

THE ETHICAL AND POLITICAL VALUES OF THE OLYMPIC MOVEMENT

International Chair of Olympic Studies, Ghent/Louvain 2009

**Prof Dr Jim Parry
Head of the School of Humanities
Leeds University
Leeds LS2 9JT, UK**

**Tel: (+44) 113 343 3272
Fax: (+44) 113 343 3265
Email: s.j.parry@leeds.ac.uk**

THE ETHICAL AND POLITICAL VALUES OF THE OLYMPIC MOVEMENT

Jim Parry (s.j.parry@leeds.ac.uk)

Olympism

For most people, I suppose, the word 'Olympic' will conjure up images of the Olympic Games, either ancient or modern. The focus of their interest will be a two-week festival of sport held once in every four years between elite athletes representing their countries or city-states in inter-communal competition.

Most people, too, will have heard of an 'Olympiad', even though it is sometimes thought to refer to a particular Games. In fact it refers to a four-year period, during which a Games may or may not be held. So: the Athens Games are properly referred to not as the XXVIII Games (since there have been only twenty-four, three having been cancelled due to World Wars) but as the Games of the XXVIII Olympiad. The Games are held to celebrate the end of the period of the Olympiad.

Fewer, however, will have heard of 'Olympism', the philosophy developed by the founder of the modern Olympic Movement, Baron Pierre de Coubertin, a French aristocrat who had been much influenced by the British Public School tradition of sport in education. This philosophy has as its focus of interest not just the elite athlete, but everyone; not just a short truce period, but the whole of life; not just competition and winning, but also the values of participation and co-operation; not just sport as an activity, but also as a formative and developmental influence contributing to desirable characteristics of individual personality and social life.

Olympism - a universal social philosophy

For Olympism is a social philosophy which emphasises the role of sport in world development, international understanding, peaceful co-existence, and social and moral education. De Coubertin understood, towards the end of the nineteenth century, that sport was about to become a major growth point in popular culture - and that, as physical activity, it was apparently universalizable, providing a means of contact and communication across cultures.

A universal philosophy by definition sees itself as relevant to everyone, regardless of nation, race, gender, social class, religion or ideology, and so the Olympic movement has worked for a coherent universal representation of itself - a concept of Olympism which identifies a range of values to which each nation can sincerely commit itself whilst at the same time finding for the general idea a form of expression which is unique to itself, generated by its own culture, location, history, tradition and projected future.

De Coubertin, being a product of late nineteenth-century liberalism, emphasised the values of equality, fairness, justice, respect for persons, rationality and understanding, autonomy, and excellence. These are values which span nearly 3000 years of Olympic history, although some of them may be differently interpreted at different times. They are, basically, the main values of liberal humanism - or perhaps we

should say simply humanism, since socialist societies have found little difficulty in including Olympic ideals into their overall ideological stance towards sport.

The contemporary task for the Olympic Movement is to further this project: to try to see more clearly what its Games (and sport in wider society) might come to mean. This task will be both at the level of ideas and of action. If the practice of sport is to be pursued and developed according to Olympic values, the theory must strive for a conception of Olympism which will support that practice. The ideal should seek both to sustain sports practice and to lead sport towards a vision of Olympism which will help to deal with the challenges which are bound to emerge.

The Olympic Charter

The Olympic Charter (2004) states simply the relationship between Olympic philosophy, ethics and education:

Fundamental Principle 2 (p7) says:

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.

Fundamental Principle 6 (p7) says:

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, requires mutual understanding with a spirit of friendship, solidarity and fair play.

If we add to this de Coubertin's famous dicta 'all sports for all people' (quoted in During and Brisson, 1994, p187) and 'All games, all nations' (de Coubertin, 1934, p.127) we seem to have a recipe for the core values of Olympism: fair play, education and multiculturalism.

A Philosophical Anthropology of Olympism

Based on its heritage and traditions, each society (and each ideology) has a political and philosophical anthropology - an idealised conception of the kind of person that that society (or ideology) values, and tries to produce and reproduce through its formal and informal institutions.

