

## THE DILEMMA OF SPIRITUAL AND MORAL PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT OF MODERN STUDENT-ATHLETES

### DYLEMAT DUCHOWEGO I MORALNEGO ROZWOJU OSOBISTEGO WSPÓŁCZESNEGO STUDENTA-SPORTOWCA

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**Summary:** The practice of doing sports during adolescent years abounds in situations which may cause unacceptable behavior, such as rudeness, selfishness, vanity, etc. Observations of coaches' work reveal that athletes' planned and systematic spiritual and moral education is often neglected in the training process. However, preventing and combating negative manifestations in sport is possible primarily with the help of spiritual and moral education and one of its most important missions, i.e. building beautiful human relationships. The most helpful tool in education seems to be a proper analysis of parenting situations that form the basis for metaphorical work.

**Keywords:** spirituality, morality, personal development, athlete, student, religion, culture

**Streszczenie:** W praktyce uprawiania sportu zdarzają się sytuacje, które mogą wywołać nieakceptowane zachowania (grubiaństwo, egoizm, próżność i inne). Obserwacje badawcze pracy trenerów wskazują, iż w procesie treningowym nie poświęca się należytej uwagi planowemu i systematycznemu wychowaniu sportowców. W działaniach profilaktycznych w zwalczaniu negatywnych zachowań w sporcie powinno się stosować przede wszystkim duchowo-moralne wychowanie, którego jednym z ważniejszych celów jest pielęgnowanie pozytywnych relacji interpersonalnych. Ponadto, ważnym środkiem wychowawczym jest dokonanie analizy sytuacji pedagogicznych, które mogą być oparte na uniwersalnym przesłaniu wielu utworów literackich. Umiejętność zastosowania w wychowaniu sportowym dydaktycznych funkcji przypowieści może wpłynąć na osiągnięcie większej efektywności w procesach edukacyjno-wychowawczych i treningowych, wypracowanie odporności na niestandardowe sytuacje wychowawcze (często konfliktowe), które są tak charakterystyczne dla aktywności sportowej i związanych z nią ciągłych przeciążeń i stresów.

**Słowa kluczowe:** duchowość, moralność, kształtowanie osobowości, sportowiec, student, religia, kultura

#### Relevance of athletes' spiritual development

The dilemma to be solved by both humans and each individual start at birth. Being born in the conventional sense of the word is just the beginning of 'birth' in its broader one. The whole life of an individual is a process of transforming one's nature and awaking human potential. Sports activities can either help or hinder a human's spiritual development. The choice between fame, material wealth, which is not always achieved in an honest way, and the desire to remain honest and faithful to oneself in any situation (but with a risk of losing titles and material benefits) is unacceptable for many athletes. Thus, it is worth noting that one's personal development does take place in the process of education and training.

The analysis of recent research on the above described issue has been reported by R. Bikmuhametov (2004), L. Borytko (2004), N. Vizitey (1989), V. Vinnick (2005, 2009), A. Krasnikov (2009), E. Zakolodnaya (2012) etc.

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Right from the beginning, humans started to create a certain set of rules and norms which governed and regulated behavior guided by the desire to make life more comfortable and safe. These were then passed from generation to generation in the process of upbringing and education. On the other hand, there also appeared a need to create certain humanistic values and values of mutual coexistence, whose main task was to ensure a relative stability of human wellbeing. Introducing humanistic values became necessary in order to avoid chaos that could lead to the destruction of human community. In the world without rules, absolutely everyone would feel free to solve his/her vital tasks at the expense of others, including their physical existence (Vizitei 1989; Vinnick 2005; Kobrinsky 2010; Zakolodnaya 2012).

Having the above in mind, it becomes necessary to touch upon religious consciousness. Having much life experience, people are able to foresee the main direction of their own lives, to some extent being certain how they will react in certain life situations. However, a sufficient number of people come to realize that not everything in their lives depends

on them. Moreover, they are not always capable of talking positively about prospects and directions of their work until they find themselves some unexpected conditions. In such circumstances, people refer to faith as a source of protection. They hope that in some difficult situations some higher force will give them an ability or power that might allow them to preserve their dignity, and not to succumb to their biological instincts, such as the instinct of self-protection (Stolyarov, Egorov 1997).

