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To cite this article: Chris Ingraham (2016): Competition or exhibition? The Olympic arts and cultural policy rhetoric, International Journal of Cultural Policy, DOI: [10.1080/10286632.2016.1153082](https://doi.org/10.1080/10286632.2016.1153082)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10286632.2016.1153082>



Published online: 02 Mar 2016.



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Competition or exhibition? The Olympic arts and cultural policy rhetoric

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(Received 11 September 2015; accepted 1 February 2016)

Though they are widely forgotten today, the modern Olympic Games once offered competitive medals for art. This tradition, which lasted through the seven summer Games held from 1912 to 1948, found artists competing for gold much as athletes do now. These artists represented their nation in judged competitive events showcasing artistic works. In its initial form, the ‘pentathlon of the muses,’ as it was called, included competitive events in Architecture, Musical Composition, Sculpture, Painting, and Literature. This paper considers the history of these arts competitions and their eventual demise as a study in cultural policy, arguing that no understanding of cultural policy is sufficient unless it considers the rhetorical factors that contribute to its formation. Without abandoning the Foucauldian backbone of cultural-policy studies, this argument makes an interdisciplinary plea to open cultural policy studies to the field of rhetorical scholarship, which it has almost wholly neglected to date.

Keywords: Olympics; agonism; art; sport; rhetoric; cultural policy

1. A pentathlon of the muses

Though they are widely forgotten today, the modern Olympic Games once offered competitive medals for art. This tradition, which lasted through the seven summer Games held from 1912 to 1948, found artists competing for gold much as athletes do now. These artists represented their nation in judged competitive events against others representing theirs. In its initial form, the ‘pentathlon of the muses’ included competitive events in Architecture, Musical Composition, Sculpture, Painting and Literature, though numerous subcategories were added later. All told, the tenure of the arts competitions saw thousands of participants from 28 countries submit eligible entries and win 147 medals and another 100 honorable mentions (Stanton 2000, p. 355). Yet, by the 1952 Games in Helsinki, the arts competitions had vanished. The International Olympic Committee discontinued them altogether, replacing arts *competitions* with arts *exhibitions*, which offered neither overtly competitive oppositions nor any medal as their reward. These exhibitions have been the centerpiece of Olympic ‘cultural’ programming ever since. The pentathlon of the muses never returned.

Taking the Olympic arts competitions and their demise as a revealing case study in cultural policy, this article considers the meaningful differences such a case

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might elucidate between *competition* and *exhibition* as two presumably opposed models of policy attempting to accommodate the purported cultural distinctiveness of sport and art. I argue that, from a policy standpoint, the shift from a model of competition to exhibition is a crucial but often overlooked change in thinking about how policy might best regulate the way people understand and appreciate sport and art as cultural practices. Indeed, the models of competition or exhibition make viable frameworks for understanding how all cultural policy comes about. This argument builds upon the Foucauldian scaffold that supports most cultural-policy studies today. That is, it follows the likes of Tony Bennett, Toby Miller, Nikolas Rose and others in supposing that the emergence of ‘culture’ as an autonomous field of activity has been historically contingent upon governmental techniques for the regulation of both individuals and larger populations. But, as a supplement to the Foucauldian perspective, I also hope to show what cultural-policy studies might gain from the insights of rhetorical theory.

There are good reasons to supplement cultural-policy studies with rhetorical theory, particularly when it comes to the Olympics. The study of rhetoric as a reproducible art governing the production of successful speech began in Greek antiquity, in lockstep both with the political values that birthed democracy and the cultural milieu that spawned the Olympiad. To study Olympic governance with any eye toward its history, then, is necessarily to encounter the evolving role of rhetorical discourse in democracy going back to a time before ‘culture’ became the autonomous field of activity it is today. Moreover, the specific circumstances that motivated the move from competition to exhibition in the particular case of Olympic cultural programming cannot fully be explicated through a study of government and its more systemic forms of power. Modern Olympic cultural programming has always been triggered by the promulgation of rhetorical *topoi* (common topics or argumentative patterns) that tend to recur in how policy decisions are made in the crucible of their debate and formulation. Although key rhetorical actors have been persuasive agents in this regard, rhetoric is not just a set of strategic resources to persuade or manipulate through words. It is also a powerful social practice capable of legitimating and securing particular democratic ideals about culture. Accordingly, the lens of rhetorical theory offers a valuable supplement to how we think and write about cultural policy.

Long ago, the ancient Greeks distinguished between *rhetorica utens* and *rhetorica docens*. The former refers to the *practice* or *use* of rhetoric: to persuasive speech, primarily, but more generally, as Kenneth Burke puts it, to ‘the *use* of persuasive resources,’ which might include the discursive wielding of any symbols for rhetorical effect (1969, p. 36). The latter term, *rhetorica docens*, refers to the meta-discursive study of those resources and techniques that someone practicing rhetoric might perform in the interest of being more effective. From our vantage, the important difference between the two terms is the notion of rhetoric as a productive tool, in the former case, and rhetoric as an analytic tool in the latter. Although the distinction between *rhetorica utens* and *docens* is somewhat slippery, the rhetorical tradition having ballooned to treat rhetoric as an interpretive theory for understanding all social reality, there is utility nonetheless in highlighting the *utens/docens* distinction as it might relate to the study of cultural policy.

