

中國的奧運會

——論證與多元文化交流的可能性

許立宏*

摘 要

2008 年奧運會於北京所舉行，這可以是一個促進國際理解與多元文化交流的最佳時機。本文提出二項任務。第一項任務，是從全球性的角度來論證奧林匹克主義 (Olympism) 的普世性與奧林匹克活動在中國的重要性。因此，有關和諧與世界和平及世界公民的相關概念也將在此一部分做一釐清。第二項任務，是透過奧運會在中國的舉行來尋求促進多元文化交流的可能性。在本文中提出以下幾項建議：包括從全世界各地來徵召運動志工，特別是從敏感地區。進一步的建議是，在主辦國內提昇國際語言的實際使用空間、事先提供可幫助各國代表瞭解中國文化的課程與教材、以及協助設立各國文化活動之空間，以俾來自全世界各國之參與者（包括主辦國人民）皆能分享此一獨特與豐富的多元文化體驗。

關鍵詞：中國的奧運會、和諧、世界公民、多元文化主義

*大葉大學運動事業管理學系助理教授。E-mail: hsuleo@mail.dyu.edu.tw。

Chinese Olympics: Justification and Possibilities for Multicultural Interactions*

*Li-Hong (Leo) Hsu***

The 2008 Olympic Games will be held in Beijing. This can be the best timing to promote international understanding and for multicultural exchanges. This paper presents two tasks. The first task is to justify Olympism from a global perspective and the importance of the Olympic Movement in China. Hence, the concept of harmony with respect to world peace and world citizenship will also be clarified.

The second task is to seek possibilities for promoting multicultural interaction through the Olympic Games in China. A few initiatives are proposed in this paper, including the recruitment of volunteers from all over the world, especially from sensitive regions. Further suggestions are increasing the international language capacity in the hosting country, helping delegations with introduction courses in advance by providing informative materials, and finally to help setting up cultural houses so that participants from all over the world (including the hosting country) can all share unique and fruitful multicultural experiences.

Key words: Chinese Olympics, harmony, world citizenship, multiculturalism

* The early draft of this article was presented at the conference on "Multiculturalism in the Olympic Movement" 19-23 August, Beijing Sport University, China. The author wishes to thank Beijing Sport University, Professor Susan Brownell and Professor Ren Hai for their kind invitation to attend this conference. Thanks are due, too, to Ms. Elisabeth Rutten for her helpful and constructive comments on a previous draft of this article.

** Assitant professor, Da-Yeh University. E-mail: hsuleo@mail.dyu.edu.tw

I. Introduction

The 2008 Olympic Games will be held in Beijing. This can be the best timing to promote international understanding and for multicultural exchanges. This paper presents two tasks. The first task is to justify Olympism from a global perspective and the importance of the Olympic Movement in China. Hence, the concept of harmony with respect to world peace and world citizenship will also be clarified.

The second task is to seek possibilities for promoting multicultural interaction through the Olympic Games in China. A few initiatives are proposed in this paper, including the recruitment of volunteers from all over the world, especially from sensitive regions. Further suggestions are increasing the international language capacity in the hosting country, helping delegations with introduction courses in advance by providing informative materials, and finally to help setting up cultural houses so that participants from all over the world (including the hosting country) can all share unique and fruitful multicultural experiences.

II. Justification of Olympism from a global perspective

For some scholars from Asia, the term “Olympism” might be a western product or a product of western imperialism. Some might even argue that Olympism is merely an ideal, since we found non-amateurs, cases of cheating,

violence, boycotts, etc, in the previous Olympic Games. Moreover, the Modern Olympic Games include very little Eastern or Asian sports events and can therefore be seen as WESTERN oriented games. Most sports historians would agree that the Olympic spirit was already in existence in the ancient Olympic Games. Even though the term 'Olympism' did not appear until much later, the tradition and spirit of the ancient Olympic Games in Greece were combined with the 19th century English public school conception of sport to be firmly embedded in Pierre de Coubertin's conception. When one looks at Coubertin's ideas of modern Olympism, it is hard to ignore that many of his ideas of Olympism are fundamentally based on the tradition of the ancient Olympic Games.