Typically, one's individual values manifest themselves in exceptional circumstances. Only then, can one's value system be determined to be worthy of praise. Otherwise, it is like dust – worth nothing relying on biological existence. What may thus happen when such extreme situations become the norm, as it is often the case in sports activities?

### **The study conducted in BSUPC**

#### **The study's objective**

The objective of the following study is to identify the most effective means of facilitating people's right choices in cases of arising needs that require solving spiritual and moral problems.

#### **Methods and organization**

The identification of the effective means of facilitating proper life choices demands an analysis and synthesis of scientific and methodological literature that deal with similar case experiences and their solutions to the above mentioned problems. Thus, a helpful methodology in this situation seem to be a questionnaire as well as an analysis of parenting situations where parables are employed

The study of the discussed matter was conducted within the period from 2012 to 2014 during the Pedagogy course classes and involved 640 students of the Belarusian State University of Physical Culture (BSUPC).

#### **Developing harmonious personality**

Sports select their faithful supporters among whom there are also those who are eager to desire self-affirmation, acquire fame and prove excellence. On the other extreme of personal development in sports, there are: arrogance, permissiveness or conceit – the negative aspects which can potentially be manifested. Those remain undesirable in the modern sport practice and are regarded as conflicting behaviors.

It turns out that it is worth studying the Chinese philosophy to understand that masters of words or painting (as a rule – the great sages), who were also outstanding masters of martial arts. They argued that spiritual development should go hand in hand with physical development. Body needs to exercise because it is a tool for understanding the world. In Japan, for example, they still cultivate soldiers'

sensibleness and vigilance by making them learn sport-specific skills in fencing and archery. Those who educate the youth at home also believe that one of the effective ways to solve problems of spiritual and moral education of the younger generation is physical culture and sports. The formation of physical qualities and motor skills is closely linked with parenting moral and volitional qualities of an individual. A person who is physically developed, sturdy, strong and healthy is more likely to be tolerant, able to help those who need help and put their personal skills to good use only.

One of the most important areas of spiritual education is parenting the beauty of human relationships, actions and behavior. The same person can be blamed for lack of principles, rewarded for kindness or cause indignation due to his/her insensitivity towards the nearest and dearest. It happens because being good as well as brave and generous, is *NOT* possible in general, but it *IS* possible only in certain situations and in relation to certain individuals (Stolyarov 1997; Zakolodnaya 2012).

Currently, the appeal of religious values in the educational system becomes urgent. Confessional education can be successful if a proper analysis of the confessional world-outlook issues is undertaken. It involves considering a number of matters of philosophical anthropology as well as considering religion in the context of spiritual and cultural development. Parenting confessional culture should be consistent with the requirements of international and national legal instruments which provide freedom of conscience, belief and religious beliefs (Artamonova 2005, p. 32). While analyzing dialogues between religious and non-religious views on the person, society and world, one may realize that the baselines of these world outlooks are not the same – they differently explain events, general or particular phenomena. However, they may base on similar economic, social, political, moral, aesthetic ideas and human values (Haragga 2007, pp. 225-272).

Athletes fight primarily with themselves through grueling workouts and self-restraint. In this sense, it may be said that there is an element of asceticism, which unites sports and religion. Sport brings people together regardless of religion, as it provides an opportunity for harmonious development of a person, promotes patriotism, responsibility and commitment (Zakolodnaya 2012).

Research on coaches' work reveals that a planned and systematic spiritual and moral upbringing of athletes is not paid due attention to in the training process (Vizitei 1989; Vinnik 2009; Krasnikov 2009).

Parenting practices, such as persuasion, encouragement or didactic situations are naturally associated with physical culture. Thus, sport can be effective in restoring traditions of spirituality, morality as well as healthy lifestyle (Vizitei 1989; Vinnik 2009; Stolyarov 1997; Zakolodnaya 2012).

### Introducing parables in sports

There are various means and methods that contribute to moral upbringing, for example, parables, fairy tales and fables. Parable may serve as a creative tool for describing a situation as it offers an alternative and help to see the situation in a different light. It may also indicate new ways of solving problems. Parables always penetrate unconscious human potential although they are not rigid guidelines or directives – they are just soft hints or guideline how to teach. A symbol, metaphor or allegory always correspond to the former cultural and historical space and time. Therefore, unlike the strict language of terms, they aim at understanding other cultures, which helps to avoid all sorts of conflicts. (Zakolodnaya 2012)

The author's method of moral education in the field of sports activities described in the article has been tested and implemented in the educational process at the Belarusian State University of Physical Culture (BSUPC). The technique of moral education of students involves using parenting situations based on fairy tales, parables, fables and proverbs introduced during lectures and workshops on pedagogy.