Beyond being a purposive art whose flexible principles guide communication across contexts and situations, if rhetoric is also a framework for recognizing the ways we are influenced and persuaded by others, then it offers a critical vocabulary

for thinking about the leveraging of power and the manipulation of truth (perhaps its very ‘creation’) through the influence of social relations and cultural practices. In this case, the persuasive discourse and *topoi* found in debates about Olympic policy suggest that, despite how it’s been cast in the Olympic context, there is less meaningful difference between *competition* and *exhibition* as models for policy concerning ‘culture’ than might seem to be the case. Better understanding the discontinuation of the arts competitions and the establishment of arts exhibitions in their place will valuably inform current cultural policy measures that neither want to repeat the shortcomings of an earlier, high modernist time nor rest content with the policy insufficiencies of our own globalized age.

2. Abortive flowers

Only in the last 20 years have any concentrated efforts been made to document the Olympic arts competitions as a historical phenomenon (Stanton 2000, Garcia 2002, 2008) or to explain their eventual demise (Good 1999, 2000, Hanna 1999, Guillain 2005, Inglis 2008, Hiroshi 2009, Gold and Revill 2011). This scholarship may signal a larger trend toward reimagining the confluence of art and sport as cultural practices governed by common policy. Certainly, recent attention to the ‘cultural’ intersection of art and sport has been ample. In 2008, this journal devoted a special issue to ‘Sport and Cultural Policy in the Re-Imagined City,’ and a number of subsequent publications here and elsewhere have drawn further attention to the policy implications of the idea that art and sport alike are ‘cultural’ and compatible, hence governable by similar or common policies (see, e.g. Hughson 2004, Maguire *et al.* 2008, Piggin *et al.* 2009). Books on sport by Toby Miller also confirm this trend (Miller *et al.* 2001, Miller 2002).

But if this literature addresses the arts competitions at all, it tends to treat them merely as bygone curiosities, as ‘abortive flowers’ (Hiroshi 2009, p. 119) that footnote the larger narrative of the Cultural Olympiad we know today. The tone of these narratives casts the arts competitions as a kind of novel but naïve idea, realized briefly (if imperfectly), only ultimately to be deferred. Implicit in this sensibility is an apparent assumption that the arts competitions failed for concrete and understandable reasons: that is, for reasons there is little need to interrogate as unfortunate or misguided. The rhetorical tradition offers good cause to challenge this assumption.

Nevertheless, most accounts of the Olympic art competitions either neglect a rhetorical frame altogether or tacitly embrace the idea of *rhetorica utens*. For example, the belief that Baron Pierre de Coubertin was the ‘rénovateur’ of the modern Olympic Games, the one who single-handedly conceived and implemented the Olympic revival, aligns with the idea of *rhetorica utens* by supposing Coubertin to have produced certain results through a set of persuasive rhetorical actions. Speeches, letters and meeting minutes thus count among the marshaled evidence to explain Coubertin’s remarkable influence. And no wonder: they are instances of rhetoric in practice, of Coubertin’s skilled and determined attempts to achieve consensus regarding what (he believed) mattered most in the Olympic revival. From one perspective, such thinking is historically accurate and illuminating. Coubertin really was the prime mover behind the Games’ revival, playing a nonpareil role in establishing the arts competitions in particular. But to look only at those actions that causally precipitated changes in policy, whether through the lens of rhetorical

theory or not, is to subject the study of policy to mere historicity rather than to isolate ways of understanding the stakes involved in policies governing culture to begin with. Here, *rhetorica docens* may prove more valuable.

Still, in the several recent attempts to explain the ultimate replacement of arts competitions with exhibitions in the Olympics, the use of rhetoric as an analytic tool is notably absent. Instead, a consensus seems to have formed about the historical reasons for the policy shift, naming two essential factors: a commitment to the Olympic principle of *amateurism*, and insurmountable *structural differences* by the mid-twentieth century between ways of understanding sport and art (see Guillain 2005, Gold and Revill 2011). While the tenet of amateurism potentially fits within a view that sees policy changes accomplished through rhetorical performances of vested actors, claims about structural differentiation imply broader observations about why competition cannot be applied equally to art and sport within the socio-economic structure of the Western world.

The wisdom of rhetorical theory teaches us that the arts competitions must be understood as the instantiation of a particular set of cultural policies that sought to restore in modified form the thoroughly humanist and philhellenic ideal that held sport and art, through their unification of body and mind, to be cultural counterparts. This ideal was expressed, more particularly, in Coubertin's allegiance to the ancient idea that art and sport alike celebrate the virtue of the human spirit when undertaken in a public, competitive struggle. Tracing the circumstances that ushered in the arts competitions' demise therefore tells us not just about evolving conceptions of Olympism, but about the ways policies governing the Olympics delimit and define how we think about art and sport as intersecting spheres of 'culture' with sometimes convergent, sometimes divergent values.

