubertin's sport pedagogy shifted away from France toward the international stage and the Olympic Games.

Coubertin agreed with *via media* thinkers that an education based on free will required the learner to act. The subjective will of the individual partaking in sport must make a conscious decision to "accept the sacrifice" involved in athletics. By choosing to engage in the "excess of effort" inherent in sport, the true athlete experiences meaning as he seeks to constantly transcend himself through willful physical effort. Further, Coubertin suggested that pursuits such as athletic sport are experienced by and through the senses, not merely through the mind or cognitive processes. In order to experience sport, we must actively participate in it. We do not merely think about participating. Coubertin argued that sport produces the sort of truth that needs to be lived. Indeed, Coubertin would agree with Gardiner that we "play in order that we may live, not live in order that we may play."⁵¹ This conception of sport pedagogy as having freedom, action, and experience at its centre is reminiscent of another educational project of Coubertin's day: the Dewey School in Chicago.

Dewey established the University Elementary School at the University of Chicago (later named after its founder) with the stated purpose of "work[ing] out in the concrete, instead of merely in the head or on paper, the unity of knowledge."⁵² Dewey conceived of knowledge as inseparably tied to, in fact synonymous with, doing. People act in the world, and that action results in learning. This learning occurs through social avenues such as group activity. Activities that have the most relevance to life outside the classroom constitute retained learning. Learners construct knowledge through social action; hence the current trend in educational theory largely based on Dewey's thought is labeled "constructivism." Like Dewey, Coubertin argued that the best means of educating a child was through active involvement in a pseudo-society. For Coubertin, this society involved athletic sport. The child constructed knowledge around active participation in sports that were freely organized. Dewey began work at the University of Chicago in 1894, a year after Coubertin's last lengthy trip to America in 1893, making a meeting between the two impossible. Still, Coubertin's agreement with certain tenets of this "constructivist" approach to education is evident in his sport pedagogy as well as his Olympic ideology.

Coubertin's thoughts on educational reform provide a clear paralleling of the basic principles of the *via media*. His plans for societal reform in France had education as their cornerstone. Similarly, the philosophers of the middle way emphasized education as a necessary part of social change.⁵³ As virtue was a central part of the ethical system of the *via media* and their political leanings toward social democracy, so Coubertin sought to use sport "toward the development of moral character" and toward a virtuous French youth. Coubertin insisted that education through sport occurred as the individual freely chose to participate; only then could the character-building benefits of sport be experienced. In fact, Coubertin strongly contrasted and commented on the two different systems of physical education he observed in America. One emphasized freedom, the other, determinism. He approved of the free-games system patterned after English sport but characterized the other,

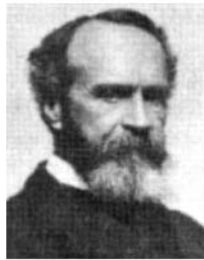
part German gymnastics and part anthropometry, as "reminiscent of a stable of race horses; there is the breeder who hands over the handsome beasts to the trainer...This whole approach is not education, it is animal husbandry!"⁵⁴ More important for our discussion is his addition that "the impression they give is that of a distorted ideal...unconscious but total materialism."⁵⁵ He was referring to certain factions within United States sport at that time, as well as views of physical education, which used anthropometry to justify excessive training methods. For Coubertin, this materialistic approach to sport education reduced his ideals for social reform in an intolerable way.⁵⁶ Similar to thinkers of the *via media*, he rejected a reductionist view of either man or sport. Instead, Coubertin agreed that lived experience provided the basis for knowledge about reality, including how to function in society, and that only a renewed emphasis on developing ethical citizens (in this case, through sport) could usher in any substantial change in society. He described the result for France and implicitly the world at large via his Olympic Games:

Social reform must be achieved through education. Our efforts must focus not on adults, but on children, in order to ensure our success. We must give those children qualities of mind . . . and qualities of character that will render them capable of performing the transformation in France's salvation.⁵⁷

The Olympic Games would be Coubertin's vehicle for a larger educational, religious, and political ideology that shared significant common ground with fundamental principles of the *via media*.

"Oil and Water." The Struggle Between Religion and Science

The religious aspects of Coubertin's Olympic ideas provide further parallels between Coubertin and *via media* thinkers, especially their shared struggle with the claims of religious knowledge. *Via media* thinkers arrived at theories of knowledge because of an intense struggle between science and religion.



William James established his epistemological foundation of lived experience largely out of despondence over the metaphysical implications of the positivism prevalent in his day. He could not reconcile the overarching determinism of this philosophy with the human choice he saw as self-evident. His theory of lived experience included a validation of religious belief as important for philosophical consideration. While he did not focus on dealing with metaphysical questions, he believed that such questions were not moot. James emphasized the importance of religious faith in shaping our attitudes, choices, and actions. Thomas Green emphasized religious feelings rather than theology. He was especially critical of cultivating "personal sanctity," but instead he wrote with some conviction that religion should "lead to altruistic social service."⁵⁸ One can see in this the beginnings of both

progressivism and a liberal "social gospel" emphasizing the use of religion in service of social reform.

John Dewey also wrote that "faith is to manifest itself in social action."⁵⁹ One of Dewey's unique ideas was that religious motives drive democracy and that individuals find the truth as they are motivated by religion toward action for the betterment of society.⁶⁰ Though these thinkers were not formally associated with the theological shift toward liberalism and the social gospel of Progressive Era America, it is interesting to view their religious thoughts in light of the popular theology of the day. Coubertin shared some of these thoughts. Finally, Alfred Fouillee saw philosophy as a fusing of the truths of science with the truths of religion, namely the "experience of something beyond."⁶¹ Fouillee was critical of the dogmatic and authoritarian tendencies of the French Catholic church, a characteristic he shared with the *renovateur* of the Olympic Games.