And so, having heard a parable or fairy tale in the classroom, which apparently concerns the subject of the lesson implicitly, students are to formulate their own non-standard conclusions on the discussed subject. They are expected to find a number of meanings by interpreting a parable, proverb, fairy tale or saying, which are often unexpected even for the teacher. For example, when studying the topic "Basic personality culture – its nature and the way of formation", at the end of the lesson students were offered a parable entitled "The Seeds", which reads:

A woman had a dream in which she saw the God standing behind the counter of the store.

"What it is possible to buy from Thee?" the woman asked.

"You can buy anything," was the answer.

"In that case, give me health, happiness, love, success and a lot of money."

The God went away and after a while returned with a small box of paper.

"And that's it?!" the surprised and disappointed woman exclaimed.

"Yes, that's it," the God said and added: "Didn't you know that in my store seeds are on sale only?" (Kobrinsky 2010, p. 174)

Searching for the link between the meaning of the parable and the topic of the lesson, many students remarked on its essence with the diverse proverbs and sayings. Their responses included: "One will reap what he'll sow"; "If you like to sled – you have to like to drive the sledge"; "He who likes skiing downhill must enjoy climbing uphill"; "No pain, no gain"; "He that would eat the fruit must climb the tree"; "Life is what you make it", etc. Those students, who were unable to write a proverb, convincingly

explained that one of the major obstacles to happiness and productive life is laziness, which does not allow a person to reveal his/her potential.

One of the questions from the anonymous questionnaire was: "What was most memorable at the lectures on pedagogy?" which is annually answered by 95-98 percent of the students. The answer was: "Working with parables at the end of classes." Many believe that owing to this work they learned to think more quickly and draw correct conclusions in shorter time, which is very important in sports (especially in games).

### Contemporary sports reality

In works by numerous researchers (Vinnik 2009; Ponomarchuk 1991, 2002; or others), it has been shown that athletes are involved in really laborious activities at the age of 10-14. Herewith such early professional orientation and specialization causes that teenagers assume a definite social role without acquiring principles of general culture. This in turn leads to narrowing of their focus on interests and social contacts. The studies by V. Vinnik have revealed that athletes' true-life guidelines are often dominated by status attributes, with human qualities and creativity being overshadowed (Vinnik 2009).

Modern sport is one of the most important social institutions, which gives a person an opportunity to assess his/her attitude to the society and through these relationships to evaluate one's position in society. Commercialization and professionalization in sports have caused that such problems as the influence of sporting activities on the formation of the younger generation's values has been put to the forefront (Vizitei 1989; Vinnik 2005, 2009; Krasnikov 2009).

All athletes who defend their countries' honour at the Olympic Games train for 8-10 hours a day. They simply do not have time for other work, and in the case of students for studying. Because of the impossibility of obtaining full-scale education during the preparation period prior to major competitions, athletes may not always be role models. Besides, due to the NOCs' (network operation centre) management, who take certain decisions, some misconceptions about morality arise.

For example, at the London Olympics, Lebanese fighters refused to train in the same room with the Israelis. In theory, the Olympic Committee had to say: "Your requirement is contrary to the spirit of the Olympism. We shall exempt you from the competition." Instead the Committee divided the room for workouts separating the teams with a wall to avoid offending Lebanese orthodox persons (Latynina 2012). Here is another example. At the London Olympics there were two athletes from Saudi Arabia – Vodzhan Ali and Sarah Attar. The ladies refused to perform without hijabs. The logic of the Olympic Movement seems to be very simple:

if you do not accept the standards of participation at the Olympics, the participation is not possible. Instead, the Olympic Committee allowed athletes to perform in hijabs (Latynina 2012).