I have elsewhere tried to present a philosophical anthropology of Olympism as part of an explication of its ideology, and as a contribution to a theory of physical education (Parry 1998a, 1998b). The Olympic Idea translates into a few simple phrases which capture the essence of what an ideal human being ought to be and to aspire to. It promotes the ideals of:

- individual all round harmonious human development
- towards excellence and achievement
- through effort in competitive sporting activity
- under conditions of mutual respect, fairness, justice and equality
- with a view to creating lasting personal human relationships of friendship;

- international relationships of peace, toleration and understanding;
- and cultural alliances with the arts

Sport and Universalism

However, Olympism achieves its ends through the medium of sport, and so it cannot escape the requirement to provide an account of sport which reveals both its nature and its ethical potential. Let me briefly suggest a set of criteria which might begin to indicate the fundamentally ethical nature of sport.

- *physical* (so effort is required)
- *contest* ('contract to contest' - competition and excellence)
- *rule-governed* (obligation to abide by the rules, fair play, equality and justice)
- *institutionalised* ('lawful authority')
- *shared values and commitments* (due respect is owed to opponents as co-facilitators)

It is difficult even to state the characteristics of sport without relying on terms that carry ethical import, and such meanings must apply across the world of sports participation. Without agreement on rule-adherence, the authority of the referee, and the central shared values of the activity, there could be no sport. The first task of an International Federation is to clarify rules and harmonize understandings so as to facilitate the universal practice of its sport.

Olympism: Immutable Values?

The principles of Olympism, to be universal, must be unchanging, and yet they must apparently be everywhere different. They must not change over time, but at all times we see rule changes reflecting social changes. How are these paradoxes to be resolved?

What I have argued elsewhere (Parry, 1988) is that there are indeed fundamental differences between the ancient and modern Games, and between de Coubertin's revivalist ideas and those which are current today. The ancient Games had developed over a thousand years, as an expression of the values of a developing archaic community. The modern Games, however, were created by a set of nineteenth century ideas which sought to impose a modern ideology onto ancient values so as to affect contemporary social practice for the better.

Such differences are inevitable, over time and space. Social ideas, or ideas inscribed in social practices, depend upon a specific social order or a particular set of social relationships for their full meaning to be exemplified. This seems to suggest that such meanings are culturally relative and that therefore there could be no such thing as a universal idea of Olympism. But are we doomed to relativism? Are we doomed to a situation in which we must continue to misunderstand one another, since we inhabit different cultures (and therefore generate different meanings for 'Olympism')?

Rawls' distinction between concepts and conceptions is useful here. The *concept* of Olympism will be at a high level of generality, although this does not mean that it will be unclear. What it means is that the general ideas which comprise its meaning will admit of possibly contesting interpretations. Thus, naturally, the concept of Olympism will find different expressions in time and place, history and

geography. There will be differing *conceptions* of Olympism, which will interpret the general concept in such a way as to bring it to real life in a particular context.

Taken together, the promotion of these values will be seen to be the educative task, and sport will be seen as a means. Each one of these values, being articulated at a high level of generality, will admit of a wide range of interpretation. But they nevertheless provide a framework which can be agreed upon by social groups with very differing commitments. This raises the questions of the relationships between such differing cultural formations, and of our own attitudes towards cultural difference. One way of addressing these questions is via a consideration of the very important notion of multiculturalism.

Liberalism and Multiculturalism

In an earlier paper (Parry, 1999) I looked at the contemporary importance for liberalism of the idea of multiculturalism. The liberal state sees itself as deliberately not choosing any particular conception of the Good Life for its citizens to follow. Rather, it sees itself as neutral between the alternative conceptions of the Good to be found in most modern liberal democracies. In this it sharply distinguishes itself from 'illiberal' states, which embody and enforce one view of the Good Life. Rather than promoting one culture over another, it sees itself as multicultural. Citizens can choose their own version of the Good and pursue their own aims and values, independently of the state. In such a state, attention to multicultural ideals such as recognition, respect and equal status for all cultures will become increasingly important.

Multiculturalism is a fact nowadays for most Western societies, and it requires a political society to recognise the equal standing of all stable and viable communities existing in a society. It outlaws discrimination against groups and individuals on the grounds of ethnicity, race, nationality, religion, class, gender or sexual preference. However, some of these communities may be authoritarian, illiberal and oppressive – so does 'multiculturalism' apply equally to all communities, or only to liberal ones?