Coubertin joined *via media* thinkers in his struggle to reconcile the truth claims of science and religion. His thoroughly Jesuit education and pious upbringing buttressed a lifelong religious belief. However, like Fouillee, Coubertin shared a disappointment with the authoritarian position taken by the church and, especially, its hostility toward the French Third Republic. The autocratic control the church sought to impose over French education was another deterrent to any obvious link between Coubertin and organized religion. However, while Coubertin shunned dogmatic policies in education and politics, he generously infused his Olympic ideas with religious rhetoric. In the Olympic ideology, he found a unique way to reconcile religion with sport, thus joining the sacred and the profane.

Coubertin viewed sport as "a religion with its church, dogmas, service ... but above all a religious feeling."⁶² In a radio address two years before his death Coubertin declared:

The first essential characteristic of ancient and of modern Olympism alike 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...' 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 altars of ZEUS... The ideal of a religion of sport, the *religio athletae*, was very slow to penetrate the minds of competitors, and many of them still practice it only in an unconscious way. But they will come round to it little by little.⁶³

This labelling of Olympism as a religion provides insight into how Coubertin dealt with the tension between religious and scientific truth claims in his own thinking, as well as the uncertainty he felt from the drastic removal of religious metaphysics in Europe during his era. Nissiotis suggests that Coubertin's motivation came from:

An unbound enthusiasm in a secularised era, characterised by the absence of the gods...he wanted, through sport, to keep young people looking towards the infinite, that which is dazzling and gives to life its supreme spiritual meaning. He wanted modern youth, thus armed, to be able to go beyond the mechanics and sciences of the modern era, re-establishing religion in a realistic dimension.⁶⁴

The Europe of Coubertin's era was undergoing a rapid transformation in philosophical and religious thought. Secularism and, in many circles, scientific positivism rapidly replaced the Christian God of traditional European culture. Like James, Fouillee, Dewey, and Green, Coubertin sensed this spiritual vacuum left by the removal of the divine. Thus, to the youth of the world he offered:

Olympism as religion, a serious appeal to take with complete devotion its humanist principles impregnated with Greek philosophy and Christian faith, above all kinds of dogmatic absolutism against other social beliefs and conditions. Olympism in the service of peace, democracy and internationalism, and of the moral transformation of man, giving him a dignified character, regenerating him by the achievement of equilibrium between body and mind, through athleticism in its Olympic sense.⁶⁵

Coubertin's conception of the Olympic Games as religious also mirrors James' theory that knowledge emerges from lived experience, and that religious belief is a part of this experience. Especially applicable is James' assertion that religious faith shapes our attitudes and actions. Perhaps the main reason Coubertin invoked a sense of the religious into his Olympic plans was to shape the attitudes and actions of the athletes with purpose.

Coubertin's first use of the term *religio athletae* came in a short article in 1928. Here he outlined the best means for protecting his modern Games from the "excess that corrupted and ruined ancient athletics."⁶⁶ His ideal for sport involved a world where "each young man possesses sufficient taste for athletic exercises to make him practice them regularly . . . seeking in wholesome sports an admirable means to perfect his health and increase his strength."⁶⁷ He admitted this was unrealistic and that a "system of organized competition" would need to take its place. However, this sort of competition would inevitably lead to corruption. Therefore, a "regulator" such as the Greeks found in Olympia needed to protect his modern games. Coubertin alluded to the ancient Olympics and the "spirit of almost religious reverence" with which the young men approached them. This reverence was derived not from "sacrificing solemnly before the altar of ZEUS," but from "taking an oath of honor and disinterest, and above all in striving to keep it."⁶⁸ Thus, Coubertin sought to protect the sanctity of his modern Olympics by incorporating a similar oath into their opening ceremonies. Coubertin sought to promote this type of religious approach to competition within Olympism. He intentionally infused the games with religious rhetoric in order to ensure that the actions and attitudes of the athletes would proceed out of religious reverence. Like his fellow Frenchman Fouillee, Coubertin wanted to instill in the Olympic athletes the "experience of something beyond."

In this way, Olympism shared a progressive view with religion as they both sought to promote service of one's fellow man. Olympism shared a mission, although it was not synonymous with, religion since each promoted such qualities as freedom, fairness, friendship, and peace.⁶⁹ No doubt Coubertin sought to encourage the athletes toward social service through his religious conception of the Olympic Games; but he also suggested that the peoples of the world would seek to emulate the behaviors represented by these athletes during the games.

It is in the religious examination of Olympism that Coubertin's lifelong idealism and his ever-present concern for educating youth emerge. Olympism at its best and infused with religious reverence, he suggested, would be a powerful educator of the youth of the world,

who Coubertin liked to refer to as "human springtime."⁷⁰ In Olympism, there was an appeal to the transcendent, religious nature of sport joined with the concept of mutual respect among peoples in an effort to educate youth and promote peace on an international level. This paralleled James' encouragement to employ religion in shaping thoughts, actions, and attitudes.

