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The possibilities of spiritual sports training

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Abstract:

Wojciech J. Cynarski, editor-in-chief of the magazine specializing in *bujutsu idō* (martial arts medicine), talks to an outstanding teacher and versatile humanist, *Prof. dr hab.* Pasterniak. The conversation concerns the use of spiritual training in sports and therapeutic methods used successfully by Prof. Pasterniak, an art and music therapist, who is also interested in sport and philosophy. The study material consists of long-term observations (carried out within Professor Pasterniak's research programme). The method of presentation of the results was a direct interview, or rather a kind of dialogue. The achievements of Professor Pasterniak make a very interesting contribution to the theory of sport, sport psychology and alternative medicine (unconventional therapies).

Wojciech J. Cynarski: Modern sports training is increasingly integrated and comprehensive. Not only are the physical capabilities of the competitor enhanced, but his mental and spiritual condition are also improved.

Physical and mental training is the most widespread and well-known to coaches and players, whereas spiritual practice is very rare and its course and subject are often a mystery. In this situation, I turned to *Professor dr hab.* Wojciech Pasterniak, who has been dealing with the spiritual aspects of education, including the spiritual training of athletes. His greatest achievements, as we have reported, are the training and successes of a triple world champion in shooting at a moving target: Luke Heron [Pasterniak 2007; Pasterniak, Cynarski 2012] as well as similar results in the training of various table tennis players, tennis players, speedway racers etc.

We shall begin our conversation by asking about the nature of spiritual training. Therefore please describe your understanding of this issue Professor.

Wojciech Pasterniak: Before answering this very interesting question, I would like to remind you that we can distinguish between two types of human spirituality, namely atheistic spirituality and theistic spirituality. I wrote about this in the annual “Dydaktyka Literatury i Konteksty” (*Didactics of Literature and Contexts*), in Volume 32 [Pasterniak 2013]. The first-mentioned spirituality

is not related to a specific religion, in the other, this relationship exists, and is very important. Atheist spirituality has been recently described in a wise and beautiful book by an outstanding French philosopher André Comte-Sponville [2011]. Theistic spirituality associated with many religions, has been present since the dawn of human history, from the moment when the first religions appeared. In both cases, spirituality is expressed by certain values, especially by the so-called timeless values, also called spontaneous, and the various values related to them. In atheist spirituality the author of these values and spirituality is man, and the engine is man's striving for perfection. However, theistic spirituality implies the existence of the Creator, God, the Absolute, and expresses itself in the quest for union with the Supreme Source of All, the Highest Good, Wisdom and Power.

The essence of spiritual practice is very difficult and probably impossible to define for a number of reasons. The first reason is related to the rationality or irrationality of meditation. It is accepted, I think in most cases, that meditation goes beyond rational and verbal content, and is trying to reach spiritual phenomena untranslatable into discursive language, the language of words or even colours.

Professor, you have just listened to my song *To był ten znak* (*That was the sign*) with my lyrics and melody, where there is polyphonic ultrapsychical, spiritual content present. It seems that art, especially poetry and music, but also many paintings communicate spiritual content, the strength and

importance of which cannot be overestimated. As I said, the content is difficult to define, but it enriches physical training with an incredibly powerful energy.

A contemporary researcher of meditation says, not without reason, that the aforementioned activity cleanses the body and mind of stress [Filaber 2013: 120], which in sports training is not without significance. It also facilitates self-discovery and personal training, which is not always appreciated and implemented into sports preparation.

W.J.C.: Historically speaking, preparation for the fight basically required spiritual preparation [Cynarski, Litwiniuk 2000; Tiwald 2013]. And what does it look like in today's sport? In relation to the Professor's previous reflections, I would like to ask if anyone in the world uses spiritual training in their practice?

W.P.: Probably so, though I have no direct information on this topic¹. However, some actions of coaches and players allows us to surmise that such training is taking place. Certainly, there is a need for it. This is for example visible in the religious gestures made by some athletes and coaches before the start, as well as after sporting successes. Those people include Bogdan Wenta, the former coach of the national handball team and now the coach of the handball club "Vive Targi" Kielce; some boxers, such as T. Adamek and M. Masternak; athletes and footballers. This occurs among a number of representatives of other countries. Some athletes' statements also suggest the need for such training. But there is also the other side of the coin. For example, a "prominent" coach, when asked about the spiritual training of his players ignored the question in silence.

My limited experience, I have already mentioned, indicates the fundamental importance of spiritual training, which was confirmed in "Gazeta Lubuska" by Łukasz Czapla (already mentioned here).

W.J.C.: Professor, do you know any empirical studies confirming the validity of spiritual training in sport?

