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Olympism and its values in institutional texts and their circulation in social networks

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Abstract

This article focuses on discourses dealing with sport (political, institutional, Olympic, etc.) as well as discourses coming from sport experiences (forums, social networks and applications dedicated to sport), in order to question the Olympism and its values and the way they are put into discourse and polarized. The corpus is composed of major institutional texts (mainly charters and codes). Its study is completed by the analysis of a second corpus comprising “posts” disseminated on sports forums and social networks as well as publications relating to the Strava community. We describe how the texts governing Olympism formulate an instituting topique, and how the meaning of values evolves through discursive actualization, in contexts referring to the practice of amateur sport. In particular, we examine Respect, Friendship and Excellence (the three core values claimed by the Olympic movement) and their links with other values (peace between peoples, equality, solidarity, integrity). The discursive analysis in situ allows us to identify the reconfiguration of these fundamentals in the digital practices of amateurs, around fair play, performance, and more generally what is understood by “sport values”.

Keywords

Institutional texts, olympism, values, Olympic Movement, amateurism, Strava

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Introduction and Purpose

This article deals with Olympism and its mythification through instituted values and a sought-after ideal, as set out in charters and other official texts. Inherited from Antiquity, modern Olympism has been the object of a veritable process of patrimonialization since its conception. This is evidenced by the almost systematic capitalization of this term understood as a concept developed by Pierre de Coubertin. This is what the Preamble to the Olympic Charter reminds us: “Modern Olympism was conceived by Pierre de Coubertin, on whose initiative the International Athletic Congress of Paris was held in June 1894.” (Olympic Charter, July 2020, p. 10)

Moreover, in the “Defining Olympism” section of its website, the French National Olympic and Sport Committee (CNOSF) states that “the term Olympism refers to the institutionalized ideal of the Olympic Movement”.¹ It also adds that the term “Olympism” is often mistaken or misused. This acknowledged confusion will be a part of the focus of our investigation.

Our research questions the behaviors and rules that need to be observed in order to guarantee peace in the world and harmony among people. A comparison with amateur sports practices allows us to question Olympism and its values and to observe the way they are put into discourse and reconfigured. Philosophical perspectives lead us to consider that:

“The existence of an Olympic charter allows an ethics of sport to be anchored in the historical and cultural dimensions of sport. It is on this condition that Olympism becomes a philosophy of life that exalts

1 See: <https://international.franceolympique.com/international/actus/5182-dfinir-lolympisme.html>

a balanced set of qualities of the body, the will and the spirit. Combining sport with culture and education, Olympism aims to create a lifestyle based on joy in effort, on [the] educational value of good example[s] and on the respect of universal fundamental ethical principles (Simon, 2000). It is at the heart of Olympism that sport is an educational fact that cuts across all dimensions of the human phenomenon.” (Andrieu, 2020)

From the process of Charters producing prescriptive discourses to illustrations of everyday sports performance shared online, we will illustrate the paradox of and difficulties for the Olympic movement in implementing and acculturating Olympic values from their universal perspectives.

1. Olympism: ethical dimension, societal dimension, beliefs and values

The act of naming, which precedes the denomination (Siblot, 2001), is foundational, and the intentionality associated with it participates in the semantic definition and semiotic scope of the lexicon created. This is why, on the discursive level, “Olympism” crystallizes within it a real philosophy carrying axiological values associated with actantial modalities, but also with narrative motives (Richard, Longhi, Duteil, 2022).

1.1 Ethical and societal dimensions

On the level of Social Practice² the existence

2 We borrow this notion from Rastier who refers to the division of labor in social practices: “texts are configured by the concrete situations in which they participate; moreover, through the mediation of genres and discourses, they are articulated to the social practices of which the situations of enunciation

of internal bodies, of authorities which make up Olympism – such as the IOC and the International Federations – contributes to the construction of Olympism. This is exemplified by the creation of the IOC Olympic Studies Centre, the Olympic Museum, the World Olympic Library archives, and the IOC Heritage collections which archive Olympic artefacts, video and sound recordings, photographs, and the administrative memory of the IOC. In addition, an Olympic Foundation for Culture and Heritage works for the international promotion and dissemination of Olympism. The symbols (the flag, the rings, the flame), the Olympic motto (*Citius, Altius, Fortius* – the three Latin words adopted in 1894, the date of the creation of the IOC), and the rituals and solemn ceremonies rooted in the spirit of the ancient Olympics and preserved over time also bear witness to this heritage.