Politics, Progressive Influences, and the *Via Media*

Coubertin shared certain political beliefs with *via media* thinkers. The epistemological leanings of Dewey, James, and other *via media* theorists away from dualism and toward a holism involving freedom, will, and action had political implications. These philosophers viewed democracy as the best training ground for exercising freedom through lived experience.⁷¹ Because freedom was a fundamental value in lived experience, each agreed that the participation of all citizens in the governing process was paramount. With this political freedom came uncertainty, as individuals chose whether or not to act virtuously and toward social progress. As they had previously done with epistemological and metaphysical uncertainty, *via media* thinkers accepted this tension as necessary. As James was fond of saying, such was the consequence of "living on the perilous edge."⁷² *Via media* thinkers also subscribed to the progressive view that democracy required a limitation of government authority in favour of public will. Such a rule by the people, however, required that politics be linked with ethics; a prerequisite for a virtuous government was a virtuous citizenry. Where education was the primary tool of citizen development for *via media* philosophers, Coubertin preferred a model involving sport education.

Like most thinkers from the 1880s until the First World War, Coubertin held a generally progressive view of humanity: people would continue to advance in terms of morality, technology, and overall life experience. This view surfaces throughout his Olympic writings.⁷³ Coubertin also leaned toward a moderate political progressivism that championed sport as an essential means of elevating society above social and political maladies. Coubertin's agreement with politically progressive social concepts emerges in examining those individuals with whom he enjoyed professional and personal relationships during the formative years of his Olympic ideology, including Henri Didon, Theodore Roosevelt, and William Milligan Sloane. Didon influenced Coubertin toward a system of politics centred on social progress rather than class distinction. Roosevelt, the first presidential candidate of the Progressive People's party in 1912, became a kindred spirit in the strenuous life of sport and its usefulness in improving citizens and society. Sloane was a vital part of Coubertin's strategy for sport education through the Olympic Games, exerting significant influence on Coubertin's faith in international sport as a tool for social reform. While each man's specific relationship to and awareness of *via media* philosophers differs, they all influenced Coubertin toward a generally democratic and progressive view of politics and sport.⁷⁴

Henri Martin Didon



Didon was an important influence on Coubertin's early educational and political ideas. Coubertin met this French educator and priest as a young man, and a friendship between

kindred spirits endured until Didon's death in 1900. Both men acknowledged the glaring decline of France and the success of Germany after the Franco-Prussian war. Both also believed in the moral and reforming value that education, and specifically sport education, could have on youth to effect the restoration of French culture. The two men shared an educational philosophy that combined intellectual and physical development, and they worked diligently to introduce this mind and body education into the secondary schools of France, beginning with Didon's Albert Le Grand School in Paris. An example of this educational ideal was the motto etched above the door on the main building of the school and later included by Coubertin as the official Olympic motto: *Citius, altius, fortius*. Coubertin found a philosophical ally in Didon; he also absorbed Didon's social and political ideas.⁷⁵ Didon influenced Coubertin toward a general appreciation of Republicanism that would eventually lead to an admiration for democracy, even progressivism.

Didon received regular chiding from the Catholic Church, even temporary banishment, because of his liberal and theologically unorthodox views.⁷⁶ As a member of the political movement called the *Raillielement*, Didon supported moderate social reform through a Republican government. As a Catholic priest, he also supported the idea that the French Catholic church be "freed from the domination of the Royalists" and that it seek some reconciliation with the established Third Republic. In this regard, Didon proved himself to be in tune with the political dealings and compromises occurring between leaders of the Monarchy (or Legitimists), the Catholic Church, and the Third Republic. Coubertin admired such political views. In fact, though his father was a "staunch legitimist" and favoured the reestablishment of the Monarchy over liberal Republicanism, Coubertin confessed in 1903, "I have always belonged to the Republican Party, and the Republic that I claim is the Republic espoused by Gambetta, by Jules Ferry, and by Carnot."⁷⁷ A common anecdote of Olympic historians involves a twelve-year-old Coubertin shocking his family and some visitors by claiming that the radical Republican Gambetta was in fact a French patriot.⁷⁸

These ideas about and contributions to French Republicanism varied, and it would be difficult to show Coubertin's agreement with each man's variations on particular ideas. What remains obvious is Coubertin's agreement with the aims of Republicanism including a rally against class distinctions, a betterment of the economic plight of the working class, a moderate form of anticlericalism that sought to protect against church hostility toward the Republic, and especially a priority on education as the key to social betterment.⁷⁹ This French Republicanism shared the political aims of *via media* thinkers and their views on democracy and progressivism. In fact, the term *progressist* in France shifted from connotations of leftist Republicanism in the 1880s to a more moderate Republicanism by the 1890s.⁸⁰

Finally, the influence of Didon on Coubertin emerges in an obituary written by Coubertin upon the priest's death. He praised Didon's liberalism, saying "in all his varied activities, he sowed love and liberalism all around him." Coubertin salutes Didon's patriotism, calling him a "great patriot and vigorous pioneer of civilization." He admires Didon's single-mindedness that had everything "directed toward the same goal: to be a man of his time."⁸¹ Henri Didon strongly influenced Coubertin's own desire to be a man of his time both intellectually and politically. Coubertin responded by embracing democratic, progressive, and international views of the world that were emerging during his Olympic campaign.

Theodore Roosevelt



Teddy Roosevelt, the "rough rider" of American political and sporting life in the last decade of the 19th and first two decades of the 20th centuries, provided Coubertin with a respected exemplar of the life philosophy of Olympism. Perhaps none of Coubertin's friends typified his conception of eurhythmy - harmony between physical, spiritual, and moral character - better than did Roosevelt. Coubertin consistently referred to Roosevelt as "a firm partisan, an invaluable friend to our cause."⁸² In fact, Roosevelt received the first Olympic diploma at the 1905 Olympic Congress in Brussels. Coubertin regularly included anecdotes regarding the President in his Olympic speeches and letters, especially when seeking to add legitimacy or importance for the audience. He especially liked to recall Roosevelt's decision, while in charge of the New York City police department, to open free boxing gymnasiums in response to the increasing violence in the city. Coubertin's epitaph to Roosevelt, written in 1919, indicates a deep appreciation for this American progressive: "I should propose to apply to this faithful friend of our cause the words... mens fervida in corpora lacertoso - an ardent mind in a trained body...and this would have been the epitaph which he would have preferred above all others."⁸³ Other works include elements of the relationship these men shared, but a direct connection between the progressive views of sport each man held needs clarification.