W.P.: To answer this relevant question I would like to rely on Ken Wilber's research, in which three types of empiricism are distinguished: 1) the sensual, that prevailed during the period of the Enlightenment and still dominates among science-oriented researchers, but which is increasingly being called into question, as in an excellent monograph

¹ Similar experiments were successfully carried out by A. Weil [1988] and M. Ogorevc [2011].

by Adolf Szołtysek *Philosophy of education* [2013]. However, empiricism, as an intellectual experience (2) was and will continue to be a valuable methodological "approach". Nothing stands in the way, so as not to appreciate the spirit of empiricism research (3) having a very old tradition in both strands of the representatives of theistic and atheistic spirituality. Spiritual empiricism is extremely rare in educational and sports research and in Poland.

Typically, these three types of empiricism are unified, as was shown by Lloyd and Johnson [2012], whose ideas can be successfully used in sports training, as they serve to eliminate stress which is a source of disease and many physical, mental and spiritual indispositions, so frequently found in Poland in contemporary sports life.

W.J.C. : Are you currently working on creating new original spiritual training concepts?

W.P.: With great interest I am attempting at such efforts by including them in research at the universities that employ me (eg. *Łużycka Wyższa Szkoła Humanistyczna* in Żary and *Gnieźnieńska Szkoła Wyższa „Milenium”* in Gniezno). Among other things, I have created the Health Laboratory of Prevention and Unconventional Therapy. Psychological and spiritual training is the main objective of my research. However, I do not separate sports training from mental health and spiritual issues in general; or sports training from private life and activities in the workplace. This holistic approach seems to me to be correct, and is often overlooked because of the unity of our physical and inner life in various areas of our activity. It is obvious that positive activity of private and professional lives supports sports training. But it can also, as evidenced by numerous examples of failures of prominent athletes, reduce the effects of that training or completely destroy them.

In my modest and hypothetical studies I take into account several methods of psychical and spiritual training. They are based on the dominance of one of the ways of prevention and treatment, while maintaining the active concurrence of other ways and methods of theoretical and practical procedures. For example, for some people, sensitive to music, music therapy can be the leading therapy, for others, sensitive to colour it can be colour therapy (which has a very long tradition), yet for others concepts of the healing code according to Lloyd and Johnson [2012], or the famous American healer Dr Loe [1999]. Therefore I do not give up any of the methods. I choose them because of their suitability for a particular person or an athlete. I

therefore use a fully individual project of psychical and spiritual training²², harmonized with physical training.

W.J.C.: In conclusion, tell me how your concepts and experiences are available?

W.P.: Because I have achieved considerable success in the treatment of many people, even with the most severe disease, whose statements I gather, access to me and my concepts due to time and health is limited (some diseases may be unknowingly passed on by a patient), but I am open to: 1) scientific collaboration with other scientists; 2) individual spiritual and psychological training for both outstanding and mid-ranking athletes; 3) consultations regarding the training of coaches interested in this issue. I would also add that in my concepts a significant role is played by various diagnoses: medical, psychological, coaching, competition-related, of sports observers, journalists, psychologists and with some restrictions of radiesthetics. So I am open to any cooperation and assistance which may be expressed in other forms not listed here.

I would like to thank Professor Wojciech J. Cynarski for conducting this interview and for the existing, substantive and methodological cooperation.

W.J.C.: Thank you, Professor, for sharing with the readers of "Ido Movement for Culture. Journal of Martial Arts Anthropology" the secrets of your success and creative ideas that enrich the science of sport with a new, holistic approach and its important application value.

Health Laboratory for Prevention and Unconventional Therapy (Zdrowotne Laboratorium Profilaktyki i Terapii Niekonwencjonalnej), Świnoujście, August 5-6, 2013.

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²² Prof. Wojciech Pasterniak uses in relaxation processes and psychical and spiritual therapy many different energies, including energies of sound, colour, but also the energy of the Absolute, fire, water, air, earth, forest, rivers, lakes, etc. He has composed the music and wrote the lyrics to 28 songs recorded on cds with a solist, a "rising star" of Polish music business Igor Herbut [W.J.C.].

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O możliwościach duchowego treningu sportowego

Słowa kluczowe: uzdrawianie, arteterapia, psychoterapia, duchowość, sport

Streszczenie

Z wybitnym pedagogiem i wszechstronnym humanistą, prof. dr. hab. Wojciechem Pasternakiem rozmawia Wojciech J. Cynarski, redaktor naczelny naszego pisma specjalizujący się m.in. w *bujutsu idō* – medycynie sztuk walki. Rzecz dotyczy zastosowania treningu duchowego w sporcie i metod terapeutycznych stosowanych z powodzeniem przez prof. Pasterniaka. Jest on arte-, a zwłaszcza muzykoterapeutą, ponadto interesuje się sportem i filozofią. Materiał badań stanowią jego długoletnie obserwacje (realizowane w ramach programu badań naukowych prof. Pasterniaka). Metodą przedstawienia wyników był tu wywiad bezpośredni, czy raczej swego rodzaju dialog. Dorobek prof. Pasterniaka stanowi bardzo interesujący przyczynek do teorii sportu, psychologii sportu i medycyny alternatywnej (terapię niekonwencjonalne).