3. Coubertin, competition and the Olympic arts

The conceptual motivation for bringing art events to the modern Olympics can be traced to the eponymous Games in ancient Olympia, and specifically to the ancient *panegyris*: 'a festive assembly in which the entire people came together to participate in religious rites, sporting competitions and artistic performance' (Gold and Revill 2011, p. 80). When the ancient Olympics began, as far back as 776 BCE, they involved the public gathering of people in competition to please and praise the Gods (Spivey 2004, Young 2004). This happened in a variety of ways: through song, through oratory, through sculpture, through drama, through wrestling, through boxing, through foot or chariot races, and so forth (Miller 2004). In Hellenic times, that is, it would have been inconceivable to imagine modern signifiers like 'sport' and 'art' held to be separate practices of different status or capital. Both alike rather celebrated the virtuousness of the human form and spirit as a way to please and thank the Gods. With this principle as the basis for the modern Games, it made sense that they would endeavor to include what we now call 'the arts' alongside sportive programming.

Art and athletics could co-exist as cultural counterparts largely because, in antiquity, they both exemplified the virtue of competition: what Debra Hawhee calls the 'joint values of agonism and *arête*' (2004, p. 4). Today the concepts of agonism – from the Greek word *agōn*, often reduced to something like 'sportive contest' – and *arête* – usually translated as 'virtue' – do not nearly capture the nuance the terms had in antiquity, when the distinct categories we now know as 'sport' and

'art' were essentially undifferentiated enactments of Greek citizenship. *Arête* was both an ethical concept and a constantly sought-after condition to be achieved through public action. Hawhee describes it as 'a kind of virtuousness that in its own way drove agonistic encounters, as Greeks sought after the esteem of others through competitive engagement and display of their abilities, be they skill at javelin throwing or delivery of an encomium' (ibid., p. 17).

Agōn, meanwhile, is sometimes regarded as a 'sportive contest,' and hence agonism is treated as a synonym for competition. In this usage, *agōn* refers to a struggle that has as its successful end (*telos*) a victory in the form of triumph over the competitive adversary that the struggle itself posed. But as Hawhee observes, this meaning of *agōn* puts too much emphasis on teleological, outcome-motivated competition, for which the Greeks had another word altogether: *athlios*, or the verb *athleuein*, to contend for a prize (ibid., p. 15). The *agōn*, then, as distinguished from the *athlios*, was less a competition fraught by the kind of opposition only victory can resolve, than it was a contestive encounter made meaningful by the mere act of coming together. *Agōn* in this secondary sense follows its root meaning as a 'gathering' or 'assembly,' Hawhee says, much the way the Greek term *agora* ('the marketplace') derives from a similar root and was understandably thought in ancient times to be the quintessential gathering of people (ibid., p. 15). To say that sport and art come together culturally through the joint values of agonism and *arête* is then to say that sport and art are most fully realized when engaged in a competitive contest attended by a large public, though the competitive struggle itself matters more than its actual reward.

We need not stop in antiquity, however, to recognize the virtue still accorded to agonism in much current thinking about democracy and its governing policies. Chantal Mouffe, for instance, has defended the agonism inherent in all attempts to govern the differences found in large, heterogeneous populations and cultures. She suggests that agonism is not a problem for politics to overcome, but rather 'the very condition of existence' for democracy itself: desirable insofar as it grants legitimacy to all points of view, adversarial or not (2000, p. 74). Rather than aspire toward a deliberative democracy by imagining the political to consist in communication or argumentation somehow capable of achieving policy solutions that please everyone, Mouffe maintains, we are better off accepting an agonistic pluralism that comes to terms 'with the constitutive nature of power' in legitimating how pluralistic populations are governed (2000, p. 100).

Undoubtedly, agonistic democracy has a Foucauldian tenor: because power is endemic to all social interdependence, the question is not how to overcome power's perceived negativity, but how to accept its inevitability as a starting point for what Foucault calls 'the work of reciprocal elucidation' (1984, p. 381). Agonism, that is, does not mean shutting out others whose views are different, thereby delegitimizing them as subjects. Rather, it involves recognizing the value inherent in a reciprocal politics that, by accepting conflict as inevitable, legitimizes all subjects. When it comes to cultural policy, then, and particularly to policies governing sport and art alike, embracing the virtue of agonism means accepting that *competition* need not be directed toward an outcome of winners and losers, but can have merits in itself.