According to some authors (such as Simri, 1986: 199-205), a universally acceptable definition of Olympism does not exist, because no efforts were made by Coubertin and his co-founders of the International Olympic Committee to define the terms 'Olympic Idea' or 'Olympism'. It seems that Coubertin never tried to define these terms unequivocally. Nevertheless, from his discourses and essays, Coubertin did make a clear statement about some characteristics of Olympism. For example, in a letter on the 22nd November 1918, he writes that "Olympism is not a system; it is a state of mind...No race or epoch can claim an exclusive monopoly of it" (Coubertin, 1918: 55). In 1935, his seminar article *The Philosophic Foundation of Modern Olympism*, was clearly composed of the eight essential characteristics of Olympism. These characteristics, according to Coubertin, are similar to the ancient Olympic ideas.

- a) A religion of sport (the *religio athletae*)
- b) An aristocracy, an elite (but egalitarian and meritocratic)

- c)Chivalry
- d)Truce (the temporary cessation of quarrels, disputes and misunderstandings)
- e)Rhythm (the Olympiad)
- f)The young adult male individual
- g)Beauty (art)
- h)Peace: promoted by mutual respect based on mutual understanding

It may be argued that some of Coubertin's thoughts are already dated and should be challenged in the modern times (such as the games are only for aristocracy and the young adult male individuals). Nevertheless, his central ideas still bear a big impact on later generations around the world. While in recent decades there are many interpretations or notions of Olympism (Brundage, 1963; Segrave, 1988; Durantez, 1993; Wigmore, 1999, the IOC Charter, 2004, Parry, 2006) they are still mostly based on Coubertin's thoughts. The core values of Olympism are: respect for universal ethical principles, fair play, mutual understandings, antidiscrimination, education through sport, and multiculturalism (Parry, 2006: 192).

With different views and interpretations of Olympism within the context of popular culture, one might question whether it is true that Olympism can be seen as a universal valuable philosophy. If it is, then what is the argument for it? Do no alternatives exist? In order to answer these questions, we are also not surprised to find similar difficulties as serious as those encountered when defining democracy, human rights, fair play and sportsmanship. This is one of the fundamental philosophical questions concerning concept and conceptions.

To resolve this problem, it can be argued that although there might be

different conceptions of Olympism, but there is only one central and general concept of Olympism that will bring it to real life in a particular context. In other words, Olympism, if it has to be universally accepted, must entail certain positive values which are applicable to all persons regardless of their cultural setting. Parry (1998) argues that while the concept of Olympism can be at a high level of generality, it will find different expressions in time and place, history and geography.

From the view of philosophical anthropology, Olympism can be seen as an ideology – an ideology about the ideal human being and the ideal life. Parry states that the status of Olympism as a social, political and educational ideology necessarily appeals to philosophical anthropology which he refers to as “an idealized conception of the human being towards which the ideology strives in its attempted social reproduction of the individual (Parry, 1998: 159).” By thinking in this way, other alternatives can be subject to this ideology. This, however, does not mean that Olympism is superior to other sporting ethos. Instead, it is to expose an ideal good-ethos for all of the sporting games and to recognize positive human values that can/should not be exhausted merely by a short list of principles or the values such as ‘fair play’ and ‘sportsmanship’. And since Olympism is universally valid, it should not be seen as a contingent ideology based on the change of time, space, society or who is in the powerful position (e.g. the president of the IOC or other sports federations).

Based on this rationale, I argue that Olympism can basically be divided into two parts: That is the individual concept of personal development and the community concept of international development. For the former, it is for an individual to demonstrate good human values towards an ideal human being, thus it is a philosophy of life and it contains a wide variety of ethical values.

For the latter, it is based on a global perspective, which is a collective concept of an ideal life for a community, especially for international societies (including rules governing bodies and sports institutions) to reach a better mutual understanding, to achieve a peaceful and ideal world.