Because of this heritage, the Olympic Movement has ideological and spiritual affinities with Antiquity. It is worth noting that the International Olympic Academy was founded on the original site of the Olympic Games, the sanctuary of Ancient Olympia, site of the first Olympiads.

The theme of peace, inherited from the concept of truce, is at the heart of Coubertin's appeal and this theme is very marked in contemporary texts relating to Olympism: "Let us export rowers, runners, fencers: this is the free trade of the future and the day it is introduced into the customs of old Europe, the cause of peace will have received a new and powerful support." (De Coubertin, 1892). The goal of the modern Olympic Movement is thus "to contribute to building a peaceful

and better world by educating youth through sport practised in accordance with Olympism and its values"³. Let us also note that in July 2000 the IOC established an International Olympic Truce Foundation (IOTF) with the aim of promoting peace through sport and the Olympic ideal⁴.

In this excerpt from the Olympic Charter of 1973, we find the evocation of a peaceful and better world:

- (1) "The aims of the Olympic Movement are to promote the development of those fine physical and moral qualities which are the basis of amateur sport and to bring together the athletes of the world in a great quadrennial festival of sports thereby creating international respect and goodwill and thus helping to construct a better and more peaceful world." (Olympic Rules and Regulations, 1973, p.3)

The religious dimension does not disappear completely from modern Olympism either since ancient Olympia remains, in Coubertin's writings, the source of inspiration for the modern Olympic Games: "Like athletics of Antiquity, modern athletics are a cult, an impassioned soaring which is capable of going from 'play to heroism'." (Coubertin, 1906, p. 428).

In this extract from the Olympic Charter of 1933, Coubertin's words take on a sacred dimension, evoking through the religion of sport "a school of moral nobility and purity":

- (2) "A tablet to commemorate the revival of the Olympic Games [was] erected by the Hellenic Government. Unveiled on

and interpretation are occurrences" (2001).

³ <https://olympics.com/ioc/olympic-movement>

⁴ <https://www.olympic.org/fr/treve-olympique>

the 17th of April, 1927 (IVth year of the VIII Olympiad) it is located in the old sacred wood at Olympia, between the Museum and the ruins of Altis. ... On the same day Pierre de Coubertin delivered the following message to the “Sports” youth of the world: “Today, amongst the famous ruins of Olympia, the monument erected to commemorate the revival of the Olympic Games thirty-three years ago has been unveiled. The enterprise which the Hellenic Government has honored has taken its place in history. It is up to you to maintain it. My friends and I have not fought and worked to restore the Olympic Games to you as an object for museum or cinema, nor is it our wish that mercantile or electoral interest should seize upon them. In reviving this institution, twenty-five centuries old, we have wished you to become devote[e]s of the religion of Sport in the same sense as it was conceived by your famous ancestors. 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 honor and disinterestedness in sport on a level with your physical powers. The future rests with you.” (Olympic Charter, 1933, p. 10)

It is interesting in this regard to note the parallel Coubertin draws between physical athletic qualities and moral virtues. Both guarantee the harmony necessary for the Olympic Movement.

But the greatest witness to this patrimonialization remains the inclusion of

the “Olympic spirit” into France’s national intangible cultural heritage in 2019, a key step before its inclusion into UNESCO’s intangible cultural heritage wanted by Paris 2024.

Thus, without entering into an analysis of the complex relations between the contemporary adaptations of the IOC and the writings of Coubertin, we can examine the Olympic Heritage and, through it, the auctorial work of Coubertin, but also the Charters and official texts which govern and structure modern Olympism as an instituting topicality, a CANON as defined by Sarfati:

“the first (presumed) formulation of a topic is, as a matter of principle, institutive (canon), whereas once transmitted it becomes instituted (vulgate), often to didactic ends. As soon as the norms of the canon are taken up they are no longer linked to it, hence their characteristic of being “demoted” content (which is simultaneously available in a possible “preconstructed” state).” (2007, p. 78)

Educational manuals, pedagogical tools and programs such as OVEP (Olympic Values Education Program) transmit the VULGATE, the instituted topic, which seeks to apply and spread the Olympic values. It is these values and the modalities associated with them, constructed in and by the discourse, that we will look at (infra).