Few knew this better than Baron Pierre de Coubertin. Although evidence suggests that Coubertin was not the first to envision or advocate a modern Olympiad, nor even the first to implement a more modest version of the Games on a local scale, he was certainly the most zealous and successful of Olympic revivalists in

the nineteenth century (MacAloon 1981, Young 2002). If his visage on postage stamps or the sculptures of his figure on multiple continents is any indication, it is well within reason to consider his ideas, certainly his influence, as constitutive of the principles that have undergirded the modern Olympic movement from its inception. Coubertin has written or otherwise gone on record prolifically about his visions of educational reform, Olympism, the competitive human spirit, and other fixations that inspired his life's mission.¹ What emerges from a survey of this record is a fairly specific set of *topoi*, or topics of argument, that Coubertin made to set the parameters of what mattered when it comes to including the arts competitions in the Games.

These three *topoi* include political, axiological, and economic commitments to ideas about the ideal relationship between sport and art under the canopy of 'culture' that the Olympic movement provides: (1) *agonism*, (2) *inter/nationalism*, and (3) *political economy*. Although it might appear that agonism is an axiological position, *inter/nationalism* a political one, and *political economy* an economic standard, such a clean correspondence does not tell the whole story. The whole story suggests a far more muddled set of relationships, which Coubertin found integral to unite in the vision of Olympism he sought to realize through Olympic policy.

3.1. *Agonism*

Nigel Crowther has noted that Coubertin 'probably knew enough Greek (although he used translations) to understand the concept of the ancient *agōn*' in all its complexity (2006, p. 3). In a 1908 article Coubertin wrote for the *Fortnightly Review* as part of his efforts to implement the first arts competitions in that year's Games, Coubertin noted that 'unbridled competition entails grave risks to the spirit of fair play and leads to envy, vanity, and mistrust.' For Coubertin, the idea of competing merely 'for the sake of winning something' was 'the dangerous canker with which we have to reckon' (Coubertin 2000, p. 543). In other words, neither in Olympic sports nor arts was he advocating for agonistes of a strictly outcome-oriented nature, but rather for competitions with an eye toward the secondary sense of *agōn* as a coming together publicly to witness the struggle of contestation as a virtue in itself.

3.2. *Inter/nationalism*

Moreover, this virtue was, for Coubertin, necessarily international in scope (Morgan 1994). National pride sanctified competition by bringing cultures together in mutual respect based in a shared and universally human appreciation of the competitive struggle (Coubertin 1898). Only by coming together in this mutual respect, he believed, was peace possible between the nations of the world (Coubertin 2000, p. 45).² In this sense, arts competitions were less to showcase the cultural distinctiveness of a given nation than to celebrate one of the more mindful, as opposed to purely physical, expressions of the virtue in agonistic contestation. What would become the stipulation, at the outset of the arts competitions, that each entry be 'directly inspired by the idea of sport' (Stanton 2000, p. 34), can thus be read more as a gesture toward the celebration of those competitive struggles that are already familiar to us through athletics than as an entreaty to express a nation's cultural distinctiveness *per se*.

3.3. Political economy

The urgency of including arts competitions in the Games, though, makes more sense in light of Coubertin's commitment to an esthetic ideal in the larger Olympic revival. This interest was explicit from the start (Durry 1986). While it probably dates back to Coubertin's passion for educational reform, his vision for which sought to integrate the beauty of art and sport in the similarly esthetic harmony of mind and body, he was also influenced by the work of John Ruskin, a popular English art critic and public intellectual from the middle part of the nineteenth-century. Ruskin's political economy was grounded in a broad and ethically informed sense of wealth as 'the possession of the valuable by the valiant' (1967, p. 73). A nation's art, for Ruskin, provided a better index of national wealth than anything else insofar as good art, the beautiful, could only come from good people. We ought to make things beautiful, then, because when we do, that gives them value. Yet for Ruskin, as for Coubertin, the value that came with beautification was merely an uninteresting natural consequence; what mattered was the beauty. 'There is no wealth but life,' he famously put it (*ibid.*, p. 88). Krüger (1996) has detailed Ruskin's influence on Coubertin, and made a compelling case that, while Ruskin himself showed no interest in arts competitions, Ruskin's notion of political economy is clearly evident in Coubertin's insistence upon beautification of the games. Coubertin's recurrent evocation of the principle of eurhythmics, or harmony (see Messing and Muller 2000), can accordingly be read as part and parcel of the importance he placed in beautifying the Games. The arts competitions were one way to do that. The fact that they carried with them a prize, which could be leveraged for social or economic gain, was merely a testament to the validity of Ruskin's political economy: beauty added value that Coubertin wanted to see the Games reap.

The *topoi* of *agonism*, *inter/nationalism* and *political economy* will prove helpful again later. For now, though, the important point to emphasize is that, for Coubertin, these arts events were not just a sideshow to the main event of athletic contests; they were themselves very nearly the *sine qua non* of the Olympiad. As he wrote in a letter dated 31 January 1911, Coubertin believed that, 'Deprived of the aura of the Art Contests, Olympic game[s] are only World championships and for my part, I could not support any contests' (quoted in Stanton 2000, p. 31). In other words, from its outset, precisely what was to distinguish the Olympics from other large expositions or sporting events (the likes of which were increasingly popular in a late-nineteenth century that saw world fairs and other mega-events being staged worldwide) was the combination of sport and art as an expression of our common humanity united internationally through the agonistic spirit of esthetized competition.

