

Humphreys College

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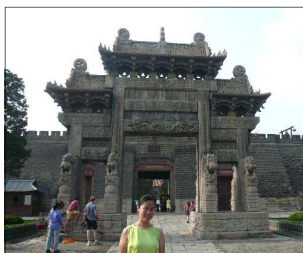
CHINA POST-OLYMPIAN DISCUSSION WITH DR. RICHARD CHABOT

Motto: "The Olympic victor, I said, is deemed happy in receiving a part only of the blessedness which is secured to our citizens, who have won a more glorious victory and have a more complete maintenance at a public cost. For the victory which they have won is the salvation of the whole State"

~Plato. *The Republic*, ca 360 B.C.E.

To millions of people worldwide, the Games of the XXIX Olympiad offered an opportunity not only to watch the amazing athletic competition but also to think anew about today's People's Republic of China. At Humphreys College, the Chinese history and its current developments are taught by **Dr. Richard Chabot** in his Modern Asian History courses. "Though I love to travel and always happiest when on the road, I've really only been to a few countries, though for long periods of time in each," opened our conversation Dr. Chabot, when asked to share his post-Olympian observations with the readers of *Humphreys College Newsletter*.

"I grew up planning on going to China (eventually) and got the chance in 1979 when I went to Taiwan through a California State University overseas student program. After studying Chinese language and history for a year in Taipei, I stayed on another year as an English teacher at Tunghai University in Taichung City. I only left Taiwan so that I could pursue a Master's in Asian Studies at the University of Hawaii. In Honolulu, I was given the chance to study in the People's Republic of China for a summer, and was then offered a job teaching English for a year in Tai'an, a tiny little town at the base of Mt. Tai in Shandong Province. Though I have spent a lot of time in the Philippines, I have not been back to China since 1984. I follow China's current events, economy, and politics very closely and I feel fortunate to be able to teach a course on Asian history. It gives me a chance to renew my contact with a land and people I feel very close to."



Memorial Archway—A main gate in
Tai'an City

For two weeks, the world enjoyed the Olympics along with several rare glimpses of the Chinese architecture, nature, cultural traditions, and everyday life on the busy Beijing streets. Even the Chinese president agreed to an interview with the Western media. The opening and closing ceremonies amazed everyone. As a long-term observer of the Asian past and present, do you think that the Olympics have become an invitation to see a New China?

"The Chinese government hopes that the world, Chinese and non-Chinese alike, will see the modern China in a new light. The government wants people to be impressed and quieted with thoughts of a China that has finally left behind a history of poverty, backwardness, and authoritarian rule. The Olympics show that mainland China can match and even surpass what Japan or Western nations can offer. Unfortunately, while Chinese around the world are quite proud of the economic and technological miracles the People's Republic of China is becoming known for, it remains an authoritarian regime. Demands for democracy may be overly optimistic about what the ballot box can provide, but it is obvious that the people do expect dialogue that is more open and less heavy-handed control from those in power. The Olympics showed the world what China is capable of, and all its people cheered. Unfortunately, it is unlikely that any but an authoritarian regime could have pulled it off. The Olympics spectacle announced to the

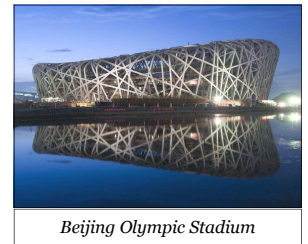
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world, and most especially to all Chinese wherever they may be living, that China had arrived, was capable of great things, and looked to the future with a determination that the West should take seriously, perhaps with even a little fear.”

When most people around the world hear of the People’s Republic of China, they think of a large land mass with lots of people and a huge export economy...

“This is true, but also superficial, and the Olympic Games symbolize the achievements the mainland China wants the world to make note of. While most in the West can applaud the quality and efficiency of the Olympics, few understand the gut level pride felt by Chinese nationals with such success. We have all heard of the length of Chinese history, of how the Chinese invented gunpowder, book printing, or paper. However, we also have vague memories of Chinese coolies, Chinese opium smokers, and all the poor in China. Though 600 years ago, China had a fleet of ships capable of traveling halfway around the world and bringing back live giraffes for the emperor’s private park, 150 years ago China was weak and powerless before European nations that fought for an ever larger piece of the Chinese pie. While Europeans were free to own and pillage China almost at will, backed by their economic prowess and powerful militaries, the Chinese were second-class citizens in their own country and unable to escape from what seemed an old and corrupt culture. Revolution was followed by war, and yet more revolution, and still China was not taken seriously by the West. With the American-allied Nationalists, led by Chiang Kai-shek, forced onto the island of Taiwan, the communists seemed determined to destroy themselves with an emphasis on political ideology over the immediate needs of the people. While the Chinese on Taiwan worked to make a place for themselves in a modern Asia, mainland China seemed doomed to self-destruction and poverty.”