1.2. Beliefs and values

The construction of Olympism and its values of is inscribed in the institutional practice of Olympism (organizational, functional and operational) and in the discourses used to promote Olympism. The status of constitutive discourse implies founding without being founded. This specificity is found in the Charters. Maingueneau and Cossutta point

out that: “Constitutive discourses perform the same function in the symbolic production of a society, a function that we could call *archeion*” (1995, p. 112). For them *archeion* “intimately links the work of founding within and through discourse, the identification of a place associated with a body of consecrated enunciators, and the construction of a memory” (*ibid.*). They further add:

“Enunciative forms are not a simple vehicle for ideas, they institute within discourse at the same time as they shape the social universe to which they now belong by legitimizing it. Something is constituted precisely insofar as an enunciative device founds, in a kind of performative way, its own possibility, while acting as if it has got this legitimacy from a source it is supposed to merely embody.” (Maingueneau and Cossutta, 1995, p. 119)

The charters are part of this type of discourse. The *archaeion* corresponds to the community of sport, to the sport authorities and to the sportspeople who spread in society and in the whole human community. The notion of memory is interesting and in the Olympic Charters we find precepts that circumscribe the supposed adherence to this topicality, which has been memorized and ratified. This memory is what Charaudeau (2001) calls the “memory of discourses”, which is constituted around the knowledge of knowledge and belief in the world, and which forms a “discursive community”.

Texts such as charters appeal to this community. Charaudeau specifies that “beliefs correspond less to an attempt to understand the world than to an attempt to evaluate its validity and to assess its effect on man and his rules of life” (2002, p. 125). Thus, these

beliefs “are judgments that contribute to the creation of reference standards against which the behavior of individuals will be evaluated” (*ibid.*).

Institutional texts ratify a universe of values and beliefs around what sport symbolizes, and define the behaviors that are worthy of being part of the Olympic Movement.

2. From Ideal and Culture to the societal commitment of Olympism

2.1. Ideal and Culture in Olympism

In this excerpt from the Olympic Charter published in 1949, Olympism is presented as an “ideal”; its link with common collective education is obvious and fundamental:

(3) “The IOC, noting with great satisfaction that the effort it pursues is universally approved, can only rejoice in the emulation that the Olympic movement has aroused among the various nations and it praises the governments which, seeking to improve popular sports, have adopted the broad program of collective physical education.” (Olympic Charter, 1949, p. 22)

Nevertheless, it believes there is a danger attached to the Olympic ideal that, alongside the legitimate development of sports in accordance with the principles of amateurism, certain tendencies could spread which would aim above all at a national exaltation of the successes won, rather than the realization of the common and concordant objective which is the essential law of Olympism.

We also find in the Olympic Charter of 1979 the notion of the “the Olympic movement and its high ideals” (p.108) as well as the “high ideal of the Olympic Movement”. This ideal has pedagogical virtues, and it is necessary to

underline that Coubertin clearly saw amateur sport as part of an educational program that allowed people to live together. Amateurism appears as a guarantor of Olympism, which competitions and professional sports could deviate from. This is expressed by the following extracts from the Olympic Charter of 1958:

(4) “National Olympic Committees should encourage the development of [the] Olympic spirit among the youth of their countries. They should promote a program of education for the public and the press on the philosophy of amateurism. There is a tendency to concentrate too much on performance and new records and not enough on the social, educational, aesthetic, ethical and spiritual values of amateur sports (...)

The aims of the Olympic Movement are to promote the development of those fine physical and moral qualities that come from contests on the friendly fields of amateur sport and to bring together the youth of the world in a great quadrennial sport festival, thereby creating international respect and goodwill, and helping to construct a better and more peaceful world (...)

