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## **What is Olympism? A Critical Discourse Analysis**

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## Summary

Dominik Sandler: What is Olympism? A Critical Discourse Analysis

(Under the supervision of Guillaume Bodet, Professor)

This Master Thesis' overall aim is to reveal meaning from discourse and discursive practices within the Olympic Movement and the life of its founder Pierre de Coubertin. As the starting point ontological and epistemological assumptions were outlined. By doing this the radical idealist approach, which assumes that one's perceived reality is entirely subjective and socially as well as culturally constructed could be embedded in a post structural framework. The methodological synthesis which was applied constitutes itself through the all-encompassing critical discourse analysis by Norman Fairclough and is complemented by rather abstract tools from Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida. Foucault provides the theoretical basis for the genealogical approach applied in this work and further helps us to identify power/knowledge relations by analyzing discourse. Derrida and his concept of deconstruction shall further prove very useful in revealing meaning from discursive practices. After providing a short introduction and framework of Olympism the genealogical-empirical section of this thesis commences. Since Foucault postulates that in order to identify power/knowledge relations one needs to attempt to return to the very origin of a certain development and because Coubertin derived his thoughts from the ancient Olympic festival the genealogical starting point is clear. After having outlined ancient Greek culture, society and Olympic Games we advance to the 19<sup>th</sup> century in order to analyze the privileged aristocratic life and ideological formation of Pierre de Coubertin. By choosing this approach deconstructive and analytical tools proved helpful to derive answers to the research questions of how Coubertin came up with his idea of restoring the Olympic Games as well as what he regarded as his concept of Olympism. Once this analysis had been completed it was important to compare this derived conception of Olympism with what had actually happened throughout Olympic history. It becomes quite clear that Olympism was never really adhered to during its entire history. By supporting the Nazi Olympics in Berlin 1936, ignoring the student massacre in Mexico City 1968 while condemning the silent protest against discrimination and for solidarity this analysis suggests that the concept of Olympism is more a means rather than an end. The analysis highlights that extensive human rights violations accompanied the Games in Beijing 2008, Sochi 2014 and Rio de Janeiro 2016. Thus, the conclusion of this critical discourse analysis can only be that Olympism is an ideological chameleon which can fit into any ideology and which can be exploited by any host to camouflage certain actions which would counter the often claimed fundamental principles of Olympism.

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## 1. Introduction

Already from a small age on I lived a very active life and soon understood what a fantastic sporting spectacle the Olympic Games were. Since I can remember I always watched the Olympics with family and friends and was repeatedly positively consumed by the spirit which is spread over the period of the Olympic Summer and Winter Games. My sportive lifestyle soon materialized in choosing a school with a special focus on sports. Up to this day, I can clearly recall the lesson in sport science where the teacher introduced the Olympic Games to us for the first time. I still remember how he talked about the world-uniting character of the Games, the peace-oriented philosophy and of course the Olympic motto *citius, altius, fortius*. We learned of the ancient origins and also of the revival of the Olympic Games at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, all in a very romantic way with no flaws or criticism attested to the Games. The challenges the Olympic Movement had to face were always presented as some higher power preventing the Games from happening (in its ideal form). That specific countries boycotted the Olympics or caused troubles elsewhere. In the narrative I received the IOC and the Olympic Movement were impeccable and had to accept whatever came their way in order to host the Games and make sure the Olympic Festival is celebrated. During my undergraduate studies I basically heard the same stories in my sport science and management lectures, again without any criticism. Due to my excitement I managed to visit the 2014 Olympic Games in Sochi myself as a volunteer for the Austrian Olympic Committee. During these three weeks I had the chance to talk to all kinds of people from the world of sport, economy and media, who shared different background stories and experiences from their visits to different Games with me. Within those three weeks, my entire image I had of the Olympic Games started to change. I started to identify certain contradiction between what I've learned in theory and what I hear from people who have actually been a part of Olympic Games. During my next Olympic experience at the 2016 Youth Olympic Games in Lillehammer my critical view of the entire movement was again confirmed and widened by various personalities from within the world of sport. About half a year later, I started my Master's degree at the International Olympic Academy and immediately embraced together with my international fellow students and professors the critical debate about different topics concerning Olympism and the Olympic Games. I could further shape my opinion regarding my theoretical knowledge in comparison to my practical observations. One constantly reoccurring topic was Olympism as the theoretical foundation of the Olympic Games. After I was done with the studies at the International Olympic Academy I still had to write my thesis and needed a topic which sparks my interest and creates intrinsic motivation in order to finish it. After I have left Greece, a good friend gave me the book *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* by Michel Foucault (1975),

which opened up my eyes for a completely new approach to see reality. This formative experience opened up the rabbit hole into post-structuralism and its various thinkers, which eventually led to the chosen topic of this Master's thesis. I see great potential in providing a new angle of looking at the Olympic Games and hope to contribute my part to opening a new regime of truth for fans and followers of the Olympic Movement.

The main reason for choosing this topic with this approach is the often contradicting reality within Olympic studies and the various meanings which can be interpreted as Olympism. Besides the fact that probably not everybody who knows the Olympic Games is aware of its underlying principles found in Olympism, most people I would argue, connect the Olympic Games to a certain Olympic spirit. Even if undefined, people are somewhat aware of the claimed unifying and peace-oriented values the Olympic Games are based on. However, when we look at Olympic scholars and their research, opinions are diverted. These opinions are ranging from saying positive things like, Olympism is representing the values found in humanism (MacAloon 1996) to expressions of concern towards being a gateway for increasing nationalisms, political involvement in sports, acceleration of commercialization and professionalization of sport, discrimination of marginalized and vulnerable groups, corruption and a western imperialistic attitude (Chatziefstathiou & Henry, 2012).

I thought, how could such a divergence of opinion and meaning be possible and thus found my topic for this master thesis. In order to extract meaning I wanted to critically analyze the history of Olympism and the Olympic Games and the discourses surrounding them. To do justice to exactly that, Norman Fairclough's method of the Critical Discourse Analysis will be the main tool in the empirical section of this thesis. This all-encompassing analytical method will be complemented with tools stemming from two great thinkers of the 20th century, Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida. Michel Foucault, the great French post-structural thinker, deployed a method in his book *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1975), which he called genealogy. This is essentially what archeologists attempt to do, to arrive at point zero of a certain development in order to work their way chronologically up to today. By doing this the prevailing discourses and social structures of the time can be considered and critically analyzed. To derive additional meaning, power/knowledge relations which allow- in Foucauldian terms- for certain knowledge to exist or not to exist will be examined. Derrida's concept of Deconstruction is based on what I would call a hidden hierarchy in language. By exposing this hierarchy and revealing evident but cloaked contradictions it is possible to extract actual meaning from discursive practices.



A methodological synthesis of these three approaches shall dominate the empirical part of this thesis in order to answer the following three research questions:

1. How did Pierre de Coubertin come up with the idea of reviving the Olympic Games and establishing his concept of Olympism?
2. What did he regard as Olympism and what does it represent?
3. In which way were the principles found in Olympism applied during Olympic Games throughout history?

In order to answer these three research questions this thesis begins by outlaying the fundamental ontological as well as epistemological assumptions. It is based on the ontology of radical idealism, which assumes that there is no fixed objective reality, but rather that every individual social reality is socially constructed by one's intersubjectivity and exchange with objects in the physical world. The choice to base this work on this type of ontological considerations was mainly influenced by the wide and diverging interpretations I have found concerning Olympism. I found no other explanation than the acknowledgment that most things are subjective creations of the human mind. This understanding is also mirrored in the epistemological assumptions this work is based on. Thomas Kuhn and Paul Feyerabend present their own criticism concerning scientific endeavors, which is based on subjective believe systems or paradigms which are not questioned anymore but taken as granted and true. Therefore, Feyerabend argues that a new individual mix of methodologies might reveal new insights into a certain scientific field and should not be prohibited as it would only prohibit scientific progress. This becomes evident when we take a look at his famous postulation, *"Science is an essentially anarchic enterprise: theoretical anarchism is more humanitarian and more likely to encourage progress than its law-and-order alternatives"* (Feyerabend, 1993, p.13). The great respect paid to his postulation becomes evident when we look at the customized methodological synthesis applied during this thesis. Although, before we proceed to the methodological part an introduction to the structural and post-structural schools of thought as well as presentation of important concepts and terminology is provided in chapter 2. The methodological synthesis of this paper will be constituted by Michel Foucault and his concepts of genealogy, power/knowledge, epistemes as well as regimes of truth. Jacques Derrida's concept of Deconstruction with its inherent notions of différance and aporia are highlighted before we proceed to the all-encompassing methodology of Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis.

Before we take the next step towards the empirical part of this work a clarification of what Olympism is regarded as will be provided. This is done in order for the reader to have a basic understanding of the concept of Olympism before the genealogical section will be entered.

This mentioned genealogical journey tries to identify the origins of the Olympic Games in order to derive where the concept of Olympism originates from and what it could potentially mean. The genealogy takes the reader from ancient Greece, via Coubertin's life in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century, up to the most recent Olympic Summer Games in Rio de Janeiro 2016. The bigger social structure as well as dominating discourses of antiquity and Coubertin's era are subjects of critical discourse analysis blended with the afore mentioned post-structural tools to eventually derive meaning and answer the first two research questions. The third question can only be answered after we apply the finding from the second research question on the history of the Olympic Games of the modern era. This will be undertaken throughout chapter 6 to eventually arrive at a satisfying conclusion in chapter 7.

This Master Thesis is of special importance as I am only aware of a limited number of scholars how have worked within the post-structural paradigm to analyze matters within the Olympic Movement. Special attention I want to give to two publications. Among these I have found the excellent and critical book *Post-Olympism? Questioning Sport in the Twenty-first Century* edited by Bale and Christensen, which poses essential questions concerning Sport and specific episodes within the Olympic Movement. The various authors represented in this compilation of post-structural works apply deliberately different concepts, which can partially be also found in this thesis and was therefore a good inspiration for the initial though process preceding this thesis. The second book I want to mention is *De Coubertin's Olympism and the Laugh of Michel Foucault: Crisis Discourse and the Olympic Games* by Seth Brown (2012), which makes use of Foucault and his concepts especially regarding power structures and underlying motives for action. Unfortunately, there is not much work to be found in this academic sphere, which underlines the important and necessity of this Master Thesis in contributing to a more divers and honest discourse about Olympism and the Olympic Games.

As a closing statement for this introductory chapter I want to borrow the words of Lord Killanin, International Olympic Committee president between 1972-1980, as found on the website of the International Olympic Academy.

*"The Olympic Movement is and will remain open to criticism because it is a human enterprise and therefore imperfect. Let us, however, try to improve it and contribute to strengthening its foundations."*

## 2. Epistemological and ontological assumptions of the research

The ultimate aim of this master thesis is to create knowledge and to provide a meaningful addition to the scientific debate surrounding Olympism, the Olympic Games and the Olympic as well as Paralympic Movement, and to provide an additional perspective, a new lens to assess and perhaps reconsider certain approaches and believes within this Movement. In order to be able to do that, I see myself obliged to supply the reader with certain ontological thoughts and considerations as well as with epistemological assumptions, which will play a major role in defining the theoretical framework of this work.

Before the question of “How can knowledge be acquired?” can be answered I find it of great importance to first pose and answer this research’s approach to a different question: What is reality? I choose this approach since epistemological assumptions are usually derived from ontological ones. Reality, according to the author’s point of view, is a socially and culturally constructed one and relies on human activity, made experiences, certain believe systems and is always based on intersubjectivity and the exchange of thoughts, ideas and behavior. In other words: Humans create meaning, and therefore their own subjective reality, through their interactions with each other, while being in constant exchange with objects in their surrounding environment (Burr, 2006). The underlying ontology, the way in which we regard and perceive the nature of social reality can thus be summed up as radical idealism. This theory suggests that there is not one single shared social reality, but rather that social reality in general is constituted by individual and subjective constructions influenced by intersubjectivity and exchange with objects in the physical world (Hughes & Sharrock, 1998). These ontological assumptions build the basis for the following epistemological assumption for this research, as the latter usually derive from the former.

When Carl Bernstein and his colleague Bob Woodward, the famous journalists for the Washington Post, who investigated the Watergate affair, which ultimately led to the resignation of US president Richard Nixon, were asked about their investigation’s purpose and methodology, they put a very complex answer into a simple sentence. They tried to find “the best obtainable version of the truth” (Bernstein, C., 1998). By stating this, they indirectly confess, that there can never or at least very rarely be only one objective truth, in other words: one objective reality, because each truth/reality is a subjective one. It is connected to so many variables, to so many different commentators with different social and cultural backgrounds, different believe systems, different ways of life and so on. Post-structuralists would argue that there wouldn’t even be “the best” obtainable version, but rather a subjectively preferred version and one which might suit the given discourse of a time more

than another version of the truth. Assuming, that there are many truths and many different subjective realities depending on one's level, type and quality of information as well as individual histories, we have to ensure that we make the development of our personal reality as transparent as possible. Hence, this paper intends to outline its entire thought process and considerations in order to give its readers a clear understanding of how this research was conducted and theoretically established.

Further, its research strategy builds upon an inductive approach. As the findings of this thesis and answers to the research questions will be built on the genealogical evidence, which constitutes the core of this thesis, and the findings will be derived from an interpretative analysis, it is inductive. (Blaikie, 2007).

After presenting the ontological assumption of this research as well as its strategy, the epistemological considerations will be outlined in the following paragraphs. In his famous and heavily discussed work, *The Structure of Scientific Revolution*, Thomas Kuhn states, that today's historians and scientists face great difficulties to classify and differentiate between "*scientific*" observations and assumptions of the past, and opinions, which have been called "*fallacy*" or "*superstition*" by their scientific predecessors. The more detailed their investigation is, the more they come to the conclusion, that once valid assumptions were not less scientific nor more subjective than today's findings. If one wants to call those outdated views myths, then we have to accept that these now-called myths were created by their inherent methods and were believed the same way scientific findings are believed today. If we, on the contrary, want to call them science, then we need to accept, that science includes elements, which are completely contrary to today's scientific consensus. However, this does not mean, that such outdated theories are necessarily unscientific, but it makes it difficult to regard scientific progress as a process of growth (Kuhn, 1962/1991, p. 16). To elaborate on Kuhn's thought more profoundly his four phases of science will be outlined. The first phase is the *pre-paradigmatic phase*. This phase only happens once for any discipline. It is the very beginning of a scientific discipline, when there are no theories, concepts nor methods, there is no shared technical vocabulary, no language. This is a rather unproductive phase, as there is no theoretical knowledge yet to build on, there are no common assumptions. The second step *normal science* is reached once the first phase is completed and a certain discipline has come to agree on a number of theories, ideas, concepts, methods and measuring instruments, that all scientists in this field take for granted and work with. They are not critically examined. A historian would hardly ever question when the French revolution started or the second world war began, not because it is necessarily true, but because the entire scientific community accepts it as true. This is

commonly accepted knowledge. The third phase is called *crisis*. A crisis occurs when normal scientists start losing confidence in their theories, in their paradigm. They detect anomalies, which are problems within a certain paradigm, that scientists are at the moment unable to solve. When such anomalies are detected, one either manages to solve these anomalies and to include them into the existing paradigm and thus return to normal science or it comes to a scientific revolution, which constitutes the fourth phase. It results in scientific revolutions if strong anomalies are found within a certain discipline of normal science. If these anomalies cannot be solved within the existing paradigm, a new paradigm will emerge and if this newly emerged paradigm is accepted by the majority of the scientific community Kuhn talks about a scientific revolution or a paradigm shift (Kuhn, 1962/1991).

What is mentioned in the introductory paragraph on Kuhn's work, namely, that science of the past, is not necessarily less scientific than today's science, becomes clearer through his four phases of science, but will get even clearer by outlining his concept of *incommensurability*. Incommensurability identifies the deficiency of a neutral standard to compare and assess, which of two paradigms is the better, the truer one. It describes the lack of comparability. As time goes on scientists tend to know more facts and more proven theories, which contribute to the body of knowledge within a certain discipline. Sometimes though, scientists make mistakes and perhaps it takes some time to recognize these mistakes, but this only leads to a replacement of usually very small fragments of this body of knowledge and not to its entire abolishment. Overall, Kuhn states, the accumulation of knowledge is a smooth process. But this only counts for scientists within the same paradigm. If scientists go against the paradigm, they are mostly not taken seriously. One only has to think of the struggle Galileo Galilei or Charles Darwin had to endure due to their opinion against the reigning paradigms of their time. In normal science there is a clear scientific progress through building upon formerly produced and accepted knowledge. However, new paradigms need to start most of the time from zero, as all former beliefs are overthrown. Therefore, the acquisition of scientific knowledge is a cyclic process, which happens between scientific revolutions (Kuhn 1962/1991).

Paul Feyerabend, an Austrian philosopher and scientific theorist, shares a more radical understanding of Kuhn's notion of *incommensurability* and adds to the discussion through his book: *Against Method* (1993). He suggests, that the diversity in Europe with its many different cultures, nations as well as individuals, has led to a great number of different paths and has therefore reached a plurality of directions and resulted in a "*progressive and many-sided development*" (Feyerabend, 1993, p. 27). He goes on to compare a well-trained pet which obeys the commands of his master

with a well-trained rationalist, who strictly follows the standards of argumentation he or she has learned and internalized so profoundly. The rationalist will find himself or herself *“unable to discover that what he regards as the “voice of reason” is but a causal aftereffect of the training he has received”* (Feyerabend, 1993, p. 23). Kuhn would perhaps call it the inability to break out of a certain paradigm and to examine it critically. Feyerabend uses a strong metaphor to show how indoctrinated we all are by our subjective believe systems and individual experiences. Observations and experiences have to confine and limit our scientific convictions, otherwise there would be no science. But they are not capable of doing that only by themselves. An apparently arbitrary element, which constitutes of potential random personal and historical circumstances, seems to be always an inherent part of a believe system of a certain scientific community at a certain point in time (Kuhn, 1962/1991, p. 18). As a potential solution to the problem, Feyerabend (1993, p. 20) claims, that *“Some of the greatest inventors and scientists occurred only because some thinkers either decided not to be bound by certain “obvious” methodological rules, or because they unwillingly broke them.”* Kuhn would call for a critical examination of the applied paradigm in order to come closer to objectivity. Hence, Feyerabend identifies his radical solution as: *“The only principle that does not inhibit progress is: anything goes.”* (Feyerabend, 1993, p.20). Meaning, that science should be more open to individual methodological approaches, to introducing, adapting or abolishing certain methodologies. Additionally, he proclaims that there are no measures to assess and evaluate different scientific methods. This relativism, has led him to the believe, that *“Science is an essentially anarchic enterprise: theoretical anarchism is more humanitarian and more likely to encourage progress than its law-and-order alternatives”* (Feyerabend, 1993, p.13).

This short introduction of Kuhn’s and Feyerabend’s approach in regards to epistemological consideration within the sphere of interpretivism rather than positivism is essential as it justifies and sets the theoretical basis for the further progression of this thesis. It gives way for tackling the research questions with an individually assembled methodological synthesis of concepts borrowed from post-structural thinkers such as Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida and Norman Fairclough in order to be able to conclude this thesis with valuable new insights which will add to the academic debate concerning Olympism and the Olympic Games and perhaps helps to challenge common convictions. However, before this can be done, a deeper clarification of the theoretical framework is required. The following chapter will take a brief look at structuralism and post-structuralism and certain concepts within this realm, before we proceed to Olympism and its ideals.

### 3.1 Structuralism and Post-Structuralism

In order to further build up the theoretical framework towards a methodological synthesis of different post-structural concepts it is necessary to introduce the related concepts of structuralism and post-structuralism. Firstly, to create a wider understanding of the origins of these movements and the ontological and epistemological considerations this thesis is based on. Secondly, to provide the reader with certain concepts and vocabulary inherent in these two schools of thought. I shall begin to lay out the assumptions of structuralism before I will advance to present the essential elements of post-structuralism as it was established out of criticism of the former.

#### 3.1.1 Structuralism

Structuralism is ultimately the search for structure in order to find meaning. The Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure, stated that linguistics is not about applying another science - like history - to language. By doing that we could find out where a certain language has its origins or where certain grammatical conventions derive from. This would be diachronic linguistics. According to De Saussure this is not linguistics. For, linguistics studies the structure of language itself and is therefore synchronic, because it focusses on how a language operates at a certain point in time. Linguists are only interested in different sounds of different languages and dialects, if the change of sound results in a difference in meaning (De Saussure, 1959). Therefore, the central idea of structuralism would be, that an object's identity is defined, not by its intrinsic properties, but rather by the larger structure it is part of. This attempt to grasp the concept will make more sense in brief. De Saussure came up with his groundbreaking analysis, that language consists of signs, and signs again consist of an exterior shape and an interior concept and meaning. The exterior shape he called *signifier* and can be for instance the sound of a spoken word or the letters of a written word. The interior meaning, the concept behind the exterior structure, on the other hand, is called *signified* (De Saussure, 1959). To make it clearer I will provide a simple example: Let's take the word *tree*. Despite the fact, that there are numerous different words in different languages we assume that the entire world has English as their second language. Tree has the same signifier for everyone to see or read it. But certainly not everyone will have the same concept in their minds. Perhaps, a people from a tropical region of the world might have a palm tree on their minds whereas a person from the global north thinks first of a fir. Please excuse this simplification and plain generalization, but in order to explain Saussure's theory it is easier to work with a clear and straightforward example. We see, to know alone the *signified* of tree is not enough. It is necessary to learn concepts by learning about the different relations between all concepts of our language. To fully understand the concept of tree

we also need to know the concept of wood, leaves, lumberjack, fir, apple, forest, etc. Learning a language means learning concepts. One needs concepts in order to think. Languages have conceptual structures in which concepts have all kinds of relations with each other. As we shall see in more detail in following chapters, the identity of a sign is dependent on its difference to other identities within the same structure. The meaning of any concept is determined by its place in that structure – the structure of the language, not the world. Thought requires language (De Saussure, 1959). Also the famous Austrian philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein takes a similar line when stating, that “*the limits of my language mean the limits of my world*” (Wittgenstein in Williams, 1973, 76-95.). To further clarify this thought George Orwell’s book 1984 (1948) will be of good use. In his famous piece, which describes a dystopian world, where the entire population of Oceania lives under constant surveillance, is separated in 3 classes and is forced to use the language *newspeak*, it becomes clear that Orwell himself was familiar with different theories of language as he developed his own language for the book (Joseph, 2006).

*“It was intended that when Newspeak had been adopted once and for all and Oldspeak forgotten, a heretical thought--that is, a thought diverging from the principles of Ingsoc--should be literally unthinkable, at least so far as thought is dependent on words.” (Orwell, 1948, p. 236)*

Oldspeak refers to the old language, which in this case is standard English, but because people were too free to think, the ruling party (with their political system of Ingsoc - English Socialism) established this new language to make thoughts divergent to the party’s goals impossible to come up with. New words were introduced and old concepts of words were changed towards a satisfactory outcome for the ruling class. The word *free* for instance could only be used as *the dog is free from lice* but no longer in the old sense as *politically free* (Orwell, 1948). We can clearly see that the signifier, in this case the letters of *free*, do not change, but the signified, the concept behind the letters was eradicated.

Conclusively, structuralists believe, that there are no independently existing objects with an individual meaning and features. Objects receive their meaning and significance through the interplay with different objects and the exchange between the object and the observer. Thus, meaning exists only within a structure as a whole (Hawkes, 1977).

### **3.1.2 Post-Structuralism and Discourse**

Like many philosophers of semiotics and language, also Jacques Derrida pointed out that Saussure’s notion of a clear separation of both components of a linguistic sign, namely, the concept or the



meaning behind a written or spoken word (*signified*) and its exterior shape (*signifier*), is not entirely unproblematic. We cannot really grasp or explain the *signified* without using different *signifiers*, which ultimately ends up in a never-ending chain of *signifiers* (Derrida, 1976). With this judgment Derrida posed essential questions to structuralism and consequently found himself as one of the pioneers and further as one of post-structuralism's most popular representatives (Assmann, 2011). This philosophical movement of the second half of the twentieth century does not set itself clear boundaries of what it is and what it isn't. What can be identified as a common characteristic of post-structural thinkers like Foucault and Derrida is the attempt to perpetually reevaluate epistemological and ontological assumptions. Derrida's critique, mentioned above, is shared by most classic representatives of post-structuralism and extended in the regard that meaning is not fixed but arbitrary and temporal since it is created, shaped and negotiated by discourse in a certain time at a certain location. Post-structuralists question and doubt the existence of a concrete and objective reality. Our ideas, worldview and knowledge all depend on the societal discourse at a certain point in time. The discourse shapes the way we act, speak, respond & communicate. It commands what we can say, when, and who can say it. An inherent and basic assumption of this philosophical branch is that language does not depict reality, but rather creates it (Hartwig, 2018, p. 281). Language and discourse are at the center of post-structural thoughts and theories. But what exactly is discourse? According to Stuart Hall *"A discourse is a group of statements which provide a language for talking about – i.e. a way of representing – a particular kind of knowledge about a topic. [...] Discourse is about the production of knowledge through language"* (Hall, 1992, p.201). Representatives of post-structuralism like Jacques Derrida, Stuart Hall, Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault see discourse, knowledge and power interconnected. *"It is in discourse that power and knowledge are joined together."* (Foucault, 1990, p. 100). They are linked and interdependent. Accepted social practices, to be able to say certain things in certain contexts and situations are examples of how power and discourse are intertwined (Foucault, 1990). *"Since all social practices entail meaning, all practices have a discursive aspect. So discourse enters into and influences all social practices"* (Hall, 1992, p.202). Discourse, in the Foucauldian sense, is the element which tries *"to overcome the traditional distinctions between what one says and what one does"* (Hall, 1997, p.29), namely language and practice. He further believes *"that things can have a real, material existence in the world"* but also that *"nothing has any meaning outside of discourse"* (Foucault, 1972 in Hall, 1997, p.29). It depends on the discourse at a certain moment in time, whether specific social practices are accepted, tolerated or prohibited. Let's take sport and physical activity as an example. Many people would probably be scared or at least confused if they would encounter a group of cross country skiers with rifles on their backs making their way through the snow-covered forest.