Rawls (1993) attempts to draw guidelines for a Law of Peoples acceptable to members of both liberal and illiberal cultures, by introducing the notion of 'reasonable societies'. These societies, though illiberal, follow certain core principles:

- Peace (pursuing their ends through diplomacy and trade)
- Common Good (a conception of justice)
- Consultation (a reasonable hierarchy thereof)
- Responsibility (citizens recognise their obligations and play a part in social life).
- Freedom (some freedom of conscience/thought)

'Reasonable societies', even illiberal ones, could agree to a Law of Peoples based on such a 'thin liberalism' as this – and this could be seen very positively: as offering learning experiences both ways, as each culture learns from the other. But multiculturalism has its limits, and those limits are drawn by the universalistic claims of thin liberalism, supported by some form of Human Rights theory. As Hollis says (1999, p. 42), liberal societies

... must fight for at least a minimalist, procedural thesis about freedom, justice, equality and individual rights.

In the short term, in the interests of peace and development (or of political or economic gain), such basic moral commitments may be temporarily diluted or shelved – but they are the inalienable bedrock of the possibility of a global multiculturalism. There are limits to toleration. Liberal democracy is (still) an exclusionary system - some cultures are beyond the pale.

Why Be Multiculturalist?

Why should we be multiculturalists? Because we want to honour and respect the widest variety of human culture. Why? Because it enriches us all. We value diversity because every culture expresses a form of human life and helps us to appreciate the full range of difference and choice. It is the same reason that we value knowledge of the history of human social evolution: to help us to understand more fully our identity as humans.

But this means that we have to tolerate difference, and we have to accept that sometimes other people's views will hold sway over our own. The liberal citizen permits democracy - people can see the reason for (and therefore accept) decisions even if they don't agree with them. Such a 'rational pluralism' is characteristic of Liberalism, but 'unreasonable' doctrines will not accept such a pluralism. Liberals see the problem as resting with those who object to the valuing of anything other than their own culture. In these circumstances we can still believe in 'live and let live' – but we must defend the liberal values that permit such tolerance. Central to our concern is the defence of individual rights against illiberal groups.

We have two motivations:

- (a) to save a valuable heritage, central to the identity of a group of people
- (b) to defend the liberal rights of the individual.

For example, imagine Aztec society, now long disappeared. Its achievements (in common with the astonishing achievements of other indigenous meso-American cultures) cause us to think again about the capacity of humans to organize themselves into social groups that can build, think, create, maintain, etc. But it also promoted the ritual sacrifice of some of its members to propitiate its gods.

So we disapprove of forced sacrifice, ritual murder, cannibalism, etc - but this does not prevent us from valuing those cultures for their achievements, and for their reminders to us of the great variety and flexibility of possible human social arrangements.

So what do we do? Internally, we seek to liberalise those cultures, at least to some small extent, e.g. to enforce basic liberal rights within the liberal states. So, in minority cultures, we permit no slaves, no mutilation, no forced marriage, no child prostitution, etc. - or we permit individuals to escape from those circumstances if they want to; to deny others the right to 'harness' individuals to their ends. Externally, we pursue foreign policies that seek to contain hostile illiberal societies in ways that minimise their threat to liberal ones. So long as they are far away, pose no external threat, collaborate with (or at least do not obstruct) commerce, we may express disapproval or criticism of their arrangements, but we often leave them to do as they wish, even in cases where the majority of the population is obviously oppressed.

Is Universalism Ethnocentric?

Critics of the liberal project put forward the objection that the idea of liberal democracy is a historical product, a kind of western ethnocentrism, a kind of post-colonial imperialism, foisting local western

values on the rest of the world. The kind of ‘universalism’ to which both liberalism and Olympism pretend is just an ethnocentric smokescreen. There is no basis for such a universalism of values, because all values arise within cultures, and therefore do not apply across cultural boundaries – they are culturally relative.

We may call this thesis ‘the Anthropologist’s Heresy’: liberalism for the liberals! cannibalism for the cannibals! (see Lukes, 2002, and Hollis, 1999, p. 36). All cultures are equally valid, because they can only be judged on their own ‘internal’ terms – norms and principles that apply only to themselves.

