



Olympic & Paralympic Discourses
Olympische & Paralympische Diskurse

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**Der Band ist Univ.-Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c. Norbert Müller
zu seinem 70ten Geburtstag gewidmet**

**This book is dedicated to Univ.-Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c.
Norbert Müller on the occasion of his 70th birthday**

Agon Sportverlag Kassel 2017

Preface of the Editors

This book is dedicated to Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c. Norbert Müller for the occasion of his 70th birthday. The contributions encompass and stimulate the ongoing multi- and interdisciplinary discourse on the Olympic and Paralympic Movement, which the jubilee celebrant has clearly coined throughout his research initiatives and publications over the last decades. Following the universal scholar of the 19th century, today's universal academic ideally pursues both a specific discipline and interdisciplinary approach. In the academic community, it is well known that Norbert Müller has applied this concept. His academic versatility is nationally and internationally recognized and can only be described selectively within this volume.

As one of the most prominent scholars on Baron Pierre de Coubertin and probably the most important exponent of Coubertin's writings, a major focus of Norbert Müller's work lies on the epoch and the cultural historical setting in which the founder of the modern Olympic Movement developed his ideas. This is closely linked to the study of ancient sports history and its reception since the time of Neo-humanism and modern philanthropy. Norbert Müller's scholarly expertise is linked to these topics, but also to the discussion about the Olympics, the concept of the Olympics, and questions of sports science. Olympic education in general and the International Olympic Academy in particular were shaped by him, which inevitably led to a discussion about delicate topics within the Olympic movement. These discussions concerned, amongst other topics, commercialization, gigantism, interference of politics, and doping. Olympic education has been and continues to be essential to Norbert Müller because it strengthens the objective understanding of the Olympic values and their importance for the core intention of the Olympic Movement. For Norbert Müller, Olympic education takes place at sports grounds, in seminars, in classrooms, workshops, and at events and ceremonies held in the context of the Olympic Movement and its spirit. But, it has always been essential for Norbert Müller that teaching and research on the multidimensional aspects of Olympic education must not be directed backwards. Academic debate on the problems and action guidelines of the Olympic Movement must, rather, be future-orientated.

According to Norbert Müller, all disciplines can make a significant contribution to this and can analyse relevant processes of continuity and transformation of the Olympic Movement. Based on these research results, future directions of the Olympic Movement have the ability to be discussed and evaluated. The integration of these research results in teaching contexts has been strengthened by Norbert Müller. By applying the strategy of a researched based learning and teaching atmosphere, he has motivated students to display an ongoing critical interest in the Olympic Movement.

Academic companions have gathered in this volume with contributions from the different subject areas researched by Norbert Müller. Herewith, the ancient Olympic Games are addressed first by Ingomar Weiler and Christian Wacker. This topic will be followed by a historical and contemporary analysis of the profile of the International Olympic Academy written by Stephan Wassong and Konstantinos Georgiadis. Ethical dimensions and challenges of the Olympic Games are in the focus of the articles submitted by Bernd Wirkus, Dietmar Mieth and Karen Joisten. Jean-Loup Chappelet and Jens Flatau have dealt with the topics of territorial Olympic heritage and the Olympic Games in the era of globalization. Their articles are then followed by insights on the evolution and management of TV-Rights presented by Emilio Fernandez and writings on the modern pentathlon from the perspective of spectators researched by Manfred Messing. Otto Schantz and Gabriel Kunzer are the authors of a contribution that has a specific focus on the Paralympic Games. Concluding the book, Lamartini DaCosta and Ines Nikolaus have addressed Norbert Müller's expertise in Olympic Studies and his successful efforts in establishing and supporting the circle of the International Pierre de Coubertin Schools. Without doubt, the articles collected here, in this book the Olympic & Paralympic Discourse, should be preserved as they contribute to keeping alive this vital line of research.

Concluding, we have to present our upmost gratitude to the Comité International Pierre de Coubertin (CIPC), the German Pierre de Coubertin Committee (DPCK) and the Olympic Studies Center (OSC) of the German Sport University Cologne. These institutions have financially supported the publishing of this book.