The Games are not, and must not become, a contest between nations, for this would be entirely contrary to the spirit of the Olympic Movement and would surely lead to disaster.” (Olympic Charter, 1958, p. 80 ; p. 9 ; p. 78)

Here, competitions between nations are not just a deviation from but the negation of Olympism. In the following excerpt from an 1894 letter, Coubertin refers to “paid gladiators” as if they were taking part in circus games, which is perfectly contrary to the Hellenism of the Olympic games and the

associated moral purity:

(5) “First of all, it is necessary to maintain in sport the typical qualities of nobleness and chivalry which distinguished it in the past, in such a way that it should continue to be part of the education of present day peoples, in the same way as sport served it so wonderfully in the times of ancient Greece. Humanity has a tendency to transform the Olympic athlete into a paid gladiator. These two tendencies do not agree with each other. We have to choose one or the other of these formulas.” (De Coubertin, 1894)

Aestheticism is correlated with ethics and spirituality, which are values embodied in Olympism:

(6) “The objectives of the International Olympic Academy are to create an international cultural center at Olympia, site of the ancient Games, where the high ideals of amateur competitive sport were first conceived and realized, and to study and to promote the social, educational, aesthetic, ethical, and spiritual values of the Olympic Movement.” (Olympic Charter, 1967, p. 107)

Note an important element that has disappeared from the current Olympic Games: their cultural dimension⁵. In the Olympic charters dating from before 1978, we find mention of arts as a compulsory test of the games. The origin of the art contests goes back to Antiquity, as the Olympic Charter of 1958 reminds us: “Artistic and literary contests were also arranged and theatrical plays were sometimes given in the stadium.” (p. 70). The parallel between sporting achievements and the beauty of the arts is then obvious:

⁵ What De Coubertin calls “the pentathlon of the muses”.

(7) “In ancient Greece during the Golden Age there was always a close connection between Sport and the Fine Arts. The buildings and sport fields were designed by the greatest architects and the athletic grounds and their surroundings were filled with the finest sculpture; famous poets, orators, and musicians participated in the ceremonies. Grace and beauty were esteemed equally with athletic prowess. In 1900 Baron de Coubertin suggested that competitions in the Fine Arts, (architecture, literature, music, painting and sculpture) should be included in the Olympic program, with the idea of introducing new values for the benefit of both spectators and participants.” (Olympic Charter, 1958, p. 77)

But the arts disappeared in 1948 to give way to the “cultural programs” that we know nowadays. The recommendation 26 of the Agenda 2020 of the IOC insists on the fact “to ally more the sport and the culture”, and proposes in particular “the installation of artists in residence” during the Games. Thus, during those of Rio in 2016, and for the first time, the contemporary artist JR, the writer Tilman Spengler and the digital artist Gerald Andal are in residence during the event.

(8) “Recommendation 26

Further blend sport and culture

Further strengthen the blending of sport and culture at the Olympic Games and in-between.

1. At Games time:

Create the Olympic Laurel award for outstanding contributions to Olympism (culture, education, development and peace) at every edition of the Olympic Games: The award ceremony to take place during one of the ceremonies.

The recipient of the “Olympic Laurel” to be nominated by a jury including independent highly respected personalities.

Study the development of an Olympic House to welcome the general public to engage in a dialogue with the Olympic Movement.

Study an “Olympic Museum on the move” concept to introduce Olympic culture to the general public in the context of the torch relay, live sites and/or the Cultural Olympiad.

Develop an artists-in-residence programme.

2. Between Olympic Games:

Study how to develop an impactful commissioned artists programme to engage a steady and authentic interaction with global cultural players and build a dynamic legacy.

Encourage NOCs to appoint an “attaché” for Olympic culture.” (Agenda, 2020, p. 69)

In 1978 professional sports appeared in place of amateurism:

(9) “IFs which also govern the professional side of their sport must have a separate amateur governing body within their federation which organises world or regional amateur competitions” (Olympic Charter, 1978, p. 47)

Thus, the role of IOC is “to encourage the organization and development of sport and sports competitions” (Olympic Charter, 1980). Money and spectator sport threaten the real “sportsman”:

(10) « Nous sommes bien obligés de le répéter, le spectateur sportif est devenu une plaie. Il abaisse le niveau moral du sportsman, lui inspire des préoccupations

étrangères à l'acte qu'il accomplit et des ambitions qui ne sont point nobles. Or, quand on a construit un stade avec vingt mille places dedans, il faut bien l'utiliser. Si un athlète accepte bien de jouer ou de combattre sans presque de spectateurs, il lui sera très désagréable de le faire devant des gradins vides. Alors on s'ingénie à les remplir, ces malheureux gradins. On bat le rappel. On cherche des occasions de fêtes sportives. Et le sportsman peu à peu devient un acteur grisé par les applaudissements et toujours surexcité par la soif qu'il en éprouve. Leur crépitement résonne d'avance dans ses oreilles et, du véritable athlète tel que nous cherchons à le faire revivre pour l'ennoblissement de la civilisation présente, il n'a bientôt plus que le nom. » (De Coubertin, 1910, 131-132 - IN FRENCH)