Objections:

1. This thesis cannot account for moral criticism across cultures – for how can we criticize unjust practices if that’s all they are – the practices of others?
2. Is relativism itself a kind of concealed ethnocentrism? Is it true that to respect other cultures is to abstain from criticizing them? Or is this a kind of disrespect – failing to apply to others (denying to others) the standards of justification and argument we apply to ourselves?
3. Relativism is self-refuting. It is a theory that claims that there are no cross-cultural truths. Well, then: does relativism apply to itself? If so, relativism is not true (because it says that there are no cross-cultural truths; so relativism is just a cultural practice of anthropologists, with no claim to truth, and therefore nothing to say to outsiders like me). So: even if relativism could be true, it would make itself false. But relativism can’t be true, since it claims that there is no such thing as truth.
4. Concept of ‘culture’ is a tricky one here, too. Relativism, says Lukes, trades on ‘poor man’s sociology’, according to which cultures are homogeneous, coherent wholes. But cultures are not ‘windowless boxes’. Conflicts arise within cultures as well as between them, but relativism gives us no way of making progress.
5. Finally, adherence to the Anthropologist’s Heresy means a rejection of all those organisations that pretend to universalist values, including the United Nations, the World Health Organisation and Amnesty International. It means that there is no such thing as Human Rights, an idea which, of course, is rooted in notions of our universally common humanity. I don’t think that there will be too many of us willing to accept such a radically disastrous conclusion.

So Lukes and Hollis dismiss relativism as a sensible response to diversity. Of course, there is considerable diversity, and the job of the anthropologist is to seek it out and describe it for us. But the anthropologist exceeds his occupational remit when he seeks to convert his experiences into an ethical theory. The importance of such research cannot be overestimated. It continually reminds us that we should recognize the value of modesty or restraint in moral judgement and criticism, and avoid the dangers of abstract moralising. But anthropological experience is not a sufficient basis for ethical theory. The facts of diversity require theoretical explanation – but the facts alone do not explain it.

Liberal Democracy - an Historical Product?

So I must ask myself: do I accept liberalism just because it's the view of my tribe? I don't think so, because any political view requires a justification, and we offer arguments for and against particular systems.

'Liberal democracy is a historical product.' Well, it is true that the benefits of liberal societies flow from a series of European inventions:

- The constitution of the individual as a legal subject
- Scepticism as to the truth
- Self-criticism
- Separation of church and politics (and the emergence of the secular state)
- Separation of church and knowledge (and the development of the scientific world-view)

However, the fact that liberalism happened first in the West does not bestow a greater virtue upon us. Maybe it just *happened* here – as it were, contingently. In Europe, historically, people just became exhausted from religious wars, and pluralism emerged as a pragmatic way of carrying on with life without the debilitating and destructive background of constant war. And look how long and painful was this development in the West – through religious and social persecution (there were witchcraft trials all over Europe, Catholics in England were still denied political rights in the mid-19th century, women until after the First World War, African-Americans until after the Second World War, etc.). It took hundreds of years of development, and we're still not satisfied with our political systems. Apartheid in South Africa, state communism in Europe, religious and ethnic enmity in Ireland, the former Yugoslavia, the former USSR, etc. It is a long and painful struggle to achieve stability with freedom and development, and maybe the preconditions do not yet exist everywhere.

'Liberal democracy is a historical product.' This makes it sound as though there is no justificatory argument for liberalism, although a very important element of liberal thinking, part of the liberal project, is the claim that liberalism expresses a kind of 'truth' about human beings and the human condition; that it is the best mode of social organization for the benefit of all citizens of the world. The arguments we advance for liberalism claim that it is the system within which individuals can find maximal freedom for self-development and maximal choice of life-style, and through which communities can progress along their own chosen path of development in peace and fruitful concord with other communities. It is a salient fact that no liberal democracy has ever declared war on another.

But we have to remain self-aware and self-critical. Just because some community claims the status of a liberal democracy does not automatically mean that they are the good guys. Our judgements of their goals and their actions contribute to our assessments of the quality of a particular democracy. Is it behaving in anti-liberal ways? Is it being perverted or exploited? What are its disadvantages, and how can they be ameliorated? Where does it need improvement? Is a majority being oppressive – and if so do we need special minority group rights?