Revisiting Norbert Müller's Contributions to Olympic Studies: A Dialogue with Lamartine DaCosta about Traditions and Present Interpretations

Lamartine DaCosta

In 1994, whilst I was travelling to the International Olympic Academy – IOA, Olympia, Greece – from Brazil, with a stopover in Frankfurt, I went to visit Norbert Müller at the University of Mainz. This meeting was of great personal importance to myself as it represented an opportunity to exchange ideas with a scholar, who, even at that time, was prominent in the field of Olympic Studies.

From the messages we had exchanged prior to the visit, the decision to actually meet up emerged from mutual interest. In particular, Norbert demonstrated curiosity over the presentation I was to deliver at the IOA, in which I talked about Sports for All within the theme of values.¹ I, on the other hand, wanted to take the opportunity to speak with him and gain a better understanding of the reasons as for why Pierre de Coubertin was involved in making sports accessible to everyone, which, in my view, implied a better understanding of the values that informed the Restorer of the Olympic Games.²

My interest in Sports for All came about from my involvement with research in the field coupled with that of the experiences I had encountered whilst leading a national campaign in Brazil in the 1980's (DaCosta and Miragaya, 2002). However, for Norbert, Sports for All was one of the subjects related to Coubertin's writings and therefore was subject to re-interpretation. Thus, my understanding of Sports for All was formed because he, in association with Otto Schantz, was the

¹ DACOSTA, Lamartine: *How can the Olympic Movement promote Sport for All?* Olympia 1991, 149-153.

² MÜLLER, Norbert: *Olympism and Sport for All*. Olympia 1988, 188-200.

organizer of the most celebrated collection of Coubertin's texts with interpretative comments.³

Putting everything into contextual terms, it is important to remember that, in 1986, the International Olympic Committee – IOC – promoted a large congress in Frankfurt to invigorate Sports for All, creating a favorable environment for discussing this topic.⁴ Whilst both Norbert Müller and I were present at this event dedicated to sports with access to multiple conditions of participation, we were not to meet. It was only in following years, after our sharing of the IOA's initiatives, that we came into contact with one another.

However, following my digression, our dialogue conducted at the meeting in Mainz turned out to be most productive. This was due to that if we had not better clarified the dynamics of the values, either concerning Coubertin or sports in general, we would not have begun a collaboration that remained active for more than two decades. In addition, at the end of that visit, I noticed that Norbert was not only a researcher who specialized in Pierre de Coubertin but was also an intellectual engaged in the construction of knowledge related to Olympic themes and equally the proper functioning of the institutions involved with the Olympic Movement. That is, Norbert Müller was committed to the Olympic ideals in the tradition started by Coubertin either as a scholar or as a cultural activist. From my perspective, it appeared that he did not highlight the work of his 2190 pages, in three volumes, published in 1986, as an academic production but rather as a benchmark for new approaches to build upon.

In other words, in contrast to my prior expectations, Norbert did not come across as a person so interested in valuing academic positions among his peers. I came to this realization on the grounds that he prioritized the development of the Olympic Movement in its totality including the geographic reach strategies. With regards to this specific aspect, still during my short stay in Mainz, I ended up understanding my position and part within this overall geographic interest; therefore,

³ MÜLLER, Norbert & SCHANTZ, Otto: *Pierre de Coubertin, Textes Choisis – Tomes I, II et III*. Zurich 1986.

⁴ DACOSTA, Lamartine: "The Network and Low-cost Approach to leisure and Sport for All" (paper presented at the 1st International Sport for All Congress, Frankfurt, March 9 – 12, 1986).
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I received incentives from Norbert for the expansion of the Brazilian Olympic Academy, which had been under my administration since 1991.