4. Rhetorica utens

The rhetorical dynamics of cultural policy become more visible after considering how Coubertin actualized the concepts that motivated his commitment to the modern Olympic revival. In 1906, with two Olympic Games already complete, Coubertin mobilized to incorporate arts events into the Games. He had not done so previously for purely strategic reasons. As he later reflected in his memoir, 'It would have been foolish [to proceed earlier] . . . Proceeding gradually by stages has

always seemed to me the best way of going about any large-scale enterprise expected to last' (Coubertin 1979, p. 185). But by April 1906 the time was right. He drafted a letter inviting members of the IOC, along with artists and dignitaries from around the world, to Paris to attend a Consultative Conference 'for the purpose of studying to what extent and in what form the arts and literature could be called upon to participate in the modern Olympic Games and, in general, to be associated with the practice of sports in order to benefit from them and ennoble them' (Coubertin 2000, p. 608). Here, in a three-day program attended by some seventy personages from several Western nations (Stanton 2000, p. 10), Coubertin laid out his vision for including arts events in the Games.

As he explained in his opening speech, they had gathered for a purpose: 'to reunite the Muscles and the Mind, once divorced, in the bonds of a legitimate marriage' (Coubertin 2000, p. 611). Calling to mind the Greek concept of *agōn* as gathering, he spoke of 'the alliance that must be forged among athletes, artists, and spectators' because 'today, the masses are incapable of linking the pleasures of various sorts of art together' (ibid., p. 612). On the agenda over the next three days were discussions about how to link the pleasures of the proposed competitive arts with the artfulness of extant sportive events. Coubertin, as ever, was determined in his resolve that the Conference would both lend approval to the arts competitions and develop the plans to implement them by the 1908 Games, scheduled for Rome.

To this end, the agenda included not just meetings to discuss the five arts categories he had proposed for his pentathlon of the muses, but meetings about the choreography ('processions, parades, group and coordinated movements') and decoration ('Stands and enclosures – Mats, badges, garlands, draperies, clusters') that would be a necessary complement to the competitions if they were to meet the standards of his imagination (ibid., p. 609). As Coubertin elaborated in his opening remarks, no one any longer 'seems to revolt at the miserably mundane décor, the ridiculous processions, the detestable cacophony, and the whole apparatus attendant upon what is called a "public festival" these days. One guest is always missing: good taste' (ibid., p. 612). What Coubertin wanted was to restore 'good taste' through the cultivation of public appreciation of what that meant. 'Let us be good guides,' he concluded. 'Let us place appropriate guideposts here and there. Public opinion will follow the direction we give it.' (ibid., p. 612).

These are the words of a rhetorically deft man forging cultural policy out loud. Certainly, there cannot be many better examples of cultural policy taking shape as 'a project that seeks to educate the citizenry into a set of tastes' (Miller and Yudice 2002, p. 7). Here, that education in taste formation is *explicitly* Coubertin's aim. And he shows no discomfort whatsoever in the elite position of authority that would presume in doing so to tell the public their own opinion. Coubertin's ability to set the parameters of the conversation at the 1906 Consultative Conference attests not just to the power of *rhetorica utens*, but to the rhetorical constitution of the policies the Conference set into motion.

In effect, the Conference proceeded exactly according to the plan Coubertin devised. By the first day's end, attendees unanimously passed a resolution to include arts competitions in the upcoming 1908 Games. Despite the presence of only three other IOC members and a largely French contingent (Stanton 2000), this was all the momentum Coubertin needed. Two more days of discussion followed, but he had already succeeded in establishing both an accepted justification and working template for the arts competitions based upon the three *topoi* central to his argument. In

the years ahead, these topics established at the 1906 Conference would remain central to the debate about the place of art in the greater Olympic festival.

After the 1906 Conference, though, there were high hopes for the grand marriage of muscle and mind that Coubertin spoke of in his remarks. Although the introduction of arts contests with medals at stake had been approved to begin as early as the 1908 games in Rome, the calamitous eruption of Mt. Vesuvius forced the IOC to move the games to London at the last minute, leaving insufficient time to prepare arts events in the new venue. Not until 1910, as a trial run for the 1912 Games in Stockholm, did the IOC stage its first arts competitions: in architecture. Cheered by the relative success of this event, which saw nine entries and awarded gold to a pair of Swiss architects (Bergvall 1912), Coubertin rallied for the full artistic pentathlon in Stockholm two years later.