So we hope to see critical liberal democracies, striving towards ideals expressed in terms of human rights and peaceful co-existence. Since they are human creations, they will be imperfect and they will make mistakes. It is often said that democracy is not a very good system of government – it is inefficient, cumbersome, ridden with untidy and unsatisfactory compromises, and with many other faults and disadvantages - but every other system of government thought up by mankind is worse!

Olympism Again

Above, I outlined the distinction between concepts and conceptions, and argued that the concept of Olympism will be at a high level of generality. In fact, it sets out a range of 'thin' liberal values, allied to the thin values underlying the concept of sport. However, the values which comprise its meaning will admit of contesting interpretations, exhibiting a range of 'thick' values as the concept of Olympism finds different expressions in time and place, history and geography.

In terms of promoting its aims of international understanding and multiculturalism, it is most important that the Olympic movement continues to work for a coherent universal representation of itself - a concept of Olympism to which each nation can sincerely commit itself whilst at the same time finding for the general idea a form of expression (a conception) which is unique to itself, generated by its own culture, location, history, tradition and projected future.

I believe that providing multicultural education in and for modern democracies is a new and urgent task, and one that must be made to work if we are to secure a workable political heritage for future generations. In the present global political context, this means promoting international understanding and mutual respect; and a commitment to the peaceful resolution of conflict.

In the case of Olympism, I think that the 'thin' values underpinning the rule structures of sport, acceptance of which by all participants is a pre-condition of the continuing existence of sporting competition, support at the educational and cultural levels such political efforts. Children who are brought into sporting practices, and who are aware of international competitions such as the Olympic Games and the World Cup, are thereby becoming aware of the possibilities of international co-operation, mutual respect, and mutual valuing.

The Olympic Games went to Moscow in 1980, and it was impossible to prevent the penetration of ideas into a previously closed society. Maybe the connection is fanciful, but maybe there is a direct relation to the dramatic, spectacular and incredible events of 1989, when 'The Wall came down'. Now only 15 years later, many of the former 'Eastern bloc' countries have formally joined the European Union. A generation ago this was unthinkable. What will be the result of Beijing 2008, when a mighty and venerable culture, on the cusp of massive economic expansion into world markets, accepts the influence of visitors and the kind of global communications associated with an Olympic Games?

Nowadays the very idea of a 'closed society' is under threat everywhere – the people are no longer reliant on restricted and controlled forms of information. The internet, satellite television and global forms of communication are all contributing to a democratization of information and the extensive migration of people across continents is producing a new cosmopolitanism.

It will require increasingly high levels of dogmatism, authoritarianism, isolationism and extremism to sustain closed, exclusivist societies. Their life is limited. This, at any rate, has to be our hope, and the hope of any kind of peaceful internationalism based on the idea of individual freedom and human rights.

Does all this matter? Is it just abstract academic theorizing? I think it matters a great deal, and our commitment to the development of global forms of expression such as sport, and to international understanding through Olympism is one way that we as individuals can express our commitments, ideals and hopes for the future of the world.

Organizational Ethics

But our influence as individuals, though important, is necessarily small, and so we often rely on organizations to represent and express our views in more powerful ways. The International Olympic Committee is the organization charged with promoting the ethical ideals of Olympism, and it has attracted some criticism in recent years,

Segrave (2000, p. 273) says:

Perhaps the most egregious example of the widening chasm between the organizational ideals and organizational conduct within the Olympic movement is the ever deepening corruption and bribery scandal that has engulfed the Olympics since late 1998 when Swiss IOC member Marc Hodler first exposed the chicanery surrounding Salt Lake City's bid for the 2002 Winter Olympics.

Several IOC members came under personal scrutiny and criticism, and later resigned or were expelled, but the IOC itself was also castigated for failing to notice or prevent unethical practices. The question arose: was the IOC itself an ethical organization?

We routinely ascribe moral responsibility to individuals, but does it make sense to talk of the responsibility of a company, corporation, government, institution or organization, such as the International Olympic Committee? Some think that organizations are just like persons, having rights and responsibilities, and others think that this applies only to human individuals. Somewhere in the middle lies the truth: sometimes corporate decisions and practices exceed the responsibilities of the individuals who collectively made them (the whole is bigger than the sum of its parts); but sometimes the individuals within the organization end up accepting more responsibility than is fair.