For people who are familiar with biathlon, this observation would not be unusual, because they can put the observed in order as the discourse in, let's say Scandinavia, is in some way concerned with sports, winter sports and consequentially biathlon. The same accounts for a round piece of leather. In the right context it is a football and the object of peaceful contest around it, i.e. during a football game. Without context and discourse this round leather object would still exist, however, it would have no meaning and therefore we would not know what to do with it. The biathlete and the football become meaningful only through discourse. Also, meaning might change over time. A century ago, biathlon might have been associated with military exercise and football linked to an activity which privileged public school students engaged in. Today, we might think of high end, international sport competitions and the Olympics or of the world most popular sport with all its famous players. The same thing accounts for the Olympic Games and its inherent concept of Olympism. Discourse, which is mainly led and created by the IOC and the host cities/nations of the respective Games, suggests that it is peace-making, democratic, at the service for a harmonious development of man, but where is the proof of it?

This introduction to the traditions of thought of structuralism and post-structuralisms as well as the provided account of discourse are crucial as this master's thesis will analyze different statements, actions and productions– in short: social practices - which enable conclusive interpretations of and within Olympism. However, a deeper insight into discourse and the connection between power and knowledge according to Michel Foucault shall be provided in a later chapter as these insights together with the concept of deconstruction are constituting the methodological build-up towards a critical discourse analysis which will represent the methodological synthesis for the empirical part of this master thesis.

#### **4. Methodology**

Methodology is always based on the epistemological assumptions of the respective research. According to the epistemology provided by Kuhn and Feyerabend in the 2<sup>nd</sup> chapter of this thesis and their notion of the incommensurability of paradigms I can derive the assumption that knowledge and the acquisition of knowledge is in its entirety a subjective undertaking. In special regards to this premise I pay great respect to Feyerabend's postulation: *anything goes*. Thus, an individual methodological approach has been developed for tackling the following research questions:

1. How did Pierre de Coubertin come up with the idea of reviving the Olympic Games and establishing his concept of Olympism?

2. What did he regard as Olympism and what does it represent?
3. Did, and if yes, how did Olympism shift away from its original principles and values throughout its history?

In order to answer this research question in a satisfying manner three tools to analyze discourses and narratives will be applied. The first two, power/knowledge and deconstruction, will be rather abstract accounts of methods while the critical discourse analysis tries to put their school of thought into a more traditional methodological frame. Together these three tools will serve as the empirical methodology of this thesis.

#### **4.1 Foucault, Power/Knowledge and Genealogy**

As already roughly mentioned in the chapter “Post-Structuralism and Discourse” Foucault’s understanding of discourse is always in close relation to power/knowledge relations. What that means and what he tried to summarize under the term genealogy shall be the subject of inquiry of this chapter.

The incommensurability of paradigms, according to Kuhn and Feyerabend, and the post-structural conception, that meaning, and therefore subjective truth, knowledge and reality, are created through discourse, leads to the question of what differentiates a bad argument from a good one? Michel Foucault’s concept of power/knowledge shall be of great help to answer this question. In *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1975) he challenges the thought that knowledge can be found outside of structures of power. According to him, as power and knowledge are interconnected, only power brings forth and allows for certain knowledge. Since the cognitive development of humans always takes place within such power structures, it is impossible for an individual to acquire knowledge independent of power relations. Thus, we are unable to obtain objective knowledge, but we become objects of knowledge through power (Foucault, 1975, p. 26-28). Power, however, in the Foucauldian sense perhaps varies a bit from the common interpretation of the term. It is less an oppressive force, but more an all-encompassing phenomenon, which is not necessarily static, but subject of constant negotiation and re-negotiation. This kind of “*power is exercised rather than possessed; it is not the ‘privilege’, acquired or preserved, of the dominant class, but the overall effect of its strategic positions - an effect that is manifested and sometimes extended by the position of those who are dominated*” (Foucault, 1975, p.26-27). This exercise of power leads to an ongoing battle for truth, but truth can only be found in the respective *episteme* of a certain time and place. An *episteme*, the epistemological field of a certain time, which allows and/or prohibits certain possibilities of knowledge. It is the unconscious structure the production of

scientific knowledge is based on. Foucault's notion of *episteme* is often compared to Kuhn's understanding of paradigm, however, it has to be pointed out that Kuhn exclusively mentions paradigms in the realm of scientific knowledge (production), whereas *episteme*, on the other hand, in the Foucauldian sense, is not solely restricted to the scientific community (Foucault, 1966/2005). Several *epistemes* can exist simultaneously at a given time and place, and thus act as the underlying fertile soil from where, what Foucault calls *regimes of truth*, can emerge from. These *regimes* lie within each society. They define the discourses which function as true, the technics of differentiating between truth and falsehood, the procedures where truth can be extracted from, as well as who gets granted the authority and credibility to say what counts as true (Foucault, 1976, p. 13). A valid strategy to answer the raised question in line with these epistemological assumptions is to analyze discursive practices in order to identify regimes of truth and show how these regimes produce and reproduce oppressive power relations.

Another important tool which will find its application in this thesis has been described in Michel Foucault's book *Discipline and Punish* (1975) where he introduced the concept of genealogy. The term is almost used synonymously to archeology with the only difference being, that genealogy is more concerned with finding pertinent power relations, which allow certain knowledge to prevail and dominate certain discourses. It is the seeking for genesis, for origin, which is described by genealogy.

## **4.2 Deconstruction and Différance**

After having presented the account of Foucault's concept of power/knowledge we shall go deeper and take a closer look at the abstract concept of deconstruction in this chapter and Critical Discourse Analysis in the following. This tool shall assist in identifying contradictions, structural hierarchy and inequality

The term Deconstruction is mentioned for the first time in one of Derrida's most impactful books: "*Of Grammatology*" (1976). Deconstruction is deeply political as it is ultimately concerned with revealing power structures within language. Since this language system seems to ignore the difference between the inherent elements it is made of, it prioritizes certain elements over others and thus creates a structure of inequality, which shall be discovered by deconstructing language as well as discourse. *Différance* is probably the core concept within Jacques Derrida's deconstruction. It constitutes of the two words "defer" (a temporal displacement) and "differ" (a spatial displacement) which then shape the neologism *différance*. Deconstruction highlights the fact that difference, especially in western tradition, is organized through opposition, based on Aristotle's principle of

non-contradiction. This suggests that if something is true it cannot be false, something good could not be bad, a man cannot be a woman, and so on. Therefore, language is regarded as a system of binary opposites which only receive their meaning through the difference to each other, and thus shape our ways of thinking (Hanrahan, 2010). Further, he sees these oppositions not submitting to a peaceful coexistence but to a fierce hierarchy, which has been culturally established throughout history: good over bad, speech over writing, male over female, rationality over irrationality, etc. Due to these prioritized dichotomies, Derrida argues, real and true difference is repressed in language as one end is regarded as the inferior, the undesirable, and is therefore dominated by the superior end on the other side. With the concept of *différance* he wants to shine light on the spatial and temporal distinctness of such binary opposites in order to reveal real meaning from a text (Derrida, 1976).

Another main feature of deconstruction is the search for *aporia*, the “undecidable” in Derridian terms. *Aporia*, or the blind spot, are signifiers which cannot be categorized in the system of binary oppositions because they have several meanings simultaneously. Derrida allows himself to create such an *aporia* through the neologism of *différance*, but very seriously argues that such *aporias* challenge our system of prioritizing dichotomies. In the case of *différance*, one needs to prefer the written language over the spoken as the term is homophone and its difference to “difference” can only be shown by the different spelling. Thus, he shows very impressively how the binary oppositions mentioned before can be easily reversed and are therefore not universal. Hence, deconstruction is about questioning the overall possibility of universality (Hanrahan, 2010).

To understand a structure one needs to understand its origin, that brought it into being. It is hardly possible to trace a structure back to its very origin, as the origin is not pure the structure must have evolved out of a difference, thus, the origin must already have a structure (Derrida, 1976).

This last paragraph is of particular importance to this thesis. It outlines the further proceeding as the signifier Olympism and its signified shall be further investigated and traced back to its origin in the empirical part of this work. A genealogical approach will be carried out in order to find relevant hints and draw conclusions to its relevance and meaning of today.

### **4.3 Critical Discourse Analysis by Fairclough**

Before this work advances to its empirical analysis the specific theory and methodology of Critical Discourse Analyses (CDA) will be introduced and outlined in this chapter.

Norman Fairclough, an English linguist, is perhaps considered the most prominent representative of language analysis as he has coined the concept of Critical Discourse Analysis. Out of concern how power is exercised through language and discourse, he went on a journey on how to reveal and derive actual meaning from text, speech, video or other social practices. Fairclough regards all texts to be produced with a certain ideology and subjectivity, so to say from a specific point of view. What Critical Discourse Analysis tries to do is to challenge the position of the author (Fairclough, 2003). One needs to challenge *“common sense by pointing out that something could have been represented some other way, with a very different significance”* (Fowler, 1996, p.4). Common sense is very subjective and relies on the accumulation of social experiences. Hence, it differs from culture to culture, from place to place. The attempt has to be made, to remove the reader from his or her own socio-political coinage or, as an alternative option, to use another culture’s lens in order to effectively use common sense to conduct CDA. As Roger Fowler, a critical linguist, concludes: *“This is not, in fact, simply a question of ‘distortion’ or ‘bias’: there is not necessarily any true reality that can be unveiled by critical practice, there are simply relatively varying representations”* (Fowler, 1996, p.2).

Fairclough (2003) sees external relations of text as being concerned with the analysis of relations of the text to social events, social practices as well as social structures. It describes connection between the text and the social, mental and physical world. The external relations of the text are categorized the following three sub-categories:

*Social Structures*, which are very abstract entities that allow and provide the grounds for certain possibilities of social practices and events to happen and not to happen. They comprise complex systems like language, democracy, catholicism, capitalism, etc.

*Social Practices*, which represent social actions within a certain structure. Examples could be classroom teachings, family meals, everyday conversations with a friend, press conferences, arguments, discussions and the like.

*Social Events* are consequentially formed by the interaction of two causal powers – those of social agents and those of social structure and social practice. These two powers are interdependent, thus, it is this interplay of structure and agency which creates and shapes social events (Fairclough, 2001, p.4).

Another subdivision in order to analyze Discourse as a social practice results in the three sub-categories:

*Genres* (ways of acting) could manifest as interviews, conversations, interrogations, etc.

*Discourses* (ways of representing) Which different discourses, which perspectives and positions are included in a certain way of representing individual realities of the world.

*Styles* (ways of being) – the way of using language and discourse as a certain way to express one's own identity and self-image. Presidents, policemen, doctors, teachers, leaders talk differently and their style is adjusted to their role and self-image (Fairclough, 2003, p.23-28).

According to McEnery, Xiao and Tono (2006, p. 71) in order to address specific research questions do-it-yourself corpora (body of data) can be constructed individually by the researcher. Hence, the corpus adducted for this research will consist of a variety of different genres to exemplify the meaning of Olympism in different periods of the modern Olympic history.

The methodology which will be applied in the upcoming sections of this thesis constitutes a synthesis of techniques and methods which have been presented and outlined over the course of this thesis' theoretical part. I shall complement Fairclough's approach to the Critical Discourse Analysis with Jacque Derrida's abstract notion of deconstruction to ultimately encompass these two techniques with Michel Foucault's understanding of power/knowledge relations. Before this approach can be applied a genealogical inquiry of the origins of Olympism and the Olympic Games is required in order to utilize these findings to define an ontological starting point for answering the third and final research question. In the further course of this work the anomaly and discrepancy between the discourse surrounding Olympism and the Olympic Games and its practical application shall be highlighted to derive meaning and to answer the three research questions of this thesis.

## **5. Olympism and the Olympic Movement**

As this thesis shall serve as a critical lens to enable the reader to see how the Olympic Games defer and differ from what the dominating discourse suggests them to be, it is of great importance to investigate the underlying principals at the very basis of the modern Olympic Games. Olympism, as the fundamental philosophy of the modern Olympic Games can thus be regarded as a sort of moral compass, guidebook or point of reference to check against all decisions and actions taken by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) or the Organizing Committee of the Olympic Games (OCOG). It is stipulated in the Olympic Charter, which is a kind of rule book or constitution for the Olympic Movement. Thus, the introduction and presentation of Olympism is of highest relevance for the further course of this work and will be subject of a critical analysis in the empirical part of this thesis.

Despite the fact, that Baron Pierre de Coubertin, the founder of the Olympic Games of the modern era, seemed to have had a fairly clear vision of what Olympism ought to be, he never provided a precise definition of his perception and understanding of this concept in one of his numerous writings (McLaughlin & Torres, 2012). Once, he described the uniqueness of the Olympic Games as *“something else”* and *“it is just this, ‘something else’ that matters, as it is not to be found in any other variety of athletic competition”* (Coubertin in Torres, 2010, p.3). This uniqueness, this *“something else”* is considered the core of the Olympic Games and provided, together with other pieces of Coubertin’s work, the fundamental framework, which was necessary for the IOC to define Olympism in the Olympic Charter. A first and vague mentioning of *Olympism* can be found in the Olympic Charter of 1933, where it says:

*“In the present world, where possibilities are great, and yet threatened by so many risks of degeneration, Olympism may be a school of moral nobility and purity, as well as of physical endurance and energy, provided that you always keep your conception of honour and disinterestedness in sport on a level with your physical powers.”* (IOC, 1933, p.10)

In Olympic Charters of following years the IOC refrained from providing a clear account of what Olympism is. Merely the terms *Olympic ideals* (1930, p.19, 21; 1946, p.27), *Olympic Law* (1946, p.27) or *high ideals* (1949, p.7, 1958, p.11-95), *Olympic ideals and aims* (1950, p.4) are mentioned, but it is always subject of interpretation of what those ideals, aims or laws are supposed to represent. *Olympic Spirit* (1956, p.82; 1958, p.80; 1962, p.80) is the first attempt after more than two decades to outline what we call Olympism, today. It took the IOC almost another four decades - until 1991 - to include a definition in the Olympic Charter. From that time on, the written definition of Olympism has not been changed and is up to this day *“a philosophy of life, exalting and combining in a balanced whole the qualities of body, will and mind. Blending sport with culture and education, Olympism seeks to create a way of life based on the joy found in effort, the educational value of good example and respect for universal fundamental ethical principles”* (IOC, 2019, p.11). Further, the IOC aims at putting sport, which it regards as a human right, at the service of *“harmonious development of humankind”*, while promoting a peaceful, non-discriminative society, which preserves human dignity (IOC, 2019). To further elaborate on the concept of Olympism the insights of the highly respected and experienced scholars within the Olympic Movement Brownell & Parry (2012a) will be of good use. According to their interpretation, Olympism always includes a certain pursuit of excellence. Human excellence, the strive to be a better person. A holistic approach on combining body, will and mind. It further includes and promotes equality among humans, despite of economic, racial, religious, social, gender, national and other differences. Tolerance, mutual respect,



friendship, joy of effort, non-discrimination, fairness and justice, international understanding, sustainability, promotion of moral values, celebrating the diversity of cultures, people and youth, peace as well as peaceful co-existence are some, surely not all principles and values combined under the concept of Olympism. It has to be mentioned, that these definitions are nothing more and nothing less than definitions. It stands for a humanistic and liberal worldview and way of life (Brownell & Parry, 2012a). Today, the IOC defines and promotes their main values as friendship, respect and excellence, but as we just have seen, one needs more than three words to grasp the notion behind the concept of Olympism.

As a first step a genealogical journey will be undertaken to critically analyze Pierre de Coubertin's life, thoughts and episteme he lived in, to eventually derive how he came up with the idea of reviving the Olympic Games and establishing his conception of Olympism. Further, this conception of his, will be deconstructed to derive meaning from it and to examine what it represents. Ultimately, this thesis intends to compare the theoretical notion of Olympism to what has happened in practice and how it has been applied throughout its existence, applied on selected cases. Which motives, what power/knowledge relations and what meaning can be extracted and revealed.

In order to conduct the empirical part of this thesis in a more systematic way the history of the Olympic Games of the modern era will be separated into three parts. The names for it are solely based on the differentiating aspects these periods were coined by: The era of military conflict (1896-1948), the era of ideological conflict (1949 - 1990), the era of commercial conflict (1991 - today). Of course there is no clear cut between these eras, but there is a tendency that a predominating characteristic has become insignificant or that a new one has emerged. The first period was coined by constant interruption of the Olympiads due to two World Wars. This phase lasted until 1948 because at these Games a couple of nations were still banned from participating. The second era was full of power demonstrations during the cold war, a war of ideology, east vs. west. This global rivalry actually lasted up to the Games in 1992, but due to IOC President Samaranch's intervention the Olympic Games started towards a new direction with the abolishment of the amateur paragraph for the first time at the 1984 Olympic Games in Los Angeles which opened the doors for professional athletes and commercial interests to enter the Olympic stage.

## **6. From Ancient Greece to the Revival of the Olympic Games – A Genealogy of Olympism**

In order to define the point of departure for the further course of this research, the history of the Olympic Games as well as the concept of Olympism will be examined to be able to derive meaning from this genealogical undertaking. As Foucault has impressively demonstrated in *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1975) by exploring the past we might be able to derive meaning from a historical process. To do justice to this strategy, exactly that will be done in the following paragraphs. I will attempt to highlight the greater social structure where Olympism and the Olympic Games might stem from. Thus, I will provide historical insights into the Olympic Games and Greek society to detect potential congruencies or disparities between then and now, which shall assist in revealing diverse considerations of Pierre de Coubertin, the man who appears to be the main figure around the revival of the Olympic Games. As the current Olympic Charter

### **1. 6.1 The ancient Olympic Games embedded in the ancient Greek society**

Many historians accept and share the same believe that the ancient Olympic Games date back to the 8<sup>th</sup> century BCE, more precisely to 776 BCE and that the last ancient Olympic Games were supposedly held in 393 CE due to the prohibition of any pagan traditions by Theodosius I (Golden, 1998). Kidd (1984) mentions the year 369 in which the last known ancient Olympic festival took place. We see, scholars do not have a uniform opinion concerning the starting and the end date, we are working with estimations.

As the name suggests, they were held in ancient Olympia on the Peloponnese, the Greek peninsula, far away from the similar sounding Mount Olymp, the home of the gods in Greek mythology, which is located in the North of what we know today as Greece. The Olympic Games, as part of the four Panhellenic Games<sup>1</sup>, were held every four years at the same sacred site, in honor of Zeus. Over the centuries the Games grew in popularity, size and also in prestige. During the 8<sup>th</sup> century they were merely a regional festival, which consequentially grew into a Panhellenic festival that attracted participants and visitors from all over Greece and its colonies like Sicily and Syracuse. Pindar, the ancient Greek poet, in his first Olympic ode in honor of the tyrant of Syracuse, Hieron I, he wrote, “look no further for any star warmer than the sun, shining by day through the lonely sky, and let us

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<sup>1</sup> The four main Crown or Panhellenic Games as we refer to them today consisted of the Pythian Games in Delphi (in honor of Apollo), the Isthmian Games in Corinth (Honor of Poseidon), the Nemean Games in Nemea (in honor of Zeus), and of course the ancient Olympic Games in Olympia in honor of Zeus. To read more I take the opportunity and refer to my former professor of ancient history Nigel Crowther.

not proclaim any contest greater than Olympia” (Pindar, 476 BCE) and thus emphasizes the notion of the ancient Olympic Games being truly respected and valued athletic festivities. Sports in ancient times, especially in Greece were predominantly considered as a purely male area of life, and thus, women could not participate nor watch (Scanlon, 2002). Up to this day, scholars are uncertain whether maidens were allowed on the sacred site or not. However, vast concordance with the assumptions that married women were categorically rejected from entering the Altis, Zeus’ sacred grove in Olympia. The only married woman allowed inside the sanctuary was the high priestess Demeter Chamyne and sat at her altar across the judges (Dillon, 2000). Despite its success over the centuries, the athletic contests never secularized the religious festival (Kyle, 2013). The ancient Olympic Games as we refer to them today, have nothing or at least very little in common with what we would consider a game or games in today’s term. In the ancient Greek society, the term *Agon* was used to describe contests and to ascribe a competitive nature to a certain event, a moment of “coming together”, be it in sport or in war. *Agon* together with *Arete* and *Athlon* as well as *Kalokagathia* are historically handed down to make up the theoretical principals at the basis of social life and especially sport in ancient Greece. Already Homer spoke of *Arete*, literally meaning excellence or virtue. It describes the pursuit of excellence, the constant personal improvement which encompasses all aspects of life in the ancient Greek society. In order to pursue *Arete* one must aim for *Kalokagathia* (*Kalos + Agathos*), a balanced development of body and mind. *Kalos* refers to the aesthetic, harmony and beauty of the body, attained through physical activity. *Agathos* is more concerned with the psychological sphere of the human identity. It describes justice, willpower, bravery and intellect as desirable attributes to achieve. Their importance becomes clear when Socrates’ considerations regarding the function of a society are outlined. In opposition of the Ionian tradition of thought, he replaced nature with humankind at the center of attention of his thoughts. From there, he derived that humans are not self-sufficient, but interdependent and therefore, need other humans in order to survive, thus forming groups and societies. His second realization was that humans are different with distinct skills, talents and interests and therefore, a division of labor adjusted to the competences and abilities of the members of society leads to more efficiency (Petrochilos, 2002). *Athlon* refers to the prize which an athlete receives after gaining a victory. Another way of describing contests from a more individual and subjective point of view would require the use of the signifier *Athlos*, which would literary mean struggle. The combination of *Athlon* and *Athlos* results in the familiar term Athletics we use today. These concepts, deeply ingrained in the ancient Greek society led to a very competitive nature of its people. It was a very performance and competition driven life. Not only in sports and war, but also in music, poetry and other artistic disciplines, the notion of *athlos* and *agon* came to light (von Scheliha, 1987; Scanlon,

1983). *Arete* as well as *Kalokagathia* were life encompassing, and the notion of training and developing the body, will and mind was regarded as a crucial part of life. This is highlighted by Plato's statement concerning the education of youth. "*Exclusive attention to physical prowess may make a man become brutish, like an animal; but exclusive attention to the mind may make him brittle and soft. The body and mind should be cultivated together*" (Plato as cited in Young, 2005, p.29). They were especially life encompassing, since ancient Greeks were very conscious of what other people thought. No respected member of the ancient Greek society could afford to lose face as there was a strong blaming-culture, what in the further course of this work shall become clear, when examining the destiny of defeated Olympic losers (Petrochilos, 2002).

The gymnasium was the place where male students participated in the pursuit of physical but also social and intellectual endeavors. Music was an accompanying part of physical exercise, in which the young men engaged nude, a symbol of purity in a divine sense. The institution of the gymnasium maintained close ties to warfare throughout most parts of the Hellenic world. Greeks even saw excellence achieved in athletics analogous to excellence achieved in war (Golden, 1998). "*Yet*", according to David C. Young (2005) "*the widespread belief that ancient Greek athletes were the prototypes of our own contemporary Rhodes scholars, cultivating their intellects as well as their bodies, is outright nonsense. There is no evidence whatsoever for this popular idea*". He reinforces his argument by stating that not a single victor at the Pythian (Delphi) or Olympic Games has been known for any intellectual accomplishments. Nor are there any reliable sources which suggest that prominent Greeks within the intellectual realm of society have been victorious in athletic competitions. The source which suggests such an occasion hints towards a potential participation of Plato in the Isthmian and Pythian Games. However, in his work, he quotes the same Plato saying, "*An athlete who aims at an Olympic or Pythian victory . . . must train full time. He has no free time for any other activity*" (Plato in Young, 2005, p.25). Please, note that this quote is in no contradiction to Plato's quote above, as he now refers explicitly to Olympic and Pythian victories. He suggests that if a man seriously considered winning one of the major athletic festivities a prioritization of the body over the mind has to precede this decision. Thus, perfect equilibrium, a balanced development of body and mind in connection to successful athletic performances in Olympia or Delphi seems unrealistic and is rather based on idealistic imaginations and interpretations of *arete*. This accounts at least if one wants to gain a victory instead of only participating. Proof of that notion is provided by further intellectuals of that time, who depict an apparent supremacy of the athletic, the body over the intellectual, the mind in ancient Greek society. One of the earliest information on ancient Greek history can be found in the books of Homer. In his *Odyssey* 8 he describes the story of

Odysseus, who landed on the island of Phaeacia where he was invited to compete at the local athletic festival. Odysseus' athletic physique must have impressed Laodamas, the king's son, which has led to this invitation stating (Young, 2005), *"So long as a man lives, he has no greater glory than what he wins with the strength of his hands and the speed of his feet"* (Homer as cited in Young, 2005, p.26). This sentence clearly shows the hierarchical predominance of the body over the intellect. Another source, which provides us with a slightly different understanding of this dichotomy is the poet Pindar, who lived in the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE and produced the following text, *"The race of men is one thing, that of the gods, is another. . . . There is a total difference in power, so that we are nothing – while the bronze heaven remains the gods' secure seat forever. But however – we may be something like the gods, through greatness – greatness of mind or greatness of body"* (Pindar as cited in Young, 2005, p.26). I would like to place the main emphasis of this quote on the conjunction "or" in the last sequence of the quote. With this "or" he doesn't place any higher importance on either one of the two binary opposites, but delivers the notion that it is of no special essentiality which of the two greatneses one chooses to excel in as long as one is pursued. This can be regarded as what Derrida considered as aporia, as Pindar detaches both terms from a hierarchical structure and leaves it up to the individual, which trait will be pursued. However, there is a certain extent of hierarchy left in this quote as it is not possible to not pursue either one if the individual wants to be a respected member of society. This pursuit of arete, of excellence, has thus the implication of overcoming the insignificance of men and finding something godlike within oneself, becoming somewhat more divine, or at least closer to the gods. The philosopher Xenophanes as well as the Athenian speech writer and political commentator Isocrates, both complained that athletic pursuits enjoyed more respect and honor than it was paid to intellectual pursuits, which according to their opinion benefited society much more (Young, 2005).

