It is true that the Olympic Games, held every four years, have now become a truly world event. They are now the number one event from the point of view of the meeting of world athletes and sporting spectacle. It would not even be an exaggeration to say that there is no other world event which at this point in time attracts the interest of so many people throughout the world even outside sports circles. It is difficult to find people, whatever their social status, age, race or nationality, who are not deeply moved by this quadrennial event, whether they are sport enthusiasts or not. The Olympic Games in these past few years have succeeded in becoming a major world event, the like of which has never been seen before.

The unquestionable success of these Games is mainly due to the following reasons:

a) the realisation of the need of all the people of the world to meet at periodical intervals in the same place, away from the things that divide them racially, nationally, religiously, politically;

b) the progressive participation of more and more nations, in particular the presence at the Games of new nations, mainly of Africa, as independent and free people;

c) the spectacular development of sports performances in the last fifty years and the achievement of almost superhuman records, something which gives them an indisputable grandeur with the competitive spirit that prevails in all Olympic sports;

d) the equally spectacular technical progress, especially in the field of mass information media, as a result of which in addition to the few thousand spectators who can watch the spectacle, the Games have reached the millions of people who can now enjoy them through television as if they were present themselves.

This tremendous development and growth of world interest in the Games every four years is naturally characterised, in times such as these, by a constant tendency to produce more material goods, and to ob-

* Lecture given in July 1979 at the International Olympic Academy’s 2nd special session for members and staff of National Olympic Committees, held in Olympia.
tain increasingly greater possibilities of financial growth and material power through competition; this situation has given on the one hand more prestige, grandeur, wealth and interest to the Games, while turning them into a dangerous enterprise which constitutes, as we all know, a threat to the spirit of Olympism which is severely tested under such conditions.

Thus, together with the considerable progress and success of the Games, we all speak of a great crisis which is threatening them to such an extent that we are now afraid that their end will be nearing if we allow the present situation to persist. All share the fear that if present trends are allowed to continue, the day will soon come when the Games will be abandoned as something which has denied, through abuse during its application, its own higher spiritual values and the lofty aim it pursues.

It is necessary to recall these well-known facts and the tragic opposition between progress and crisis in order to underline the imperative duties of those responsible for the Olympic movement throughout the world. As the crisis grows (and this is its positive and beneficial element) the need for specific action on the part of those who wish to serve the pure idea of Olympic tradition is becoming more imperative.

But is it not too late or is this a Utopia of some theoreticians, longing for the past who do not want to understand the demands of modern reality?

It is not possible to give a direct answer to this question. It depends on how one sees the present crisis and how one wants to face it. It would really be Utopic to try, because of a romantic predisposition, to return back to the good old times, reject the so-called gigantism and try to impose by force a pretentious simplicity and purity of purpose.

Apart from the fact that this is no longer possible or attainable; it would become, if ever achieved, affected, superficial and hypocritical. For the Olympic Games and participation in them, the way of competing in them, the spirit of competition and their nature in general are directly influenced by the spirit of their time. This is unavoidable and to a certain degree understandable and must be accepted. It is true that there are many Olympic sports, it is true, that the organisation has become unwieldy, it is true that commercialisation exists, it is true that professionalism is lurking. All this corresponds to the demands of our times which the Olympic Games represent.

What we must consider now is how to control corrupt practices from an organisational and administrative aspect—something which is handled by the IOC and about which the NOCs should be extremely vigilant—and mainly how we can compensate these unavoidable trends.

II

Here we find the imperative need, now more than ever, for permanent Olympic education. As the crisis grows, the need to intensify educational action around the principles of Olympism becomes more apparent.

We must distinguish between two forms of education. The first I shall call corrective, competitive and apologetic. It will be aimed at controlling abuse, that is the effects of the spirit of our modern times, as they have been described in the preceding paragraph, within certain limits that may be considered as admissible. This form of education should underline the dangers that not only threaten the principles of the Olympic movement but also the staging of the Games every four years. Education at this point should be aimed at showing the contradiction existing between quantitative and material progress, competition for the acquisition of power and supremacy, prestige and ostentation on the one hand and spiritual principles on the other. The amounts here are inversely proportional: the more one progresses materially, spectacularly, outwardly, the less one is interested in spiritual values and higher goals. Everything disappears, as a result of wear, obsolescence, decline, but Olympism seems to be threatened by the vortex of records and its external splendour.

The second form of education I shall call constructive. It is that which tries to influence, by means of the Olympic principles and ideals, the large masses of young people from all professions and social classes independent of the dangers that threaten the Olympic movement as a result of the misuse in its application to the modern Olympic Games. This form of education creates the conditions under which the Olympic ideology can become a unique experience, that can offer on every occasion and to each man individually and as a member of a group, a community, a society, values of life and define ways of behaviour and action of these individuals in our contemporary society. This form of education, without conflicting with other ideologies, will try by means of the
Olympic principles to contribute to general, family, social, school and university education with a touch of spiritual life that springs from the realism of physical education and sport and from the universality of the human value of personality, that is from the psychosomatic entity of human substance. This form of education considers man as an integrated being, as a whole. The vision of life goes beyond the specialisation of profession and modern technological civilisation. It uses those principles of Olympism that refer to man as a whole, as an indivisible psychosomatic, material and spiritual, theoretical and practical entity, in his relation to the world as a whole, beyond any professional, technical, racial, national or religious discrimination.

This is the form of education which the overspecialised man of today requires. Assaulted by knowledge that differentiates, divides, specialises, individualises, he needs a global and universal outlook, associated with an inner vision. The integrity of human personality is threatened by the external world that surrounds it. A conflict arises between a bureaucratical-organisation scientism self-limited to a narrow circle of interests and the inborn need of man’s soul and mind to perceive and embrace the whole world as a pan-human, indivisible entity based on the universal principles of justice, cooperation and love. And again, as specialisation grows, the longing for this global vision of life grows with it.