One may also recall the 2010 Olympics in Vancouver. In the final match of the Olympic ladies' hockey tournament, Team Canada beat their perennial rivals from the United States 2-0. Half an hour after the awards presentation, Team Canada hockey players returned back on the ice in the game uniforms, where they began to smoke cigars and drink champagne straight from the bottles. According to Gilbert Felli – the IOC Executive Director, public drinking of alcoholic drinks in one of the Olympic venues is unacceptable and negatively affects the image of sport. However no punishment followed (<http://sport.utro.ru/articles/2010/02/26/876357.shtml>). The Canadian sportsmen were raised in such conditions, which means that sports culture with its characteristics and prospects is usually determined by a combination of positive and negative factors.

### The study's implications

The proper socialization of athletes is undermined by limited influence of other social institutions – the institute of education and the institute of family. As athletes in their adolescence frequently have to live in training camps and they do it for a long time, they are more prone to greater influence of media, which does not deny them access to the norms of public morality and law but reduce their significance. This in turn is a main cause for moral core loss and asocial (and even antisocial) behavior in everyday contexts (Stolyarov 1997; Krasnikov 2009).

A way out of a sporting negative influence on the youth could be introducing positive factors attempting to initiate laborious activities. Training inherently represents a career because it exercises will and brings the ability to focus on efforts. Besides competitive activity provides people with an opportunity for self-confirmation.

The concept of “spiritual and moral education,” which is frequently popularized today, was repeatedly mentioned in the Programme of Cooperation between the Ministry of Education and the Belarusian Orthodox Church in 2011-2014 (from 08.04.2011). Such a pairing of concepts of the “spiritual” and the “moral” can rarely be found in psychological and theological literature, as they are often juxtaposed to each other. Naturally, there is a deep connection which exists between spirituality and morality that often prevents their clear differentiating in scientific and educational literature. Spirituality sets sense, while morality establishes rules and modes of action (Kobrinisky 2010). Morality can only be measured with a person's actions. Morality is a person's ability to act, think and feel in accordance with spiritual principles, methods and techniques, which bring out his/her inner spiritual world outside (Kobrinisky

2010). Finally, spirituality is a practical activity aimed primarily at remaking oneself – a process that continues throughout life (Zakolodnaya 2012; Ryazanov 2013; Chernov 2013).

Spiritual and moral education is a multifaceted, systematic, deliberate and coordinated activity of the state bodies, public associations and institutions. They are responsible for the formation of a physically and spiritually developed person, who would be mentally stable and able to realize his/her creative potential, and who would have a high level of citizenship and patriotism.

Joint research on spiritual and moral, religious and philosophical, psychological and pedagogical, historical and cultural issues has united efforts of many educational authorities, institutions and community organizations to expand the potential of human values and traditions in the formation of a human person. All this may contribute to the revival of spiritual values of motherland culture.

The connection of spirituality and the relationships between people has been known since the birth of the world's religions. The major commandment of all religions says:

“In everything, do to others what you would want them to do to you.” (Jesus Christ);

“Do not do to others what you yourself do not want.” (Confucius);

“None of you aren't faithful until you desire for the neighbor of that you wish for yourself.” (Muhammad);

“No other bites that piercings thyself.” (Buddha);

“Do not do to others what you hate yourself.” (Rabbi Hillel, the Jewish teacher of faith) (Huseinov 1988).

To solve the problems of spiritual and moral education it is vital that family, church, state, school and community combine their efforts. Otherwise, if people do not cooperate nothing will change, as they act like a circular firing squad.

In the context of the spiritual education of a teacher-to-be as part of personal and professional development, it is reasonable to establish close interdisciplinary communication in the learning process. This might contribute to forming a holistic view on the part of both students and teachers on understanding of the relationship and interdependence of universe and human life.

### Conclusions

Solving the problems of spiritual and moral education requires the combined efforts of family, church, state, school and community. Parenting examples of introducing parables and fairy tales, which in a gentle criticize human weaknesses are especially relevant in the case of training athletes. It is especially vital in the case of those who are often characterized by aggravated vanity or a feeling of exclusivity and uniqueness. Practical work with parables promotes better adoption of social norms.



The ability to work with parables allows future specialists in the field of sports to increase the effectiveness of the educational and training processes, develop immune response to non-standard (often conflicting) pedagogical situations characteristic of sports-related activities, often carried out under constant stress and physical overloads.

The final conclusion might be that there are still prospects for further research. More study is expected to take place in the direction of analyzing the results of applying parables in athlete students' moral education at training sessions in various sports activities.

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