The way to achieve these values is not only via sport, but by treating sport as a human valued practice rather than as a pure instrument in order to satisfy a commercial purpose or a certain political ideology (cf. MacIntyre, 1987). It focuses on commitments to friendship and peace among individuals, groups and nations. That is why to host the Olympic Games and to promote the Olympic movement through the philosophy of Olympism plays a very important function in the world. It serves as a good philosophy for international society that endorses peace and mutual understanding between different nations.

On the one hand, those positive values can be ideals and very abstract, such that they may not easily be achieved. On the other hand, however, they may only mean that in any situation one (an individual, a team or a sports governing body) is always trying to look forward to reaching an even better stage based on these ideals.

III. Justification of the Olympic Movement in China

As Olympism can be seen as a universally valuable philosophy from the previous rationale, we now can look at the Modern Olympic Games which have been held at different continents over the past century. It will be interesting to follow the updated development of the Olympic Movement. As

sport can be a very powerful means and the latest Olympic Games will be held in Beijing, perhaps this will be the best timing for international society to develop a better understanding about China, a country often seen as mysterious by western society. Although there were controversial debates with regard to whether the Games should be awarded to Beijing, in principle, three major reasons can be given in order to justify the Games in China¹.

The first reason is about international integration: that is, it will give Beijing a chance to enhance their international reputation and help the nation integrate into international communities. For, this will benefit Chinese people in the long run. Secondly, more tourists will travel to China, which will boost China's economy. The third reason is that the Games will force China and the Chinese people to face the world.

Besides the above, one can also find other reasons to justify the Games in Beijing. One of which is in consideration of equal opportunity for the biggest nation in Asia to host the Games and to promote sports for Chinese people. During the 2005 Beijing Forum, the Secretary General of the Korea Foundation for Advanced Studies Kim Jae-Youl (2005: 8) made a remark that the "20th century dominated by the west is also a century of conflicts. In fact, many countries have suffered from conflicts due to the domination of the western civilization. We hold the view that the 21st century should focus on cultural harmony, co-existence and co-prosperity." To achieve this aim, the Chinese government and its people have been given a chance to open a window to the world and to mix and mingle with other cultures.

¹ See Lin (2005: 142-143).

IV. Harmony and World Citizenship

As the slogan of the 2008 Beijing Games says: One World; One Dream. The dream hence can be interpreted as harmony with respect to promoting world peace. In order to understand the concept of harmony, one needs to understand the concept of whole. According to the Czech sports philosopher (Martinkova, 2003: 86-89), the whole as to holon (Greek word) is the base for the holistic view of the world, the whole as to pan (Greek word) is the base for the dualistic tradition. Only the former allows harmony and one cannot separate personal and universal harmony. Each being is an inseparable part of the universe and being its part, it attributes to it.

To increase the possibility of harmony not only for oneself but also for the world community, we ought to consider the concept world citizenship.

World citizenship begins with an acceptance of the oneness of the human family and the interconnectedness of the nations of "the earth, our home." It insists upon a wider loyalty, a love of humanity as a whole. It does not, however, imply abandonment of legitimate loyalties, the suppression of cultural diversity, the abolition of national autonomy, nor the imposition of uniformity. Its hallmark is "unity in diversity."... World citizenship encompasses the principles of social and economic justice, both within and between nations; non-adversarial decision making at all levels of society; equality of the sexes; racial, ethnic, national and religious harmony; and the willingness to sacrifice for the common good (Bahá'í International Community, 2002).

The concept of world citizenship is not new to the world community. It is both implicit and explicit in a host of UN documents, charters and agreements, including the opening words of the UN Charter itself. But it can be very meaningful for the Olympic Games to be held in China and for Chinese people in particular. For, over the past century Chinese people suffered so much from internal and external wars. Thus, one can see that there have been various contexts that Chinese tend to express their overly national pride and patriotic mentality. By stressing the concept of world citizenship, which can be argued as a transcendental concept that goes beyond traditional ideology of nationalism and patriotism, the new concept should bring Chinese people challenging and dynamic opportunities. It will also help the Chinese to think that the world is just ONE and we are all interconnected and living on the same planet.