Here he encountered some resistance. The Stockholm Organizing Committee, bolstered by various artists and artists' unions, maintained that arts competitions would be meaningless when it came to artistic integrity. The demand that artists submit works inspired by sport, which effectively meant figurative representations of a preordained subject, confined eligible entries to a particular way of understanding art's esthetic possibilities. This limitation bothered Swedish artists who, in a period we now think of as high modernism, wanted to explore more avant-garde and individualistic means of expression. The Royal Academy even claimed that restrictions on subject matter would lead merely to 'illustrations' rather than works of art (ibid., p. 807). The Stockholm Organizing Committee told Coubertin they would accept arts *exhibitions* as a suitable alternative, but if he wanted competitions, he would have to organize them himself (Stanton 2000, p. 32).

That's exactly what he did. Coubertin's intransigent determination to see the arts competitions become a vital part of the Olympic movement would not let him be deterred. Using the money allocated to him from the Stockholm Organizing Committee, he set about implementing the arts competitions he'd envisioned in 1906 and partially actuated in 1910. There were not many entries in 1912, but medals were awarded to the winners and, more importantly, the arts competitions had officially been integrated into the Games. Coubertin had succeeded. Yet, despite his worldwide recognition today, the feat of rhetorical brilliance that propelled his success remains underappreciated. Slater argues that Coubertin's 'exceptional public relation skills' explain his influence (2002, p. 157), and MacAloon attributes Coubertin's effectiveness more broadly to his 'drive and personality, the resources of money, prestige, and social contacts he commanded, and his total investment in his identity as a sports entrepreneur and reformer' (MacAloon 1981, p. 154). But the reality is, the Baron created cultural policy through his astounding rhetorical skill.

The notion of *rhetorica utens* helps to explain how the persuasive means and influence of such a man helped to codify the arts competitions as policy. Attentiveness to *rhetorica utens* can generate a similar narrative to explain how the arts competitions came finally to be replaced by *exhibitions* starting with the 1952 Games in Helsinki. In this case, the formidable man was Avery Brundage, the American president of the IOC from 1952 to 1972. His single *topos* was the principle of amateurism.

Amateurism is the tenet of Olympism that maintains participants in the Games, whether in art or sport, should not be remunerated for their work. William Sloane, one of the original IOC members, called the problem of amateurism 'the most knotty, elusive, and exasperating of all questions connected with sport' and

according to Donald Fuoss, ‘Evidence indicates that Olympic authorities have been more concerned with the problem of amateurism than probably any other aspect of the Olympic games’ (quoted in Glader 1978, p. 9). The issue of amateurism grew particularly nettlesome for the arts competitions as they became a regular component of the quadrennial Games.

We have seen how the Stockholm Committee, at the urging of Swedish artists, rejected the idea of arts competitions on grounds that the imperative of a prescribed subject matter took away from the spirit of art. An undercurrent of this argument was the belief that art should be undertaken for art’s sake alone. To compromise one’s singular artistic vision by conforming to the restrictions of a contest is to compromise the integrity of creating art instead as a response to an inner need. The precept of amateurism embraced by the IOC similarly held that sport and art should be undertaken for their intrinsic worth alone. In short, amateurism promoted the ideal of ‘sport for sport’s sake’ and ‘art for arts sake,’ or the premise that sport’s joys and benefits, as with art’s, were their own reward.

Arts *competitions* contradicted these values. Unlike most (but not all) of the Olympic athletes, many of the artists who submitted entries were already working professionals. While the Games might include any number of marathoners, for instance, who did not make a living by running, the prospect of receiving viable arts entries from an architect was virtually inconceivable unless that architect also worked professionally to design and construct buildings. When winning artists moreover stood to gain materially from the social or cultural capital that came with earning a medal, the IOC began to worry that the arts competitions egregiously flaunted the spirit of amateurism that would value art for its own sake.

Just as the arts competitions were Coubertin’s passion, it was Avery Brundage who monomaniacally resolved to eliminate any aspect of the Games that infringed on the ideal of amateurism. For him, this meant ending the arts competitions and establishing a model of exhibitions in their place. As early as the 1932 Games in Los Angeles, Brundage had championed that cause, even receiving an honorable mention in the arts competition for an essay he submitted to the literature category called, ‘The Significance of Amateur Sport’ (IOC 1933) – a fine irony given that his allegiance to amateurism would make such awards obsolete 20 years later.

By 1952, as president of the IOC, Brundage ‘strong-armed’ the executive board on grounds that ‘one can be practically sure that under present conditions the winners of the Olympic Fine Art medals will do everything possible to capitalize on their victories professionally’ (quoted in Good 1999, p. 161). As Stanton (2000) shows through remarkable collocation of correspondence, memoranda and minutes, Brundage put his rhetorical wherewithal to work – in speeches, in letters, by organizing committees – to eradicate the arts competitions from the Games on the grounds that they were a ‘flagrant exploitation’ of the Olympic ideal (Brundage 1965, p. 50). Loyalists to Coubertin’s vision persisted in fighting to maintain the competitions, but Coubertin had died in 1925, and without his own rhetorical prowess, Brundage prevailed. Arts exhibitions became the official model for Olympic policy regarding the arts.

5. *Rhetorica docens*

The lens of *rhetorica utens* shows how the persuasive mettle of Brundage brought about the competition’s end just as Coubertin’s had brought about their beginning.