Both men were progressive regarding their faith in the ability of sport to reform society and produce virtuous citizens. Each preached the message of sport as a means of protecting against social maladies and developing both morally and physically strong citizens. Further, each believed that equal access to sporting opportunities could ensure justice among the different economic classes.⁸⁴ One of Coubertin's better summaries on the ability of sport to achieve the progressive objectives of social reform comes in a letter to the members of the IOC:

Now, in the accomplishment of social reforms athletics have a most important part to play...the sports group is in a way the basic cell of democracy because only the inequality due to nature exists in it, while the artificial inequality introduced by men is banished; because mutual aid and competition, these two pillars of every democratic society, are inevitably neighbors in it; because sport, the leveler of classes, is also a powerful counterirritant to all evil instincts, an antidote to alcoholism, an expeller of tuberculosis, a factor in physical and moral hygiene which today has no equal; lastly because it sows the seeds of...self-control, judgment in effort and the expenditure of energy...It is clear that in the face of such vast labors the world of sport needs to renew itself, to widen its foundations, and to transform its machinery...The physical and moral health of the nations depends upon it.⁸⁵

Roosevelt's agreement with these progressive views of sport is evident in a personal letter to Coubertin in 1905: "The healthy development of the body by vigorous and manly sports is one of the methods of building up this high and healthy national life. Of course, sport can be grossly exaggerated, and it becomes harmful the minute it assumes a

disproportionate position in the life of any man."⁸⁶ Roosevelt's caution for a balance in sport that protects against excesses also bares resemblance to Coubertin's *eurythmy*.

Interestingly, the travesties of World War I, though commonly assigned part of the blame for the demise of progressive politics and reforms in general, did little to dampen the progressive hopes of Coubertin. Though Coubertin served his country in the war, he returned to his Olympic work with an increased conviction in the ability of the games to usher in international peace. These, then, were the key beliefs that both Coubertin and the archetypal progressive Roosevelt expounded as they each sought to use sport for ideological and political purposes. One might easily read Coubertin's name and his hopes for France into Roosevelt and his efforts in the United States. The end result for Coubertin and Roosevelt, the building of a "high and healthy national life," was a view that *via media* thinkers held as necessary for sustaining the experiment of democracy. Coubertin differed from these philosophers only on the vehicle for building this national life and character. Whereas these thinkers chose a system of general education aimed at social improvement, Coubertin substituted international sport education. Professor William Sloane provided much of the groundwork for Coubertin's ideology.

William Milligan Sloane

Coubertin left for the first of two trips to America in 1889 after the Ministry of Public Instruction commissioned him to attend a physical education conference in Boston. More important than what he observed in Boston was his meeting in New Jersey with William Milligan Sloane, a devout Quaker and professor of history and politics at Princeton University. Coubertin's visits to various American universities left him discouraged by the discord and excessive specialization he found among physical educators (especially those favouring excessive anthropometry). Rather than relying on the American physical educators to back his Olympic plans, Coubertin recruited the internationally respected historian Sloane. This involvement provided Coubertin with a well-connected ally and supporter to champion the Olympic cause in America, especially to the Ivy-League constituency.⁸⁷

Sloane was an important member in the governing and regulating bodies of the Olympic Games throughout his life. As one of the main organizers and members of the 1894 Sorbonne Congress (and the only American member), Coubertin called Sloane part of "an immovable trinity composed of three members," one of whom was Coubertin himself.⁸⁸ Members of this Congress ultimately voted to reinstate the Games and to create the International Committee for the Olympic Games (ICOG), of which Sloane was also a member. Along with preparing for the revival of the Games, the ICOG and later the International Olympic Committee (IOC) were responsible for clarifying an Olympic Idea that was until then rather vague. Sloane gave definition to this Olympic Idea in 1912:

First, to create and strengthen bonds of friendship, such as ought to exist among all civilized nations, by frequent, peaceful intercourse; secondly, to purify sport, abolish selfish and underhand methods in the struggle for athletic supremacy, secure fair play for all, even the weakest, and, as far as possible, make the contest and not the victory the joy of the young.⁸⁹

Sloane strongly argued that the Olympic Games and the Olympic Idea would have a positive effect for international peace and would ensure equality and "full justice to all men" concerning the ability to compete. He also supported competition in the arts as part of the Olympic Idea. As Coubertin struggled to find an international audience receptive to his

plans of reinstating the Games, he found in the American professor a kindred spirit who "alone was wildly enthusiastic about the project."⁹⁰

Though Sloane was aware of his colleagues Dewey and James at Chicago and Harvard, respectively, there is no evidence that Sloane personally interacted with these men regarding their philosophical ideas. Instead, it is useful to see how Sloane influenced Coubertin toward a progressive view of sport's possibilities within culture, especially in the form of Olympic Games and their ability to educate the masses toward social virtue and progress. Scholars have numbered Sloane among the American progressives who used the language of sport to realize ideas of social and political reform.⁹¹ Sloane argued that the "moral force" of the modern Olympics equaled that of the ancient Greek games and would bring people together and compel them toward moral and social progress. Sloane had a confident faith in sport to affect social change, and he undoubtedly strengthened Coubertin's own progressive notions of sport throughout their lengthy and affectionate friendship. Sloane's influence can be seen in a speech Coubertin gave to the Parnassus Club in Athens in 1894,