Sport is a powerful means to promote peace around the world. One way to promote peace through the Beijing Games can be done by referring to Coubertin's early idea on international sporting encounters as "the free trade of the future" (Muller, 2006: 6). That is, to see the participating athletes as "ambassadors of peace" and bringing them the concept of world citizenship, i.e. to reduce chauvinistic nationalism.

V. Some possible ideas for promoting Multiculturalism

Multiculturalism means honoring and respecting the widest variety of human culture. It values diversity because every culture expresses a form of human life and helps us appreciate the full range of difference and choice,

which also helps us to understand more fully our identity as humans (Parry, 2006:195). The following suggestions might be useful to promote multiculturalism for the hosting country:

A. Recruit more international volunteers

One suggestion for the Beijing Olympic Games Organizing Committee is to recruit more volunteers from different nations. Hence, volunteers from all over the world can be “ambassadors of peace” as well and they can promote peaceful dialogues and they will work in the equal spirit for the Games. It can be assumed that China, just like all previous organizing countries is recruiting many volunteers. Most Olympic volunteers tend to come from the host nation, as an important attribute that must be possessed by volunteers is patriotism, which will help to promote Beijing and China of the host nation. However, in consideration of promoting multiculturalism, what can be suggested further for the Organizing Committee is to recruit more volunteers from certain sensitive regions so that the hosting country can achieve a better understanding and relationship.

Moreno (1999) lists three reasons why volunteerism is an important part of the Olympic Movement. These three reasons are the political, economic, and cultural. In connection with promoting people’s sense of awareness and international understandings, the third reason, i.e. the cultural viewpoint is one of enhanced knowledge on solidarity and multiculturalism; that is, an appreciation for all cultures. As Canada’s Multiculturalism Policy is globally renowned as being one of the best of its kind, perhaps the Olympic Movement in China may benefit by adapting parts of this policy. The essence of such a

policy should emphasize the following²:

- a) equal recognition of all volunteers
- b) equal opportunity for personal growth through the volunteer experience
- c) a chance to experience the “spirit of the Olympics”
- d) an avenue of cultural exchange and interchange amongst each other
- e) a “common cultural environment”

By recruiting more international volunteers, I am convinced that Beijing can offer an avenue of cultural exchange not only between East and West, but also within the regions of Asia. The multicultural exchange can play a very important role to promote a peaceful spirit endorsed by Olympism. Hence, the new spirit of Asia embedded among different cultures can be exemplified.

For example, we can also use the multicultural exchange approach to gradually resolve the tension between the two sides of the Taiwan Straits. It may be naïve to think that there will be no more political tension between the both sides of the Taiwan Straits after the Games, but at least it never harms to try to seek a permanent peaceful solution. People should keep an open mind and start to learn to know each other. A peace researcher from Taiwan (Li, 2003: 114) once stressed that from her personal experience she finds that: the misunderstandings between the Chinese people on both sides of the Taiwan Straits are related to the long period of isolation. In fact, both educational parties currently have been really looking forward to peaceful resolutions and try to avoid misunderstandings. As Coubertin long ago already stressed that:

² See Karlis' (2003) paper titled “Volunteerism and Multiculturalism: A Linkage for future Olympics.”

To ask the people of the world to love one another is merely a form of childishness. To ask them to respect one another is not in the least utopian, but in order to respect one another it is first necessary to know one another. (Coubertin, 1935: 134).

Coubertin was convinced that peace education could only be effective if theoretical learning was accompanied by personal experience. Olympic sport was the very means to achieve this aim (Muller, 2006: 2). We cannot achieve much with fighting as fighting usually provokes new fighting, but the way of mutual understanding is much better. When you know the people, it would be just hard to initiate conflicts.