But *rhetorica docens*, the use of rhetoric as an analytic tool, is what makes it possible to isolate those *topoi* that characterize the more indelible stakes of the competition or exhibition debate for the study of cultural policy. So, while the dominant narrative in recent literature about the arts competitions names amateurism as one of the ‘two more fundamental factors’ explaining the demise of the competition model (Gold and Revill 2011, p. 91), that explanation alone only tells us what happened historically. For an understanding of cultural policy, the true importance of the shift from exhibition to competition is more discursively complex.

Coubertin, for instance, never much cared about amateurism. He had rather promoted it strategically, in order to bring his own Olympic vision to life. As he later admitted in his memoirs, ‘The question [of amateurism] never really bothered me. It had served as a screen to convene the Congress designed to revive the Olympic Games’ (Coubertin 1979, p. 412). In other words, for Coubertin, amateurism merely served as a rhetorical expedient. Variations on such expedients undoubtedly lie behind all policies that get codified into practice. Though they well serve as instantiations of *rhetorica utens*, they fail to explain the deeper ethical issues at stake in any attempt to police culture. After all, as Miller and Yudice remind us, ‘cultural policy always implies the management of populations through suggested behavior’ (2002, p. 14). Certainly, decisions about how and to what degree the arts ought to be included alongside sport in a global event of such magnitude as the Olympics suggests ways for people to consume, appreciate, and understand culture in our own globalized world. But if we want to determine the basis for particular ways of suggesting behavior, we need to look further.

The three *topoi* of *agonism*, *inter/nationalism* and *political economy* offer a place to begin. When Brundage succeeded in codifying exhibitions as the policy model for the arts, the Olympic Charter was amended to specify that the Games’ organizers ‘shall arrange exhibitions and demonstrations of the host country’s art (architecture, literature, music, painting, sculpture, photography, and sport philately)’ and that ‘this section of the programme shall be of an equal standard and held concurrently and in the same vicinity as the sports events’ (quoted in Masterson 1986, p. 108). In this new policy already reverberations of Coubertin’s three *topoi* can be discerned. The requirement of equal standards and geographical proximity between the sports and arts, for example, alludes to the sort of eurythmic harmony Coubertin sought in the principle of political economy, which would beautify art through sport and sport through art. But equal standards are elusive once arts become mere exhibition, because the arts are left bereft of even what little audience boost they gained from the draw of having had medals at stake, whereas in sport, an audience always watches the high drama of a competitive struggle taking place, and not just that struggle’s result. This among other factors explains why, when placed side by side in policy matters, sport is sure to win the day when it comes to popularity, publicity and financial resources (Garcia 2008, 2012).

Further reverberations of Coubertin’s *topoi* can be felt in the changing nature of Olympic art’s relationship to the nation it comes from. Rather than arts competitions that celebrated the humanistic virtue found in agonism, now the arts exhibitions display art implicitly associated with ‘the host country’s’ cultural and national identity. That is, the *inter/national* motivation for including art in the Games now explicitly associates art with a country’s claims to cultural distinction (though its specific list of what *types* of artistic distinction qualify as eligible leave out numerous artistic practices that might themselves mark a culture’s uniqueness).³ So, while

the exhibitions curb the agonistic spirit that would pit these cultures together problematically as if one could be superior to another, it is worth remembering that in Coubertin's competitions the association of art with national identity and cultural distinctiveness was never there in the first place. The competitions rather melded sport and art as a common culture through the 'joint values' of agonism and *arête*. Recalling the dual nature of *agōn*, it thus makes some sense to imagine the distinction between arts *competitions* and arts *exhibitions* as a similar distinction, respectively, between *agōn* as *contest* and *agōn* as *gathering*. In that case, the shift toward exhibitions signals a definitive rupture in the beautiful Hellenic idea that agonism expressed both a social or public gathering and an individual competitive struggle.

Of course, the second of the two common explanations for the arts competitions' suppression – the idea of 'structural differentiation' between sport and art – goes some distance toward supporting such an alignment. Coubertin's intention for the Olympic revival may well have been to unite art and sport under the purview of a common cultural policy modeled after ancient Greece. The problem is, ancient Greece is just that: it's ancient. The world has changed considerably since then, and the ability to think of sport and art united through a common cultural policy may just be an atavistic dream. That, anyway, seems to be the conclusion of David Inglis, whose provoking account of what he calls this 'arts-culture-sports interface' (2008, p. 464) articulates the position of 'structural differentiation' between sport and art more incisively than anyone.