The Olympic ideology can contribute to all types of professional or humanitarian activities by enhancing this vision and thus saving the torn personality of modern man, in cooperation with the other spiritual values that serve the same purpose.

Olympism should not fall into absolutism and complacency. It is not by itself the only or final solution. Its value lies in the fact that it is the derivative of all these higher spiritual values of life. This is why it is valuable only when it serves them and helps them in better performing their difficult task. Olympic education should always act with humility, without propagandist passion and zeal, which would create fanatic converts. It should aim at playing a complementary role in every situation, in every existing type of education, in every cultural environment, in any political regime, contributing the missing elements to an educational system that suffers from the need for specialisation and technical knowledge. It can also widen a narrow outlook on life through the limited political, social, economic and racial patterns each of us has easily

adopted as his and therefore true, superior and infallible for him.

Education as provided through the Olympic principles should therefore not be:

a) autonomous and self-made, since it is the distillate of wisdom, religious faith, humanitarian culture, the pre-existing rich spiritual tradition of mankind in its evolution toward the higher values of life: beauty, greatness, truth;

b) fanatical and partisan, since it refers to the most unifying principles of the transcendent that constitute the basis of human dignity and family, and whatever is transcendental and eternal can become pan-human;

c) self-sufficient, since it is only through cooperation with the other values from which it originates that it can fulfill its higher purpose.

This conception of the fundamental aspects of Olympic ideology can promote its contribution to education in a constructive way. In contrast to the superior, splendid and majestic spectacle of the Olympic Games, without this being considered as wrong, Olympic education should avoid egocentricity, ostentation, noise, absolutism and complacency, if it wants to play its part in the general education of modern man.

III

This understanding of Olympic ideology and its complementary role in the complex and difficult task of education today can explain how and why Olympic principles should be disseminated as an educational medium. In summary and conclusion we could say that Olympic ideology is not an individual discipline in the field of science or philosophy, but that it is related to man as whole, his attitude toward the universe and to all the aspects of cultural, philosophical and moral life. This is why Olympic ideology can become a tool for a wider, humanitarian education encompassing all fields of knowledge and all educators.

This means that the dissemination of Olympic principles is not only the task of the friends of the Olympic movement, the fanatic supporters of Olympism, on the model of the adepts of other ideologies and sport enthusiasts in general, but should become the common cause of educationists as well. The principles of Olympism coincide with the principles of humanism and for this reason they
are an important supporting element in the formation of strong character and distinguished personality as part of any educational system. By disseminating the principles of Olympism, those who serve the Olympic movement can therefore contribute to the overall education of the new generation.

This should be the common policy of all those who work in NOCs or Olympic associations, facilities, offices or who take part in various activities for the promotion of the Olympic spirit and ideal. All our efforts should be aimed at furthering the higher objective of general education which includes all individual training and knowledge. If the dissemination of Olympic principles is one of the major duties of NOCs, then this activity should become an integral part of any scholastic or academic training.

As a result of this NOCs should in particular:

a) maintain close contacts with education officials of their countries;

b) extend efforts to attract the interest of educationists in general about the Olympic movement and not only physical education teachers;

c) use every opportunity to promote the value of Olympic principles as an educational tool among school pupils and students;

d) organise seminars during the holiday period so as to introduce to these principles as many students as possible from universities and technical or professional schools, who will meet jointly, independent of their individual field of specialisation.

At the same time, efforts should be made to ensure that a few scientists mainly from theoretical sciences, participate in research on the university level, on the special subject of Olympism, for the purpose of obtaining a doctor’s degree in humanities and pedagogy. This research will progressively increase the interest in and better knowledge of the various facets of Olympism and develop new methods for the dissemination of Olympic principles as an educational medium.

At the same time too, the establishment of local national Olympic Academies should be promoted; they would work together with the IOA for the wider dissemination of the principles of Olympism in the various regions of the world, which would facilitate the larger participation of students and attendance of courses (unity of languages, customs and traditions, special educational problems).

Finally, together with courses for general introduction into the ideology of Olympism, scientific congresses should also be held on specialised subjects, such as “The principle of truce today” or ‘Sculpture, architecture and the Olympic Games”, or “The writing of the history of the Ancient Games”, etc. In this way a deeper study of Olympic principles will be achieved, parallel to their promotion as an educational tool. At the same time, special scientific research within the Olympic movement will give a new impetus to Olympism as a whole without, however, becoming the specialised science of an elite of theoreticians; for this would mean a denial of its principles, as has been already mentioned.

Special research on certain subjects does not mean scientific specialisation on scientific professionalism, but a deeper and more thorough consideration of certain aspects of Olympism for the promotion of its educational work, for the benefit of all the branches of specialised education.

So, if Olympism is going through a crisis as far as the Games are concerned and the alarming symptoms they present, on the other hand, the awareness of the need to strengthen the educational role of the Olympic movement is growing daily. This will be possible through the thorough study of Olympic principles with the firm belief that their dissemination among pupils, students and teachers can greatly contribute to the general education of the present generation.

In this way and in the face of the negative practices that have become associated with the Games every four years, the true ideology and philosophy of the Olympic movement will prevail as an inhibiting factor and a means of eliminating excesses that threaten every noble idea in the hands of those who are furthering personal interests, thirsty for power and supremacy.

The Olympic movement is not only reflected in the competitions of the Olympic Games but in the principles that govern them and which represent the best means for a true education based on humanism.

N. N.