But Olympic amateurism is not absolute amateurism, as De Coubertin has sometimes been accused of:

(11) « Et comme on m'a reproché souvent — et toujours à tort — la prétendue hypocrisie du serment olympique. Mais lisez-le, ce fameux serment dont je suis le père heureux et fier. Où voyez-vous qu'il exige des athlètes descendus sur le stade olympique un amateurisme absolu que je suis le premier à reconnaître comme impossible ? Je ne demande, par ce serment, qu'une seule chose : la loyauté. » (De Coubertin, 1936, p. 398 - IN FRENCH)

2.2. The societal commitment of modern Olympism

At present, charters are focusing more and more on CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility):

(12) “With Agenda 21, the Sports Movement has also committed to carrying on sustainable development actions and to respecting environmental standards so as to reduce the ecological impact of its activities and places of practice.” (<https://rso.franceolympique.com>)

This policy affects the image of the Olympic Movement within society but also in relation to the environment:

(13) “This societal commitment is reflected in the implementation and promotion of physical and sports activities in support of education, equality, respect, gender diversity and social cohesion, health and well-being, while raising awareness of the environment.” <https://rso.franceolympique.com/la-rso-dans-l-adn-du-sport>

It should be noted that this platform is part of the CNOSF's “sport & co-responsible” approach:

(14) Announced in the eight actions of its Project for French Sport adopted at its 2019 General Assembly and included in the sports movement's 15 commitments to a successful Paris 2024 Games and their legacy, the “environmental excellence through sport” platform or the RSO platform (Societal Responsibility of Sports Organizations) is a major action by the CNOSF aimed at encouraging all actors in the sports movement to structure and enhance their societal responsibility approach: “For many years, the sports movement has had strong ambitions in terms of social utility and social responsibility (SR). To support the actors of the sports movement in achieving sustainable development by 2030, the French National Olympic

and Sports Committee (CNOSF) has for the past few months worked with a group of federations to set up a dedicated online platform, which will go live on 23 September 2019.” <https://cnosf.franceolympique.com/cnosf/actus/7983-la-plateforme-rso-pour-un-sportcoresponsable.html>

But in what way does Olympism have the legitimacy to take on societal values? It shows its legitimacy through its global reach and the pious wishes it formulates, which are supposed to receive the support of all humanity. Moreover, its field of action covers all areas of life: education, leisure, sport, etc. Olympism is the subject of a narrative that allows us to situate good and evil, and to highlight these same benefits in daily life at the individual level. The examination of the charters published since 1924 has allowed us to trace the origin of this social dimension of Olympism. Let us examine now the reconfiguration of sporting values within social networks and web productions.

3. The pragmatic reconfiguration of values in amateur practice

The values promoted by Olympic sports institutions are reconstructed, reconfigured and transposed into texts related to amateur sports. Indeed, sports users adopt these values and update them in their own way. To study this, we will quickly look at texts that regulate amateur practice in the Strava community, in order to see how certain norms can be transmitted through tools or sites that bring together many practicing athletes.

Strava is “a website and mobile application used to record sports activities via GPS” (according to Wikipedia), and its use is regulated by various texts, including the

Strava Community Standards (2020). In these texts, the value of respect is very present, as in the following statements: “Being part of the Strava community means committing to respecting each other, respecting yourself and following etiquette”, “Respect starts with yourself”, “Respect means respect for others”, “Kindness and fair play. Your sport sessions are moments of togetherness and conviviality, be courteous to other athletes. Respect for one’s opponents and politeness are obviously a must”. There is both respect for others and respect for oneself. This respect is associated with safety, friendliness and fair play. In a less “absolute” way, this text also recommends “respect for the law”. More originally in terms of regulating a sports community, the text gives indications on “racism and discrimination”, which were previously (Longhi et al., forthcoming) identified as counter-values of sport. For example, it states:

Include everyone and fight racism. Strava is actively committed to eradicating racism and discrimination in all its forms. If you use Strava, you are making a commitment to us, without exception.