Inglis focuses on the 'cultural Agonistes' of the Olympics, from Coubertin's arts competitions to the Cultural Olympiad that rules the day now. But he does not pick up the dual-nuance of the ancient notion of *agōn*. He rather stops at acknowledging that, 'the totality of the ancient Olympics in their heyday was characterized by a cultural complex of "arts" and "sports"' far more undifferentiated than they are today (ibid., p. 465). Today, he argues, art and sport have become more isolated from one another as a result of the complex sociological changes wrought by the structural differentiation of the industrial age. The increasing division of labor signaled a correspondence, socially, between newly differentiated conceptions of mind and body. The physical labor of work came to be associated with the body, and the luxury of leisure time with the mind. Sport and art came to share a similar divide, which could not be separated from its class distinctions: sport became a working class, physical kind of labor, and the arts a mental endeavor of those in the middle or upper classes privileged enough to undertake it. Though Coubertin's ideal marriage of 'the Muscles and the Mind' might beautifully rekindle the cultural essence of an ancient past that found sport and art, body and mind, undifferentiated and unified, for Inglis 'it seems unlikely' that such a dream 'will ever be realized' (ibid., p. 475). Far better, he proposes, to abandon the arts competitions and instead focus on the competition for funding that remains in contemporary Cultural Olympiads repeatedly troubled by a disparity between the resources promised and those resources actually allocated.

6. Upon the wavering line

From his sociological lens, Inglis may be right. But from a rhetorical perspective we might find that a more sanguine conclusion is possible. Rhetoric, after all, as Kenneth Burke has it, is 'an art that can "prove opposites"' (Burke 1969, p. 44).

The idea of ‘rhetorical identification’ through *rhetorica utens* and *docens* alike offers a way to envision art and sport not just as separate, autonomous spheres of activity, but as consubstantial spheres that share ‘the wavering line between identification and division’ (ibid., p. 45). In that sense, an approach informed by rhetorical theory makes a well equipped heuristic to find the key points in policy discourse that speak toward the edges of what count as irremediable ‘cultural’ divides along that ‘wavering line.’ This bodes well in our globalized age, when the very premise of clear-cut cultural division comes close to the reductionist sociology of culture that I – with Benhabib (2002) – have tried to resist. The reductionist view ‘that cultures are unified, harmonious, seamless wholes that speak with one narrative voice’ (Benhabib 2002, p. 102) is the same view that would fail to account for the meaningful implications of the shift from competition to exhibition in Olympic arts policy.

I have tried to suggest that a rhetorical approach, as opposed principally to a socio-historical one, might illuminate key issues of cultural policies that are not otherwise so readily visible. Locating and then mining the *topoi* Coubertin and Brundage mobilized for their respective causes is one way the rhetorical perspective might do so. But even if the arts competitions were both a ‘victim of the protection of amateurism’ and unable to overcome the ‘divergent evolution of contemporary art and sport’ (Guillain 2005, p. 29), as the predominant arguments maintain, the competitions were also susceptible to innumerable operational problems not adequately accounted for even by the various *topoi* offered to defend their significance. Clumsy organization, poor quality of artwork submitted, lack of interest among artistic elites, inconsistent rules and procedures, these and other problems hobbled the arts competitions throughout their tenure (Guillain 2005).

Yet, these problems alone can’t account for the changes in Olympic policy this article has addressed. As Tony Bennett reminded us some time ago, ‘it now makes no sense – if it ever did – to think of culture as a ground situated outside the domain of government and providing the resources through which that domain might be resisted’ (Bennett 1998, p. 30). In that case, we might remember that *any* cultural policy attendant upon art – from the funding that makes it possible to the copyright or trade regulations governing its reproduction and distribution – whether pertaining to the Olympic Games or not, operates at the intersection of competition and exhibition. In a sense, cultural policy itself is a competitive struggle. Whether such policy leaves the arts to survive alone on the free market, or offers state subsidies to assure the arts don’t wither, all cultural policy with regard to the arts is engaged in agonism in the thick sense of the word: gathering and contest. The losers of the *agōn* are those excluded from the advantages that an active policy makes possible. The winners are those who survive, for whatever reason, to exhibit their distinction.

In the end, then, the meaningful difference between competition and exhibition may not be as pronounced as at first it seemed. Today, the active Olympic Charter says that the ideal of Olympism ‘seeks to create a way of life based on the joy of effort, the educational value of good example, social responsibility and respect for universal fundamental ethical principles’ (IOC 2011). Certainly in the ‘joy of effort’ we can read a subtext of *competition*, and in the ‘value of good example’ a variation of *exhibition*. The spirit of Olympism that would collapse the two together suggests that there is good cause for exposing the policy models of competition or exhibition as a false binary. This conclusion is important because it invites us to

stand upon the wavering line in the relationship between art and sport under the purview of a common cultural policy without embracing, on one hand, an atavistic hope for a neo-Hellenic, holistic sphere of culture, and on the other, a cynical supposition that sport and art are fundamentally incompatible.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

Notes

1. See, for instance, the nearly 1000-page compendium of Coubertin's selected writings (2000).
2. Of course, Coubertin was soon to be disabused of this dream when the First World War saw the 1916 Games canceled, and the Second World War required canceling the 1940 and 1944 games.
3. Hanna (1999) makes a strong argument about the arts competitions' Eurocentric bias, though without acknowledging a similar bias in the exhibitions model.

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