By knowing each other better as the first step will also make us think about “why” there is a difference, not “how it should be”. This way, we can prevent unnecessary prejudices.

B. Increase the international language capacity

The second proposal is to increase the practical language usage capacity for the hosting citizens. It is not simply to learn a few sentences in different languages within a short period of time. For example, a person might be able to greet in different languages but cannot engage in a basic proper conversation with foreign participants and to help them understand the local culture. This won't do any good for the people who are willing to interact and learn from each other, because it is not useful and helpful at all. For the sake of basic communication, there has to be at least one common, around world spoken language together with some knowledge of different cultures about different nations. Therefore, I suggest that English is a must-learn language for the

hosting country's citizens. At least, most foreign participants in one way or the other have to communicate in English.

So if we focus on a world wide spoken language (i.e. English), then the next step is to design a few useful sentences, which will be good enough for hosting citizens to be able to speak and practice them on the streets or on the sporting grounds in order to help and interact with international participants. This way, hosting citizens in one way or the other way can learn a great deal and is self-rewarding.

C. Help delegations with introduction course in advance

To many foreigners, Chinese culture is still a mystery. It may be a good idea to design a few interesting courses together with some supplementary materials such as DVDs, video clips and hard copies (such as leaflets or handbooks) for those who are coming to China for the Olympic Games or Games' related tourism. The content of those materials can cover many items such as brief Chinese history, philosophy, geography, basic conversation language, popular sports, etc. One way to do that is to send those materials to all the foreign Olympic delegations in advance. Ideally, it will be even better to send some trained/qualified ambassador-like lecturers to give an introduction course in the relevant countries before their departure for the Games. This way, an unnecessary cultural bias can be prevented and better cultural understandings can be appreciated.

D. Help setting up cultural houses

The Olympic village normally offers a great venue for international athletes to exchange different cultures. Therefore it is very important to

carefully design what an Olympic village should look like and how it should function. Apart from that, we can also expand the possibilities of cultural exchange that goes beyond athletes and official delegations. One proposal is to set up many different nations' cultural houses. The idea is derived from my personal experience when I was attending the 2000 Sydney Olympic Games. I had an opportunity to attend a Dutch House which was located in the Sydney Harbor area. I found it a very successful initiative since during the period of the Sydney Games, many people (not only Dutch fans but also local and international tourists) can all go there to experience the Dutch culture and their authentic way of celebration. They set up a big TV screen to show a live broadcast about their Dutch athletes' performance, and quite often, they also invited their athletes to be part of their celebrations.

VI. Conclusion

Although the original ideas of Olympism were derived from Ancient Olympic Games and adopted by the Frenchman Pierre De Coubertin, it does not need to be seen as an alien product in other non-western societies. While in recent decades there are many interpretations or notions of Olympism, they are still mostly based on Coubertin's thoughts. Different conceptions of Olympism will interpret the general concept in such a way as to bring it to real life in a particular context. The view of the philosophical anthropology is the way to defend the universal status of Olympism for an ideal human being.

For the possibilities of promoting multicultural interactions through the 2008 Games in Beijing, a few initiatives have been suggested but they should

not be exhausted. There is still a great potential for the hosting country to contribute more multiculturalism and international understandings. To organize such an international workshop is already a great achievement!