Internationalism...is a movement which arose from the great need for peace and brotherhood which is welling up from the depths of the human heart...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 muscular development.⁹²

Perhaps their similarly pious upbringings (Sloane was raised a Quaker and Coubertin, a Catholic) produced a concern for such social ills as alcoholism; no doubt their agreement on the reforming ability of athletic sport influenced their shared view that sport could do away with such maladies.⁹³ Coubertin liked to refer to this cultural (and democratic) practice of sport as "every sport for everyone." He labelled this goal of bringing sport to the international community and the reform resulting from participation as his "unfinished symphony." Next to the Olympic Games, it was the "second half of his life's work."⁹⁴ Contained in this motto are the democratic and international notions that Sloane, Roosevelt, and other progressive Americans infused into Coubertin's Olympic thinking through their ongoing friendships.

Conclusions

Remembering that Coubertin's Olympics emerged within a time of dialectical tensions between "tradition and modernity" guides historians in assessing Coubertin's place within this larger cultural discussion.⁹⁵ Turn of the 20th century dialect between tradition and modernity involved new ways of thinking about religion, philosophy, education, and politics. Thinkers of the *via media* dealt uniquely with each aspect of this discussion. It is apparent that Coubertin shared significant ideological ground with these thinkers, especially after examining his writings and interaction with certain progressive individuals. Coubertin shared in the struggle to define the place of religion in light of a rapidly emerging scientific culture. He shared their ontological and epistemological starting points including the holistic conception of man, the supremacy of experience, and the relationship between freedom, action, and knowledge creation. He saw the need for a psychological as well as a physiological explanation of experience that had implications for sport. Finally, he agreed with other progressives that education, especially his model of sport pedagogy, could effectively contribute to the betterment of the international society. This shared ground provides an interpretation of Coubertin's sport pedagogy, one aspect of which was the

Olympic Games, that is both moderate and historically relevant. It confers upon Coubertin the title he was so fond of in others: a man of his time.

Endnotes

- ¹ Richard Gruneau, *Class, Sports, and Social Development* (Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics, 1999), p. 15.
- ² Ibid.
- ³ For an excellent and fairly recent discussion on the state of sport history and future methodological direction see the entire issue of the *Journal of Sport History* 25, 2 (Summer 1998), and especially S.W. Pope, "Sport History: Into the 21st Century," pp.I-X.
- ⁴ John Hoberman, "Toward a Theory of Olympic Internationalism," *Journal of Sport History* 22, 1 (Spring 1995), p. 1. Though published after his article, it is fair to say that Hoberman would consider the substantive work by David Young, *The Modern Olympics: a Struggle for Revival* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996) as evidence that some scholarship can be free from the tendency to sanctify Coubertin and the Olympic ideology. Here, Young provides a convincing argument that Coubertin was not the first to promote the idea of Olympic Games in modern times.
- ⁵ Read almost any yearly session of the *Proceedings of the International Olympic Academy* (Lausanne, IOA) to confirm this tendency toward excessive idealization of the Olympic Games.
- ⁶ For example, John Hoberman's "Toward a Theory of Olympic Internationalism." Hoberman makes the seeming outrageous statement of an "ideological compatibility between the IOC elite and the Nazis" in John Hoberman, "Toward a Theory of Olympic Internationalism," p. 17.
- ⁷ Ibid., pp. 16-17. John MacAloon also notes that there are liberal interpretations about Olympic scholarship as well as Marxist interpretations, see "On the Structural Origins of Olympic Individuality," *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport*, June, 67 (2), 1996, pp. 136-147.
- ⁸ Douglas Brown elaborates on Coubertin's Olympic ideology from a few different perspectives including "Sport Performance: Anchoring Pierre de Coubertin's Sport Theory in French Cultural Discourse," in Kevin B. Wamsley, Scott G. Martyn, Gordon H. MacDonald, and Robert K. Barney, eds., *Bridging Three Centuries: Intellectual Crossroads and the Modern Olympic Movement, Fifth International Symposium for Olympic Research*, International Centre for Olympic Studies, September, 2000, pp. 51-58; Douglas Brown, "Pierre de Coubertin's Poetic and Prosaic Theory of Everyday Sport," in Kevin B. Wamsley, Robert K. Barney, and Scott G. Martyn, eds., *The Global Nexus Engaged: Past, Present, Future Interdisciplinary Olympic Studies, Sixth International Symposium for Olympic Research*, International Centre for Olympic Studies, September, 2002), pp. 41-48; Brown explores Coubertin's Olympic ideology from the perspective of modernism in, "Pierre de Coubertin's Olympic exploration of Modernism, 1894-1914: Aesthetics, Ideology, and Spectacle," *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport*, June, 67 (2), 1996, pp. 121-135. Finally, see John MacAloon's "On the Structural Origins of Olympic Individuality," *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport*, June, 67 (2), 1996, pp. 136-147 for a recent anthropological analysis of Coubertin's Olympic ideology.
- ⁹ Douglas Brown, "Sport Performance: Anchoring Pierre de Coubertin's Sport Theory in French Cultural Discourse," 2000; and Douglas Brown, "Pierre de Coubertin's

Olympic exploration of Modernism, 1894-1914: Aesthetics, Ideology, and Spectacle."