The use of the application, and integration into this community, must therefore be accompanied by a moral dimension linked to tolerance among users. In order to evaluate the reconfiguration of values in a corpus of social data (forums, social networks), we have built a heterogeneous corpus (Garric and Longhi, 2012) of social data:

1. Social networks

Number of articles/publications: 7

Number of comments: 415

Number of words: 7987

2. Forums

Number of articles/publications: 11

Number of comments: 339

Number of words: 19460

3.Blogs

Number of articles/publications: 5

Number of comments: 30

Number of words: 5889

4.Specialized sites

Number of articles/publications: 5

Number of comments: 350

Number of words: 14034

Total

Number of articles/publications: 28

Number of comments: 1134

Number of words: 47370

Respect” is often mentioned in exchanges, whatever the medium:

(15) Twitter: “Stop fantasizing about an opposition between resistance fighters and collaborators. We’re talking about simple rules of life and fines for those who don’t respect them.”

(16) Facebook: “these people really don’t respect anything...”

These two examples use the verb “respect” applied to sports rules or customs. But the word can also be used in a more absolute way, as in the following forum example:

(17) Forum: “We have different ideas. No help no strava. Just ride, show respect, and enjoy nature”. And the following reply, “You can also share a ride with good mates while respecting nature by riding eMTBs and even registering on Srava without worrying about your performance... When you’re feeling low, when work is getting monotonous, get on your bike and ride without thinking about

anything else except the road you’re on.”

This comment enhances the athlete’s ethics (“respect”), which is linked to the athlete’s action (“ride”) and to pleasure (“enjoy”). Athletes can also comment on sports news, as in this message on a forum:

(18) “This rider and this team have already shown their respect for the sport with their treatment of Bouhanni. Personally, I have no doubt about Démare’s mentality, and this story about cheating does not surprise me at all.”

Despite the diversity of uses of the verb “respect”, we retain from this first point the importance of respecting the rules, and of respect as an absolute value. Therefore, if respect is often mentioned, it is because the very question of values is put into discourse, as can be seen in this comment:

(19) Comment site: “there are some who don’t know the values of sport, it’s a shame”

By indicating regret (“it’s a pity”) about not knowing “the values of sport”, the commentator presupposes the existence of such values (“the”) and considers them as a qualitative indicator of how to describe people. But the Stravist community appropriates the question of value(s) in a much more specific way, especially in relation to the question of performance. Indeed, the virtual rewards given may depend on a number of parameters, as one user mentioned on a forum:

(20) Forum: “Racing and KOM have absolutely nothing to do with each other – they are two worlds that you have to distinguish the spirit, the way, and the will to approach things. As anyone can create a segment, a KOM means nothing and has no value unless there is a plethora of cyclists approaching the same segment

with the same intention in identical conditions, just as the Strava segment will not make a difference as it depends on whether you have a headwind or a tailwind, whether you have 30 minutes of cycling or 5 hours, or whether you are going to ride for 1 hour or many hours.”

The question of users’ sporting values is linked to the value of excellence found in Olympism, which can, in terms of reconfiguration, be embodied in “performance”:

(21) Forum: “If the guys want to cheat and then show off, that’s their problem. But for what purpose? I don’t know... But tkt, real performance is achieved and seen on the bike and not on Strava.”

(22) Forum: “Personally, I switched to Strava to learn the names of the nice sections (most often Strava segments) of my favorite races in order to chat with friends who know what we’re talking about and clearly not for my performance... Otherwise, I don’t have a problem with some people racing via Strava... if that’s their thing... “

When one user talks about “real performance”, they imply a relativity of performance and a hierarchy of ways of approaching it, distinguishing between “the bike” and “on strava”. The second user also shows a different use of the application which is to “learn the names of the cool parts” rather than to measure performance.