It becomes clear, that these physical efforts and contests were of high significance in the ancient Greek society. Probably, not least due to the many conflicts and wars between the various polis or city-states, the physical attributes increased in standing. A mixture of apparent historical facts and legends were handed down to tell us today that a myriad of military conflicts which caused constant chaos urged King Iphitos of Elis to visit the Oracle of Delphi. The answer to the king's question, how to ensure peace and end all these conflicts, was to reinforce the faith in the gods among the Greek population. To do this, he was told to organize athletic competitions at the sacred Altis of Olympia in the honor of Zeus and declare a truce for their duration (Swaddling, 1999).

To ensure a safe journey for all visitors, judges and athletes an Olympic truce (*ekecheiria*) was agreed on by different city-states like Elis, Sparta and Pisa. During a period of one to three month,

depending on the Olympic Games' popularity and scale throughout different centuries, arms were laid down and the fighting stopped (Krüger, 2004). This truce played a major role in securing the success of the ancient Olympic Games for a period of more than a thousand years. It not only enabled all visitors and participants to reach their destination without harm, but also guaranteed for a peaceful competition. The ancient Olympic Games and the Olympic Truce were interdependent. One could not exist without the other. Olympic Truce messengers, so called *spondophoroi*, were sent throughout the Greek world to announce the date of the Olympic Games and the time when the Olympic Truce set in. Olympic Officials were in charge of penalizing violations of the agreement and could ban entire city-states from participating in the Olympic festival if they would not respect the Truce (Syrigos, 2009). The Olympic Games and its truce were of such high importance that the festivities took place in 480 BCE even though the Persian empire set Athens on fire and fought against Athenians and Spartans. Only after the Games were over most of the participating city-states joined the war to assist their fellow Hellenic people, which ultimately resulted in winning the battle against Persia (Miller, 2004).

Another specialty of the ancient athletic festival was its religious and ritual character. These rules and rituals had to be strictly followed. Athletes who wanted to compete had to fulfil certain criteria. They had to be ethnic Greeks, enjoyed Greek education, have the right age, have a father and a family, have no ill-character, be a member of a Greek city-state, belong to a tribe, be free and no slave. The age categories are not clearly defined but as it is believed that there were adult (18 years and above) and boy's categories (12 - 18) to be entered. Additionally, to the rigorous criteria athletes who were to compete at the Olympic festival had to train over a period of 30 days in Elis, the city governing and organizing the Games. After this period, they were judged by the Hellanodikais, the ancient judges, and if the evaluation was positive they could participate in the Games and join the procession towards Olympia (Crowther, 1996). The Olympic festival itself lasted in its beginnings only one to two days, but as it grew in popularity and prestige, in the 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE, it extended its celebrations to a five-day schedule. On the first day, in front of the temple of Zeus an oath was sworn by the athletes, their fathers and their coaches, that they have trained and prepared well and will respect the rules of the sacred athletic festival. Afterwards, the heralds and trumpeters had their competition, the only non-athletic contest, to decide who will accompany the athletic contests (Krüger, 2004). Other Panhellenic Games, like Delphi, put more emphasis on artistic contests. In Olympia there were no cultural and artistic competitions taking place, but demonstrations and exhibitions were a common thing to expect. Artists, poets, painters, historians, philosophers and many more used the occasion to present their work to new audiences (Crowther, 2001). Later on

the first day of the festivities, the Youth competitions took place, on the second day the equestrian events and the pentathlon followed. On the third day, 100 decorated oxen were sacrificed in order to worship and honor Zeus. On the same day the running events were held and in the evening a banquet dinner was arranged. On the fourth day, the heavy contests like pankration, wrestling, boxing and hoplitodromos, the race of soldiers, took place. Especially in these competitions serious injury or even death were no rarity. Kyle (2014, p.29) emphasizes this by stating, "*Greeks found orchestrated violence alluring, and they admired combat athletes for their toughness, endurance, and fighting spirit*". On the fifth and final day, the Olympic victors were crowned with an olive wreath at the presentation ceremony, before the festival ended with another sacrifice and banquet dinner in honor of the gods (Krüger, 2004).

Olympic victors brought great fame and reputation to their native polis. The prestige the city-state gained resulted in higher prices craftsmen from that city could charge for their products since they were regarded superior. Not least due to the reason that the year which the Games were held in was named after the winner of the foot race (Stade) of these Olympic Games, so it would be "The year that Theseus of Sparta won the Stade" (Czula, 1975). Various city-states have paid subsidies to successful athletes and some polis as well as athletes were even accused of bribery in order to gain unjustified advantages, like recruiting successful athletes from other city-states. As a penalty they had to pay high fines, which often were redistributed to the sacred site, for instance in the shape of numerous zanes, statues of Zeus, which served among other things as a walk of shame for cheating athletes. However, if an athlete returns home with a victory, he most likely could be sure to have sorted out the rest of his life. It was not uncommon to grant him daily meals on public expenditure for the rest of his life. Sometimes he even received a house and a pension as expression of gratitude by the city-state (Crowther, 2001). At the ancient Olympic Games, victors only received an olive wreath as a material prize, however, he rose immensely in social status. On the contrary, second places, or even behind, despite their perhaps good performance, they received nothing but shame and guilt once they returned to their homes (Kyle, 2014; ). The highest honor and prestige was awarded to the athletes who could prove to be victorious in all four Panhellenic Games. These winners were called *periodonikes*, circuit winners (Miller, 2004). Being an athlete meant having lots of expenses. To be successful one had to train many hours, find a suitable training location, find and pay a coach, afford to travel to different events all across the Hellenic world. It is therefore assumed that most victorious athletes were from higher social classes. Only in the equestrian events the winner was not the athlete but the horse owner. In this way it was possible that a wealthy person hired a private jockey, who could potentially be from a lower class. Over the centuries and especially

with the influx of Roman culture it became more common for the upper social class and aristocracy to engage in the pursuit of knowledge and intellect rather than in the world of physical exertion which was regarded to be primitive and animalistic (Kyle, 2014; Crowther, 2001, Miller, 2004).

After the death of Phillip II in 336 BCE, his son Alexander the Great took over the empire his father has left him and expanded it to geographic regions where we find today Egypt, Lebanon, Iraq, Iran, Turkey, Russia, Turkmenistan, Tadjhikistan, Pakistan and India. To maintain his power and influence over this vast empire he wanted to spread the Greek culture while leaving the conquered regions with a certain kind of freedom. Wherever Greeks touched foot they built a gymnasium and organized Greek athletic competitions in order to spread the Hellenistic culture, which was so important to Alexander the Great as he knew that this was perhaps his most powerful tool. (Christopoulos, 2013). The increasing Roman influence over Greek politics during the first and second century BCE, had also an effect on the Olympic Games and Greek athletics in general. While they became more open to a greater number of former “Barbarians” and foreigners, they became less religious and more pragmatic. The Roman leaders recognized the successful strategies the Greeks have applied to spread Hellenism in order to integrate more people and cultures into their empire and thus, established so called “Isolympics” and Imperial Games throughout their empire. The religious and athletic aspects of these Games (*Iudi*) as we know them from the ancient Olympic Games decreased quickly. Athletes became mercenaries, entertainment of the audience was the new religion and the values of former Greek athletics were abandoned and replaced by more bloody, more brutal and more spectacular events. Gladiator fights, battles with wild Animals and naval races inside the Colosseum were among the new established traditions to please the crowds. The political leaders understood very well that in such an unequal and hierarchical society the Games served as an appropriate tool to control the masses and to counter revolutionary tendencies by offering free wheat and free Games, “*panem et circenses*” to its people. It becomes clear that the religious and spiritual character of the ancient Olympic Games was the predominant characteristic throughout its entire existence over a period of more than 1000 years. Through the interference of a foreign power, the Olympic organizers lost autonomy and were forced to accept the ideas the foreign ideas coming from Rome. Eventually, the ever increasing Roman influence and the conversion to Christianity in 313 CE accompanied by the destruction of pagan symbols and traditions, put the nail in the coffin for the abolishment of the ancient Olympic Games at the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century CE (Gallo, 2000).

After having provided a portrayal of the ancient Greek society, the rise and fall of the ancient Olympic Games as well as athletic considerations and theoretical concepts at the base of it I find it



appropriate to advance to a time roughly 1500 years after the last ancient Olympics were held. To a time, when all the fundamental principles of Olympism at the basis of the modern Olympic Games were developed to do nothing less than to revive this ancient religious and athletic festival in the modern era.

## **6.2 Pierre de Coubertin and the revival of the modern Olympic Games**

Whenever the topic of the revival of the modern Olympic Games is on the table, one name is intrinsically tied to it. It is the name of Pierre de Coubertin. The preamble of the Olympic Charter pays tribute to this man by postulating that modern Olympism was conceived by him (IOC, 2020). This historical figure will be the main subject this chapter is concerned with. For the simple reason that he is considered and referred to as the “father” (e.g.: Weiler, 2004, p.427; Georgiadis, 2009, p.57) or even “patron saint” (Czula, 1975, p.10) of the modern Olympic Games, he and his life as well as the time, zeitgeist and episteme he grew up and lived in will be the focus of this chapter. This is done to be able to derive in the subsequent chapter the congruencies and contradictions which shall arise when circumstances in ancient Greece are compared to Coubertin’s thoughts, ideals, desires and views on sport, Olympism and the Olympic Games of the modern era.

Before diving into this chapter I want to shine light on the fact, that throughout this chapter I will consult letters, books, speeches and other sources of information, which were originally written and composed by Pierre de Coubertin himself. However, in most cases I had to draw on these texts in their translated version – be it in English or in German – in order to be able to fully understand and read them. It is still up to a certain extent problematic as some information, connotation or interpretation might be lost, as the prime source could not be obtained and the interpretation of the text in its translated form was executed by someone else, with his or her subjective reality and own angle of interpretation. Additionally, I must draw your attention to another important detail. The book which, for the purpose of this work, contains crucial and first-hand information about the foundations of Olympism, Coubertin’s work and life and much more, is called “Olympism: Selected Writings” and was edited by Norbert Müller (2000) and published by the IOC. As the name already suggests, it contains “selected” writings. It is clear that a book of 862 pages is not capable of including all of Coubertin’s work which is estimated to amount to around 15 000 printed pages. Still, without trying to suggest bad intentions, it is clear that the IOC and Müller have their own subjective bias and agenda. The criteria for selecting certain texts are presented in the book and seem to serve better transparency. At this point, I want to remind the reader of Foucault and his elaborated concept of power/knowledge without further commenting on it. The archives of the International

Olympic Committee as well as the International Olympic Academy would certainly entail a great deal of additional texts and publications of Pierre de Coubertin, however, it was not possible for me to consult these institutions for the course of this work. Despite this insight, I am certain to provide a work not inferior in quality with the resources I have access to.

### **6.2.1 The early life and influences of Pierre de Coubertin in the French Third Republic**

Pierre de Frédy, Baron de Coubertin (1863-1937) was born as the last of four children. He was born into aristocracy as his mother was the daughter of a marquis, who seemed to have served as captain in the French royal guard. His father was a classical religious painter. The family enjoyed great wealth, which can be retraced by looking at the different homes (including at least two chateaus and a five story townhouse in the center of Paris) the family used to reside in. In 1870, when the young Baron was seven years of age, the Franco-Prussian War started and resulted in the loss of Alsace-Lorraine, the downfall of monarchy and the proclamation of the French Third Republic (Chatziefstathiou, 2012). Within the framework of the war, in 1871, additionally, a civil war started in Paris between the socialist Paris Commune and the republican authorities. This battle has led to tens of thousands of deaths and injured only within a single week (Tombs, 2014) and probably constituted in a very formative perhaps traumatic experience for the eight-year-old boy. The time after the war was coined by social and political changes of sometimes very dynamic nature as well as colonial expansion in Africa and Indo-China. The industrial revolution continued, but due to the Great Depression between 1873 and 1896 price levels, wages and interest rates of earlier times could not be reached during this period. Despite this depression productivity of labor and technical, methodological and organizational innovations and improvements occurred and led to an economic development in the shape of a cosine wave. Economic recessions and booms replaced each other while recessions were having the upper hand (Rosenberg, 1946).

After he graduated from the catholic Jesuit Collège de Saint-Ignace in Paris, where he first heard of the ancient Olympic Games from Father Carron, his humanities teacher, he moved on to study at the military academy of Saint Cyr with the intent to please the parental elitist expectations, but quit only after a few months. He also studied law at the Faculté de Droit, but out of critique of its strict educational system he decided to discontinue this career too. He had little interest for the conservative royalism of the aristocratic generation his parents belonged to. Neither he could see himself joining the political left. Thus, he found his ideological brothers within the republican party of the time. The connections and networks he makes there will prove of good use in his later life. This experience also led his way into the free and liberal Ecole Supérieure des Sciences Politiques. This university, was established just after the end of the Franco-Prussian War with the aim of

promoting and educating a new class of French politicians (Loland, 2001). He refused to pursue a career neither in the military nor the law, because as he stated retrospectively in his memoirs of his youth written in 1908, “he wished to change a career and associate his name with a great educational reform” (Chatziefstathiou & Henry, 2012, p.71). From this moment on the direction was clear. He set for his life the goal of associating his noble name with a great improvement of the educational system in France.

During this time of his life he made himself familiar with numerous books exploring alternative systems of education. Besides Jean Jacques Rousseau’s *“Emile, or on Education”* (1824) and Dupanloup’s *“On Education”* (1851) (Müller, 2000), there was a book of one of the university’s founders and most ardent promoters, Hippolyte Adolphe Taine’s *“Notes sur l’Angleterre”* (1872). In this piece a certain emphasis is devoted to the topic of physical education within the English education system. This depiction of the English way of physically educating its youth, immediately aroused great interest in Coubertin. On the one hand, he sees great potential in regards to developing the character, moral as well as physique of French youth through sport and games, most likely not least in regards to the lost war and the shared desire of Taine and Coubertin to make France great again. On the other hand, Taine paints his notion of a natural justification for the existence of a superior class (which Coubertin clearly belongs to), and that this class and its superiority should be accepted by the entire nation, because this will lead inevitably to social energy, political stability, national power as well as success as a nation. His justification for this is the reference to nature, according to Taine there is a hierarchy in nature which arises from his point of view of placing moral development over physical and physical development over character development and that the elite has had enjoyed such an education. This notion of a moral and physical elite shall remain with Coubertin (Loland, 2001). However, he believed in emancipating and integrating the working class and that aristocratic privilege comes with certain obligations, the *noblesse oblige*. The 19-year old Baron was also fascinated by Thomas Hughes’ book *“Tom Brown’s Schooldays”*. It explores the sportive practices of English public schools (Weber, 1970) under the leadership of the author’s idealized former headmaster at Rugby, Thomas Arnold. Although the two never met due to Arnold’s death prior to Coubertin’s birth, he found an inspiration, a father-like figure, a role model in Arnold and his reforms which started in Rugby but spread to other public schools throughout England (Loland, 2001) and which laid *“the keystone of the British Empire”* (Coubertin, 1967 in Loland, 2001). In a speech during the Athens Games he once again displayed his high regard for the British education system. *“To the merits of this education we may ascribe a large share in the prodigious and powerful extension of the British Empire in Queen Victoria’s reign. It is*

worthy to note that the beginning of this marvelous progress and development dates from the same time which saw the school reforms of the United Kingdom in 1840. In these reforms physical games and sports hold, we may say, the most prominent place: The muscles are made to do the work of a moral educator. It is the application according to modern requirements of one of the most characteristic principles of Grecian civilization: To make the muscles be chief factor in the work of moral education" (Coubertin, 1896, p. 308).

This power Coubertin attributes to English school sport and the connection he sees to the geographical extension of the Empire may be questioned. Not least, because most of the British territory was conquered between the 16<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century. Even that development can be rather attributed to commercial interests and a mercantilist philosophy than to muscular and morally educated youth. Thus, Britain has had most of its vast colonial expansion before 1840. In exactly that year New Zealand became officially British and soon after many south pacific islands like Tonga, Fiji or Papua New Guinea followed. One year later Hong Kong became British and also strengthened their influence in China, especially through trade. The conquest of the Punjab in 1849 may be contributed to a more muscular and thus morally improved British population, but it also just an extension of the already colonized territories on the sub-continent. In the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the British Empire expanded its territory further to areas which are today on the ground of Afghanistan, Pakistan as well as Iran. What might have helped Britain more than the school reform, was the French completion of the Suez Canal in 1869, which enabled them to gain more influence on the Arabian Peninsula as well as Africa, which shall be colonized by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, reaching from Cape to Cairo on the entire East African Coast (Encyclopædia Britannica, 2020). We can observe again, how well Coubertin knows to use language and words to convey his points and to paint a picture of the world which is not necessarily accurate but in any case beneficial to his plans and objectives.

Another great influence can be found in the person of Frédéric Le Play (1806-1882), who also was a great admirer of his "model nation" England. Le Play spent most of his life working towards improving the living and working conditions for the working class and a better society through improved moral and social harmony. By doing that he developed and coined the field of social sciences. He was appointed as Commissioner and Commissioner-General for the Paris Exhibition 1855 and 1867 respectively. It was also him, who established the Société d'Economie Sociale and in 1864 published *La Réforme Sociale en France, déduit de l'observation compare des peuples européens* which received much attention, what later led to Coubertin reading it. After the Franco-Prussian War Le Play founded the *Unions de la Paix Sociale (Unions for social peace)*, which the young Baron

joined in 1883 but was not active until he finished his education in 1886. In 1881 under the guidance of Le Play *La Réforme Sociale, a journal published every two weeks*, was released. Among different contributors and authors, Hippolyte Adolphe Taine can also be found (Higgs, 1890). This could be regarded as an indication for the close connection and perhaps ideological proximity of these two influential figures of Coubertin. It is believed, that reading these texts has shaped his perspective and influenced him a lot to undertake journeys to England and to visit various public schools<sup>2</sup> like Eton, Rugby and Gladstone (Weber, 1970; Georgiadis, 2003). Loland (2001) supports this assessment by confirming that Le Play has left a lasting mark on Coubertin's opinion and worldview. He especially shaped his political and social perspective in regards to educating the masses in order to improve moral and social harmony in a rapidly changing world where industrial and scientific progress enjoy more importance than quality of life for the many (Loland, 2001).

What he experienced in England as a prosperous and favorable education system, mainly coined through the physical education aspect with its team sports and games, was hardly thinkable in late 19<sup>th</sup> century France since the attitude towards sport was a very conservative one. Contrary to the French Church, which was in charge of the French education system, the English Church, had already adopted the notion of muscular Christianity, which replaced its former hatred of the flesh with the desire to build a better physique, character and moral through sports and therefore become a better and more manly Christian. Thomas Hughes was a major advocate of muscular Christianity and transferred these principles, which of course also greatly influenced his book, to the Christian Socialist movement, which fought for worker's rights and towards a classless society. However, similar to Taine, a deeper sitting belief in the bourgeois hegemony can be attested (Watson, Weir & Friend, 2005). As Weber (1970) states, French schools were anxious and refused to include sport, especially games like football or rugby, in their curricula. It was believed that these activities diminish the intellectual and moral results achieved by the rigid timetable of around 11 hours of school per day, which has been inspired by the tradition of "*Napoleonic discipline*". As Wesseling (2000) explicates, German gymnastics were much closer to this disciplined French culture, while at the same time English games with its incorporated attitudes of sport- and gamesmanship, fairplay and amateurism appealed much more to upper-class circles, rather than the proletariat, which is comprehensible when one looks at the expensive terrain where Racing Club and Le Stade Francais

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<sup>2</sup> For readers unfamiliar with the British school system the term "Public" might be misleading as it has nothing to do with the widely accepted meaning of "public". Public Schools like Eton, Harrow, Winchester, Westminster, Rugby, etc., were (in some cases still are) boarding schools for the sons of the British elite and ruling class. Up to this day these schools enjoy immense reputation and are incredibly successful in producing British Prime Ministers over the past 3 centuries.

were founded. In contrast to the few hours of physical education, which were marked not by pleasure but by discipline and obedience, French educationist of that time feared that this lucid English approach would lead to unhealthy, undisciplined behavior with a lack of self-control among students. However, well-respected and prestigious elite schools were among the first to introduce team sports, not least because most of them possessed sufficient facilities and space. Athletically well-performing elite schools preferred not to share their successful sports program with the public, due to fearing to lose their reputation. Interestingly, the majority of those schools also refused Coubertin's initiative to introduce his notion of physical education in French schools, most likely due to another threat, the threat of playing against students from lower classes and thus, taking the risk of losing to them (Weber, 1970). Mixing different social classes was a highly unpopular opinion, especially among aristocratic circles, like the young Baron was born into. Coubertin saw the solution for this problem in Amateurism, which he most likely was acquainted with firstly through the English literature he consumed and secondly during his travels to England.

### **6.2.2 A brief history of amateurism**

It is not entirely clear where Amateurism originates from and how it came into being. However, several sources (e.g.: Holt, 1992; Llewellyn & Gleaves, 2014) suggest it to stem from Britain in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and attest it to be a creation of the societal elite and aristocracy in order to find a justification to not cross classes as various sporting practices were emerging throughout society. Golden (2012) draws the links to ancient times and clarifies, that *"the very concept of amateurism was foreign to the ancient Greeks. It was in fact a 19th-century invention intended to preserve gentlemen from the embarrassment of competing with – and losing to – their social inferiors, and classical scholars, generally gentlemen too, read it back into their sources"*. The concept is not universal and sometimes definitions change not only from country to country but also from club to club. Amateurism is basically considered as *"doing things for the love of them, doing them without reward or material gain or doing them unprofessionally."* (Allison, 2012, p. 3). During this time several sport governing bodies like the Football Association, the Amateur Boxing Association, the Lawn Tennis Association, the Amateur Athletic Club and many more have been established by former graduates of public schools or Universities like Oxford and Cambridge (Holt, 1992). Georgiadis (2003) suggests that the Amateur Athletic Club founded in 1865 was the first sports club to incorporate the term "amateur" into its name. Its interpretation of amateurism was the strict exclusion of competitors with a working class background. Especially this club has played a decisive role in promoting their understanding of amateurism and in interfering with early attempts to establish modern Olympic Games in England (Georgiadis, 2003). The Amateur Athletic

Club was the precursor of the Amateur Athletic Association (AAA), which president was Charles Herbert, who will assist Coubertin a great deal in the run up to the first Olympic Games as we know them today (Redford, 2015). Dunning and Rojek (1992) regard pre-industrial Britain as not very beneficial to the development of a competitive sporting culture, but as the industrial revolution set in and Britain's society underwent great changes more fertile grounds arose. A Leisure Revolution within the working class came about and more emphasis was paid towards physical and also mental health as society moved towards indoor and sedentary professions (Watson et al., 2005). During this Victorian Age more liberal values emerged and found in Amateurism a new tradition to flourish in (Holt, 1992). With its self-set values combining old aristocratic elements like chivalry with newly found liberal ideals like *"cautious meritocracy, a certain almost puritanical belief in exertion and the promotion of excellence through vigorous competition [...]"* (Holt, 1992. p.29) and fairness it soon found supporters in the middle class and above. It gave them great power as most workers did not find it sensible or could simply not afford to train and compete in their scarce free time without receiving financial contributions. The sporting practices of the elite schools trickled down to some extent to the rest of society and were adapted over time. However, *"we should be under no illusion that most middle class sportsmen seem to have wanted to keep as far away from the working classes as possible."* (Holt, 1992, p.26) and rather acknowledge, that *"there seems to have been little crossing of class barriers through sport."* (Holt, 1992, p.26).

### **6.2.3 Pierre de Coubertin's professional and political efforts and influences towards establishing his ideas to revive the Olympic Games**

It becomes clear that Coubertin's journey towards leaving a positive mark in the world of sports and education of youth shall not be an easy one. Among the Baron's early steps towards achieving his objective and making himself a name was his first article in *La Réforme sociale* about sport pedagogy (Chatziefstathiou, 2012). Later, his first book *L'Éducation en Angleterre* was published in 1888. It was filled with his experiences and impressions he had made during his visits of English schools. This year was quite productive as he also founded the *Comité pour la propagation des exercices physiques dans l'Éducation* (*The Committee for the dissemination of physical activity in education*), at which he placed himself as the secretary-general. Coubertin managed to find and convince influential figures like Jules Simon, former French Minister and professor of philosophy at the Sorbonne who served as the president of this Committee (Georgiadis, 2003; Loland, 2001). Due to Simon's prestige the Committee was also known as *Comité Jules Simon*, which later shall be joined by the *Union des Sociétés Françaises de Course à Pied* to establish the *Union des Sociétés Françaises des Sports Athlétiques* (USFSA) in 1890 as a national sport governing body to which Coubertin again

served as secretary-general (Miller, 2012). As an antagonizing factor, in 1888, the left-wing French nationalist and journalist Paschal Grousset, founded the Ligue Nationale de l'Éducation Physique (National League of Physical Education), with its main objective of promoting physical education in France, but with a strong nationalistic connotation and French sports exclusively. Further, contrary to Coubertin's plans who mainly addressed secondary education, Grousset wanted to include all school levels in his plan to disseminate French sports (František, 2014).

During these two years he managed to publish his second book with the title *L'Éducation anglaise en France*. Further, he served as secretary-general of the Organizing Committee for a conference on "Problems in Physical Education" which joined the framework of the World Exhibition in Paris which was organized by Le Play in 1889. During this conference he used the opportunity to express his thoughts and ideas on how to reform the French education system through sport based on his experiences made during his travels through France where he visited numerous schools in order to get a more accurate picture of the current status of the French education system. One of his strategic steps he drew from this tour was to convince schools around the country to introduce athletic clubs to their schools. Shortly after the Exhibition had been closed, he undertook a journey across the Atlantic to attend to a conference on sport in Boston, but many additional stops at different Universities, mostly across the United States' East Coast and parts of Canada, joined into his itinerary. A year later he publishes another book called *Universités transatlantiques*, where he expressed great excitement and admiration for the physical education model of North American Universities. His various positions and travels granted him the opportunity to meet and to get to know different influential people from across Europe and North America, which shall be of great help in achieving his future aims. Among others were W.E. Gladstone, the English parliamentary leader (Georgiadis, 2003), later U.S. President Theodor Roosevelt, who shared his enthusiasm on sport with Coubertin and William Milligan Sloane, a classically educated professor of political science at Princeton. Sloane shall later become a founding member of the IOC and great supporter of the Olympic Movement (Loland, 2001).