- ¹⁰ Stephan Wassong, "Pierre de Coubertin's American Studies and their Importance for the Analysis of his Early Educational Campaign, PhD dissertation. German Sport University-Köln, 2000, p. 206. See also Wassong, "Coubertin's Olympic Quest: His Educational Campaign in America," *OLYMPIKA: the International Journal of Olympic Studies*, X, 2001, pp. 59-72. Yves Buolongne analyzes the individuals, philosophies, and political ideologies that Coubertin considered while shaping his opinions about Olympism, education, and progressive thought, see *Pierre de Coubertin Humanisme et pédagogie — Dix leçons sur l'Olympisme*. Documents Du Musée (Lausanne: Comité International Olympique, 1999). Buolongne's work complements the present study with a brief examination of the impact of Dewey and James on Coubertin's thought.
- ¹¹ See especially John Hoberman, *The Olympic Crisis: Sport, Politics and the Moral Order* (New York, Aristide D. Caratazas, 1986), and Hoberman, "Toward a Theory of Olympic Internationalism."
- ¹² Mark Dyreson, "Olympic Games and Historical Imagination: Notes from the Faultline of Tradition and Modernity," *OLYMPIKA: The International Journal of Olympic Studies* VII (1998), pp. 25-42.
- ¹³ Some Olympic researchers have labeled eclecticism the most defining characteristic of Coubertin's thinking. See Bernard Wirkus, "Pierre de Coubertin's Philosophical Eclecticism as the Essence of Olympism," *The Relevance of Coubertin Today* (Lausanne: IOC, March 1986); N. Nissiotis, "Pierre de Coubertin's Relevance from the Philosophical Point of View and the Problem of the Religio Athletae," *The Relevance of Coubertin Today* (Lausanne: IOC), March 1986).
- ¹⁴ Carl Diem Institute, *Pierre de Coubertin: The Olympic Idea Discourses and Essays* (Germany: Verlag Karl Hoffman, 1967), p. 53.
- ¹⁵ For a discussion of eclecticism in 19th century French thought see James T. Kloppenberg, *Uncertain Victory: Social Democracy and Progressivism in European and American Thought, 1870-1920* (New York: Oxford, 1986); Wirkus, "Pierre de Coubertin's Eclecticism"; Theodore Zeldin, *France, Volume II, 1845-1945: Intellect, Taste, and Anxiety* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977).
- ¹⁶ See Kloppenberg, *Uncertain Victory*, pp. 16-17.
- ¹⁷ Numerous sources elaborate on the struggle between science and religion in 19th and 20th century Europe. The information used here was gathered from J. T. Kloppenberg, *Uncertain Victory*; F. C. Copleston, *A History of Philosophy Volume VIII* (New York: Image Books, 1994); Louis Menand, *The Metaphysical Club* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2001); and Dorothy Ross (ed.), *Modernist Impulses in the Human Sciences, 1870-1930* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1994).
- ¹⁸ Kloppenberg, *Uncertain Victory*, p. 18.
- ¹⁹ These men formulated ideas and corresponded with each other for well over three decades. For correspondence between Dewey, Dilthey, James, Fouillee, Sidgwick, and Green see The John Dewey Papers, 1891-1973, Morris Library, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale; see also The William James Correspondence and Papers, 1842-1910, Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge. James corresponded

extensively with Sidgwick and Dewey, as well as another "pragmatist" of the era, James Pierce. Also see Kloppenborg, *Uncertain Victory*.

²⁰ Kloppenborg, *Uncertain Victory*, p. 10.

²¹ An examination of several archival collections of personal papers produced no direct correspondence between Coubertin and *via media* thinkers. The examination included The John Dewey Papers, 1891-1973; William James Correspondence, 1865-1929, Letters from Various Correspondents; William James Correspondence, 1856-1910; and The William James Papers, 1842-1910. Though direct correspondence is not evident, Coubertin was aware of and admired the ideas of *via media* philosophers. Yves Boulongne notes Coubertin's appreciation for James' and Dewey's "young science of psychology and their work to affirm its autonomy from philosophy" in "Pierre de Coubertin Humanisme et pédagogique Dix leçons sur l'Olympisme," *Documents Du Musee* (Lausanne: Comité International Olympique, 1999).

²² See especially Kloppenborg, *Uncertain Victory*; and Louis Menand, *The Metaphysical Club* for a discussion of differences among these thinkers.

²³ Kloppenborg, *Uncertain Victory*; and Copiey ton, *A History of Philosophy*.

²⁴ Kloppenborg, *Uncertain Victory*, p. 41.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 87; See also Copleston, *A History of Philosophy*, for support of this thought-action connectedness.

²⁶ Kloppenborg, *Uncertain Victory*.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 298-328 and pp. 395-401.

²⁸ Frederick Burkhardt (ed.), *Pragmatism: The Works of William James* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975), pp. 216-217.

²⁹ Copleston, *A History of Philosophy*; Kloppenborg, *Uncertain Victory*. In *The Metaphysical Club*, Louis Menand appropriately labels James "The Man of Two Minds" because of James' tendency to change his mind and back pedal in both thought and decision.

³⁰ Nissiotis, "Pierre de Coubertin's Relevance, p. 169.

³¹ Zeldin, *Intellect, Taste, and Anxiety*, pp. 220-230 are useful in understanding the general French ethos of the period.

³² Yves Boulongne notes that "le pragmatisme" of John Dewey and William James made an impact on Coubertin in that the Baron observed that their pragmatic/progressive thinking was opposed to the dreary metaphysics of pessimism. The progressive attitude empowered men to transform the world rather than spend precious time and energy attempting to explain it with any degree of certainty (p. 34). Coubertin had agendas that needed to be implemented. The progressive ideas of Dewey and James and their attendant pragmatic approach to modernize society inspired Coubertin. He was excited that, in the United States, there were men like Dewey and James, men of action. This was a new and enlightened philosophy to which he could relate. See Boulongne, *Pierre de Coubertin Humanisme et pédagogie — Dix leçons sur l'Olympisme*. Documents Du Musee (Lausanne: Comité International Olympique, 1999).