The values put forward by Strava users may be similar to some extent to the Olympic spirit: excellence refers to the beauty of the sporting gesture, to what it represents in terms of perseverance, human achievement and the dream to be pursued, but this value also refers to the ethos of the athlete, their ethics and exemplary character rather than their physical

and sporting performance in the strict sense of the word (e.g. times or scores, etc.). This is the message that can be taken particularly from the many Stories available on the olympics.com website: Olympians are modern heroes whose destiny is accessible to all those who aim for Excellence. The following excerpt from one such story clearly expresses the difference between Excellence and “winning” (Performance):

(23) When I look back at my life, a big constant is friendship. I would not go on the road to Tokyo if I didn’t think I would make friends doing so. To have good friends, you need respect, and to compete, you need respect. It would be stupid for me to keep participating in the Olympic cycle only for winning – so I strive for excellence. So, all three words – respect, friendship and excellence – are what I do it for. (<https://olympics.com/en/news/unitedby-friendship-respect-and-excellence-santiago-lange>)

Conclusion

Beyond the endorsed values, our study reveals narrative motives and heroic scenarios which feed the discourses related to Olympism. They are based on the mythical dimension of the Games, built through the Charters and the idealized conception of the Olympic Movement which has been perpetuated since Pierre de Coubertin.

Concerning the social networks and applications dedicated to sports, such as Strava, an exposure of the self is also expected, commented on and evaluated by the other users. The photographs posted by sportsmen and women combine landscapes, routes taken, statistical data, but also selfies

and self-enhancing poses. These stagings, like the Olympic narratives, fall within the field of discursive and pre-discursive ethos, which requires a comparative study of its own.

“This situation could therefore contain a paradox: sports organizations struggle to display references to Olympic values and virtual communities debate and substitute them. Certainly, while the symbolism of sport and Olympism has been developed around prowess, performance and competition between individuals, it is also reflected in idealized representations and shared by leaders, practitioners, media, and public authorities (Diana, Meyer 2004).” (Ouerqli et al. 2017, p. 73)

This paper has shown the complex interaction between Olympism and its values that draw on official and canonical sources and the daily or casual illustrations of performance that transfer not only descriptive physical performance but also emotional and motivational productions into the online world.

Let us remember that according to De Coubertin, sport unites **muscles** and **reflection**: « Les fondations de l'édifice sportif sont, avant tout, d'ordre psychologique. Ce qui fait un champion ce peut-être parfois sa condition physiologique ; mais ce qui fait un sportif c'est en premier lieu sa mentalité. (De Coubertin, 1914, pp.75-77 - IN FRENCH).

Thus the **body** is connected to the **soul** and even serves its interests as well as those of society: « *Mens fervida in corpore lacertoso*, un esprit ardent dans un corps musclé... la devise que je me suis efforcé de substituer à l'incolore *Mens sana* était faite pour les Français avant tous les autres. Le sport, en France, sera intellectuel ou il ne sera pas. Il se fera le compagnon fidèle et discret de la réflexion, de

l'idéal, de l'imagination — il sera le rempart silencieux et bien surveillé, derrière lequel l'individu réalisera son ascension cérébrale... il remplira cet office respectable, ou bien alors il versera dans une banalité triviale dont ce que nous savons des Jeux du Cirque, aux soirs de Rome et de Byzance, peut nous donner quelque instructif aperçu. » (De Coubertin, 1923 – IN FRENCH).

Thus, **sports performance** cannot be detached from **human excellence**. Moreover, excellence is linked to **excess** since it is a question of surpassing oneself. It is in this sense that we must interpret the Olympic slogan: « Chercher à plier l'athlétisme à un régime de modération obligatoire, c'est poursuivre une utopie. Ses adeptes ont besoin de la

« liberté d'excès ». C'est pourquoi on leur a donné cette devise : *Citius, altius, fortius*, toujours plus vite, plus haut, plus fort, la devise de ceux qui osent prétendre à abattre les records ! » (De Coubertin, 1935 – IN FRENCH)

It is interesting to underline the close links between **records** and **individual performance** but also **excellence, surpassing oneself and social harmony**: « Les Jeux Olympiques ont été créés pour l'exaltation de l'athlète individuel dont l'existence est nécessaire à l'activité musculaire de la collectivité et les prouesses au maintien de l'émulation générale. » (De Coubertin, 1931, p.1 – IN FRENCH).

This close association between **physical and muscular effort** and **emotional and psychological reflection** no longer appears in the same way on social networks. Amateurs stage their state of mind and their conception of sport through **philosophical quotes** that

they find appropriate. But the reflection seems to stop there...



Figure 1 - Screenshot 5th of November 2022 on Strava France (Facebook group)

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