Another great influence of Coubertin was the Dominican priest Henri Didon (1840-1900), who "sowed love and true liberalism all around him" (Coubertin, 1900, p.211). Didon was like a fatherly friend of Coubertin and was the one to introduced the credo "*citius, altius, fortius*" to Coubertin who made it the Olympic motto in 1894 (Coubertin, 1900).

#### **6.2.4 The genealogy of Coubertin's Olympic Ideas**



Between 1875 and 1881 Greece had granted access to Ernst Curtius, a German archeologist to conduct excavations on the ancient Olympic site. The discovery of the altis created lots of interest, especially in American and European journals. Victor Duruy, who shall later be of good help in Coubertin's Olympic endeavor, published a detailed collection of the archeological findings, which immediately resonated with Coubertin as he states years later (Loland, 2001). *"Nothing in ancient history had given me more food for thought than Olympia. This dream city, consecrated through a task strictly human and material in form, but purified and elevated by colonnades and porticos unceasingly before my adolescent mind... Germany had brought to light what remained of Olympia; why should not France succeed in rebuilding its splendors?"* (Coubertin, 1909, p.89). However, Young (1984, p.59) remarks that "his [Coubertin's] knowledge of ancient Greek history, culture, and literature was superficial, at best".

Despite the fact, that there were earlier versions of Olympic festivities like the Cotswold Olympick Games, the most important influence for Coubertin remains with Dr. William Penny Brookes and his Much Wenlock Olympic Games. However, it has to be noted that the yearly Cotswold Olympick Games were held for the first time in 1612 and lasted until 1852 with its only interruption being the English Civil War (1642-1651). Unfortunately, it is not certain to what extent the Cotswold Olympick Games inspired or influenced William Penny Brookes to start his own version of Olympic Games, the Much Wenlock Games, in 1850 (Clarke, 1997). To provide a generic overview of the different Olympic Games which Coubertin could have potentially known a list of these events shall follow.

Robert Dover's Olympick Games	Cotswolds, UK	1612–1999
Drehberg Olympic Games	Near Dessau, Germany	1776–99, 1840–42, since 1989
Les Jeux olympiques au Rondeau	Grenoble, France	1832–1954
Ramlösa Olympic Games	Sweden	1834, 1836
Montréal Olympic Games	Canada	1844
Much Wenlock Olympian	Much Wenlock England	Since 1850
New York Olympic Games	USA	1853
Shropshire Olympian Games	Shropshire, England	1860–62, 1864
Evangelis' Zappas Olympic Games	Athens, Greece	1859, 1870, 1875, 1888/1889
National Olympic Games	England	1866–68, 1874, 1877, 1883
Liverpool Grand Olympic Festivals	Liverpool, England	1862–1967
Morpeth Olympic Games	Northumberland, England	1870–1958
Lake Palić Olympic Games	near Subotica, Serbia	1880–1914

Figure 1: A List of Olympic Games before 1896  
Source: Rühl (1997) as cited in Weiler (2004, p. 429)

Dr. William Penny Brookes was an English doctor and physician who was born in the north-west of England in the small town of Much Wenlock in Shropshire. During his medical studies he visited and lived, according to Georgiadis (2003) in London as well as in Padua and according to Coubertin (1890) in Paris. Once he returned home he took over the practice of his father in 1931. Ten years later he founded the Much Wenlock Agricultural Reading Society. This was due to the close contact he had with the working class, as most of his patients were lower class farmers. He realized that free time alternatives like reading, botany, music, but also physical activity helped his fellow citizens to abstain from heavy alcohol consumption and gambling. As a result of the success, which the organization and its activities enjoyed, it decided to found an Olympian Class in order to promote physical, intellectual as well as moral development among the local citizens of Much Wenlock. The use of the adjective "Olympic" was based on his romantic interpretation of Ancient Greece and the harmonious development of body, will and mind. The first Games were held only half a year after the foundation of the Olympian Class and included events like football, cricket, high long jump and several other disciplines for boys and adolescent as well as typical English past time activities. Over the following years the program expanded and included also non-sportive competitions like knitting, reciting poems and arithmetic contests. Further events were held in pig racing and blindfolded wheelbarrow races to entertain the public and to increase the number of visitors. His motivation derived from his strong believe that physical exertion and recreation adhere to his romantic ideals drawn from ancient Olympic Games resulting in a harmonious development of body and mind (Georgiadis, 2003). Additionally, he felt that physical fitness is a necessity in being military prepared as a nation (Finlay, 1997). Throughout his entire life he worked towards introducing physical education into the school curricula (Georgiadis, 2003).

#### 6.2.4.1 The Zappas Olympia

In 1958 Brookes read a newspaper article about the revival of the Olympic Games in Greece, the Zappas Olympia. After the 400 years lasting Ottoman occupation of Greece, the Hellenes regained their independence in 1829. In order to restore the partly lost national Greek identity and collective consciousness Panagiotis Soutsos, journalist and poet, suggested the revival of the Olympic Games in Greece. Evangelis Zappas, a very wealthy Greek living in Romania, read these publications and decided to support this cause with his financial fortune. He took the initiative and sent a letter to Otto I, the king of Greece, proposing the revival of the Olympic Games with the assurance that all costs would be covered by himself. The Greek leader forwarded the letter to his Minister of Foreign Affairs, who was no supporter of Zappas' idea at first and thus did not reply. He regarded the idea as impossible to execute and absurd. With the help of Soutsos, who was related to the Minister,

Zappas could finally start a correspondence, which ultimately led to the organization of the first Zappas Olympia in 1859 incorporated into an industrial and farming exhibition for Greek products – a sort of “Greek world fair”. Only participants with Greek origin were allowed to compete. Winners received honorary medals and farming products. The initial edition of the Games was not crowned with success. The Games were planned to be organized every 4 years, but already at the second edition in 1863 was postponed, so that Zappas could not witness the development of his initiative as he died in 1865, leaving most of his fortune with the Zappas Olympia Committee to ensure a bright future for the movement. The intended four-year cycle was abolished before it could be applied. The Zappas Olympia eventually was hosted four times: in 1859, 1870, 1875 and in 1888. The program of the 1870 Zappas Games included swimming, wrestling, javelin throwing, shooting, rowing and ten other athletic disciplines. Interestingly, the head of the organizing committee of the 1875 Zappas Olympia, Ioannis Fokianos, later served as the honorary vice-president of the first Olympic Congress in 1894 organized by Pierre de Coubertin. Between the third and fourth Zappas Olympics, the Greek government recognized the importance of sports and established lessons for physical education in primary and high schools and hired gym teachers. Furthermore, many artists who became known through these events contributed to the fine arts. In 1896, Nikolaos Gyzis painted the first Olympic Diploma and Spyros Samaras composed the Olympic Anthem; both took part in the Zappas Games. The knowledge that the Greeks acquired from the organization of this event was useful for the organization of the first modern Olympic Games in Athens in 1896. With the financial remains of Zappas the Zappeion, the biggest indoor sports hall of the time, and the Panathenaic Stadium were build and renovated in 1888 and 1896 respectively and hosted events during the first Olympic Games of the modern Era in 1896 in Athens (Margaritis, Rozmiarek & Malchrowicz-Mosko, 2017).

#### 6.2.4.2 Olympic Developments in England

Georgiadis (2003) states that the 1859 Zappas Olympia had great influence on the Much Wenlock Games as events like javelin throwing and a poetry contest were taken from the Greek program and included in the Much Wenlock Games’ program, which took place one month prior. It was also that year that Brookes founded the Much Wenlock Olympian Society, with its first member being Petros Velissariou, the winner of the long distance race during the first Zappas Olympia in 1859. The statutes of this organization reveal an ideological starting point for Coubertin’s journey: *“The purpose of the Society is to contribute to the development of the physical, moral and intellectual qualities of the residents of Wenlock, through the encouragement of outdoor exercises, and through the annual competition for prizes and medals intended to reward the best literary and artistic*

*productions, as well as the most remarkable feats of strength and skill*" (Coubertin, 1890 in Müller, 2000, p.283-284 ). Dr. Brookes made the effort to explain his driving force with the words "*Civium vires civitatis vis*", the strength of the citizens is the strength of the city (Coubertin, 1890 in Müller, 2000, p. 284). The site must have really impressed Coubertin as he does not get tired to describe the beauty of Much Wenlock and how he is amazed by what "*a progressive and generous municipality can make available to its citizens*" (Coubertin, 1890 in Müller, 2000, p. 285). In the same year Brookes sent a letter to various English mayors inviting them to organize their own local Olympic Games. Additionally, he founded the Shropshire Olympian Society to hold annual Games in differing towns, which resulted in four Shropshire Olympics, the last being held in 1864. In 1862 the Liverpool Athletic Club was established by Charles Melly and John Hulley with the goal of introducing "*a physical regime into education*". The founders belonged to the Muscular Christian movement and believed that physical exertion leads to the "cultivation of body and soul". Upon the suggestion of Brookes to organize Olympic Games the first Liverpool Olympics were held in 1862 and continued to be held in 1863, 1864 and 1867. These Games awarded medals to the victors and were accessible for "noble amateurs of all peoples". In 1867, Hulley stated during a meeting what can today be regarded as a first notion of the later concept of Olympism, "*What I desire to impress upon you is that Olympic Festivals are not the end of physical education. Physical Education, or rather its dissemination, is the end. Olympian festivals are a means of securing that end. They must be judged by their after effect, not their immediate results. They are evidence of the good done, but not the whole evidence.*" (Hulley, R., n.d.) It was also Hulley who introduced Juvenal's latin motto *mens sana in corpore sano*<sup>3</sup> (a sound mind in a healthy body) to the Liverpool Athletic Club and detached it from its original meaning. It will later also become the motto of the National Olympian Association (NOA) and other Olympian societies (Young, C., 2010).

In 1865 Brookes played again a crucial part in founding the National Olympian Association together with John Hulley and Ernst Georg Ravenstein. The latter was the director of the German Gymnastic Society in London, which had members from over 30 countries and thus was internationally well connected (Anthony, 2001). The NOA created a Charter which should incorporate many ideas and considerations which were already expressed during the foundation of the Liverpool Athletic Club. It also stated to organize national Olympian Games instead of many regional Games, to hold competitions periodically, to award medals instead of money to the victors and to exclude

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<sup>3</sup> This often in the Olympic context misused quote originates from Juvenal, a first century Roman satirist. He said, "If you feel you must pray, he says, you should merely pray for general good health: *orandum est ut sit mens sana in corpore sano*, 'one should pray for a sound mind in a sound body.' That is all the *mens sana* passage is about: 'pray not to get sick, and not to go crazy.' (Young, C, 2010, p.33)

professionals from competing. Additionally, a Union was founded to incorporate the various Olympic Unions (like the athletics, gymnastics, swimming, cricket union, etc.) under one umbrella. During the following 18 years the Association organized 6 National Olympian Games in different cities throughout England. The most successful Games were the ones in London 1866 with an athletic program quite similar to what we know today as the Olympic Games. The program hosted athletic races, high jump, long jump, javelin, wrestling, boxing, shotput and fencing (Georgiadis, 2003).

As mentioned before in chapter 4.2.2, the Amateur Athletic Club founded in 1865 was the first club to include “Amateur” in their name. This emphasize placed on that concept is strongly connected with the desire of the founders and board members to take over the entire English sport and to strictly exclude competitors belonging to the working class. With the influence and financial resources, the Club’s members were equipped with it grew rapidly in size and number of members. Their interpretation of amateurism stood diametrically against various ideologies of other sporting organizations of that time, and thus transferred the class struggle of everyday life also onto the playing field. The National Olympian Association’s declining success can be attributed to the Amateur Athletic Club’s strategy to encourage their members to abstain from the events hosted by the Olympian Association. The bigger the Club grew, the bigger were the effects resulting from their member’s absence from the Games. This development led to the abolishment of the National Olympian Association in 1883 with its last held Games in Hadley. Parts of the staff as well as the motto of the NOA were inherited by the National Physical Recreation Society (NPRS) in 1885, which in turn played a crucial role as a founding body of the British Olympic Association in 1905. The former NPRS’s president and treasurer were also members of the Olympic “Comite Brittanique” founded by Coubertin in 1902. This shines light on the connection between Hulley, Brookes and Coubertin (Hulley, n.d.).

Müller (2000) mentions another occasion which potentially influenced Coubertin towards restoring the Olympic Games. In 1891, in the British magazine *Greater Britain*, the Englishman John Astley Cooper voiced his idea of organizing “a regular Anglo-Saxon Olympiad” in different disciplines such as sciences, technology, art and sports. Riordan & Krüger (1999) state that the Englishman, as Müller saw him was actually an Australian in their opinion and this Anglo-Saxon Olympiad is considered by them as the idea which shall later find its realization in the Commonwealth Games. All under the premise of demonstrating the unity of the different constituents of the global British Empire. The young and enthusiastic Coubertin was most likely influenced by this proposal as there has been a public debate around this topic.

#### 6.2.4.3 Coubertin meets Dr. William Penny Brookes

Despite the fact, that Pierre de Coubertin has heard and read of Dr. William Penny Brookes' work before, it took him until 1890 to personally visit him in Much Wenlock. The prove for Coubertin's familiarity with Brookes sporting activities in England lies in a quote from the latter's speech during the 1866 National Olympian Games in London where he puts emphasize onto the importance of physical education and effort to ensure happiness, prosperity and freedom for the entire Empire. During the opening ceremony of the International Congress for the Propagation of Physical Exercise during the Universal Exhibition of 1889 in Paris, which Coubertin had been the secretary-general of, the Baron took the opportunity and used the same line of argumentation in favor of sport and physical exercise in order to ensure prosperity and freedom for France through a physically and morally educated young generation<sup>4</sup>. Interestingly, Coubertin mentioned Olympism or Olympic Games with no word, despite that he must have been aware that the words he used originally stem from the opening ceremony of the National Olympian Games in London 1866 (Torres, 2005). Only one year after this event the two men should meet in Much Wenlock. In a newspaper article written by Coubertin and published in the British press he had voiced his interest in the British school system. As Brookes, at this point in time was also strongly advocating to implement more physical education in English schools, this article received his attention and was the start of the correspondence of the two sport advocates which led Coubertin's path onto the playing fields of Much Wenlock in October 1890. William Penny Brookes had organized a special edition of his Wenlock Olympic Games in the baron's honor, where he could witness for the first time an Olympic Event. Georgiadis (2003) offers insights into the program surrounding the athletic events. Coubertin was able to observe an accurately followed schedule including a parade, hymns sung by children choirs, colorful decorations, laurel wreaths awarded to the athletes and ancient Greek quotations displayed on the site. Additionally, Brookes had granted his guest the opportunity to plant a tree as it was custom for high-ranking visitors at Much Wenlock and showed him around his trophy room (Young, 2004). As Young (2004) further outlines, Coubertin was shown the victors list of the 1859

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<sup>4</sup>“ . . . should a day unhappily arrive when the youth of this country shall be led to abandon the invigorating exercises of the gymnasium, and to exchange the manly games of recreation ground and the healthy and animating field-sports of their forefathers for the refined, the gentle, the delicate amusements of the drawing room and croquet lawn – then, I can tell you, what will assuredly and rapidly pass away – the freedom – the long-cherished freedom, and with it the power, the influence, the prosperity, and the happiness of this great empire”. (Brookes, 1866, pp.4–5).

“Si le jour doit venir où la jeunesse de ce pays renoncera aux plaisirs virils, et aux exercices fortifiants pour des plaisirs efféminés et des exercices de petites filles, vous savez ce qui vous attend: la ruine de vos chères libertés qui tomberont emportant avec elles la puissance, la prospérité et le bonheur de tout l'empire”. (Coubertin, 1889, p.24).

Zappas Olympics in Greece, documents of the 1866 National Olympian Games in London as well as newspaper articles written by Brookes proposing the start of international Olympic Games in Athens. After the Games, Coubertin announced that Brookes had been made an honorary member of the Union des Sociétés français de Sports Athlétiques. It becomes quite clear, that Brookes must have shared his knowledge about various Olympic endeavors of his own as well as in Greece. In a newspaper article in *La Revue Athlétique*, after his return to France, in December of 1890 Coubertin wrote, *"The fact that the Olympic Games, which modern Greece has been unable to restore, are being revived today is due not to a Hellene, but to Dr. W. P. Brookes. He is the one who began them forty years ago. At age 82, still alert and vigorous, he is still organizing and running them."* (Coubertin, 1890. as cited in Müller, 2000, p. 281). In the same article he repeats Brookes words from 1866, which he had lent without mentioning the author's name or the origin of the text only one year before. This time he acknowledges Brookes efforts and contributes the power and prosperity of England again to its *"fortifying exercises of the gymnasium, the manly games, the outdoor sports that give health and life"* (Coubertin, 1890. as cited in Müller, 2000, p. 286). His belief in the power of sports was exuberant at this point in time as he believed that, *"There was no need to invoke memories of Greece or to seek encouragement from the past. People like sports for sports' sake"* ( Coubertin, 1890. as cited in Müller, 2000, p. 286). In 1896 he even referred to the Zappas Olympics as *"some premature and unskillful reinstitution attempted in Athens in King Otho's reign"* (Coubertin, 1896 as cited in Müller, 2000, p.310). However, years later Coubertin *"stated in print that there had never been any Zappas Olympics at all, and pretended that he knew nothing of Brookes' own Olympic endeavors"* (Coubertin, 1908 as cited in Young, 2004, p.151).

#### 6.2.3.4 Coubertin, the IOC and the first international Olympic Games of the modern era

Taking the accounts presented up to this point, it is in no way obvious how history will play out. In this context it is crucial to remember that at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, sport was far away from the social standing it enjoys today. There were hardly any sport clubs existing, almost no federations, no world championships and the internationalization of sport was in its infancy. Judging from the quotes and articles of Pierre de Coubertin it doesn't seem likely that he would, additionally to his several managerial and political positions, come up with the idea to create and organize a new era of Olympic Games.

However, on November 25<sup>th</sup> 1892 Coubertin, for the first time according to Müller (2000), went public with his idea of reviving the Olympic Games, pretending that this idea was novel and his own (Young, 2004). During the celebration of an anniversary of the Union des Sociétés Françaises des

Sports Athlétiques at the Sorbonne Coubertin provided his audience with an overview of different approaches to sport, different developments around Europe and North America. He lays out the benefits as well as the downsides of these various angles to interpret sport and physical activity in different geographical and cultural settings only to provide a solution in the shape of international Olympic Games.

In German gymnastics Pierre de Coubertin saw a tool to implement hierarchical thinking, obedience as well as precision and discipline among its participators, but in order to reach this goal the gymnasts need to be under “*a warlike influence*” (Coubertin, 1892, p.290) in order to be ready for the time when “*the call came*” (Coubertin, 1892, p.289). The Swedish gymnastics he describes as “*the gymnastics of the weak*” (Coubertin, 1892, p.293), but that they have scientific and medical benefits to treat the sick. However, he dislikes the gymnastic principle that “*men must not measure themselves against other, only against themselves*” (Coubertin, 1892, p.). To England, he further attributes, that it has established the most refined system there is in the world. Thomas Arnold, of course, did not remain unmentioned as well as the efforts of providing playing fields throughout England, not necessarily in the aristocratic areas but rather in the poor and popular quarters.<sup>5</sup> According to Coubertin, this had the effect of spreading English sports throughout their (former) colonies and the rest of the world. He then elaborated how in the U.S. sports and games had gained popularity, how this is reflected by the exponential increase of money spent on playing fields and sport halls as well as the growing space devoted to sports in newspapers. After briefly mentioning the French system and developments as well as struggles of the past years he said, “*SO MUCH FOR THE PAST; WHAT ABOUT THE FUTURE?*” and answers it by saying, that sport, “*is democratic and international. The first of these characteristics will guarantee its future: anything that is not democratic is no longer viable today. As for the second, it opens unexpected prospects to us. There are people, whom you call utopians when they talk to you about the disappearance of war, and you are not altogether wrong; but there are others who believe in the progressive reduction in the chances of war, and I see no utopia in this. It is clear that the telegraph, railways, the telephone, the passionate research in science, congresses and exhibitions have done more for peace than any treaty or diplomatic convention. Well, I hope that athletics will do even more. Those who have seen 30,000*

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<sup>5</sup> Due to the changing episteme sport became more accepted, also by company owners who used to prohibit their workers from participating in Games, but once the notion spread that sport might be beneficial to one’s health, those same company owners established working teams which we know today as e.g. Manchester United or Arsenal (Perry, 2017). Further, worker’s unions for both the skilled as well as the unskilled workers emerged and played their part in empowering workers, increasing their wages, improving their conditions and granting them more leisure time, which is all beneficial to the dissemination and acceptance of sport (Matthews, 1991).



*people running through the rain to attend a football match will not think that I am exaggerating. Let us export rowers, runners and fencers; there is the free trade of the future, and on the day when it is introduced within the walls of old Europe the cause of peace will have received a new and mighty stay." He then closed the speech with the call for the "restoration of the Olympic Games" (Coubertin, 1892 in Müller, 2000).*

His audience was not yet ready for this great step towards organization of international Olympic Games. According to Findling & Pelle (2004), his guests did not comprehend Coubertin's proposal and thought it to be more of symbolic nature. Years later, in his Olympic Memoirs, written in 1931, he briefly outlines what he retrospectively regarded as the reason for his unsuccessful attempt in restoring the Games. *"Naturally, I had foreseen every eventuality except what actually happened. Opposition? Objections, irony? Or even indifference? Not at all. Everyone applauded, everyone approved, everyone wished me great success, but no one had really understood. It was a period of total, absolute lack of comprehension that was about to start"* (Coubertin, 1997, pp.12). With every sentence and every thought we gather it gets clearer how strategically advanced and how well his preparations were thought through and his guests, members and colleagues were chosen. Their role determined and customized in order to maximize their value in regards to realizing his idea. The following quotation will shine light on Pierre de Coubertin's selection criteria for recruiting fellow supporters. *"[The students] were gazing in admiration at the platform, at the immaculate shirt front and dress code of impeccable cut of the most prominent man about town of the time, Viscount Léon de Janzé, whom I had shortly before made President of the Union des Sports Athlétiques, being well aware that he was not only a leading figure of society but a man of great intelligence and reliable character. On either side of him were seated the Rector of the University, Mr. Octave Gréard, and Prince Obolensky, Marshal at the court of the Grand-Duke Vladimir".* He then continues and declares, *"[...] we had a number of helpers well placed in the world of letters, science and politics: Victor Duruy<sup>6</sup>, Jules Simon<sup>7</sup>, Georges Picot<sup>8</sup>, and a host of others [...]"* (Coubertin, 1997, pp.12) However, despite his failure to revive the Games Coubertin did not become tired to realize his idea.

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<sup>6</sup> Victor Duruy (1811-1894) was French Minister of Education and Historian. He regarded the ancient Olympic Games as free for any free Greek to participate independent from wealth or birth. Further, he believed that the ancient Festival pursued two objectives: A healthy body and a healthy mind as well as preparing the youth for war (Ulf, 2008).

<sup>7</sup> Jules Simon, (1814-1896) was French Minister of Education before he became French Prime Minister. Coubertin knew Simon probably already in 1887, but met him a year later. Both had criticized the French school system and were in close ideological proximity regarding the reform of the education system towards more physical education and games (Wassong & Müller, 2007).

<sup>8</sup> Georges Picot (1838-1909), was a jurist and historian, whose closer connection with Coubertin is uncertain (Georges Picot, n.d.).

A couple of months after this first announcement of the Baron's plans, he together with a second board member of the USFSA, Mr. A. de Pallissaux, requested the organization of an international Congress in Paris for the study and extension of the principles of amateurism (Coubertin, 1896). This topic is of great concern not only for the French but also the international world of sports, as there had been various incidences where athletes had been sent home due to not meeting foreign amateur regulations despite fulfilling all national requirements. One incidence had happened to Coubertin himself, in his role as a sports club leader and secretary of the French Athletics Federation, when his rowing team wanted to compete at the famous Hanley regatta in England but was sent home due to above mentioned failure to meet the English amateur criteria (Riordan & Krüger, 1999).

The actual organization of the congress was conducted by the three members forming the International Committee of the Olympic Games, not to be confused with the later established IOC – the International Olympic Committee. Pierre de Coubertin, as the secretary general of the USFSA was in charge of France and continental Europe, C. Herbert, the honorary secretary of the Amateur Athletic Association was responsible for England and its colonies, and W. M. Sloan, professor at Princeton University took over the agenda for the American continent. Coubertin (1896 in Müller, 2000, p.311) explained his thoughts for staging the Congress not in an ordinary building but in the Halls of the Sorbonne as follows, *“It seemed to me that under the venerable roof of the Sorbonne the words “Olympic Games” would resound more impressively and more persuasively on the audience.”* Two preliminary meetings were held, one in New York in late 1893 and one in London in early 1894, where the program had been discussed and finalized. The event was under the presidency of Alphonse Chodron de Courcel, diplomat and former French ambassador to Germany and at the time to London (Weber, 1970), and under the patronage of a very elite group of individuals, which was also communicated to the public in form of a press release. Among this group one can find respectable personalities such as the King of the Belgians, the Prince of Wales, the Prince Royal of Sweden, the Prince Royal of Greece as well as the Grand Duke Vladimir of Russia. In this press release it also said that sixty-one French and foreign delegates were already registered. The circular letter, which was sent out well in advance to sports organizations throughout the world included the invitation as well as the declared purpose of the congress (Müller, 2000).