In more objective terms, my initial interpretations were confirmed when, still in Mainz, Norbert Müller gave me, alongside a dedication, the book "L'Actualité de Pierre de Coubertin - The Relevance of Pierre de Coubertin Today", for which he was the Editing Director.⁵ This collective work gathered texts by renowned interpreters of Pierre de Coubertin and participants of a symposium at the University of Lausanne in 1986 as well as including a report by Norbert on the presentations and discussions. I have selected the following passage from the book to be displayed below as this reflects and defines my, at the time then, thread of intellectual engagement of my new interlocutor in Olympic Studies. Norbert said within the closing remarks:

"The discussions showed that many of Coubertin's ideas are still relevant today in the various fields examined. The participants did not attempt merely to demystify Coubertin, any more than to consider his ideas as possessing absolute value. Even if many of Coubertin's ideas cannot be understood except in relation to his time, a good number of them remain valid in various respects and may enable the Olympic Movement to find new bases for orientation."⁶

By assuming this statement is referring to a basis for interventions, which has been promoted by Norbert Müller with regards to the Olympic themes, it should be emphasized that, in the face of the present time, the focus on tradition has successively emerged from the meeting back in Mainz in 1994. In fact, in 2014, when he visited Rio de Janeiro and we had a round of discussions, I could sense the survival of the former position he held in 1986. In the proceeding section, I outline those times when the positions and interests of both Norbert and myself did not always align. Moreover, this will include detailing our further meetings alongside his contributions to Olympic Studies.

⁵ MÜLLER, Norbert (Ed.): *The Relevance of Pierre de Coubertin Today*. Niedernhausen 1987.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 300f.

Traditions and Present Interpretations

It became clear to me that Norbert Müller respected the historian's classical role when strictly preserving sources – in this case, Coubertin's writings and proposals. Nevertheless, he was distinguished by identifying conceptions of the Restorer of the Olympic Games, which are still applicable today and will continue to be in future readjustments. In summary, having Coubertin as a reference, Norbert Müller brought together an immutable past with today's constructions.

This attitude did not suit the distancing assumed by certain sports historians to the present facts in order to avoid deviant influences in interpretations of past occurrences. That theoretical convenience occurred especially within the International Journal of History of Sport – IJHS – editorial and consultancy boards, which was then organized under leadership of James Mangan (University of Strathclyde, UK) and which I was part of. Unsurprisingly, still in the 1990's, the IJHS brought together an elite group of sports historians with international prestige.⁷

Thus, after meeting Norbert in Mainz, I was convinced of the legitimacy of his methodological claims. Through judging his profile, I interpreted Norbert Müller to be a cultural activist. Moreover, it was under these conditions that I made the decision to live out my historian interests in compatibility with Tony Mangan's visions, with my career in Olympic Studies. From there on, my work also began to incorporate influences from Norbert Müller. In this respect, my work experience in Brazilian academia prevailed and this was particularly true due to that cultural and organizational activism was one of the key conditions for my pursuit of effective results.

In the context of closer relations in 1997 Norbert invited me to be one of the keynote speakers of the Congress "Coubertin and Olympism – Questions for the Future" (17th to 20th September 1997 at the University of Le Havre). The Congress was organized to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the famous 1897 Olympic Congress in the same French

⁷ DACOSTA, Lamartine: "J.A.Mangan: Innovating Down South American Way", in: *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 20(2003)4, 130-35.

town. Interestingly, Le Havre was also the future basis of where the nascent International Olympic Committee was to be defined.

Significantly, the event in Le Havre confirmed, from its own denomination, the ideals of Norbert Müller about Olympic Studies, whose summary was made in the final document of the Congress signed by him as the Editing Director, which read as follows:

“The reality and significance of the work of Pierre de Coubertin is of constant value to Olympism. Since the Symposium of Lausanne 1986 a number of new significant researchers in numerous countries has increased the amount of research about Pierre de Coubertin and his philosophy. This development points to the need for continued reflection and discussion over the work of Pierre de Coubertin in order to address and relay his ideas to the real needs of societies and cultures of the whole world.”⁸