- ³³ Pierre de Coubertin, "Olympic Letters," 14 October 1918, and 26 October, 1918, in Carl Diem Institute, *Pierre de Coubertin: The Olympic Idea*, pp. 52-54.
- ³⁴ Norbert Müller (ed.), *Pierre de Coubertin (1863-1937) Olympism: Selected Writings* (Lausanne: IOC, 2000), p. 532.
- ³⁵ Numerous references to the "balance" within Olympism can be found in Müller, *Olympism: Selected Writings*.
- ³⁶ Kloppenberg, p. 73.
- ³⁷ John Dewey, "The Reflex Arc Concept in Psychology," *Psychological Review* 30 (1896), pp. 357-370.
- ³⁸ William James, *Essays in Radical Empiricism 1912: The Works of William James*. Edited by Frederick H. Burkhardt et al. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976), pp. 29-30.
- ³⁹ Pierre de Coubertin, *Olympic Memoirs*, p. 147.
- ⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 148.
- ⁴¹ Müller, *Olympism*, 146. Still, various contemporary writers, including James and Dewey in America, as well as his countrymen Fouillee, influenced Coubertin and the formulation of his Olympic ideology. Yves Boulongne notes the influence that James and Dewey had upon the emerging science of psychology. These two progressive thinkers worked very hard in their quest to affirm the autonomy of psychology apart from philosophy. Their influence on Coubertin was strong in this particular area. According to Boulongne, "One does not look to find in the writings of Coubertin something that couldn't be found...especially considering the state of epistemologic advancement of psychology [at this time] and then of the non-specializing academics of the author. But anxious for knowledge and in sight of backing up [defending] his syncretisme olympique, he prepared to receive the pragmatic teachings of James and the instrumentalism of Dewey — ideas in the air and the utilitarian lessons of Arnold and of muscular Christianity. See Buolongne, *Pierre de Coubertin Humanisme et pedagogie — Dix lecons sur l'Olympisme*, p. 121.
- ⁴² Pierre de Coubertin, "La philosophie de la culture physique," *Revue Olympique*, May 1909, p. 75.
- ⁴³ Pierre de Coubertin, *Une Campagne de Vingt-Et-Un Ans (1887-1908)* (Paris: Physical Education Library, 1908), p. 2.
- ⁴⁴ Müller, *Olympism: Selected Writings*, p. 109.
- ⁴⁵ Müller, *Olympism: Selected Writings*, p. 110.
- ⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 112.
- ⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 119.
- ⁴⁸ See Pierre de Coubertin, *Universites Transatlantiques*, (Paris: Hachette, 1889), pp. 94-95.
- ⁴⁹ Coubertin, *Universites Transatlantiques*, p. 939.
- ⁵⁰ Stephen Wassong, "Pierre de Coubertin's American Studies and their Importance for the Analysis of his Early Educational Campaign," p. 206.
- ⁵¹ E.N. Gardiner, "Athleticism in Greece," *School Review* X (September 1902), p. 574.

- ⁵² Quoted in Menand, *The Metaphysical Club*, p. 320.
- ⁵³ Kloppenberg, *Uncertain Victory*, p. 412.
- ⁵⁴ Pierre de Coubertin, *Universites Transatlantiques*, (Paris: Hachette, 1889), pp. 89-90.
- ⁵⁵ Coubertin, *Universites Transatlantiques*, p. 120.
- ⁵⁶ Coubertin quipped about the focus on anthropometry in schools like Harvard after his visit to America in 1889, "I thought of the joys of antiquarians in the year 2000 searching through these little books. Family portraits will be replaced by anthropometric sheets on one's ancestors. People will have their friends pause before a yellowed tablet, covered with figures and framed in gold: 'Here is my great grand uncle,' they will say... 'See how strong his biceps were!'" See Pierre de Coubertin, *Universities Transatlantiques*, 88-89. See also Allen Guttmann, *From Ritual to Record: the Nature of Modern Sports* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978) for a detailed and classic discussion of modern sport's tendency toward excessive use of science and quantification. Also see Müller, *Olympism: Selected Writings*, p. 449 for a discussion on the Olympic Congresses of 1897 and 1913 and Coubertin's purpose of addressing such "exaggerated forms of training" within the medical community.
- ⁵⁷ Müller, *Olympism: Selected Writings*, p. 76.
- ⁵⁸ Kloppenberg, *Uncertain Victory*, p. 31.
- ⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 44.
- ⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 43-44.
- ⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 36.
- ⁶² Pierre de Coubertin, *Olympic Memoirs* (Lausanne: IOC, 1997), p. 115.
- ⁶³ Carl Diem Institute, *Olympic Idea*, p. 131.
- ⁶⁴ Nissiotis, "Pierre de Coubertin's Relevance," pp. 168-169.
- ⁶⁵ Conrado Durantez, "Pierre de Coubertin: The Humanist," *Proceedings of the International Olympic Academy: Thirteenth Session* (Lausanne: IOC, 1996), pp. 76-77.
- ⁶⁶ Pierre de Coubertin, "Religio Athletae," *Bulletin du Bureau International de Pedagogie Sportive* 1 (1928), pp. 5-6.
- ⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 5.
- ⁶⁸ Carl Diem Institute, *The Olympic Idea*, p. 15.
- ⁶⁹ Habil Heinz, "Olympism and Religion: Idea and Reality," *Proceedings of the International Olympic Academy* (Lausanne: IOC, 1979), p. 200.
- ⁷⁰ Carl Diem Institute, *Olympic Idea*, p. 132.
- ⁷¹ See Kloppenberg, *Uncertain Victory*, especially pp. 400-415, for a discussion of *via media* philosophers and their leanings toward social democracy and progressivism.
- ⁷² William James, *The Principles of Psychology*, Volume 2 (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1890), p. 579.