*“The purpose is twofold. It is vital that athletics retain the noble and chivalrous quality which distinguished it in the past, so that it can effectively continue to play within the education of modern peoples the admirable role which the Greek masters attributed to it. Human imperfection tends always to transform the Olympian athlete into a circus gladiator. One must choose between two athletic methods which are not compatible. To defend oneself against the spirit of lucre and*

*professionalism which threatens to invade them, the Amateurs, in the majority of countries, have created complicated legislation full of compromises and contradiction; what is more, too often the letter rather than the spirit of this legislation is respected. Reform is needed, and before this is undertaken it must be discussed. The issues included on the agenda of the congress relate to these compromises and contradictions which exist within the amateur rules. The project referred to in the last paragraph would be the pleasing sanction of international harmony that we are, as yet, in no way seeking to achieve, merely to prepare for. The re-establishment of the Olympic Games, on a basis and in the conditions in keeping with the needs of modern life, would bring together, every four years, representatives of the nations of the world, and one is permitted to think that these peaceful, courteous contests constitute the best form of internationalism” (Coubertin, 1894 in Müller, 2000, p.301).*

By comparing the first attempt Coubertin had voiced the restoration of the Olympic Games in 1892 and this circular letter from 1894 the focus has slightly changed. In the former text sport was attributed to be democratic and international by nature. I would argue that it is as democratic and international as one wants it to be. It has to be added that Coubertin himself was aware of the ambiguity of sport depending on the way it is exercised and the ideology behind it. It can be good or bad, it can bring *“the most virtuous as well as the lowest passions into the game, it may develop unselfishness and a sense of honour as well as financial greed, it can be chivalrous or corrupted, manly or rough, and finally it can be used to enhance peace as well as prepare for war”* (Coubertin, 1894a) Seemingly, he must have realized after his unsuccessful attempt in 1892, that he had addressed the topic to the wrong audience with the wrong focal points. By placing the attention on the amateur question and by having invited an elite international audience who has a very strong interest in keeping amateur regulations in place globally, he succeeded with his idea of the restoration of the Olympic Games.

In a newspaper article of 1894 he said "The new Olympic Games will be modern, very modern. There will be no question of wearing pink tunics to run in a cardboard stadium. . . . No tripods or incense; these beautiful things are dead, and dead things are never resurrected. Only the idea can live again, adapted to the needs and taste of the age. . . ." (Coubertin, 1894b, p.184)

According to Weber (1970), Coubertin experienced no opposition or major criticism to his endeavor. The main reason for that, was that it did not question the established order, although, Coubertin saw himself together with his audience as rebels against the “old school”, ignoring the fact that his audience came from exactly there. But this non-conformist approach seems to have been beneficial

for his idea as it gave the entire project a rebellious character. It was only non-conformist in that sense that he refused that *"legitimism and clericalism of the conservative tradition"* (Weber, 1970, p19) he was born into, but highlighting internationalism and pacifism, both trends of the time as it is evident through transnational organizations like the International Red Cross, founded in 1863 and the Esperanto movement, founded in 1887 (Loland, 2001).

Interestingly, the invitation letter had been sent out to organizations throughout the world, while the European guests of the Congress received the invitation only one month before the event took place. One letter was also sent to William Penny Brookes, whose letters Coubertin had ignored and not answered in recent months. Brookes sent one letter to Coubertin wishing him good luck for his endeavor and a second letter to the Greek Prime Minister ending with the words, *"My friend Pierre de Coubertin, myself, and others are endeavoring to promote international Olympic festivals. I hope your King will patronize such Games."* (Brookes as cited in Young, 2008). This letter suggests, that Brookes regarded Coubertin as his companion in the struggle towards realizing international Olympic Games. Simultaneously, this suggests that Coubertin, judging from his behavior and ghost-like attitude towards Brookes, regarded him more like a competitor or even adversary, which he did not want to share his glory with.

Despite the fact that the preliminary program, which was attached to the circular invitation letter, had eight subtopics on the program of which seven were directly concerned with various amateur questions, the last item though, was named *"On the possibility of restoring the Olympic Games. – Under what circumstances could they be restored?"*. Coubertin uses roughly the same strategy as he did the first time he had proposed the restoration of Olympic Games. He outlines and interprets a certain problem, in this case the different interpretations or disregard of amateur regulations around the world, only to present his customized solution to the posed challenges, the restoration of the Olympic Games. When we compare the preliminary program with the printed program which was sent out, it can be noticed that the name of the congress had been changed from *"International Congress at Paris For the study and extension of the principles of amateurism"* to *"International Congress at Paris For the restoration of the Olympic Games"*. Coubertin himself provides evidence to make the claim that this happened not coincidentally, *"The Programme for the Congress was drawn up in such a way as to disguise its main object: "the revival of the Olympic Games"; it merely put forward questions on sport in general. I carefully retained from mentioning such an ambitious project; afraid it might raise such a storm of contempt and scorn as to discourage beforehand those, favourably disposed towards it. For Whenever I had alluded to my plan at meetings in Oxford and New York etc. I had always been sadly conscious that my audience considered it utopian and*

*impracticable*” (Coubertin, 1896 in Müller, 2000, p.310). Not least for that reason, to convince his audience, to take them back to ancient times and to set the spirit right he organized the singing of the Delphic Hymn to Apollo, in front of 2000 people (Coubertin, 1896 in Müller, 2000, p.311).

It has to be added, that Quanz (1993) is of the opinion, that the peace movement, for which Paris was the center at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, had an important impact on Coubertin’s plans and ideas. As noted earlier, Frederic Le Play has founded the Unions for Social Peace, which Coubertin was a member of. Not least through this membership he had a prominent network of peace advocates, which he used for his advantage placing the claimed peacemaking character of the Olympic Games together with amateurism at the center of his argumentation. Additionally, Quanz (1993, p.2) argues, that “pacifists provided an important impact on Coubertin’s plan to establish modern athletic contests within the milieu of major international exhibition” Loland (2001) regards this link to the peace movement and its organizational structure as a source for inspiration for the international structure of the IOC. The different National Olympic Committees do not represent the respective nation to the IOC, but the other way around. So the NOCs around the world serve as the Olympic Ambassadors to their respective Countries, to represent the IOC and to ensure the dissemination of Olympism.

The way in which the 78 delegates from a total of 37 sport associations, among which were 20 delegates from foreign sport associations (Wassong & Müller, 2007) could wine, dine and enjoy their time in Paris was certainly not hindering Coubertin’s desired outcome. The result of such great effort and dedication, as well as some tweaking and buttering up his guests are well known today and outlived Coubertin in the shape of the Olympic Games and the International Olympic Committee. It was decided unanimously to form the International Olympic Committee as the governing body of what is known today as the Olympic Movement, but first and foremost to organize the first international Olympic Games. The 14 original IOC members were strategically chosen. They all came from the upper or even royal class, as this new organization did not have the financial means to cover travel costs of its members nor for the organization of the Games, it was of utmost importance to recruit financially superior and socially influential personalities, first and foremost to gain support for their idea and to ensure sufficient resources. In Coubertin’s words from 1896 it sounds the following, “*I called to my assistances such personal friends as Professor Sloane of Princeton University, or gentlemen with whom I had been corresponding on that subject for a long time, like M. Kemeny from Hungary, General Boutowski from Russia; Mr Herbert from England, Commander Balk from Sweden*” (Coubertin, 1896 in Müller, 2000, p.310). Additionally, these members were not concerned with or dependent on regular labor and could therefore, devote some of their time to

the Committee's work. These 14 men were a really international bunch coming from Italy, Greece, Great Britain, the Russian Empire, New Zealand, Argentina, the United States, Austria-Hungary, the United Kingdoms of Sweden and Norway, Bohemia and of course France (Coubertin, 1896 in Müller, 2000). Years later, in his memoirs, Coubertin demonstrates how his thought process upon the selection of his members, guests and co-organizers must have looked like, "*This unusual geography was intended to simplify propaganda for me. My two colleagues [Sloane and Herbert] had accepted mainly in order to please me*" (Coubertin, 1996, p.18). Coubertin describes in his memoirs, that Herbert was in charge of a great and organized propaganda network in Britain and its colonies and that due to Sloane's reputation among academics of transatlantic universities which were in control of athletics in the U.S., was crucial to the success of Coubertin's plans. Additionally, he clarifies his approach to Germany and the Franco-Prussian War. He tried to invite a German representative to the Congress, but as soon as the French Turner Movement, threatened to withdraw their attendance should a German be invited he had to distance himself from that idea. On the same page, he clarifies that he could never understand the protest against the victor of the Franco-Prussian War and that he suffered from these nationalistic sentiments most of his fellow Frenchmen had, due to what he called a poor and wrong understanding of patriotism (Coubertin, 1996).

During the Congress several basic principles of the Olympic Games were decided upon. Among these principles we can find the four-year cycle of an Olympiad, the modern character of the competitions, the exclusion of children (children contests were proposed by Greece and Sweden, but refused by Coubertin, because he regarded it as impractical and even dangerous), the election of the International Olympic Committee with its stable principles and composition as well as the organizational model of representing Olympism to the respective countries of its members (Coubertin, 1996,p.24).

At first, Coubertin had in mind to host the first edition of this Olympic Games in Paris in 1900, but somehow the rest of the committee did not possess this kind of patience so that the first Games were rescheduled to 1896. The committee originally chose London, which was refused by Coubertin. When he realized that London would be chosen by the committee he simply postponed the decision. Demetrios Vikelas, an intellectual from Greece who lived in Paris but had no connections to athletics, was elected president of this Olympic sub-committee to choose the first host city. At first, Vikelas was neither convinced of Athens as the first city to host this somewhat new event nor was it for him foreseeable to become the first president of the IOC after he had presented his elaborated ideas for Olympic Games in Athens on the last day of the Congress. Vikelas at first was reluctant to accept the position as the first president of the IOC, but after Coubertin had relativized, that he will

hold this role only until the Athens Olympics are over and that Coubertin himself will lead the IOC to the Paris Games of 1900. He had in mind, that the acting IOC president should always come from the upcoming host nation. The idea behind that was to facilitate negotiations and propaganda. History has shown us, that Coubertin had applied that rule only once, in 1896 and that was to replace Vikelas. He shall hold the presidency for the next 31 years until 1925, when the second Summer Games in Paris and the first Winter Games in Chamonix were over. Surprisingly, after all the time and effort Coubertin has invested in the revival of the Olympic Games, it seems like he withdrew himself a great deal from the organization of the Athens Games after he had visited the city in the autumn of 1894 and experienced a quite extensive opposition to his plans. This repudiative notion stemmed from the difficult financial situation of the struggling Greece state. Vikelas moved back to Greece in order to work and network more efficiently, but during the time between the foundation of the IOC and the Athens Games Coubertin got engaged to his later wife and focused his time on writing a history book about France as it seems that he had lost much of his former interest and passion for the Olympic Games (Young, 2004). Georgiadias (2000), further discovered, that Coubertin could not have been involved in the organization in the way he describes it in his memoirs as he spent most of that time in Paris. The organization of the Games was mostly advanced by Vikelas, Crown Prince Constantin, who was won as a strong supporter for the IOC's endeavor, and a Greek organizing committee. After analyzing Coubertin's letters (1897 in Müller, 2000), it is clear, the Greek organizers saw themselves in some way as the ideological successors of Zappa's idea and therefore, they were in constant conflict with Coubertin's idea of changing the location of future Olympic Games every four years to another capital of the world, as they wished to make Athens the permanent host of the Olympic Games. Ultimately, the first Olympic Games of the modern era were inaugurated on Easter Monday, April 6 in the, thanks to Mr. Averoff, a wealthy business man, newly renovated Panathenaic Stadium. They stadium was built to host 50 000 spectators, however, Coubertin was talking about 60 000 people, mostly Greeks, who were present and watching when the Marathon event was finished an Spiridon Louis, a Greek peasant dressed in traditional clothes, was the first to cross the finish line. *"Wild applause greeted his victory. It was one of the most extraordinary sights I have ever seen. I shall never forget the scene and it left me convinced that physic forces play a much more active role in sport than is generally believed"* (Coubertin, 1997 in Müller, 2000, p333). The excitement he experienced among the Greek people and the pride the Americans and other victors took home with them excited not only him but even one of his opponents, Charles Maurras. The anti-Semitic nationalist and monarchist, who attended the Games in Athens observed, "that this internationalism will not destroy the fatherlands, but will fortify

them” (Coubertin, 1896 in Müller, 2000, p.340). A quote which shall tragically materialize only 18 years later, for the first time.

Now, that the genealogy and anthropology of the Olympic Games from its beginnings in antiquity to its restoration in 1896 has been presented, it is the duty of this work to compare the findings with the most profoundly elaborated account of Pierre de Coubertin concerning the philosophical foundations of modern Olympism extracted from a lecture recorded at a radio station in Geneva in 1935.

One year before the Games of the XI Olympiad in Berlin 1936, the then honorary president of the IOC, Pierre de Coubertin, was asked to explain the meaning of the Games and its underlying philosophy of Olympism. The key elements of his understanding and conception of Olympism will be presented in the following passages, however, the full text of the speech can be found in the appendix of this work.

As the first principle, for ancient as well as for modern Olympism he identifies Religion. He says, the ancient athlete “honored the gods”, today, the modern athlete honors “his country, his race, and his flag”. This religious sentiment is transformed and expanded by the internationalism, democracy and progress of science. Further, he calls for this religious sentiment as the cultural justification for the ceremonial character surrounding the athletic competitions, which his audience has criticized at the beginning. He then describes his ideal Olympic competitor as the *religio athletae* who worships athletics and sport like it was a religion, which often happens unconsciously, but increases gradually and which will ultimately free the “body from the constraints of unbridled passions” for which he condemns individual freedom responsible. The second characteristic in his understanding of “*Olympism is that it is an aristocracy, an elite. Of course, this aristocracy is completely egalitarian in origin since membership is determined solely by the physical superiority of the individual, by his muscular ability – improved to a certain extent by his willingness to train*” (Coubertin, 1935 in Müller, 2000, pp.580). That’s also the reason he names for refusing “*mandatory moderation*” and calls for athletic “*freedom of excess*”. Hence, he introduced “*Citius, altius, fortius*” as the Olympic motto, which should ensure the right mindset to excel and to beat records. As the next fundamental part of Olympism, Coubertin presents knighthood. He describes this chivalrous attitude as a bond being stronger than camaraderie only. The knightly character ought to enjoy competition as “*effort opposing effort for the love of effort itself*”, and as “*courteous yet violent struggle*” which needs to be added on top of the notion of mutual assistance, which he regards as the basis of camaraderie. He attests this chivalrous attitude not solely to the athletes but also to the spectators, as they should



respect and honor the athlete's performance, "regardless of national sympathies". These nationalistic feelings "must be put on temporal leave". As further key aspects of Olympism he names truce and rhythm as the former ensures the latter. He sees the Olympic Games, which have to be held in this four-year astronomical rhythm, as the "quadrennial celebration of the human springtime [is] honoring the successive arrival of human generations" (Coubertin, 1935 in Müller, 2000, p.581). He sees this human springtime personified in the shape of the young adult male, whom he compares to a "superb machine". Therefore, he goes on and expresses his image of the true Olympic hero, which he thus finds in the "individual adult male". From that, he derives the conclusion that team sports are on a hierarchically lower level. Both time the emphasis was put on "male", only to share his point of view that women could potentially participate in team sports, only to confess, that he does "not approve of women's participation in public competitions, which does not mean that they should engage in a great many sports, merely they should not become the focus of the spectacle. At the Olympic Games, their role should be above all to crown the victors, as was the case in the ancient tournaments" (Coubertin, 1935 in Müller, 2000, pp.582). He further attests to the individual male athlete a moral *Altis*, similar to the sacred enclosure in ancient Olympia, which, according to Coubertin was "*reserved for the consecrated, purified athlete only*". As the final principle he mentions Beauty, as the expression of the mind, which shall, in the shape of high arts and literature, accompany the Olympic Games. He hopes, that future Games will respect the place of poetry within intellectual exhibitions alongside the Olympic program. In the second to last paragraph of his speech he put special emphasis on peace and respect for each other, but as a prerequisite for respect he identifies the necessity to first know each other. "To ask people to love each other is merely a form of childishness. To ask them to respect each other is not utopian, but in order to respect each other they must first know each other." (Coubertin, 1935 in Müller, 2000, p.583).

Now, as there are gathered sufficient insights from Pierre de Coubertin's life, extracts of his speeches and articles, both before and after the foundation of the IOC and the first Olympic Games, it is time to switch over to the analytical part of this thesis. The aim of the following chapter will be to analyze the discourse of the time, its social structure, the social practices and events which are evident and a prerequisite to the foundation of the Olympic Games and the IOC. The upcoming empirical investigation will be guided by the already provided theoretical framework. The genealogy outlined in this chapter will thus represent the corpora which will act as the main subject of analysis. The critical discourse analysis aspires to eventually arrive at a clearer understanding of how Coubertin could have come up with the philosophical concept behind his neologism "Olympism", and what exactly he meant by and wanted to achieve with it.

### **6.3 Critical Discourse Analysis applied on Coubertin, the Olympic Games and his concept of Olympism**

In order to pay respect to Foucault's genealogical approach and to give sufficient attention to one of Coubertin's conceptions of the world, namely, "*nothing is comprehensible or explicable without history*" (Coubertin, 1930, p.39) a critical Discourse Analysis will be applied on top of the genealogical part, which will serve as the main corpora of this empirical endeavor. With the help of Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault the attempt will be undertaken to deconstruct language and discourse in order to extract meaning, reveal power/knowledge relations and to identify inherent contradictions as well as expose hierarchical structures to eventually answer the first two research questions:

1. How did Pierre de Coubertin come up with the idea of reviving the Olympic Games and establishing his concept of Olympism?
2. What did he regard as Olympism and what does it represent?

#### **6.3.1 The History of Pierre de Coubertin's Olympic Idea Critically Analyzed within the Discourse of the Time**

The analysis will start at the chosen point of departure, the birth of Pierre de Coubertin. Being born into a French aristocratic family in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the young baron experienced a youth full of privileges but also social changes and turmoil. His family had been very loyal to the royal leaders of France and thus were legitimists and royalists who were deeply shocked by the defeat of France during the Franco-Prussian War and the violence of the following civil war between the Paris Commune and the National Government, which amounted to roughly 20 000 deaths within a single week and changed the contemporary life in France substantially and sustainably.

Subsequently, the Third French Republic was proclaimed and democratic notions started to prevail over royalist sentiments. It was the result of an ideological struggle originating from the French Revolution in 1789 and its liberal and humanistic values, its anti-monarchism which goes hand in hand with anti-clericalism and secularism in order to remove power from the church which was one of the monarchs' strongest and most powerful allies (Baubérot, 2010). As MacAloon (1981, p.27) put it nicely, "Three monarchies, two empires and three republics in less than a century, that was a lot, even for a people with the resources of the French ....". These changing values influenced the episteme of the time strongly and thus, the power-knowledge relations. What could be said, what opinions are respected and accepted, what was regarded as a desirable future, and so on. All the

answers to these questions were subjects of change and progress, if one wants to call it as such. The liberal ideals and social realities as well as the uncertain economy during the Great Depression between 1873 and 1896 certainly contributed to the republican, anti-legitimist mindset of Pierre de Coubertin which he developed during his youth and adolescence. Adding to the rapid transformation of Coubertin's beloved country, were of course the scientific innovations of the late industrial revolution like telegraphs and railroad. The advances made in communication technology and transportation made the world a smaller, more accessible place, at least for the privileged. However, these societal, technological and ideological changes are not mentioned to suggest that he had lost his elite and supreme self-image, he was brought up with. Due to his aristocratic origins he enjoyed an elite education. In the Jesuit College of Saint-Ignace he soon touched on antiquity and developed a strong interest for the ancient Greek culture. His humanities teacher, father Carron, was his main source of inspiration and also the one who introduced the history of the ancient Olympic Games to the young baron. After graduating from Saint-Ignace he rebelled against the educational career in law and the military, where his parents wanted to see him. He broke with legitimist family traditions and a certain non-conformist attitude crystallized, but only in regards to his parents, and in line with the newly emerging episteme of the French Third Republic and its liberal values. In complete opposition to the wishes of his parents he sympathized with the ideology of the French Republican Party of the time, which resulted in attending the Ecole Supérieure des Sciences Politiques, which he left as an "enlightened spirit" (Koch, 2014). The university had been founded as the educational think tank and academy for future republican French leaders and can be considered as a strategic institution fostering changing power/knowledge relations while society was moving towards different regimes of truth.

During his studies he developed a strong interest in education and made himself familiar with different education theories. One of the most influential books he consumed was "Notes sur Angleterre" by one of the Universities founders, Taine. Together with "Tom Brown's School Days", this was the starting point for Coubertin's admiration and interest for English education, specifically elitist education in English public schools. The suggested natural social order, at which top Taine saw a morally and physically educated elite, was echoed by Coubertin, who intrinsically justified it by believing in the notion of noblesse oblige, the moral obligation of the wealthy to use their superior social standing and financial resources to give back to the less fortunate. Not surprisingly, an unchallenged status quo for the elite of a country would manifest its structural power and systematic positioning while it can continue and expand its individual self-esteem and perhaps public prestige by donating and giving back to the lower classes.

This is also in line with the story of Thomas Arnold and his role as the headmaster and school reformer at Rugby. Coubertin's idealized role model, which he only knew from this romantic book authored by one of Arnold's former students, was not necessarily a great fan of sports and games but saw their potential in educating the future elite of England towards becoming Christians, gentlemen and educated persons. He was a conservative traditionalist whose objective was to discipline and tame the imperfect human nature of his students (Loland, 2001). However, it was this idea of Arnold, to utilize a form of institutionalized sport as a tool to achieve educational and moral progress, which most likely sparked Coubertin's interest and shaped his understanding of the moral and educative value which lies in sport, games and physical exercise in general. In this type of education the young baron saw "*the keystone of the British Empire*" and its colonial success, which Coubertin contributes to the British educational reform of 1840 (Coubertin, 1896). This statement is rather the result of wishful thinking than accurate history, as it was more the commercial interest, the "imperialism of free trade" and the technological advantage which brought dependency to colonial and non-colonial territories as it is highlighted by Hynes (1976). As outlined before, the vast majority of territorial gains outside the British Isles happened before this educational reform of 1840 and thus, reveals Coubertin's disguised intent to present physical education as a sort of insurance for colonial expansion. Further, in the same speech, he states, "*It is the application according to modern requirements of one of the most characteristic principles of Grecian civilization: To make the muscles be chief factor in the work of moral education*" (Coubertin, 1896, p. 308). It is clear that he wants to summon the spirit of the, at the time and in parts still today, idealized ancient Greek society to connect his idea once again to something intangible, something symbolic, something so idolized that nobody would think to criticize. However, he calls for physical education as moral education according to modern requirements. But what he considers as such modern requirements, he leaves unanswered. We can extract and analyze that the positively connoted signifier "modern" is hierarchically placed above, and thus, is more favorable and appealing than its binary opposites like "old-fashioned" and "outdated", but still lacks of meaning. He leaves the interpretation of his words totally to his audience and readership and thus, often avoids friction and excessive criticism. Vagueness is his strategy to success.

His fascination for Arnold and English school sport as perceived through different books and texts made him visit Britain. On his journey he visited elite schools and expanded his network during his stay. It is coherent, that the liberally educated and enlightened Pierre de Coubertin found great appeal in what he observed in the motherland of liberalism. The most powerful nation of the time showed its muscles and allured Coubertin. In this notion of individual freedom, competition,

secularism but also democracy and internationalism which he saw represented in British school sport, especially in games like football and rugby. British school sports had overcome the Christian hatred of the flesh and this static hierarchy which assumed the mind to be much more important than the body, as this will only hinder intellectual and cognitive development. In this Coubertin must have seen the realization of Plato's understanding that "*The body and mind should be cultivated together*" (Plato as cited in Young, 2005, p.29).

His professional career with its many positions is of utmost importance to achieve his retrospectively formulated goal of connecting his name to a great educational reform. During these years and his various visits and occupations he further expanded his network, could make important experiences of how society works, what people want to hear and how to achieve certain things, not least with the help of incredibly highly respected men like former ministers, future presidents, ambassadors, military officers, high representatives of the church, academics, business men and many more. This elite and aristocratic circle will be his main tool together with his rhetoric, intellect and passion in paving the way towards reaching his goal. Through his enthusiasm he was a founding member of several sport governing bodies and committees, which retrospectively opened doors and opportunities for him. Through the strategically well positioned comrades he enjoyed many exclusive privileges and was granted easier access to certain institutions as we have seen before and will see in this chapter through a more analytical than descriptive approach.

Coubertin was a very disciplined man who placed great dedication towards reaching his pronounced goal. In order to realize that, he had to make his name visible. This was achieved by several publications, the first being published in 1888 in Frederick Le Play's journal "La Reforme Social". Le Play also gave him the opportunity to organize a conference on "Problems in Physical Education" embedded into the Exhibition Universelle of 1889, which again can be regarded as a strategic step towards widening his network of supporters and to connect his name to the perhaps most prestigious and important event of the time.

After his travels to England, through France and across the Atlantic to Universities on the east coast of the United States of America and Canada, which he all additionally used to further expand his network of influential people which share a certain interest for sports, antiquity and/or educational matters, he published more books and texts concerning his experiences made. As mentioned before, his travels through England were coined by his contact with educational institutions which mainly served the elite of the country. My interpretation of the social events and practices taking place during Coubertin's journey along the U.S. east coast and Canada, embedded in the wider

sphere of the episteme of the time, results in identifying connections to Universities which served (at least at the time) mainly an audience stemming from the upper class. This interpretation is confirmed by Katz (1983), who reviewed and interpreted two other studies of Burke (1982) and Hall (1982) concerning the role of nineteenth century American colleges, emphasizing the point that tuition fees were raised exponentially throughout the country, but especially on the east coast, amounting to a worker's annual salary and thus, making it merely impossible for the working class to attend such schools.

Coubertin must have been aware of these circumstances when he visited, but as he himself was of higher social status he most likely did not mind, but rather endorsed being surrounded by the social and economic elite of the country. When visiting these universities, he was also introduced to the early attempts of inter-collegial sports and contests, not least because the elitist universities had sufficient resources available and could thus start what is known today as college sports. This must have been a very formative experience for the young Coubertin. He saw what was possible with sports, to gather thousands of spectators at one place to "*worship the religion of the muscles*" as Coubertin perhaps would have phrased it.