If things go wrong (in ethical terms), people inside the organization should not be used as scapegoats for the shortcomings of the organization, but neither should they be allowed to hide inside the organization if they are blameworthy.

Of course, organizations are constituted by individuals, who jointly design its structures, strategies, attitudes, values and aims – in short, its culture. So we need to examine two ways of approaching the description of the ethical organisation: via an analysis of the corporate culture, and of the moral autonomy of the individual within the corporation.

Corporate culture: "... the way we do things round here ..."

Ethics asks *why* we do the things we do, and *why* we do things this way rather than that. Both of these things (our ends and our means) express our values.

What is necessary for a morally excellent organization – one with an ethical culture?

Hoffmann (1994, pp. 45-47) suggests a three-step process:

1. Identifying issues *as* ethical issues, or as having an ethical dimension
2. Engaging actively in moral thinking
3. Translating decisions into moral actions.

The first step is crucial. Issues are often dealt with as technical, scientific or organizational, when they will never be resolved without an explicit confrontation with the ethical aspects of the issue. Think, for example, of anti-doping measures, where research and development has been overwhelmingly directed at expensive and yet spectacularly unsuccessful technical/scientific solutions, whereas the problem is mainly ethical, not scientific. Or think of the allocation of the Olympic Games through the bidding process, where the ethical commitments of Olympism are seldom mentioned amongst all the technical detail considered (whereas FIFA has committed itself to the principle of ‘rotating’ events, and next time to Africa).

What is necessary here is the self-conscious adoption of an ethical mind-set as part of the approach to the problem. Without that, we remain ethically blind and vulnerable to ethical mistakes.

The second step requires, in addition, the self-conscious adoption of a set of ethical principles and procedures born of thoughtful deliberation internal to the organization’s structure and culture. This might mean attention to legislation and Codes of Conduct, statements of aims and values, training programmes (such as the Football Association’s Child Protection training for intending coaches), internal ethical audits, equal opportunities and human rights policies, grievance and appeals procedures, and so on. This step celebrates the idea of the Thinking Organization, that takes seriously its duty to reflect upon itself, its workings and its impact on individuals and society.

The third step reminds us that fine thoughts are not enough. Good intentions must be translated into action, and this requires determination and resolve.

In the case of sports organizations, we ought to expect that they will take a close interest in matters such as, for example:

- Corporate Governance Ethics
- Anti-Doping and Drugs Education
- Participant Rehabilitation
- Privacy and Data Protection issues
- Justice and Human Rights
- Fair Play and Equality of Opportunity
- Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (especially age and disability issues)
- Equality and anti-Discrimination (class, race, ethnicity, religion and gender issues)
- Child Protection and Children’s Rights
- Violence and Harm
- Pain, Injury and Medical issues

The moral autonomy of the individual within the organization

One view of the excellent organization is that each person understands and accepts his role and status within the organization, works as a cog in the wheel, and contributes at his own level to the unified goal of the organization. But it is not necessarily true that an excellent organization leaves no space for individual thought and autonomy.

Individuals cannot feel a sense of freedom and empowerment if they are not kept informed and consulted about developments, or if they feel themselves a tiny part of a massive organizational structure, or if they simply follow orders and instructions all the time. So successful organizations seek to provide ways in

which individuals can see themselves as meaningful contributors – by offering them opportunities to solve problems and initiate moral action in their own sphere, and by making corporate moral goals their own. Failure to do so is failure to recognize them as moral agents able to develop their own moral autonomy (see Hoffmann, 1994, p.50).

Hoffman's conclusion is that 'moral culture provides the form and individual moral autonomy provides the content for the morally excellent corporation' (p. 52). This is precisely applicable to sports organizations, which must consider both dimensions.