References

- Arnold, P. "Olympism, Sport, and Education," *Quest* 48.1 (Champaign, February, 1996): 93-101.
- Beijing Forum Newsletter (2005). Vol.1 No.3.
- Bahá'í International Community. *World citizenship: A Global Ethic for Sustainable Development*. <http://www.bic-un.bahai.org/93-0614.htm> accessed on (2006, September 17).
- Brundage, A. *The Olympic Philosophy*. IOA Proceedings (Athens, 1963): 29-39.
- Clark, S. J., *Amateurism, Olympism, and Pedagogy: Cornerstones of the Modern Olympic Movement*, Diss. Stanford University, 1975.
- De Coubertin, P. Olympic Letters. In Carl-Diem-Institut, (ed.). (1966). *The Olympic Idea: Discourses and Essays*. (Carl-Diem-Institut, 1918): 54-5.
- De Coubertin, P. *The Philosophic Foundation of Modern Olympism*. In Carl-Diem-Institut, (ed.). (1966). *The Olympic Idea: Discourses and Essays*. (Carl-Diem-Institut, 1935): 130-4.
- Durantez, C. "Olympism," *Olympic Review* 311 (Lausanne, 1993): 372-376.
- Durantez, C. Historic Roots of the Ceremonies. In Moragas, M., MacAloon, J. and Llines, M. (1996). (eds.). *Olympic Ceremonies: Historical Continuity and Cultural Exchange*. (Lausanne, 1996): 55-61.
- Karlis, G. "Volunteerism and Multiculturalism: A Linkage for future Olympics," *The Sport Journal* 6.3 (Summer, 2003).

- Kim, J. Y. "A Harmonious World Through Oriental Wisdom – An Interview with Secretary General of Korea Foundation for Advanced Studies," *Beijing Forum Newsletter 1.3* (2005).
- Li, C. M. "An inquiry on Peace Education," *Education Quarterly* (October, 2003): 4-12.
- Lin, Y. L. (2005). "Talking about sportsmanship: From 2008 Olympic Games' bidding and Taipei-Kaohsiung battle for hosting the World Baseball Games," *Journal of China PE* 16, 2. (2005): 138-145.
- MacIntyre, A. C. *After Virtue: a study in moral theory* (Second Edition), London: Duckworth, 1987.
- Martinkova, I. "Understanding Harmony," *KINANTHROPOLOGICA* 39.2 (2003): 85-90.
- Moreno, A. B. *The evolution of volunteers at the Olympic Games*. Paper presented at the Volunteers, Global Society and the Olympic Movement Conference (Lausanne: November, 1999): 24-26.
- Muller, N. *The Idea of Peace as Vision for the Modern Olympic Games: Origin, Development and Pedagogic Consequences*. 7th International Session for Educators and Officials of Higher Institutes of Physical Education, 20-27 July, (2006, International Olympic Academy).
- Muller, N. Olympism in the field of education: think globally – act locally. *International Olympic Academy*, IOA. Thirty-ninth Session 20 July – 5 August, (1999, Ancient Olympia).
- Nissiotis, N. Pierre De Coubertin's relevance from the philosophical point of view and the problem of the 'religio athletae'. *The Relevance of Pierre de Coubertin Today*. Edited by Prof. Norbert Mueller. (Schors-Verlag Niedernhausen/Taunus, 1987): 162-169.

- Olympic Charter*. Lausanne: International Olympic Committee, 2004.
- Parry, J. "Physical Education as Olympic Education," *European Physical Education Review*, 4.2 (1998): 153-167.
- Parry, J. "Globalisation, Multiculturalism and Olympism," *Proceedings of the International Olympic Academy* 39 (1999): 86-97.
- Parry, J. "Sport and Olympism: Universals and Multiculturalism," *Journal of the Philosophy of Sport* 33 (2006): 188-204.
- Segrave, J. Toward a Definition of Olympism. In Segrave, J. & Chu, D. (eds.). *Olympic Games in Transition*. (Champaign: Human Kinetics, 2006): 149-161.
- Simri, U. The Variety of Interpretations of Olympism and the Olympic Idea. In Kroee, M. L. and Jaeger, E. M. (eds.). *Comparative Physical Education and Sport*. V. 3. Proceedings of the Third International Seminar on Comparative Physical Education and Sport. Minneapolis, Minnesota: University of Minnesota. (July 21-24, 1982). (Champaign, Illinois: Human Kinetics Publishers, 1986): 199-205.
- Wigmore, S. *Olympism-Values for life*. National Olympic Academy, (March, 1999), Sheffield. Unpublished paper. 1-6.
- Yannakis, T. The History of the Olympic Games and their Philosophy. (*International Olympic Academy Report, 1990*): 62-71.