In 1890 he made his way to England again, where he met William Penny Brookes who had been organizing his own version of Olympic Games in Much Wenlock with a very similar character as Coubertin's later idea shall materialize. Brookes' idea developed out of the urge to educate the working class which was suffering from the harsh social and working conditions which came along with the industrial revolution. To provide alternative leisure time activities to drinking and gambling for the most vulnerable parts of society in order to enable them to climb up the social ladder and to improve their individual lives. Brookes, who was classically educated and inspired by ancient Greek culture, themed his Olympic festival firstly, around his romantic interpretation of antiquity and secondly, around popular past time activities, sportive as well as non-sportive, in order to entertain his spectators and participants. It was a successful concept which was rounded off by a certain ceremonial character which resulted in several traditions, which seemingly impressed the young Coubertin. He was truly amazed by the beauty of the event Brookes had organized for the baron. Additionally, Brookes believed that physical exertion ensures a military prepared people. This does not suggest that Brookes was a militarist, I'd rather see it as a welcoming side effect of physical training, which certainly did not hinder its success and acceptance. Another great concern of Brookes was the introduction of physical education in schools throughout the country, not only to the already privileged social groups, but also the marginalized groups within society. These ideas and purposes were written down in the Much Wenlock Olympian Society's own statutes basically

calling for the Greek ideal of Kalokagathia, the harmonious development of body and mind. Brookes himself, was at least partially inspired by what was taking place in Greece, namely the Zappas Olympia. He was in correspondence with the organizers and followed the newspaper articles reporting from this national Greek festival. Additionally, he recruited personnel from the Zappas Olympia, took over several sportive and non-sportive events for the Much Wenlock Games and introduced the Greek born idea to award medals as prizes. Through this connection between Coubertin and Brookes and Brookes and the Zappas Olympia it must be assumed that Coubertin knew of the Zappas Olympia through Brookes.

The different Olympic endeavors of Brookes, like the Shropshire Olympian Society and the Liverpool Olympics seemed promising, but were shut down by a changing power/knowledge constellation. The foundation of the Amateur Athletic Club with its strict interpretation of amateurism ended the altruistic and egalitarian Olympic attempts of Brookes and his fellow comrades and helped shape a new understanding of amateurism which is interpreted up to today in the idolized way instead of being called by its real name: the discrimination and exclusion of economically challenged people. This understanding of amateurism was also manifested and evident in the United States' university system, which he was so fond of and regarded as superior. The connection between amateurism and Coubertin's Olympic Games can be found in the person of Charles Herbert. He served as the president of the successor of the Amateur Athletic Club, the Amateur Athletic Association, and was a founding member and main contributor of establishing the modern Olympic Games and the IOC. If one wants to be cynical, it could be said that the driving force for the destruction of the National Olympian Games and organized working class sport in England can be seen as one of the greatest promoters of the modern Olympic Games – how ironic.

A similar analysis can be conducted on the person of William M. Sloane, a privileged upper class professor of the University of Princeton and IOC member from the very start. The Princeton University was among the first universities to engage in inter-collegial sports with its strict amateur rules. Of course the romantic story goes, that you should play for the sake of playing, but why does it not account for schools or coaches for instance, who are allowed to benefit financially?

This concept of Amateurism was the entry ticket for Coubertin and his idea. During the celebration of the USFSA's anniversary at the Sorbonne he took the chance to present his idea of restoring the Olympic Games for the first time. The occasion and purpose of the event was the anniversary of the Union, but Coubertin exploited it to voice his idea and to gain support from his audience. As we

already know, this attempt failed. What can be analyzed is the change of setting and of key speaking points from 1892 to 1894.

First of all, he did not have the international and esteemed audience present in 1892, which he was able to recruit for 1894. We have to consider that he always adapted his words to the audience he was speaking to. In 1892 there were French sport functionaries in the audience, so it was no problem for him to insinuate that the German gymnastics require a certain threat of potential war to function. He played with certain resentments the French still carried from the loss in the Franco-Prussian War. He also saw no issue, calling a healthy version of gymnastics which benefits the sick, the young and the old, which prevents cardiovascular diseases, to be for the weak. Further, he dismisses the gymnastic principle which says, *"men must not measure themselves against other, only against themselves"* (Coubertin, 1892, p.) as undesirable. This is in direct opposition to his quote which eventually became the Olympic credo: *"The most important thing in the Olympic Games is not to win but to take part, just as the most important thing in life is not the triumph but the struggle. The essential thing is not to have conquered but to have fought well."* (IOC, 1958). Why is it then undesirable to struggle only against oneself as long as I give my best and thus, pursue excellence? It seems like he uses the former insinuations and distaining quotes simply to disregard any alternative to his beloved Anglo-Saxon sporting systems. He attributes most of the British system's success, its dissemination into colonies and the spread of local playing fields to Thomas Arnold. This statement greatly lacks of evidence. In my interpretation it has far more to do with the economic prosperity of Great Britain, the Christian conversion from the hatred of the flesh to muscular Christianity, the establishment of functioning worker's unions, and the long rise of liberalism. According to Ball, Dagger, Girvetz and Minogue (2020), especially in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, liberalism had its apex during the four terms when William E. Gladstone, a friend of Coubertin, served as Prime Minister between 1868 and 1894. The international notion he placed at the center of his Olympic idea was almost revolutionary when put in historical context to understand its scope. The international character of the Games is impressive, when we compare it to other international developments within the world of sport. The first soccer world cup was played in 1930 in Uruguay, but other sports like cricket, rugby, swimming or track and field world championships only began to surface in the seventies and eighties of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Cashman, 2004).

Pierre de Coubertin did his job very well if one leaves out moral considerations. He presents his audience several arguments, which don't hold after examination. He represents reality in his very own interpretation, one might say he exaggerated or even consciously lied and thus, creates an



artificial discourse only to present his great solution to the problem: the revival of the Olympic Games. As we know, he did not succeed with his plan this time.

He drew his conclusions and learnings from that experience and started a second attempt. Upon the suggestion of Pallissaux to organize a congress about amateurism he saw his opportunity. What he adapted in comparison to his attempt of 1892 was a much more sophisticated and structured strategy. He identified the topic to be of great interest due to several uncertainties in a time when international sport competitions slowly emerged. As we have learned in chapter 4.2.2 amateurism is of much concern for people coming from a very privileged background. Thus, it is of no surprise that many aristocrats and even monarchs, politicians, business men and other members of the elite could be convinced to attend this congress. This was not least possible due to long preparations. Coubertin travelled to the United States and England prior to the congress to plan everything as precise as possible. Together with his fellow campaigners Sloane and Herbert, he worked out a way to put his Olympic agenda on the program and to avoid another failure. He strategically chose the patronage and members of the congress. He most likely already knew who he wanted to have as founding members of the IOC. He understood, what we would call today public relations, as he sent out a press release focusing on the elite attendees to award the congress more exclusivity and importance. As he admitted years later he consciously disguised the real objective of the congress, due to the experiences he had made during the preliminary meetings with Sloane and Herbert. This assessment is echoed by Carl Diem, a personal friend of Coubertin and main advocate for the Olympic Movement in Germany, who called the Frenchman a “clever tactician”, who had been equipped with the “smartness of an advocate” and who could “skillfully camouflage his projects” (Diem, 1971, p.1136). Whenever, in those two meetings Coubertin expressed his idea of restoring the Olympic Games his idea was considered utopian and impracticable (Coubertin, 1896). This situation urged him to put extra effort into the organization of the congress and into the entertainment of his guests. As the site for this event he had chosen the Sorbonne and to award this gathering with a special atmosphere he had a choir perform the Delphic Hymn to Apollo which was excavated shortly before. Additionally, he spared no costs to entertain the attendees as they could wine and dine and enjoy themselves in Paris. This was all done to lure them into and to convince them of the potential of his idea. Due to the social status of his audience and the political position of some, he refrained from mentioning the democratic character of sport, as he did in 1892 while keeping the notion of internationalism. The different committee members, “*among which monarchism was prevailing*” (Coubertin, 1996, p.43) would certainly have had ambiguous opinions about democracy. The peacemaking effect he attributes to his idea can only be wishful thinking as

at this point in time there was no sport competition of such scale and international diversity to draw this conclusion from. Quantz (1993) argues that Coubertin was inspired by pacifists to host the Games in the framework of universal exhibitions. I argue that he was inspired by the way the Zappas Olympia were successfully hosted, embedded into a fair for industrial and farming products. It is estimated that William Penny Brookes had shared lots of information with him about the Zappas Olympia and additionally, as Margaritis et al. (2017) remarked, the head of the organizing committee of the 1875 Zappas Olympia, Ioannis Fokianos, served as the honorary vice-president of the first Olympic Congress in 1894 organized by Pierre de Coubertin. Additionally, it has to be mentioned that national as well as international industrial exhibition like the International Industrial Exhibition in Paris 1867 and afterwards included athletic as well as artistic competitions to its program (Borgers, 2003). What he copied from the international Peace Movement was the organizational structure as Olympism and the Olympic Movement is represented by the IOC members to their respective country and not vice versa.

To conclude this chapter and to answer the first research question, how Coubertin established the idea of reviving the Olympic Games, the following paragraph shall provide a conclusion of the critical discourse analysis conducted in this chapter.

Even if Pierre de Coubertin considered himself and his audience rebels, he was just rebelling against an already bygone political and social system. He was rebelling against his parent's beliefs and convictions, but he was not rebelling against the course of history. He was a very smart and attentive opportunist as he identified where the world was moving towards. All around him he spotted the emergence of international trade exhibitions and international sport competitions, the establishment of international and transnational organization like the Red Cross, the Scouting-, the Esperanto- and the Peace-Movement, the rise of new inventions which made the world come closer together and which facilitated the organization of such events like the Olympic Games. Combining his vision and foresight with his classical knowledge, his aristocratic descent with the network and opportunities that come along with it and his experiences of the different Olympic events he had seen, read or heard of, like the Much Wenlock, Shropshire and Liverpool Olympics, the Zappas Olympia as well as the suggestions of John Astley Cooper and the following discussions of an Anglo-Saxon Olympiad resulted in the restoration of the Olympic Games embedded in the greater social structure, the liberal world view of himself and his elitist peers. If looked at it from the right perspective, this was perfectly in line with his desire to connect his name to a reform of the French education system, as he wanted to contribute to the newly emerging episteme and regime of truth which we know as liberalism. In order to reach that change of attitude and culture he identified a

great international athletic festival with artistic performances surrounding it in order to celebrate the human spring time, the arrival of new generations.

### **6.3.2 Deriving Olympism from History – A Critical Discourse Analysis with the help of Derrida and Foucault**

This chapter shall prove useful in answering the second research question, what did Pierre de Coubertin regard as Olympism and how did he come up with these concepts. A deconstructive approach shall reveal meaning and expose power/knowledge relations and regimes of truth which will serve as an adequate tool to critically analyze Coubertin's considerations concerning his conception of Olympism.

For this new event, what shall later become the biggest sport event in the world he needed a differentiating factor, a unique selling proposition (USP) as marketers would call it nowadays. He needed something which set the Olympic Games apart from potential competing international multi-sport events of the future. Something which pays tribute to his educational plans. Something which convinces decision makers to buy into his plans. Something which is modern, but not too modern as it would frighten some people as it would perhaps seem impracticable or even utopian. He needed an all-encompassing philosophy, which can also be easily understood, and thus is desirable to follow. He identified a more or less coherent philosophy which he inseparably connected to the Olympic Games, the concept of Olympism. In order to make it easier to understand and link it to positive connotations he played on the philhellenic zeitgeist, which was aroused in the western world not least through the promising and insightful excavations of the German archeologists in ancient Olympia during the two decades prior to the foundation of the IOC. As Young (1984) pointed out, Coubertin's knowledge of ancient Greek culture and the ancient Olympic Games was rather superficial, he must have had a rather romantic and idealistic understanding of the circumstances in ancient Greece, but he still turned to antiquity for inspiration. Besides the most obvious adaptation, the quadrennial cycle of an Olympiad, which he refers to as the principle of *rhythm*, he overtook some of the basic ideas from ancient times, gave them a modern look and embedded them into the liberal humanist paradigm and episteme of the time. The fundamental aspect of his idea was his desire to improve the French education system, perhaps secretly hoping that his Olympic Games would have a similar effect as the Zappas Olympia had: The recognition and acknowledgment of the government that sport and physical education are valuable social activities for a nation. Through the different books he studied and travels he undertook, he identified sport and physical education as a great tool for moral improvement and character building. This notion

he found in the ancient Greek concept of *kalokagathia*, the development of body and mind. When he first touched on that topic, the French school system was run by the Catholic Church and thought sport to be sinful and not beneficial for intellectual and cognitive progress. The concept of *arete*, which meant in ancient times something like virtue or the pursuit of excellence can be found in the liberal modern world as something like self-optimization, especially important in a society, like the western society, where the power/knowledge relations suggest that quantity is hierarchically above quality. The concept of *athlos* which literally means “struggle” or “contest” is the central concept of this competitive notion, which a capitalist society is basically based on. This competitive basis is again more valued than teamwork and collaboration. The underlying principle of competition is Darwinism with its ‘survival of the fittest-attitude’. So we can see, that the life encompassing principles of ancient Greek life are very similar, just slightly differently and sometimes romantically interpreted in modern times by Pierre de Coubertin. The Olympics and its fundamental philosophy of Olympism with its values are also transcending from and to the regular social life, the Games are in a way a mirror of society, with its good and its bad aspects, if one likes to think in such relative and binary opposites. It indirectly tells you, you should give your best at whatever you do, that hard work pays off, that competition is hierarchically considered above teamwork, as Coubertin also prefers individual sports over team sports. This competitive nature, the performance driven, functional and productive behavior is both evident in the philosophy of Olympism as well as in liberalism, as Parry (2006) echoes alike. This notion represents the desired prototype of an individual in a capitalist society. He sees the basis for this moral formation in the spirit of Olympism, in what he calls *Altis* or *sacred enclosure*. He sheds light on his interpretation, as he transforms, what was once the sacred meeting site for the ancient athletes, who have met the required criteria to compete in the ancient Olympic Games, to a sort of moral code, a *moral Altis*, which can be considered as the concept of Olympism itself. It is about mastering one’s instincts and taming one’s will in order to adhere to the *superb machine*, which Coubertin sees in the young adult Olympic athletes of the modern day. Although, Coubertin did not want to see nude athletes training and rubbing their bodies in olive oil, his idea of school sport entail the tendency to prepare male youth for potential war, just like the ancient gymnasia did. It cannot be said definitely, but due to his statement, that he had suffered from the aggressive sentiments of the French towards the Germans, in the years following the French-German War, it is not likely that he focused on that notion but welcomed it rather as a side effect he could use as an argument whenever needed. Further, the harmonious development of body and mind are an idealized understanding of ancient Greek society as there is no evidence of intellectual feats of victorious athletes at ancient Games and vice versa.

The hierarchical order in antiquity placed the gods above the insignificance of men, but by pursuing *arete* men could become closer to the gods and thus, more divine. This can be interpreted by his concept of *religio athletae*. Here, it has to be added that in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, at least in the western world, science as well as the conclusions drawn from Enlightenment were slowly replacing religion, which becomes obvious with Nietzsche's famous postulation "God is dead" (Nietzsche, 1883). Coubertin with his talent to estimate the future saw the necessity to offer a surrogate religion, the religion of the muscles, or shorter *religio athletae*. In that context Coubertin expressed his view that the ancient athlete honored the gods, the modern athlete at the Olympics "honors his country, his race, and his flag" (Coubertin, 1935, p.580). This ancient religious sentiment he expanded with internationalism and democracy without clarifying where he sees the latter concept in the Olympic Games and thus, leaving it again up to the listener and reader to interpret it accordingly. Perhaps he even hoped that this postulation remains unquestioned all together, so the movement just benefits from the positive connotations democracy enjoyed. When looking at the presented case of the foundation of the IOC it was more upon request and desire of one man, Pierre de Coubertin, than it was a democratic decision, which members to accept and which to not accept. The only democratic notion, which can be identified within the Olympics and its Movement is the decision of the IOC members to vote for a potential city to host the Games after it has voiced their interest. But if we look closer, even this process is not as democratic as it seems because the IOC members were not voted into their position in the first place, but chosen or recommended by people with concentrate power. As Coubertin later clarified in his Olympic Memoirs (1996, p.28), the IOC was a "self-recruiting body".

Another concept he could find in ancient Greece was the concept of *Ekecheiria*. The need to stop fighting to ensure a safe journey to and from the Games. He could update this concept to modern needs as the international peace movement was thriving and had its 'capital' in Paris. The peacemaking character Coubertin had attributed to the Olympic Games, cannot really be proven, however, his audience at the 1894 congress was most likely in favor of peace, not only for obvious reasons, but especially as most conflicts changed the power relations, most of the time to the disadvantage of the rulers or ruling parties. The selection criteria were adapted from ancient to modern times and were not as discriminating anymore for foreigners as the ancient Greek criteria only allowed ethnic Greeks to compete. The modern Games required amateur status, which has already been sufficiently critically analyzed in this thesis.

What Coubertin calls the second characteristic of Olympism is *aristocracy* or *elite*. He immediately clarifies that this aristocracy should be in physical terms and not in terms of social status or origin,

which again contradicts the reality of his time and especially under the light of amateurism. This egalitarian notion which he wants to introduce into Olympism is not entirely comprehensible as this principle apparently does not find its execution among the IOC members. Another interesting aspect of it is that, indeed, during races and competitions in theory everybody starts under the same conditions but if we deconstruct this concept, it is obvious that dependent on origin, former training possibilities, which are not least linked to social status and privilege create unequal preconditions. Additionally, it is desired to start as equals only to identify the inequality among the athletes. The superiority or inferiority of certain physical abilities. It is, as mentioned before, an entirely darwinistic approach to see who is the fittest and to celebrate this performance while disdaining inferior performances.

In *chivalry* Coubertin saw the superlative of camaraderie. Competition, courteous yet violent struggle is hierarchically placed above the notion of “*mutual assistance*”, which he sees as the basis of camaraderie. What he says, is that being physically superior is not enough as long as one does not love effort for the sake of effort. He uses the term chivalry synonymously for the principles underlying his conception of amateurism, which he does not mention with a single word in his speech on Olympism in 1935, despite being one of the central elements of almost 100 years of modern Olympic history. A reason for this, could be the raising criticism to the varying amateur regulations depending on the different interpretations of amateurism of the international sport federations and the slowly rising insight that prevailing amateur rules only enforce power relations concerning gender, class, race and nationality as Llewellyn and Gleaves (2016) conclude.

The ritual character of the ancient Olympic Games was taken over in a slightly different form. As he could also experience in the Much Wenlock Games there were parades and ceremonies, which he made to the Olympic rituals most people know today, the Opening and Closing Ceremonies and the Olympic Oath from 1920 onwards, though, instead of swearing to Zeus the athletes swear on Olympism.

Another interesting aspect, uncertain if Coubertin was aware of it, were the ancient Olympic Games for children and adolescence. When we look at Coubertin’s life and works up to establishing the Games, he was always focused on reforming and improving the French education system. He mostly visited French and British schools for adolescent students, but then he comes up with an international sport festival exclusively for adult men. It is especially remarkable that he refused and dismissed the proposal of his fellow IOC members to include competitions for children, calling them impracticable and even dangerous. He clarifies that the person in whose honor the Olympic Games

are celebrated, as the festival of the human springtime and the arrival of a new generation of humans, is the *young adult male* (Coubertin, 1935, p.582). Here Coubertin places the hierarchical weight as follows: young > old, adult > child and male > female. It remains uncertain to the author why, apart from chauvinistic personal ideological reasons, he would grant priority to these binary opposites the way he did. This suggests and can be regarded as the negligence of his desire to connect his name to a great educational reform. Instead, he connected his noble name to just something else which assured him social recognition as it becomes quite obvious and stringent that he was looking for attention. Evidence for that can be found in the several contradictions he had presented over the span of his life, e.g. pretending to not have heard of the Zappas Games nor the Much Wenlock Games (Coubertin, 1908 as cited in Young, 2004, p.151).

In the following paragraph of his speech Coubertin glorifies the *individual adult male* as the “*true Olympic hero*” (Coubertin, 1935, p.582) and places individualism over collectivism, and thus individual sports over team sports, which he regards as inferior to the former. Despite the fact, that Coubertin was inspired to undertake his educational journey mainly by the British team sport and game of rugby, he neglects them all together in his definition of Olympism. Perhaps due to a tendency that team sports especially football was quite popular among lower social classes and individual sports had been in vogue for more privileged groups of society (Szpeth, 2009).

The last principle which he mentions in his clarifying speech of 1935, is beauty. As he regarded the body as the vassal of the mind, he wanted to include artistic and literary performances to celebrate not solely physical strength and superiority but also excellence in fine arts and poetry, just as the ancient Greeks did at the cultural spectacle, which surrounded the athletic spectacle.

In order to conclude this sub-chapter and to provide a critical account of what Pierre de Coubertin did regard as Olympism and what it represented, the following paragraph will attempt to answer the second research question of this master thesis.

As outlined throughout this chapter, Coubertin was concerned with connecting his name to a reform of the French education system. As we have learned before, several considerations and experiences of his life, made him come up with the idea of restoring the Olympic Games. In order to attribute an educational benefit and a differentiating unique selling proposition to this idea, he created the concept of Olympism. After a critical examination of the underlying principals it becomes obvious that he did not only play with, at first sight prominent values and desired attitudes of the time, but that he leaves the conceptualization of the concept of Olympism mostly to the person ingesting it. Considering that the most elaborated but still vague interpretation of his thoughts on Olympism

remains with his speech of 1935, 41 years after the foundation of the IOC, it is quite astonishing that he did not see the need for further definition and clarification. This strongly suggests that he had little intention to embed his concept into a strict frame, which we could refer to when talking about Olympism. Instead, it is up to this point subject of interpretation and critical analysis. He uses signifiers which, dependent on one's personal experience, social background, education and of course subjective worldview, can be interpreted and understood as an array of different signified with varying meanings depending on the receiver. By doing that, he uses this mix of words extracted of their meaning to arouse positive connotations. This represents exactly the criticism post-structuralists confront structuralists with. Additionally, he refrains from elaborating his concept in a way to be unambiguously understood, he counts on individual interpretation in order to provide little to no surface for criticism in the beginnings of the Olympic Movement. To sum up the various signifiers he sees represented in his conception of Olympism I shall provide a list of notions which could be extracted from this critical discourse analysis in the course of the genealogical part which has been conducted up to this point. His understanding of Olympism is based on different concepts which are partially contradicting each other: internationalism, nationalism, peace-making, military preparation, democracy under the non-democratic leadership of the IOC, egalitarian in origin, darwinistic in performance, exclusively for adult males, amateur, individual elite performances, religious to honor one's country, race and flag and to worship physical exertion; beauty and a ceremonial character as the expression of that Olympic religion, a chivalrous attitude, effort for the love of effort, freedom of excess, a moral Altis to achieve discipline and self-mastery as well as to display the beauty of the (male) human mind.

When he talks about internationalism, he actually talks about a Eurocentric understanding, of an ideological superiority of the global west, as he and the International Olympic Committee regard the values of Olympism as universal. This further becomes evident when we look at the countries the first IOC members originated from, and the type of sports which were included into the Olympic program. As it was suggested in the theoretical framework and outlined in the methodological part the underlying epistemology and ontological assumptions of this work question the existence of absolutely universal values which Olympism claims to represent.

The internationalism he claims for the Olympic Games, which is sort of evident through the nationalistic display of strength and (ideally) one countries athletic, and perhaps artistic superiority over another country. As Maurras, the nationalist and anit-Semitic identified for him a nationalistic and patriotic notion of this "international" athletic festival, which will in his interpretation fortify the fatherlands (Coubertin, 1896). So we can see it is both, international and national, it includes



both binary opposites but somehow amazingly makes the split between different oxymoron. Let's take the democratic tendency Coubertin attributes to the Olympic Games. As outlined before, no true democratic tendencies can be found within the Olympic Movement, at least of the early days. The only democratic aspect is that the self-recruited members of the IOC could voice their opinions, the way decisions are taken was quite intransparent. But this doesn't even matter to bring the point across that every individual has a slightly different understanding of what democracy actually means. The ancient Greek society had a different understanding as someone who grew up in late 19<sup>th</sup> century France or Britain, let alone more authoritarian countries of today. But most likely, a majority connotes desirable attributes to it and thus to the Olympic Games as it fits the regime of truth for most societies today. Since he refrained from clarifying his understanding of democracy and where he sees it within Olympism, he willingly leaves it as a subject of interpretation. Another contradiction can be identified when we analyze the peace-making character Coubertin attested to the Games. As a sort of surrogate war, the competition between different nations as well as the preparation for these competitions can be regarded as preparations of a nation for war. Coubertin mentioned it frequently that the French-German War was won in the German gymnasiums and additionally, he wrongly attributed the expansion of the British Empire to physical education. This implies that he regarded physical education as a preparation for imperial and colonial activities, or to simply be physically and mentally better prepared for war. Adding to this military sentiment, he included the notion of chivalry or knighthood. Knights were nothing else than soldiers with a certain code of conduct. This highlights the proximity to military sentiments. Further, he wanted to see elite performances at the Olympics. Although, not necessarily from the elite, but from a performance elite, egalitarian in origin. This was wishful thinking, due to the tendency that amateur regulations, of which he was a great advocate, indirectly disqualified members of the lower class, before they could even show their physical performances. It is also not egalitarian as women and children were not permitted to compete. This indirectly implies, that the Olympic Games were created for a masculine social elite with several obstacles for athletes from less fortunate social backgrounds. Even if we theoretically would accept the egalitarian origin of all athletes, there are great differences in training opportunities, nutrition, coaching, and so on. On top of that, this egalitarianism only accounts for the rules of the competition every competing athletes needs to adhere to. This is done in order to promote the underlying Darwinism, to spot the differences in performance, to see who is superior, who is more or less worthy. Another aspect Coubertin sees in his conception of Olympism is that he regards it as a religion. If we spin that thought further, this implies that the IOC is then the religious authority, similar to the institution of the church. The IOC's president is thus the equivalent to the pope and the other members of the IOC as well as the National Olympic

Committees represent cardinals and bishops. The Olympic athletes consequentially are the priests of that religion who need to practice their religion to honor their country, race and flag, as Coubertin himself expressed it. Other sport-loving people are the faithful. Anybody who does not worship the religion of the muscles must be regarded as infidel. Once every four years all the members of this religion are invited to worship Olympism, their nation and the muscles with all its ceremonies and rituals, just like the holy mess. By this, Coubertin created divine associations in the spirit of a romanticized antiquity to award his project exclusivity and to establish an easily understandable analogy to the Christian church. It further stands to reason, that Coubertin saw the future of sport as what Marx regarded religion, namely "*the opium of the people*" (Marx, 1844, p.72) and a great tool to exercise and to maintain power, to control the masses, similar to what the Romans saw in their concept of "*panem et circenses*". One principle Coubertin also mentioned is *beauty*, but as we know, beauty lies in the eyes of the beholder and is therefore an entirely subjective concept and based on power/knowledge relations dependent on the societal discourse and regimes of truth which allow for something to be beautiful or not. However, what he wanted to describe with beauty are the cognitive and affective feats of the mind instead of the body, demonstrated in the shape of artistic and literary performances which were part of the early modern Olympic Games. To love effort for the love of effort, as he expressed the chivalrous ideal he wanted to see competing in the Olympic Games, as he employs knighthood synonymously to amateurism. Another contradiction is the prescribed freedom of excess, to chase after records, to go faster, higher, stronger, while demanding self-mastery and disciplines as the basis for the moral Altis he sees in Olympism.