Beijing Olympic Stadium

All of that started to change in the 1970s. Whatever one might say about the continued totalitarian policies of a one-party government, mainland China has become an economic powerhouse.



Past and Present

“Yes, about thirty years ago, Chinese around the world, even those on Taiwan, looked with some concern and little hope at the future of a giant communist state still reeling from the Cultural Revolution and weighed down by the world’s largest population, barely literate and living in the countryside. By the mid-1970s, most of the old leaders of China had died and its people were ready to enjoy life without the politics or empty slogans. Through the 1980s, many Chinese woke up in the morning with the phrase ‘To get rich is glorious’ on their tongues. It was finally OK for individual hard work and the

entrepreneurial spirit to co-exist with communist rule. With these last Olympic Games in Beijing, Chinese cheered. Even those Chinese in the United States and Taiwan, who oppose the communist regime, were proud to see how the games were presented. Gone was the sick man of Asia; gone was the impoverished countryside destroyed by natural and manmade disasters; gone was the feeling of superiority Westerners, and even the Japanese, could feel toward an old and crumbling culture. No longer are the accomplishments of China based on a long-ago past or the consumption needs of the West. China has stood up and is looking squarely into the eyes of the rest of the world with no intention of ever again being treated as a second-class player on the world stage.”

Should the rest of the world worry about the China’s future? A minute ago, you stated that the West should take new China seriously, “perhaps with even a little fear.” What might be the consequences of the communist government’s attitude, described by *The New Yorker’s* Anthony Lane, as an attempt “to make people rich before it has made them free”?

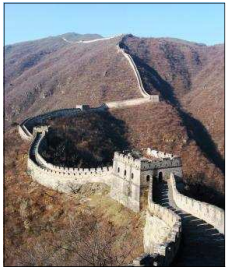
“To most Western observers, post-Olympic China is no big deal. To the Chinese nationals worldwide, this ‘great day’ has been a long time coming. Indeed, with this ‘arrival,’ we also wonder of the future. The demands of small farmers in mainland China and members of the United Nations cannot long be silenced by the accomplishments of a gleaming Shanghai or a world-class Olympics. Top-down decision making and the force of a strong totalitarian system has been shown to work for short-term capital development, but what of health care for a billion people who can barely make rent, education for a hundred million teenagers who can’t afford to enter high school, or an environment that has suffered as economic growth has taken



On the main “stairway to heaven” climbing Mt. Tai

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precedence over all else? The Chinese people have longed to see their nation flex its muscles and show what it is capable of. Its artists are brilliant, its scientists in demand around the world, its economy a miracle no other nation can match, and of course its athletes are among the finest. Still, China's future will have to provide more for its people than a hundred gold medals. The world may worry about China's people trying to consume and pollute on an American level, burying us all in trash, but more worrisome would be an attempt by the Chinese government to increase power outside its borders, to 'control the interior by focusing on the exterior.' We already see China using its economic and political leverage for its own selfish economic gain in Iran and Sudan. We are also aware of political demands placed on Taiwan's desire for independence. We will see China asserting its status and power in more global arenas over the next decade. Perhaps not militarily, it's far more subtle than Russia is, but with similar consequences for both citizens of the world and China's own populace."



The Great Wall of China

Here is an interesting quote from John L. Thornton's essay "Long Time Coming: The Prospects for Democracy in China" (*Foreign Affairs*, January/February 2008): Today, of course, China is not a democracy. The Chinese Communist Party... has a monopoly on political power, and the country lacks freedom of speech, an independent judiciary, and other fundamental attributes of a pluralistic liberal system. Many inside and outside China remain skeptical about the prospects for political reform. Yet much is happening—in the government, in the Party, in the economy, and in society at large—that could change how Chinese think about democracy and shape China's political future. Do you think that the games have contributed to a democratization process in China?