IOC Ethics Commission

The International Olympic Committee is an international organization that seeks to be an ethical organization. After all, it is not simply a profit-seeking 'company', but pursues ethical as well as other aims. As a direct result of criticism, the IOC set up an Ethics Commission in 1999, whose Terms of Reference were:

1. to develop, and update, a framework of ethical principles, including a Code of Ethics, based upon the values and principles enshrined in the Olympic Charter
2. to develop and promote best practice in the application of the ethical principles and suggest concrete measures to this end
3. to provide assistance, including advice, upon request by the IOC, to the cities wishing to organize the Olympic Games, ... in order that the ethical principles are applied in practice
4. to help ensure compliance with the ethical principles in the policies and practices of the IOC, the cities wishing to organize the Olympic Games, the NOCs, the OCOGs and the participants within the framework of the Olympic Games
5. to assess the extent to which the ethical principles are being reflected in practice
6. to investigate complaints raised in relation to the non-respect of the ethical principles, including breaches of the Code of Ethics, and if necessary propose sanctions to the Executive Board
7. to review guidelines within the IOC as to how they relate to the ethical principles, in particular the guidelines applicable to cities wishing to organize the Olympic Games, and to make comments and/or recommendations related thereto

The IOC Ethics Commission website (see the Crisis and Reform Chronology pages) makes it clear that the IOC sought to take steps to engage in an organizational re-think of the implications of the values in the Charter, and to ensure that those values were respected throughout the organization. This is a significant step forward, as it provides a benchmark for future assessments of IOC policy and practice, and of the actions of individual members.

There is a close relationship between ethics, policy and action, inasmuch as policies and actions encapsulate and express ethical values. It is possible to 'read off' working values from policies and actions and compare them with professed values. What the Olympic Movement means by its values should be written into its practices; and its sincerity may be interrogated through the reality of its practices.

And we are all watching, judging and commenting – which is just as it should be. Part of life in liberal communities is maintaining a critical awareness of the organizations we choose to support (and others, too). For our support is crucial. If the editor of a national newspaper makes an editorial mistake that

upsets many of his readers, he will have to leave. If the Prime Minister disappoints his supporters in government, he will be replaced. If IOC members behave dishonestly, or against Olympic principles, they threaten the moral standing of the whole organization, and that is intolerable.

Our duty in liberal society is to be aware, to take a critical interest, to learn to understand the issues, to express a point of view, to contribute to the formation of opinion and, where necessary, to press for action. This is the best way to protect the values we wish to promote, and to preserve the organizations that we hope will work for us.

And that is why we are here. This is the work of the Olympic Academies, and of the Olympic Chair.

Bibliography

- Carl-Diem-Institut (ed) 1966 The Olympic Idea: Pierre de Coubertin - discourses and essays (Stuttgart: Olympischer Sportverlag)
- De Coubertin, P 1934 'Forty Years of Olympism' (in Carl-Diem-Institut, 1966, pp. 126-30)
- Drummond J & Bain B 1994 Managing Business Ethics (London: Heinemann-Butterworth)
- During B & Brisson JF 1994 'Sport, Olympism and Cultural Diversity' (in Jeu, 1994, Ch 19.)
- Hoffmann WM 1994 'What is necessary for corporate moral excellence?'
(in Drummond & Bain, 1994, pp. 39-54)
- Hollis M 1999 'Is Universalism Ethnocentric?' (in Joppke & Lukes, eds, pp. 27-43)
- IOC 2004 The Olympic Charter (Lausanne: IOC)
- Jeu, B, et al 1994 For a Humanism of Sport (Paris: CNOSF-Editions)
- Joppke C & Lukes S 1999 Multicultural Questions (Oxford)
- Lukes S 2002 Liberals and Cannibals (London: Verso)
- Parry J 1988 'Olympism at the Beginning and End of the Twentieth Century'
(Proceedings of the International Olympic Academy, 28, pp 81-94)
- Parry J 1998a 'Physical Education as Olympic Education'
(European Physical Education Review, 4, 2, 1998, pp. 153-167)
- Parry J 1998b 'The Justification of Physical Education' (in K Green & K Hardman, eds, Physical Education - a reader, Meyer & Meyer, pp. 36-68)
- Parry J 1999 'Globalisation, Multiculturalism and Olympism'
(Proceedings of the International Olympic Academy, 39, pp 86-97)
- Rawls J 1993 'The Law of Peoples' (in Shute & Hurley eds., 1993, pp. 41-82)
- Segrave JO 2000 'The (Neo)Modern Olympic Games'
(Int. Review for the Sociology of Sport, 35, 3, pp. 268-281)
- Shute S & Hurley S 1993 On Human Rights (New York: Basic Books)