In Olympism, Coubertin created his own regime of truth by constantly referring to sport as a tool in the development of moral and strengthening of body and mind. The evidence he provided was the English school system with its Games but it is only a vague assumption and at the time uncertain that it necessarily benefits moral in a socially desired way. Perhaps it only foster competitiveness and winning at all cost, which would potentially be desired in a society driven by quantified economics. But is it really a direction a society wants to strive towards? This regime of truth is essentially the proclaimed Olympism the IOC constantly calls out, but is hardly ever evaluated and questioned.

This chapter impressively shows that Olympism can be interpreted how the receiver wants it to be, according to his or her believe system and thus exposes what Thomas Kuhn considered an anomaly. It is what Derrida understood as *aporia*, the undecidable. The meaning which one can extract from the Olympic Games and Olympism is so manifold that there is actually no real meaning in it or at least not one single meaning or interpretation, especially not in a universal context.

To conclude this chapter, I want to postulate, that after conducting this critical discourse analysis, and with the help of the described Foucauldian and Derridian tools, it was possible to expose Olympism as an anomaly due to the divergence of its meaning to what it is constantly displayed and presented as. It is an empty canvas, which waits for the receiver to paint meaning onto it. It has very little meaning per se and lacks of clear boundaries. After this thorough and critical analysis it can conclusively be stated that Olympism represents what Jacques Derrida identified as aporia, the undecidable. This aporia is the true anomaly. Olympism is like an ideological chameleon, which, dependent on one's needs and subjectivity, can be used in any way imaginable. As we shall later see it can be exploited by fascists, by communists, by capitalists, by democracies as well as dictatorships. It does not matter, because any meaning can be projected through the lens of Olympism.

## **7. Olympism and the adherence to it analyzed throughout selected historical events**

In the following chapter Olympism will be checked against selected historical events within the Olympic Movement to see whether Olympic actors have adhered to the movement's self-set all-encompassing philosophy. In order to conduct this examination in a comprehensible and sensible manner a chronological categorization will be performed. The Olympic history will be separated into three eras. The first part, the era of military conflicts will cover selected events from the very beginning of the Olympic Games in 1896 until the first Olympics after World War II. The second sub-chapter will work within the era of ideological conflict, as the tensions deriving from the Cold War shaped most of these years between 1949 and 1990 and brought existential questions to the surface. The last era will cover the years from 1991 until today and is called the era of commercial conflict as the Olympics opened up to professionalism and commercialism, starting in 1981 and having its peak after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War.

### **7.1 Olympism during the Era of Conflict (1896-1948)**

In its infancy the Olympic Games had to prove and make a name for themselves. Due to the elite circle represented within the IOC, the start was facilitated as many members were strategically well positioned to support and expand the Olympic Movement. However, this era was filled with challenges and obstacles for the IOC.

The first Olympic Games in Athens 1896 were marked by political skepticism from the Greek government but support from the opposition. A lack of financial resources of the struggling nation was a major reason for the political pushback. After Coubertin together with Vikelas could convince

the crown prince, who was temporarily in charge of the country due to the king's travels to Russia, the whole project started developing after much delay. An organizing committee had been established of which two members advanced to later become prime minister and president of Greece. We can see the connection between the elite of a country and the Olympic Games. One of the wealthiest Greek citizens living in Alexandria, Mr. Averoff, could be found as the donor for the renovation of the Panathenaic Stadium. The sports program for these first Games was constituted of track and field events, gymnastics, fencing, shooting, sailing, cycling, equestrian sport as well as "athletic games", which materialized as lawn tennis. All sports were governed and regulated by federations from England and France, only the rowing competitions were ruled by the *Rowing club Italiano* (Coubertin, 1996). This is a prime example of how power/knowledge relations are affected, changed and maintained. If mainly English and French sport federations, which were run by the social elite of the respective country, are in charge of setting the rules for certain competitions, they follow a certain agenda embedded in their subjective worldview. Several of these organizations, or their successors are the international sport federations who are in charge of the most popular sports of today. Despite, the different sports being on the official program, were not all organized, due to exceeding costs the sailing and equestrian competitions were cancelled and the rowing contests could not be held due to a stormy sea. Taking the data from the official website of the IOC (2020), it shows the success these first Games enjoyed due to 241 participating athletes from 14 National Olympic Committees in 43 events. Comparing these numbers to what Wesseling (2000), we find a divergence as he describes 285 contestants from 13 countries. A newspaper article in the Guardian (1896) describes how approximately 18 000 spectators were listening to King Georges words, when he declared the first Olympic Games of the modern era to be open. Despite its success, we must examine critically the underlying notions of these Games and if they were in line with Olympism. As Koulouri (2006) outlines, a major reason for the Greek government to accept the organization of the Games in such financially and socially challenging and uncertain times, was the hope and expectation to awaking the spirit of the magnificent history of the Greek people, its decline and its cultural progress during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. To invoke memories of the past, to positively link its glory to the efforts of the Greek rulers of the day and to awaken and reinstall patriotic feelings, self-esteem and national pride in modern Greece. She further mentions the appearance of a new form of national heroes, the Olympic champion, who, when being successful gets accepted immediately by the local audience and extrapolates the national pride which is awakened.

This undermines the initial desire for Olympism to be peace-making, to foster international understanding and thus promoting peace. Instead it highlights the superiority as well as inferiority of the different participating nations.

After these initial Games, the Greek King planned to keep the Olympic Games in his country and to make Greece its eternal host country. Coubertin intervened successfully and followed his plans to stage it in Paris, embedded in the program of the universal Exhibition in 1900.

These Games of the second Olympiad were held in Paris, the ones of 1904 in St. Louis and in 1908 in London due to the withdrawal of Rome after a volcanic eruption destroyed parts of the country and resources had to be allocated accordingly. All three Games were hosted within the framework of international trade exhibitions, the 1900 and 1904 Games were held during the Universal Exhibitions and the London event was organized around the Franco-British Exhibition in 1908. Especially interesting in this context is the later speech of Coubertin at the Olympic Congress of 1925 in Prague, where he mourns about a decline in morality he identifies not only in athletics but in society as a whole, thus seeing Olympism and the Olympic Games in danger of nationalistic passions and corporate interest calling for a decision as he saw also amateurism at risk, *“Fair or temple – sportsmen must make their choice; they cannot expect to frequent both one and the other ... let them choose”* (Coubertin, 1925, p.559). It was the decision of the IOC to host the Olympic Games in the framework of these great industrial fairs and not in temples as the first Games in Athens were organized. However, the success of these Games is evident when we look at the constantly growing number of participants. According to Wesseling (2000) Paris had over a thousand athletes from 20 countries, while London 1908 and Stockholm 1912 had both between 2000 and 2500, from roughly 25 different countries. But this is only a side story. The truly remarkable episode of this era of conflict, which this sub-chapter wants to shine light on is the blind devotion of the IOC and his honorary president Pierre de Coubertin to the infamous Nazi-Olympics of 1936.

Before Berlin and Garmisch-Partenkirchen were chosen to be the host cities of the Summer and Winter Games of the eleventh Olympiad, the IOC dismissed the application of Rome as host for the 1936 Games. This was most likely done due to Italy's status as the only clear-cut fascist country at the time. It was further regarded as a shaky candidate bearing certain risks, leaving us unsure, whether it was an anti-fascist attitude or the risk of having badly organized Games what dominated the IOC's decision. However, Krüger (2004) further suggests that due to chaos in the streets of Barcelona, another candidate city, where the host city for the 1936 Games was decided upon, and the lack of political certainty (which shall prove correct with the breakout of the Spanish civil war in

1936), Berlin and Garmisch-Partenkirchen were awarded the host cities of the eleventh Olympiad, for both Summer and Winter Games. Most likely it helped that the 1916 Olympic Games, which had been granted to Berlin were cancelled due to World War I. Although, we need to consider that the Olympic Games of 1908 were staged in London only due to a volcanic eruption in Italy, so the IOC could have also argued to give Rome the precedence to host these Games.

Eventually, the IOC under the presidency of Henri Comte de Baillet-Latour, awarded the 1936 Olympic Summer Games to Berlin. Nobody could predict the future of this young and troubled but democratic nation known as the Weimar Republic. During the Great Depression, hitting the Weimar Republic hard after 1931, Hitler exploited the economic, social and political turmoil for his and the Nazi Party's ascent to power in 1933. Already then international voices were getting louder pronouncing and criticizing the prosecution of minorities, especially Jews, in the public spheres of German life. As late as 1932, Hitler and the Nazi party were consequentially condemning the Olympic Games as "*a plot against the Aryan race by Freemasons and Jews*" (Hart-Davis, p.45). At first, the IOC considered changing the host city for the 1936 Games, but after Hitler identified the great benefits he could harness from hosting the Olympic Games as a tool for propaganda in a time where his Nazi Party still had to convince the German people of its ability to improve the country, he was ready to make concessions to the IOC. He ensured to welcome athletes of all races in Berlin and to provide large financial as well as organizational support to host the Games in a bigger scale than ever before. He planned several new facilities, one of them being the Olympic stadium in Berlin fitting up to 100 000 spectators. He knew how to convince the IOC to keep the Games in Berlin, as he proposed several innovations, without some of them we could not imagine Olympic Games today. One of them being the famous torch relay from ancient Olympia to the host city. Upon the idea of Carl Diem, both a companion of Hitler as well as Coubertin, more than 3000 athletes made their way as torch bearers from Greece, through the Balkans up to Germany. Who could have known that only 3 years later the Wehrmacht would go the opposite direction leaving a disastrous trail of destruction and suffering behind them. Another innovation was the worldwide radio broadcast as well as the first local television broadcast of Leni Riefenstahl's propaganda movies, for which she was awarded by the Nazi Propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels as well as the Coppa Mussolini at the Venice Film Festival of 1938. She was not only awarded with these two prizes of fascist regimes, but also upon the suggestion and urge of Avery Brundage, then Head of the US Olympic Committee, later IOC president and fulltime "racist, sexist and anti-Semitic" (Zirin & Boykoff, 2020), the IOC awarded the Olympic Diploma to her as her propaganda films were in line with Olympic ideals (Large, 2012). This is just another prove of how meaningless the concept of Olympism is as long as

the conception of certain members and leaders of the Olympic Movement is considered to be on the wrong side of history.

It was also Brundage who fought strongly to avoid a boycott of the US Olympic team. This would have most likely convinced other nations like France and Great Britain to withdraw from the Games as well, and thus devalue Hitler's Olympic project massively. He undertook a "fact-finding" journey to Germany to investigate if the claims of the pro-boycott stakeholders could be proven. When he returned to his home country he expressed his view, that he "saw no evidence of racism" and "that there would be no discrimination against any of the foreign athletes" (Large, 2012, p.62). To ensure the avoidance of a US boycott another IOC member from the US, Charles Sherrill travelled also to Germany only to convince Hitler that it would be advisable to include at least one Jew on the German team to not give foreign nations any surface for critique. Due to Germany's fear, that a boycott might really happen the 'gave in' and accepted a half Jewish fencer, Helene Mayer, in the German delegation. After his interlocution with Hitler, the same Charles Sherrill had sent a letter, dating from 30 August 1935, to the IOC president Baillet-Latour, warning him, "*You are in for the greatest shock of your entire life! It will be a trying test for even your remarkable tact and savoir faire; and the sooner you meet the situation, the better the hope for your success, instead of a destructive explosion*" (Krüger, 2004). This strongly suggests that the IOC was aware of the destructive potential of staging the Olympic in Nazi Germany. It is also a testament for the hypocrisy of the Olympic Movement and especially for the US branch of it. In a country struggling with racist sentiments, over which a civil war was fought, it is especially hideous to have people with these resentments against minorities in positions of power willing to exploit this power for causes going against the often claimed humanism viewed in Olympism.

After the successful intervention of US Olympic officials, the Games were organized and staged as planned by Hitler, Diem, Goebbels and the rest of the Nazi Party. The overall goal for these Games was to promote the agenda of the National Socialist German Worker's Party and to present the Aryan race as superior to any other race. Obviously, this is not in line with what Coubertin meant by stating that the athletes must be egalitarian in origin and that the Olympic Games should be an international and peace-making festival of the human springtime. However, we can see that there was big concern surrounding the staging of these Olympics under the patronage of Adolf Hitler and his inhuman, pathologic attitude, which was impressively ignored by the IOC. It becomes apparent that the successful organization of the Olympic Games and the propaganda for the Olympic Movement which goes hand in hand with this successful organization was more important to the decision makers than actually adhering to humanistic values or simply their self-set rules, written

down in the Olympic Charter. As a result of the immaculate show these Olympics produced for the Nazi Party it contributed to their and Hitler's rise to and manifestation of power and in this way completely obliterated what Olympism claimed and was set out to do for the world.

Another tool to increase the Nazi's power was the by Krüger (2004) mentioned specialty that the organizers possessed all the right to videos and photographs. Not this was the specialty as this was common since Amsterdam 1928, but the difference to the Games before lies in them not selling the rights or the photographs, but providing them to these images for free to the international press. In this way they could perfectly control what an international audience could see and not see. Therefore, it is also hard for scholars and researchers to retrospectively reveal meaning as only certain information left Germany. It often would end in a reproduction of a reproduction, a copy of a copy.

In an interview with a French journalist Coubertin himself could still not see any downsides to the Nazi Games. He asked the journalist rhetorically, *"The Olympic idea sacrificed to propaganda? That is utterly wrong!"* to proceed by reiterating that *"The wonderful success of the Berlin Games has served the Olympic ideal magnificently"* (Coubertin, 1936, p.522). This statement underlines the assessed devoid of real meaning of Olympism. It seems that anything is in line with Olympism which promotes a successful Olympic Games, no matter what happens behind closed, or in this case not so closed curtains.

Ironically, the "wonderful success" of these Games partially contributed to 12 years without Olympic Games. The ideal of Olympic truce could not be sufficiently respected. Thus, we can conclude that a perfect organization of the Olympic Games was regarded more important than international concern about the racist and anti-Semitic sentiments of the Nazi Party, which constitutes a tragic testament of ignorance on the IOC's side. However, it is incredibly hard to judge the situation from hindsight, especially as anti-Semitism was not an exclusively German concept but was evident in many parts of the world. Additionally, the Nazis were quite successful in cloaking their preparations for war and every other evil which came along with it. But still we can find sources which prove, that people could foresee the future as Heinrich Mann's (1936) statement clearly shows, *"Free peoples do not have the right to support the Berlin Olympic Games. (...) Nazism does not see man other than as an instrument for achieving its barbarian goals. Can such a regime, based on forced labour and slavery of the masses, a regime that is preparing for war and exists merely through mendacious propaganda, respect peaceful sport and free sportsmen? Believe me, those international sportsmen who go to Berlin are nothing more than gladiators, prisoners and entertainers for the dictator who*



*already considers himself master of the world. Finally, I should like to stress that the success of the Olympic Games will help to prolong Hitler's regime for a time. It will give it new possibilities and strength. It will reinforce its prestige...*" (Mann in Brohm, 1983, p.205). This quote together with other findings presented in this sub-chapter strongly suggests that the IOC could have known and most likely did know what was happening in Germany behind the scenes. I do not want to suggest, that they willingly supported what later materialized as the result of Hitler's Nazi government, but that the IOC at least turned a blind eye on the social and military developments occurring in Germany after 1933 and refrained from asking essential questions in respect to Olympism, while hoping for the most perfect organization of Olympic Games ever in its modern history. The idea suggests itself that the leaders of the Olympic Movement were more concerned with a successful Olympic Games in terms of image, scale and reach, than with their self-set principles enshrined in the philosophy of Olympism. The anomaly presented in the concluding paragraph of chapter 5.3.2 shall be highlighted at this point again, as it becomes evident that the Olympism is a positively connoted concept deprived of any actual meaning. The contrary to what representatives of the IOC, especially Pierre de Coubertin suggest it to be.

At the first Games after World War II in London 1948, the host country of the Berlin Games which "served the Olympic ideal magnificently" together with Japan, who ought to host the Games of the twelfth Olympiad, were banned, Austria and Italy were allowed to participate.

## **7.2 Olympism during the Era of Ideological Conflict (1949-1990)**

In this sub-chapter only one Olympiad will be the center of attention, namely the Olympic Games of the nineteenth Olympiad in Mexico City in 1968. This era of ideological conflict was mainly coined by the Cold War between western and eastern nations and ideals, between communism and capitalism. It was a time where the potential of war was a constantly present.

This period also affected the Olympic Movement due to several challenges during this time. There was a student massacre happening only 10 days before the opening of the 1968 Olympic Games in Mexico City where – depending on the source- dozens perhaps hundreds of student protesters became victims of a by now acknowledged as a state crime of the Mexican government (Woodman, 2018). The students used the international spotlight which was brought to Mexico City through hosting the Olympic Games, to voice their dissatisfaction with the government and its policies. As numbers of protesters were increasing, the Mexican government as well as the IOC feared the disruption of the long planned great Olympic show. An appropriate solution the government saw in causing chaos on the Plaza de las Tres Culturas with the help of an undercover group especially

formed to 'protect' the Olympics, the Battalion Olympia. Their identifying feature was a single white glove. Soon sniper bullets were killing dozens of students which as a consequence facilitated the imprisonment of unwanted political 'troublemakers' (Hoffer, 2009). To not deter the international media attention from the Olympics, through which Mexico wanted to present itself as a modernizing and aspiring nation, the government as well as the IOC tried to prevent media from focusing on this violent event as Murtha (2018) outlines by stating *"Brundage and the IOC not only had foreknowledge of the impending massacre, but they actually pressured the Mexican government into committing it"* by threatening to cancel the celebration. This is based on the story of Guardian reporter John Rodda, who has been in the midst of La Plaza de las Tres Culturas, the place where the shooting happened. Rodda was told by former Yugoslav athlete Arthur Takac that *"Brundage had been pressuring Díaz Ordaz [the Mexican president of the time] in the weeks leading up to the massacre to make sure there would be no disruption of the Games, threatening to pull the celebration if there was"*. Consequently, he *"personally delivered letters to this effect to the Mexican President in mid-September"* (Murtha, 2018, p.31). This is a strong accusation and shall be handled with care as it would entirely destroy the very roots of the Olympic Movement.

However, as a result of this massacre, some days after this tragedy had happened Brundage came out, but instead of condemning this horrible act of violence, he relativized it, while subliminally establishing a connection between a deadly massacre and people who question the system they live in. *"We live today in an uneasy and even rebellious world, a world marked by injustice, aggression, demonstrations, disorder, turmoil, violence and war, against which all civilized persons rebel, but this is no reason to destroy the nucleus of international cooperation and goodwill we have created in the Olympic Movement. You don't find hippies, yippies, or beatniks on sports grounds"* (Boykoff, 2016, p.103). This is not what one would expect from the leader of a movement which claims to be contributing to peace and democracy. It is especially remarkable, that he puts demonstrations, the fundamental right to express one's opinion freely without the fear of persecution in line with other terms like injustice, aggression, disorder, turmoil, violence and war. We can see once more how the IOC goes against its own rules and principles.

In the next episode of these Olympic Games in Mexico City I shall shine light on the silent and peaceful protest of John Carlos, Tommie Smith and Peter Norman during the medal ceremony after the 200m race. After the assassinations of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Robert F. Kennedy earlier that year, and exactly two weeks after the violent student massacre in Mexico City, the two African-American athletes John Carlos and Tommie Smith wanted to use their popularity and the stage

which was given to them to raise awareness about how human rights are mistreated not only in the United States but around the World. The Vietnam war was dominating the covers of western media, the Soviet Invasion of Czechoslovakia has just happened two months prior to the Olympic Games, in Germany student protests sparked what were later known as the 68 movement, and racist sentiments were personally affecting the social life of Smith and Carlos outside the running track where they excelled like few people before them. So there were enough reasons to protest against inequality and injustice. After a potential boycott of black American athletes failed the vote at a meeting of the Black Power Movement in 1967, Harry Edwards founded the Olympic Project for Human Rights (OPHR). Smith and Carlos became members together with other American athletes. On the agenda of the OPHR was the boycott of the '68 Games as well as the resignation of Avery Brundage who Edwards called "*a devout anti-Semitic and an anti-Negro personality*", Smith went as far as calling Brundage "our Hitler", not least due to the reason that the IOC president was in favor of South-Africa competing at the Olympics with an all-white delegation during the height of apartheid. After other African nations had threatened to withdraw the IOC gave in to their demands and disinvited South-Africa. On the day of the 200m event John Carlos became third place, Peter Norman, the Australian, became second and Tommie Smith broke the world record with a time of 19,8 seconds and thus became first place. Due to their plan to show a sign of solidarity with all suffering and discriminated people around the world they obtained one pair of black gloves from Smith's wife. Upon their march to the podium Peter Norman asked the two if they also had such a button from the OPHR since he wanted to express his believe in human rights too and that he wanted to support the symbolic nature of what these two Afro-American athletes were about to do. Smith was wearing the right glove, Carlos the left and both raised their fists above their head like a salute to all the people suffering from human right violations around the world. Both took off their shoes, cramped up their pants so the black socks were visible, symbolizing their poverty (Peterson, 2009). In an interview for the film *Fists of Freedom*, Carlos described their symbolic act as "*a prayer of solidarity, it was a cry for help by my fellow brothers and sisters in this country, who had been lynched, who had been shot, who had been bitten by dogs, water hoses had been turned on, it was a cry for freedom*" (Carlos, 1999).

During an IOC meeting on the following day, Avery Brundage pressured the US Olympic Committee to act due to breaching the rule in the Olympic Charter which prohibits the display of political or religious symbols. Two days after the incident, the two athletes were expelled from the Olympic Games and suspended from the US Olympic team (Peterson, 2009).

The person who urged their expulsion, was the same, who also fought in favor of Hitler to stage his Olympics where the Nazi Salute was completely accepted. We are all aware what symbolism lies behind that gesture. Certainly not one which intended to raise awareness for human rights violations, injustice and inequality. Judging from these events in Mexico City and cynically speaking it seems also to be more in line with Olympism to wear white gloves in order to 'ensure' the Games, than to wear black gloves and to raise the voice for suffering minorities. The reactions from the media and the public were further remarkable as it becomes evident, that the IOC succeeded contributing to a certain interpretation of sport, that you should not use it to express your opinion, athletes should compete and smile, not take political sides. In a world where Olympic athletes turn public heroes it is crucial for the leaders of a country or the Olympic Movement to have them either on their side or on no side at all. The analogy which comes to mind in the political sphere is how the nations around the world treat whistle blowers who reveal institutional wrong doings, injustice, misconduct, espionage and the like. These whistle blowers become a threat to the power/knowledge relations and regimes of truth of a country or even the world. To ensure that their messages get dismissed as unpatriotic or simply fictional, they are categorized as state enemies. To ensure that not man will follow their example they get persecuted and by doing this, their futures and lives are destroyed. A similar destiny awaited John Carlos and Tommie Smith and even Peter Norman, all three had to live with the consequences from standing up against prevailing injustice, all three were denied another Olympic experience, all three had to face great challenges during their post-athletic careers and lives and all three were eventually reinstated and their protest acknowledged as something desirable and important.

If Brundage would have respected Olympism as what his inventor Pierre de Coubertin claimed it to be, he would have never accepted his position as IOC president in the first place, and secondly would have seen Carlos', Smith's and Norman's protest as what they were, a true and idealistic demonstration of humanism, the claimed basis of Olympism.

This era of ideological conflict is filled with demonstrations of political power especially when we take a look at the Olympic Games in Moscow 1980 and Los Angeles 1984. Both are remembered as the boycotted Games, where western countries boycotted the Games in Moscow, and Soviet allies refrained from attending the Games in L.A. It was certainly one of the hardest period the Olympic Movement had to endure due to several incidents threatening the successful staging of the Olympic Games. Among these incidents, adding to the before mentioned boycotts, there was a terrorist attack during the Olympic Games in Munich 1972 where 11 Israeli athletes were killed by Palestinian terrorists, tremendous financial loss for the city of Montreal after the 1976 Olympic Games which

was paid back as late as 2006 as well as a boycott from 29 mostly African countries. Shortly after the Moscow Games were over, Lord Killanin resigned as president and was succeeded by Juan Antonio Samaranch. To overcome the financial struggles, the IOC was confronted with Samaranch identified the need for change and reform (Stoyanova, 2003). The former bank manager and sport functionary under Franco in fascist Spain changed the face of the Olympic Movement to what it is today. He opened it up for professionals, ending the amateur debate, which accompanied the movement through its entire history, once and for all. Further, he officially opened up the Olympic Games for commercial partnerships, what took shape in 'The Olympic Partnership' or short TOP Program. By doing this, private multinational corporations were granted the right, of course in exchange for huge amounts of money, to connect their logos with the five interlaced rings introduced by Coubertin for the first time in the Olympic Games in Antwerp 1920. Samaranch understood the power and value of the Olympic brand as one of the most recognizable symbols and used it to ensure the IOC's financial future. Its direct financial success is evident in the biggest profit made from Olympic Games in its history during the Olympic Games in Los Angeles 1984 (Simson & Jennings, 1992).

Doing this went entirely against the vision of the founder of the modern Olympic Games and the presidents succeeding him. Avery Brundage expressed his vision of amateurism as follows, "*Professional sport, so-called, is no sport at all, but a branch of the entertainment business like the circus; it is for the spectators whereas amateur sport is for the players. A competitor who is paid is a workman and not a player. The professional takes from sport, while the amateur gives to sport*" (Brundage, 1963 as cited in Chatziestathiou & Henry, 2012, p.203). So in Brundage's view, Samaranch made the Olympic Games an *entertainment business like the circucs* in order to *take from sport*. We shall see in the following chapter, which implications for Olympism this official change, which Coubertin would have seen as the change from the *temple* to the *fair*, the transformation from the *Olympic athlete into a circus gladiator*. In this way, the IOC fully entered the paradigm of absolute commercialization.