"I don't see the Olympic Games as having any influence on China's chances for democracy or political freedom. There are already more public protests and marches concerning corrupt bureaucrats or poor public services than in any other nation on earth. People already demand to be heard; sometimes they are arrested and sometimes their grievances are seen to by the powerful. Democracy has some followers in China but as a process, it is not the answer to everybody's petition. To most in China, a pluralistic liberal system is messy and full of more nooks and crannies for corruption to hide. At least with the present system the Chinese people know what to expect, however autocratic and unfair. Having said that, they are also becoming more educated, more world-wise, and learning that they can run things on their own, without some government bureaucrat telling them what to do. I don't think it will happen anytime soon, but I believe that people will eventually look around and begin to realize that a voice at the ballot box and the ability to protest without fear of arrest may be worth more than an efficiently run state machine. The Olympics have shown us what China is capable of; symbolically, that means a great deal, but it does not predict the needs or actions of the Chinese people themselves. As the glow wears off and the souvenirs gather dust, the people will look around and begin to ask, 'What about me?' - and this is something that a communist state and forced volunteerism is most afraid of. A Chinese democratic state will not look anything like what we have in the U.S. or France, but the people will want to have more of a voice in their government. We know this will happen, but I cannot predict the future. That is something the Chinese people will have to unfold for themselves."

Putting aside the generally humanistic appeal of the Olympics, presented by their motto *One World One Dream*, what do you think, as an engaged and well-informed viewer and reader, about the coverage of the games by American media? What do you think about the following observations voiced by correspondents Jeré Longman (*The New York Times*) and Tim Layden (*Sports Illustrated*)? *These Olympics will be remembered for the friendly embrace of the people and the stunning efficiency of the organizers, but also for strict control that left the Games feeling devoid of playfulness, passion and festive spirit... The luminous Bird's Nest track stadium and Water Cube pool lent an air of ethereal isolation. Even in summer, it felt as if the Games were held in an Olympic snow globe, as Tim Layden so aptly put it.*



"The coverage of the games by the American media was pure entertainment. We did not see the games, we saw American athletes compete in sports they are good at. We did not see China, we saw beautiful buildings and venues, and all choreographed according to what the Chinese and NBC wanted us to see. Cynical? It is what we have all come to expect from the television set. An Olympic snow globe? Definitely. There were occasional references to the outside world, like Russia and Georgia, the Sichuan earthquake or the arrest of protesters in Beijing, but they were static in the midst of a grand spectacle. But how is this any different from any other modern Olympics?"

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During your stays in mainland China, you had experienced the local culture and customs firsthand. While following the games, did you notice any manifestations of Chinese cultural specifics? I am talking about the reactions of the local audiences; the assistance of volunteers, many of whom learned English; mannerism of Chinese athletes; their coping with victory or defeat; the issue of gymnasts' age; a necessity to award 10,000 Olympians with their new names, making Michael Phelps "Maikere Feierpusi"...



Taishan—"A temple I used to frequent a lot. ...just hanging out and watching the tourists go by." R. Chabot

"While we in the West might participate in and support the Olympic Games out of personal interest or a desire for monetary gain, the Chinese had a far greater desire for the world to see China as having arrived, capable of anything the West could do, but better—and in a Chinese style. The 'volunteers' who were mentioned so often were at best paid a very minimal amount for all of their work, primarily because they considered themselves an important part of holding China up to the world. It was not a job, it was a duty, and even today these volunteers are probably being thanked by their neighbors and friends for doing such a good job at representing China and all Chinese. What we saw as an efficiently run production, almost machine like in its precision, does not indicate an unfeeling people or culture. All was done with the larger group in mind, for family or nation, their duty performed had a very Chinese heart in its center. I doubt we will experience anything like it for many years to come."

~Stanislav Perkner



CHANGE YOUR MIND—CHANGE YOUR GRADES— THE MAGIC OF BELIEF

By Jim DeCosta

Chris is my nephew. On occasion, we play a round of golf together. On one bright Saturday morning, I had made a tee time for a foursome. The group included a couple of friends and Chris. The tee time was for 8:45 a.m. and my two friends and I were at the course almost an hour early. We checked in and were called to the first tee at 8:30 where two groups were ahead of us. The lead group was teeing off and the second group was waiting patiently for their turn at humiliation. We nervously looked around for Chris wondering if he was going to be a no show when his car drove into the parking lot. I felt relieved because I had just paid for his green fees and I didn't want to throw away \$67. Chris had plenty of time to change into his golf shoes and walk over to the first tee where we all waited. A quick phone call to his cell and I made him aware of the situation, so he could join us on the tee. He ambled over to us and by that time, the group right in front of us was teeing off. He loaded his bag on the back of my golf cart and promptly notified us that he would need to make a trip to the restroom. I urged him to take the cart and hurry back because we would be teeing off in 5 minutes. I guess you know where this is going. Chris didn't make it back in five minutes or even ten. It appears that Chris decided he was hungry and needed to stop and order a bite to eat before he faced the grueling ordeal of 18 holes of golf. We let the group behind us go ahead and we eventually took the tee some 15 minutes late.