- ⁷³ See Müller, *Olympism: Selected Writings*; Carl Diem Institute, *Olympic Idea*; Pierre de Coubertin, *Olympic Memoirs*.
- ⁷⁴ It is unlikely that Henri Didon had any direct contact with American philosophers of the *via media*, though he likely read the works of his countrymen Fouillee with interest. Evidence of correspondence between Theodore Roosevelt and William James during Roosevelt's presidency shows that the two were acquainted on a personal level, though Roosevelt's actual understanding of *via media* ideas and the progressive ideals he supposedly represented are questionable; see The William James Papers, 1842-1910, Houghton Library, Harvard University for correspondence with Roosevelt; see Kloppenberg, *Uncertain Victory*, pp. 353-354, for a discussion of Roosevelt's use of progressive ideas for political, more than ideological, purposes. Professor Sloane was acquainted with James and Dewey as all three were faculty members at elite American universities.
- ⁷⁵ Richard Mandell, *The First Modern Olympic Games* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), p. 63.
- ⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 62.
- ⁷⁷ See Zeldin, *Intellect, Taste and Anxiety*, pp. 570-653, and especially p. 648, for a discussion of the politics between the Monarchy, the Catholic church, and the Third Republic. See also Sigmund Loland, "Coubertin's Ideology of Olympism from the Perspective of the History of Ideas," *OLYMPIKA: the International Journal of Olympic Studies*, 4 (1995), pp. 49-78; Mandell, *The First Olympic Games*, pp. 62-64.
- ⁷⁸ Müller, *Olympism: Selected Writings*, p. 25.
- ⁷⁹ Sigmund Loland, "Coubertin's Ideology of Olympism from the Perspective of the History of Ideas"; Mandell, *The First Olympics*, and John MacAloon, *This Great Symbol: Pierre de Coubertin and the Origins of the Modern Olympic Games* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981).
- ⁸⁰ For a discussion of each man's view of Republicanism see Zeldin, *Intellect, Taste and Anxiety*.
- ⁸¹ Kloppenberg, *Uncertain Victory*, p. 300.
- ⁸² Müller, *Olympism: Selected Writings*, p. 210.
- ⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 405.
- ⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 175.
- ⁸⁵ See Mark Dyreson, *Making the American Team* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1998) for a discussion of Roosevelt's basic ideas regarding Republicanism and the use of sport to bolster and facilitate political ideals of progressivism.
- ⁸⁶ Theodore Roosevelt to Pierre de Coubertin, July 21, 1905, Roosevelt Papers, Library of Congress, MD, Reel 338, in Stephan Wassong, "Pierre de Coubertin's American Studies and Their Importance for the Analysis of His Early Educational Campaign," p. 157.
- ⁸⁷ Carl Diem Institute, *The Olympic Idea*, p. 71.
- ⁸⁸ MacAloon, *This Great Symbol*. David Wassong notes that Coubertin first met Sloane in late 1888 "at the house of French philosopher Hippolyte Taine." See "Pierre de

Coubertin's American Studies and Their Importance for the Analysis of His Early Educational Campaign," p. 187.

⁸⁹ Coubertin, *Olympic Memoirs*, p. 17.

⁹⁰ William Milligan Sloane, "The Olympic Idea—Its Origin, Foundation, and Progress," *Century Magazine*, LXXXIV (June 1912), p. 409.

⁹¹ Coubertin, *Olympic Memoirs*, p. 20.

⁹² Carl Diem Institute, *Pierre de Coubertin: The Olympic Idea*, p. 9. The purpose here is to show Professor Sloane's influence on Coubertin's progressive thoughts, including international sport. Other scholars have examined the influence of the movement toward internationalism around the turn of the 20th century and its impact on Coubertin's Olympic plans. See especially Dietrich Quanz, "Civic Pacifism and Sports-Based Internationalism: Framework for the Founding of the International Olympic Committee," *OLYMPIKA: the International Journal of Olympic Studies*, II (1993), pp. 1-24. See also Stephan Wassong, "Coubertin's Olympic Quest: His Educational Campaign in America," *OLYMPIKA: the International Journal of Olympic Studies*, X, (2001), pp. 59-72.

⁹³ See especially Mark Dyreson, "Regulating the Body and the Body Politic: American Sport, Bourgeois Culture, and the Language of Progress, 1880-1920," in S.W. Pope (ed.), *The New American Sport History* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1997), pp. 121-144; also see John Lucas, "Professor William Milligan Sloane: Father of the United States Olympic Committee," in Andreas Luh and Edgar Beckers, eds., *Umbruch und Kontinuität im Sport-Reflexionen im Umfeld der Sportgeschichte* (Bochum: Universitäts Verlag N. Brockmeyer, 1991), pp. 230-242.

⁹⁴ See Dyreson, "Regulating the Body," for a discussion of Sloane on sport and alcoholism and his agreement with the belief of certain progressives that sport would do away with such societal vices. Coubertin also supported the ability of sport to provide a panacea against social "evils," as evidenced by numerous references in Müller, *Olympism: Selected Writings*; and Carl Diem Institute, *Olympic Idea*.

⁹⁵ Müller, *Olympism: Selected Writings*, p. 751.