In short, the Congress in Le Havre in 1997 constituted a continuation of the Symposium in Lausanne in 1986. This was explained by its own conclusions delivered by Norbert. However, whilst the symposium in 1997 may be seen as a continuation of the former, it is important to highlight that it saw a much greater participation and consistency in terms of expected impacts. In particular, Norbert was successful in partnering with other prominent Olympic Studies scholars regarding the organization of presentations that effectively explored Coubertin’s work. Regarding this, within my dialogue, conducted in early 1997, with the Editing Director, I focused on the philosophical interpretation of Coubertin’s ideas, which made me propose Olympism as a progress philosophy.⁹

Arguably, Norbert Müller agreed with the findings of my thesis and even decided to feature it within that event, dated September of the same year. Thus, my work had opened more room for closer collaboration between us in the following years to come. These advances we went on to make were especially kept in sectoral approaches, somehow linked to the legacies of Pierre de Coubertin,

⁸ MÜLLER, Norbert (Ed.): *Coubertin and Olympism – Questions for the Future*. Niedernhausen 1998, 296.

⁹ DACOSTA, Lamartine: “Olympism and the Equilibrium of Man”, in: MÜLLER, Norbert (Ed.): *Coubertin and Olympism – Questions for the Future*. Niedernhausen 1998, 188-199.

however, they focused on themes related to 'renewal' in Olympic Studies.

A typical example of this period would have been my studies on the environment, an approach taken as a priority by the International Olympic Committee in the late 1990's. Within this work, I had identified from Coubertin's texts that there had been early concerns about the social and cultural environments and the appropriate guidance for their preservation. Once again, Norbert Müller had included my works, relating to my environmental studies, within publications organized by the "Olympic Research Group at the Institute of Sports Science at Johannes Gutenberg University of Mainz", of which he then at the time headed.¹⁰

Another noteworthy convergence between Müller and my academic interests occurred in 2001 – 2002, whereby I coordinated a survey with its purpose being defined by that of the research question:

"Are the intellectuals with academic involvement with the Olympic Movement consciously prepared to adapt or create ethical principles as well as to theorize on their roles facing their possible inclusion in IOC organizational bodies?"¹¹

In other words, the ethical questions about relations with the IOC were on the agenda of the scholars involved with Olympic Studies; an occurrence which had also taken place with regards to the educator Pierre de Coubertin in the foundation phase of the Olympic Games in the late 1890's.¹² Therefore, for this new survey challenge, I requested that Norbert contribute his expertise on the subject. At the time, Norbert's inputs were particularly useful due to that he had just participated in the ad hoc Committee which restructured the IOC after the corruption scandals made public in 1999. Upon request, he agreed to aid me in my endeavors and took part in the validation of the survey's questionnaire questions. Moreover, this engagement led to

¹⁰ DACOSTA, Lamartine: "Visions for Athens 2004", in: MESSING, Manfred & MÜLLER, Norbert (Eds.): *Blickpunkt Olympia: Entdeckungen, Erkenntnisse, Impulse*. Kassel 2000, 116-121.

¹¹ DACOSTA, Lamartine & MIRAGAYA, Ana: *Worldwide Experiences and Trends in Sport for All*. Oxford 2002, 15-31.

¹² DACOSTA, Lamartine: *Olympic Studies – An Inquire on IOC Crisis*. Los Angeles 2002, 177-197. Accessed June 14, 2016, available at:

<http://library.la84.org/SportsLibrary/Books/OlympicStudies.pdf>

another encounter of both ourselves and our cultural activist trains of thought. It is important to mention that our encounters were always kept within the framework of Olympic Studies.

In 2008, the thread linking me to Norbert Müller's thoughts was subject to a continuity test because I had been invited to take on one of the chapters of a book in his honor. This work, in "Festschrift" style, which had Christian Wacker and Robert Marxen as editors, was named "Olympia – Ideal und Wirklichkeit" (Olympia: Ideal and Reality). The title of which was highly suggestive of what my task was.¹³

Under these circumstances, I adopted a particular point of view of Norbert which understood the pursuit of updating the meanings of Coubertin's thought through his incomplete ideas. Specifically, this concerned itself with the need for major elaborations of Coubertin's works in order to gain a better understanding of the present time. Based on this assumption, my chapter of honor began with the following statement:

"Methodologically speaking, I shall give voice to Coubertin's and other actors' interpretations of their own actions; in addition, I will discuss the premise that the term 'culture' envisaged by the Baron during his lifetime was actually the traditional worldview conception with roots in Ancient Greek art and prevailing nowadays under the denomination of global culture which encompasses the Olympic Games."¹⁴

Having mentioned that, my arguments incorporated into the Festschrift confirmed the findings that had been reoccurring since 1994. With those findings being that

"the culture interconnected with art and sport from Coubertin's early elaborations seems to coincide with the traditions of worldview, again a cultural expression of present times being understood as global culture. Indeed, the current conception of globalization

¹³ DACOSTA, Lamartine: "The Contribution of Arts in Coubertin's Conceptions towards a Sport Global Culture", in: WACKER, Christian & MARXEN, Robert (Eds.): *Olympia - Ideal und Wirklichkeit. Festschrift für Norbert Müller zum 60. Geburtstag*. Berlin 2008.

¹⁴ Ibid., 315.

refers to the compression of the worldview and its consciousness as a whole.”¹⁵

Norbert Müller’s Brazilian Experience

Considering my participation in the Festschrift as the coming of maturity in the dialogues I had with Norbert Müller, I now feel it is important to mention other Brazilian scholars who also came into contact with him, concerning the construction of Olympic Studies.

One specific case is that of Nelson Schneider Todt, who, as of 2008, took over the coordination of the Pierre de Coubertin Brazilian Committee and promoted so many of the visits made by Norbert to Brazil. The culmination of which, the visits and interactions, was the launch of the book “Pierre de Coubertin (1863 – 1937): Olympism - Selection of Texts” in 2015. One of the book’s most important features was that it translated the work of the Restorer of the Olympic Games into the Portuguese language, making his works more accessible globally.¹⁶

In 2015, Todt also strengthened both cultural activism and Olympic Studies through promoting the creation of the first Coubertin School in South America, in the Brazilian city of Erechin. This project followed the main Olympic Education initiative proposed by Norbert Müller and combined various academic actions under the Olympic themes. Ultimately, the project resulted in the erection of the Pontificia Universidade Católica do Rio Grande do Sul (Catholic University in Rio Grande do Sul state), a center of excellence of Olympic Studies in Brazil and where Todt works as a professor and researcher.

Another Brazilian scholar who has benefited from dialogues with Norbert is Otavio Tavares from Universidade Federal do Espírito Santo (Federal University in Espírito Santo state), who visited Mainz in 2001 and went to the Sportbund Pfalz in 2015. However, Müller also visited Otavio’s university in Brazil, in 2015, when participating in field recognition of the Olympic Education entity project “Estacao do

¹⁵ Ibid., 324.

¹⁶ MÜLLER, Norbert & Todt, NELSON S.: *Pierre de Coubertin – Olimpismo, Seleção de Textos*, trans. Luiz Carlos BOMBASSARO. Porto Alegre 2015.

Conhecimento” (Station of Knowledge), conducted in the city of Serra, Espirito Santo state.

In terms of knowledge production in collaboration with Norbert Müller, I finally mention Neise Abreu, a scholar associated with him for their inclusion of a chapter about Olympic Education in the book “The Future of Sports Megaevents”, launched in 2015 in Brazil. In this initiative, Müller contributed with his proposals for updating the values originated by Coubertin. These proposals were especially in regards to adaptations being made in the conditions of Paralympic athletes.

In conclusion, by having participated as an editor of the book cited here, I hope have reminded Norbert Müller of that of the topic of his choice and why he selected to participate in Brazilian academia. Moreover, I feel this article has demonstrated the constituted return we have made since and the reason of my visit to Mainz 21 years ago. The reason being that we were then and still are now interested in discussing the validity of sports values, identified by Coubertin, and how they can be adapted for anyone.

My interlocutor’s response - and also of many other cultivators of Olympic Studies - on the bygone days of Mainz and nowadays in Rio de Janeiro was brief and objective: “We deal with immutable but always adaptable values to the reality we seek to understand.”

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