During the first five minutes of that 15-minute wait, I found myself slowly burning inside. Anger was building but I had not totally lost hope that he would return just in time for us to meet our obligatory tee time. When it became apparent

that he wasn't going to make it back to us in time, we let the group behind us go and my anger began to subside as I contemplated the most probable reason for his tardiness. I surmised that his restroom call was one that even he could not have expected to be so lengthy.

When Chris did show up, smiling and jovial as always, happy to be chomping on a humungous breakfast burrito, anger and disgust was my immediate visceral reaction. I assumed that Chris was not considering the remaining three of us when he ordered the morning meal. Of course, I was right. I know my nephew. Chris wasn't in the least concerned that he might be causing us some anxiety on a day that was supposed to be a fun day of sport and friendship. It was because of this lack of consideration of others that I let my emotions affect my performance.

It took me three holes before I came to my senses and realized who was really at fault here. Was it Chris? No, it wasn't Chris who caused me to react to the situation the way I did. I was at fault; I am responsible for my own feelings, and it is my beliefs (worldview) that caused me to react in such a manner that I nearly lost my chance at extending my joy to include this beautiful Saturday morning. The anger and frustration that filled me for approximately 30 minutes affected my performance. I topped tee shots, hit fat fairway irons, and pulled putts that I normally would have knocked in with one hand tied behind my back.

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As I thought about what was taking place, I realized the reality of the situation and that I could change what was occurring on the golf course by changing what was in my mind. I immediately changed my perspective and saw Chris for what he truly is—a great kid with a joyous attitude toward life, intelligent and hard working. He is a young man who loves his family and his friends and is eager to meet new people in the hopes of being able to enjoy their company, too. Chris would rank timeliness far down on his list of priorities and wouldn't even think he was late if it was just a matter of a few minutes. Chris would never think of not calling to cancel a date that he couldn't make but 15 or 20 minutes plus or minus would be considered in the neighborhood and good enough for life or a game of horseshoes. I know this about Chris, yet my worldview got in the way.

How does this all relate to grades and academic performance?

In the above story, my beliefs about punctuality allowed my perception of events to cause the described emotional reaction. The emotions of anger and frustration were directed toward Chris—someone outside of me as the person responsible for the bad things I was feeling. The feelings caused me to be tense physically and made it difficult to concentrate on the mostly mental task of playing a good, fun-filled round of golf with people I love and enjoy.

The same things can happen to students who hold beliefs (worldviews) that are at odds with reality—the reality that they are in control of most things in their lives, especially their learning. When students pre-judge their instructors,

subject matter, the course materials, the scheduled time or place in which the course is being offered, they are often setting the stage for pointing their finger away from self when something unexpected happens in the classroom.



The unexpected often happens in life, and the classroom is no exception. Perhaps an assignment is perceived to be too demanding or an important examination is bombed; the beliefs you hold just may be stopping you from being and becoming the best you. The stress of performing under your initial expectations may release emotions that cause you to fall back on some incorrect assumptions. The problem was the exam, or the teacher, the dry uninteresting subject matter, or even the textbook - all of these external sources will only keep you from seeing the truth...you are responsible.

Few of us examine our deepest-held beliefs; most of us get these beliefs about life, people, and events from secondary or even tertiary sources. Our culture, parents, friends, teachers, and the media are quick to provide answers that offer us an easy way out. Our nature as human beings is to categorize and judge; our lives are busy and complicated and having answers given to us is much more expedient than to do the work of uncovering our own individual beliefs about what is or what isn't a threat to our ultimate well-being.

The next time you feel anxious, frustrated, or angry, take some time out to examine why. Look at your priorities, look at your actions, your commitment, your persistence, determination, and, above all, look at the beliefs that allow you to view the situation and cast judgments. Many times a change of mind will erase those nasty feelings and allow you to proceed with an intelligent response to life and the situations that allow us to create the joy that is our right



Main Campus

6650 Ingleswood Avenue
Stockton, CA 95207
209.478.0800
Fax 209.478.8721

www.humphreys.edu

Branch Campus

3600 Sisk Road, Suite 3-A
Modesto, CA 95356
209.543.9411
Fax 209.543.9413

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Stanislav Perkner, Editor, sperkner@humphreys.edu

Cynthia Becerra, Co-Editor, cbecerra@humphreys.edu

Leslie Walton, Executive Editor, lwalton@humphreys.edu