### **7.3 Olympism during the Era of Commercial Conflict (1991-today)**

The starting year for this era of commercial conflict was chosen to be 1991 instead of 1984, due to the end of the Cold War and the dissolution of the Soviet Union at the end of that year. This also resulted in the reestablishment of independent ex-soviet countries, which soon founded their own NOCs and joined the Olympic Movement. It was also in 1991, when the IOC included a new definition

of Olympism into the Olympic Charter. It was a promising time with economic prosperity, which the IOC wanted to be part of.

With the release of the Olympic Charter in force as from 16 June 1991 a new interpretation of Olympism echoed the hopes for world peace after the long period of the Cold War and for the first time in the Olympic history a clear definition of Olympism is provided. The fundamental principles are presented in the very beginning of the Charter and define several responsibilities of any member of the Olympic Movement. The three important paragraphs for this analysis are found in point two, three and six of these principles.

The second paragraph defines Olympism by stating:

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

The third paragraph describes the objectives of Olympism:

*“The goal of Olympism is to place everywhere sport at the service of the harmonious development of man, with a view to encouraging the establishment of a peaceful society concerned with the preservation of human dignity.”*

And the sixth paragraph outlines the aims of the Olympic Movement:

*“The goal of the Olympic Movement is to contribute to building a peaceful and better world by educating youth through sport practised without discrimination of any kind and in the Olympic spirit, which requires mutual understanding with a spirit of friendship, solidarity and fair-play.”* (IOC, 1991, p.7)

The problematic statement of claiming universality for these *fundamental ethical principles* has been discussed before and is challenged by the underlying epistemological and ontological assumptions this work is based on. This becomes even more evident when we look at Brownell’s (2012b, p.324) assessment on the Olympic Games in Beijing 2008, that a “consensus on what is meant by ‘respect for human dignity’ had not yet been achieved”. Perhaps there was also not sufficient political will to reach a consensus, however, for the further course of this chapter this claim of universality will be left untouched and the other central statements defining the goals of Olympism will enjoy prime attention.

In order to check the self-set fundamental principles of the Olympic Movement against the adherence to them, episodes from three different Olympic Games were chosen: Beijing 2008, Sochi 2014, and Rio de Janeiro 2016.

After long discussions on whether to include the two magical word 'human rights' in the bidding process for the 2008 Olympics, authorities decided to include them into their public relations efforts. This becomes evident when we look at what the mayor of Beijing, Liu Qi expressed during deciding IOC session in Moscow 2001, where Beijing received the majority of the votes, *"I want to say that the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games will have the following special features: They will help promote our economic and social progress and will also benefit the further development of our human rights cause. They will promote an exchange of rich Chinese culture with other cultures. They will mark a major step forward in the spreading of the Olympic Ideals."* (Brownell, 2012b, p. 313).

Hein Verbruggen, IOC Member and head of the coordination commission between the IOC and the Beijing Olympic Games Organizing Committee, expressed his personal opinion and discontent with the image Amnesty International was painting when criticizing China in their preparatory work, by saying what China has signaled during the bidding procedure concerning human rights were no commitments but rather convictions or believes. I derive from that, that nobody could expect China to improve the human rights situation and thus adhere to Olympism. This is a quite strong statement, from a person who later admitted, *"We [the IOC] need the games because it's the only thing we have."* (Verbruggen, 2009 as cited in Brownell, 2012b, p.323).

Right from the start, in 2001, Amnesty International (AI) as well as Human Rights Watch (HRW) voiced major concerns, that China could not meet the expectations demanded by the Olympic principles, and that it would need to improve the current situation massively in order to meet these criteria (Adi & Miah, 2011). According to a publication from Amnesty International (2008), compliance with human rights in several areas have changed for the worse rather than the good. Repressive actions against activists and journalists as well as forced evictions where the Olympic constructions were planned to be built. These forced evictions bear a twofold tragedy as abuses of migrant construction workers and inhuman working conditions were the sad result of these housing evictions. The violently ended Tibetan unrest in March 2008 sparked numerous protests against China and their issues with human rights disrupting the torch relay preceding the Games, but only intensified state repression against freedom of expression as well as practices of intimidation, house arrest or even imprisonment of 'undesirable' people. Instead of fulfilling the promises made by China as well as the IOC during the seven years of preparation, the situation has deteriorated. The

strategy of the Chinese government as well as the IOC together with public relations and communication agencies tried to divert the focus of the international media on the insistence that the Beijing Games will be the greenest ever, after decades of public request for more sustainable Olympics. Unfortunately, HRW reports that ahead of the Games thousands of migrant workers who were responsible for recycling garbage, had to leave the city prior to the start of the event (HRW, 2008).

It is obvious that these Games, despite being the biggest and most watched Olympic Games ever, with 204 NOCs participating (Brownell, 2012), were absolutely not in line with what Olympism claims to aim for. What does it say about the Olympic Movement, when several international non-governmental organizations feel a stronger need to defend Olympic principles such as the *“educational value of good example and respect for universal fundamental ethical principles”* in order to achieve *“the harmonious development of man, with a view to encouraging the establishment of a peaceful society concerned with the preservation of human dignity”* than the inventors and guardians of Olympism themselves? It is nothing less than a moral defeat and suggests that it is higher up on the IOC’s priority list to reach new and prosperous markets in order to keep the TOP sponsors satisfied and to ensure sufficient revenue, than to actually represent and fight for their own fundamental principles written down in the Olympic Charter.

A similar impression comes to the surface when looking at the Sochi Winter Games in 2014 where homophobic legislation, environmental destruction, inhuman working conditions and forced evictions, the killing of thousands of stray dogs as well as unforeseen financial spending coined these Games as a financially, ecologically as well as socially unsustainable Olympic Games. (Luhn, 2014; Herszenhorn, 2014). Corresponding social and financial tragedies went also hand in hand with preparations for the Olympic Games 2016 in Rio de Janeiro. Brutal police and military force affecting the poorest neighborhoods of the city was well documented in the lead-up as well as during the Olympics as several Human Rights organizations report (AI, 2016). The government even requested Google to disguise the locations where favelas are or once were on Google Maps, and to simply call the “hills” (Rivera, 2014). This is a prime example of how certain power structures allow or not allow for knowledge. It is the digital eviction before the real life eviction, which came as the non-digital aftermath.

Also in these two briefly presented cases it becomes quickly evident that the principles of Olympism were successfully ignored wherever it seemed opportune and disguised violence on nature, animals as well as people was used to ensure a successful preparation of the Games. But Olympism, in its



ideal form, as numerous times expressed and repeated by Olympic Officials as well as representatives of the host cities, is not about being opportune. “It is”, to say it with the words of the current IOC president Thomas Bach, “what the Olympic movement is all about – changing the world for the better” (Bach, 2016).

It seems that wherever the Olympics are going, infringements of fundamental Olympic principles go with them. Questionable comments and statements from representatives of the Olympic Movement have been presented which suggest a structural deterioration from what Pierre de Coubertin wanted to present as his concept of Olympism.

## **8. Conclusion**

This entire thesis is based on the epistemological assumption that one’s entire knowledge and view of the world is subjective. Based on intersubjective experiences as well as the discourses an individual is exposed to, power/knowledge relations surface and make room for certain possibilities of knowledge. The methodological framework of this thesis, which is based on Foucault’s concepts of genealogy and power/knowledge, Derrida’s abstract but enlightening creation of deconstruction and the all-encompassing critical discourse analysis by Norman Fairclough, enabled me to derive meaning and to answer the three research questions at the basis of this work.

After having provided a thorough and detailed genealogy of the origins of the Olympic Games and Olympism throughout the empirical part of this work, light could be shed on the origins of the Olympic Games in ancient Greece, embedded into the social and cultural life of antiquity. Further, the life and thoughts of Pierre de Coubertin, the founder of the Olympic Games of the modern era were the subject of scrutiny. In order to answer the first of the three research questions his privileged life as a member of aristocracy and his elitist education, where he had heard of the ancient Olympic Games for the first time, were under examination before his connections to the social and political elite of the French Third Republic were highlighted. Besides the numerous books he had consumed, his travels abroad to England and North America were probably the most formative experience for the young baron. He developed the desire to link his noble name to a great educational reform and found inspiration in the public school system of Victorian England. His visits to public school where he could see with his own eyes how these students from privileged backgrounds engaged in team sports and games like football and rugby shaped his understanding of sport as a great tool for moral education and character building. The invitation he received from Dr. William Penny Brookes to visit his Much Wenlock Games and the stories about other Olympic endeavors like the Shropshire, the Liverpool as well as the Zappas Olympics, which he must have

told his French guest were most likely the starting point for Coubertin's Olympic considerations. He took what he had heard, read and seen, mixed it with his superficial knowledge of antiquity and embedded his idea in the liberal episteme of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. His farsightedness and social intelligence enabled him to somewhat predict the future of sports, not least due to what he had observed in England and the United States, but also due to constantly improving innovations which let the world of his day shrink and come closer together. The power/knowledge relations and the strategic positions of his elitist supporters enabled him to shape the discourse around the power of sports, which hardly anybody of his contemporaries saw the way he did. Out of these considerations he derived the Olympics' USP in the shape of the concept of Olympism. Over time he elaborated on his idea and planned his actions accordingly. After a first failure in 1892, he analyzed and reflected about his wrongdoings and missed opportunity, only to come back stronger and to present the right focal points of his address to his international elite audience. He camouflaged and embedded his plan to present his idea of restoring the Olympic Games in the framework of a congress on questions on amateurism. Due to the characteristics of amateurism it is an inherently elitist concept to exclude undesired lower classes from competing and even participating. Thus this was a great gateway to convince this aristocratic audience to join this congress on amateurism in June 1894. By hosting this congress within the mighty walls of the Sorbonne, by treating them well, by letting them wine, dine and visit the impressive city of Paris and by singing the recently excavated Delphic Hymn to Apollo he invoked an alluring atmosphere in the spirit of ancient Greece. This surrounding energy together with his speech, could only result in the favorable acceptance of his idea to restore the Olympic Games and to establish the International Olympic Committee as the institutional authority of what is today known as the Olympic Movement.

The second research question concerned what he regarded as Olympism and what it represented. To provide an adequate answer and to derive meaning from the genealogical approach the speech of the 1894 congress as well as his most accurate definition of Olympism in a radio interview from 1935 were compared, critically analyzed and deconstructed. Looking at the numerous adjectives he mixed into what he saw as Olympism, one must come to the conclusion that this concept lacks of complete meaning. It is what Derrida describes as *aporia*, the undecidable. It can be interpreted as being international and peace-promoting as well as nationalistic preparation for war as nationalist and anti-Semitic Charles Maurras expressed it after his visit to the Athens Games 1896, to be a great nationalistic and patriotic undertaking which will fortify the fatherlands. His wish to assemble individual adult males at the Olympics to celebrate elite performances under the status of an amateur contradicts his expressed desire that these elite and aristocratic performances shall be

aristocratic in performance only, but egalitarian in origin. This is far from reality as the Baron must have been aware whom amateurism mainly served. Certainly not the marginalized and discriminated parts of society. After the critical discourse analysis, the conclusion was drawn that the concept of Olympism is what the recipient makes of it or wants it to be. It is, as expressed before, an ideological chameleon, an empty canvas to paint any individual desire onto it. The paint on that canvas as well the painter change every four years and are free to interpret Olympism as whatever they would like to interpret it as.

Coubertin as well as IOC presidents after him have not been getting tired of repeating the same unquestioned story and thus shaping the discourse surrounding the ambiguous concept. All talk about it just like a priest talks about the unfailing and great god above. Nobody can prove it to exist, but a lot of people blindly believe in it. Olympism in its ideal form, as interpreted by many representatives of the Olympic Movement and hosting nations, certainly is a desirable and humanistic philosophy, which would undoubtedly make the world a less unequal and unjust place for the majority of people on this planet. But as we compared the principles and claims of Olympism to certain selected episodes of Olympic history it is evident that the discourse around Olympism as shaped and presented by their representatives is nothing less and nothing more than wishful thinking. After a more detailed definition was provided by the IOC under the presidency of Samaranch in 1991, the room for interpretation became smaller. However, the IOC in cooperation with the host cities and nations, showed little signals to actually adhere to their self-set principles.

This thesis exposed, that even under the dictatorship of Adolf Hitler, Coubertin thought "*The wonderful success of the Berlin Games has served the Olympic ideal magnificently*" (Coubertin, 1936, p.522). High ranking IOC members were ignoring racist and anti-Semitic actions by the German government, gave them advice on how to avoid public criticism and were even working to prevent a boycott due to raised concerns from exactly those communities which should suffer so much over the subsequent decade. Additionally, nobody, at least according to the findings presented in this thesis, raised or voiced their concern about the Nazi Salute during these infamous Nazi Games. When 32 years later, one of the main reasons for the undisturbed staging of the 1936 Berlin Olympics, Avery Brundage, condemned the peaceful and silent protest of Tommie Smith, John Carlos and Peter Norman, because he identified it as a political statement at the 'unpolitical' Olympic Games, he showed impressively how the Olympic authorities apply double standards. A successful and undisturbed staging of the Olympics seems more important to them, than to defend what these authorities so often present as Olympism. This notion reveals itself as a red thread throughout the Olympic history. In Mexico City 1968 official authorities from both the IOC as well

as the Mexican government were surprisingly silent about the student massacre at La Plaza de las Tres Culturas and were far from condemning it, rather relativizing it. Not so, when the two Afro-American athletes raised their fists covered in black gloves as a sign of solidarity among discriminated and marginalized minorities around the world but especially in the US. Similar considerations must have prevailed when the IOC members in 2001 voted for Beijing as the host for the 2008 Olympics. Despite of expressed fear by numerous organizations around the world concerning previous and potential future human rights violations as a result of organizing the Olympic Games in China, the IOC awarded the Games to Beijing. As reports from human rights organizations show, these concerns were justified as the human rights situation worsened as the Games were coming closer. The IOC as well as the Beijing organizers together with international communication agencies tried to divert the public's attention to other areas. Similar ignorance could be found in Sochi as well as in Rio, suggesting the thought that flawless Olympics and an immaculate presentation of the Olympic Games to the world is higher up on the agenda of the IOC than actually adhering to the fundamental principles found in Olympism.

Conclusively, it can be assessed that Olympism as the theoretical philosophical and ideological basis of the Olympic Movement is totally deprived of any clear meaning as it is and has never been more than a marketing tool in order to create a certain regime of truth within a power/knowledge constellation which is beneficial to the expansionary and commercial interests of the International Olympic Committee and its partners, the hosting nations. Through the constant reproduction of the same discourse concerning Olympism and the positive power of the Olympic Games to make the world a better place through sport, it becomes evident that this postulation is nothing else than a lip service and wishful thinking.

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## Appendix

- *Le Congrès de Paris; in; Bulletin du Comité International des Jeux Olympiques, July 1894, no. 1, p. 1; as cited in Müller, N. (Ed.). (2000). Pierre de Coubertin 1863-1937: Olympism: Selected Writings, p. 298-299. International Olympic Committee:*

This Congress has been called by decision of the Board of the Union des Sociétés françaises des Sports athlétiques in the spring of 1893, at the request of Mr. A. de Pallissaux and Mr. Coubertin. Three committee members were placed in charge of organizing the congress: Baron Pierre de Coubertin, secretary general of the Union, for continental Europe; C. Herbert, secretary of the Amateur Athletic Association, for England and its colonies; and W. M. Sloane, Professor at Princeton University (United States) for the American continent. A preliminary meeting was held at the University Club in New York on November 27, 1893. A second meeting was held at the Sports Club in London on February 7, 1894. In the meantime, the program of the Congress was sent with the following appeal to the athletic and sports associations throughout the world. The appeal read, "It is our honor to inform you of the enclosed program for the International Congress, which will meet in Paris next June 17 under the auspices of the Union des Sociétés françaises des Sports athlétiques."

"The purpose of this Congress is twofold. We must uphold the noble and chivalrous character of athleticism, which has distinguished it in the past, so that it may continue effectively to play the admirable role in the education of modern peoples that was attributed to it by the Greek masters. Human imperfection always tends to transform the Olympic athlete into a circus gladiator. A choice must be made between these two incompatible approaches to athletics. To defend against the spirit of gain and professionalism that threatens to invade them, amateurs in most countries have established complex legislation that is replete with compromise and contradiction. In other places, too often the letter of the law is shown greater respect than the spirit.

Reform is necessary, but before it is implemented that reform must be discussed. The issues placed on the agenda of the Congress deal with the compromises and contradictions that persist in amateur regulations. The project mentioned in the last paragraph, should it come to fruition, would mean appropriately sanctioning the international understanding for which we hope to pave the way. The time for its implementation has not yet come. The restoration of the Olympic Games, on foundations of and under conditions that are in keeping with the needs of modern life, would bring together representatives of the nations of the world every four years. It may be hoped that these peaceful, courteous confrontations are the best form of internationalism.

In taking this initiative that may have such significant results, the Union is not attempting to usurp the primacy that does not belong to any one country or society in the republic of the muscles.

The Union merely believes that the clarity of its principles and attitude, as well as the high-level friendships it is honored to have made in France and abroad, puts it in a position to give the signal for the reform movement, the need for which is felt more and more every day. Therefore the Union is acting in general interest, without any ulterior motives of blind ambition.” (International Committee of the Olympic Games).

- *Pierre de Coubertin, 1935 in Les assises philosophiques de l’Olympisme modern, in Le Sport Suisse, Vol. 31, August 7, 1935, p.1; a special print of the Sport Suisse, Geneva 1935, 4pp. in Müller, N. (Ed.). (2000). Pierre de Coubertin 1863-1937: Olympism: Selected Writings. International Olympic Committee:*

As the founder and honorary president of the Olympic Games, I was asked to present the first of messages to be broadcast by radio that will explain the meaning of the Games. I was quick to accept this honor. I believe that the best way to go about this is to present my initial thoughts and the philosophical foundations on which I tried to base my work.

The primary, fundamental characteristic of ancient Olympism, and of modern Olympism as well, is that it is a *religion*. By chiseling his body through exercise as a sculptor does a statue, the ancient athlete “honored the gods”. In doing likewise, the modern athlete honors his country, his race, his flag. Therefore, I believe that I was right to restore, from the very beginning of modern Olympism, a religious sentiment transformed and expanded by the internationalism and democracy that are distinguishing features of our day. Yet this is the same religious sentiment that led the young Hellenes, eager for the victory of their muscles, to the foot of the alters of Zeus. From this sentiment derive all the cultural expressions that constitute the ceremonies of the modern Games. I had to impose these ceremonies one after another on a public that was opposed to them for a long time, seeing them merely as theatrical displays, useless spectacles incompatible with the seriousness and dignity of international athletic competitions. The athletic religious concept, the *religio athletae*, took root slowly in the minds of competitors, many of whom still experience it only in an unconscious way. But they will come around, gradually. It is not just internationalism and democracy, the foundations of the new human society now being constructed in civilized nations, but science as well that is involved in this sentiment. Through its constant progress, science has given man new ways to cultivate his body, to guide and straighten nature, and to snatch the body from the constraints of unbridled passions to which it had become subject in the name of individual freedom. The second characteristic of Olympism is that it is an *aristocracy*, an *elite*. Of course, this aristocracy is completely egalitarian in origin since membership is determined solely by the physical superiority

of the individual, by his muscular ability – improved to a certain extent by his willingness to train. Not all young men are destined to become athletes. Later, no doubt, through enhanced public and private hygiene and through astute measures intended to improve the race, it will be possible to increase the number of individuals capable of handling intense athletic education. It is unlikely that we will ever reach more than about half, certainly no more than two thirds, of each generation. Currently we are far from that figure in all countries. Yet even if such a result were to be achieved, it would not necessarily follow that all these young athletes would be “Olympians”, i.e. men capable of contesting world records. I have presented this idea before, in an axiom (now translated into various languages) unconsciously accepted by nearly everyone: “For every hundred who engage in physical culture, fifty must engage in sports. For every fifty who engage in sports, twenty must specialize. For every twenty who specialize, five must be capable of astonishing feats.”

To try to make athletics conform to a system of mandatory moderation is to chase after an illusion. Athletics need the “freedom of excess” that is why their motto is *Citius, altius, fortius*: Faster, higher, stronger, the motto of anyone who dares to try to beat a record!

Yet being an elite is not enough. This elite must also be a *knighthood*. Knights, above all else, are “brothers in arms”, brave, energetic men, united by a bond that is stronger than that of mere camaraderie, which is powerful enough in itself. In chivalry, the idea of competition, of effort opposing effort for the love of the effort itself, of courteous yet violent struggle, is superimposed in the notion of mutual assistance, the basis of camaraderie. In antiquity, that was the Olympic spirit in its purest form. It is easy to see the tremendous consequences that application of this principle can have when it comes to international competitions. Forty years ago, people thought that I was deluding myself with my plans to restore the impact of this principle in the Olympic Games. But it is becoming clear that not only can and should this principle exist in the solemn setting of the quadrennial Olympic Games, but that it is already being seen in less solemn circumstances. From country to country, its progress has been slow but steady. Now, its influence must reach the spectators themselves. This, too, has already taken place, in Paris, for example, at the football match last March 17. We must come to a point on such occasions and especially at the Olympic Games, that the applause is expressed only in proportion to the feat accomplished, regardless of national sympathies. A truce must be called regarding exclusively nationalistic feelings, which must be put on “temporary leave”, so to speak.

The idea of the *truce* is another element of Olympism. It is closely related to the notion of *rhythm*. The Olympic Games must be held on a strictly astronomical rhythm, because they are the quadrennial celebration of the human spring time, honoring the successive arrival of human generations. That is why we must adhere to this rhythm



strictly. Today as in antiquity, an Olympiad may fail to be held if unforeseen circumstances present an insurmountable obstacle, but neither the order nor the number of the Olympiad may be changed.

The human springtime is neither childhood nor adolescence. In our day, in many if not all countries we are making a serious mistake by placing too much significance on childhood, granting it a certain degree of autonomy and allowing it excessive and premature privileges. The theory is that we gain time this way, and increase the period of youthful productivity. This approach comes from a mistaken interpretation expression "Time is money". This expression was not devised by a race or a specific form of civilization, but by a people – the American people – who were going through an exceptional and temporary period of productive opportunities at the time.

The human springtime is expressed in the *young adult male*, who can be compared to a superb machine in which all the gears have been set in place, ready for full operation. That is the person in whose honor the Olympic Games must be celebrated and their rhythm organized and maintained, because it is on him that the near future depends, as well as the harmonious passage from the past to the future.

How better to honor this than by proclaiming a temporary cessation of hostilities, disputes, and misunderstandings, at regular, set intervals for this express purpose? Men are not angles, and I do not believe that humanity would profit from having most men become angles. But the truly strong man is one whose will is powerful enough to make himself and his group stop pursuing its desire or passion for domination and possession, regardless of how legitimate such pursuits may be. I would welcome most warmly an interruption in hostilities in the midst of war between armed opponents, in order to celebrate athletic, fair, and courteous Games.

From what I have just said, one must conclude that the true Olympic hero is, in my view, the *individual adult male*. Should sports teams, therefore, be excluded? This is not absolutely essential, if one accepts another essential element in modern Olympism, as it was accepted in ancient Olympism: The existence of an *Altis*, or *sacred enclosure*. At Olympia, plenty of events took place outside the Altis. A whole community of life thrives all around it, even though that community did not enjoy the privilege of appearing inside the enclosure. The Altis itself was like a sanctuary reserved for the consecrated, purified athlete only, the athlete admitted to the main competitions and who became, in this way, a sort of priest, an officiating priest in the religion of the muscles. Similarly, I see modern Olympism as having at its core a sort of moral Altis, a sacred fortress where the competitors in the manly sports par excellence are gathered to pit their strength against each other. The objectives of these sports are to defend man and to achieve self-mastery, to master danger, the elements, the animal, life. These athletes are gymnasts, runners, riders, swimmers and rowers, fencers and wrestlers – and then, around

them, all the other types of athletic life one might want to include, such as football tournaments and other games, team exercises, etc. They will be honored in this way, as is fitting, but on a secondary level. Here, too, is where women could participate, if this is felt to be necessary. Personally, I do not approve of women's participation in public competitions, which does not mean that they should not engage in a great many sports, merely that they should not become the focus of a spectacle. At the Olympic Games, their role should be above all to crown the victors, as was the case in the ancient tournaments.

There is one final thing: *Beauty*, the involvement of the arts and the mind in the Games. Indeed, can one celebrate the festival of the human springtime without inviting the mind to take part? But then we face the weighty issue of the reciprocal action of the muscles and the mind. What should their alliance, their cooperation, look like?

No doubt, the mind is the dominant figure. The muscles must remain the vasals of the mind, provided that we are focusing on the highest form of artistic and literary creation, not the lower forms to which ever-increasing license has been given in our time to our great detriment of civilization, of human truce and dignity, and of international relations.

I know that in response to my request, the Games of Eleventh Olympiad will open to the incomparable sounds of the last movement of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, sung by powerful choral groups. Nothing could make me happier, because during my childhood this particular movement stirred and moved me deeply. The harmony of the piece seemed to communicate with the divine. I hope that in future choral music, which is so well-suited to translating the power of the hopes and joys of youth, will accompany their Olympic feats more and more. Similarly, I hope that history will hold a major place alongside poetry and intellectual exhibitions held along with the Games. This is only natural, since Olympism is part of history. To celebrate the Olympic Games is to lay claim to history.

History is also the best guarantee of peace. To ask people to love one another is merely a form of childishness. To ask them to respect each other is not utopian, but in order to respect each other they must first know each other. The only true basis for peace will come from taking into account the precise chronological and geographical outlines of World History as it can now be taught.

Now that I have come to the close of my days, I take advantage of the coming Games of the Eleventh Olympiad to express my best wishes to you, along with my thanks. At the same time, I express to you my unshakable faith in youth and in the future!