

## EXPERTS OPINIONS, DISCUSSION, POLEMICS

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### **Selected reasons for failure at the Olympic Games. An interview with prof. zw. dr. hab. Wojciech Pasterniak, Head of the Department of Philosophy of Lusatian Education at the Higher School of Humanities in Żary**

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#### **Abstract**

According to Prof Pasterniak an important reason for the failure of Polish representatives at the Olympic Games in London was the omission both in the organisation and during training of the spiritual dimension which is important for life and activity. By placing the main emphasis on the physical and mental sphere to the total exclusion of the subconscious and superconsciousness of the athletes resulted in their lack of confidence, their necessary concentration, and their resistance to stress, which weakened the energy of their performance, and their will to fight and led to anxiety etc. In Prof. Pasternak's view the training of coaches in respect of spiritual preparation is highly inadequate. The interview contains a diagnosis of the failure of Polish athletes at the Olympic Games in London and suggests possible preventive measures.

#### **Introduction**

Prof. Pasterniak has given lectures on: philosophy, cultural anthropology, psychology, pedagogy, ethics, literature studies, didactics of literature and religious studies. His main area of scientific interest concerns relations between theoretical and practical knowledge, between interdisciplinary knowledge supporting sport performance and concrete sports results. For thirty years he has been interested in both the theory and the practical application of alternative medicine. He has been using methods of treatment and training including music therapy (he has written 48 texts and melodies used in relaxation techniques, therapy as well as the physical, psychical and spiritual activation of many people including many athletes), as well as painting and other areas of art. There are many people who have trained under Prof. Pasterniak's supervision, including Łukasz Czaplak – a three-time world champion in running target shooting; table tennis players from ZKZ Drzonków and "Bogoria" Grodzisk Wielkopolski; speedway

riders and others. He has also had consultations with Wang Zi – the only Polish table tennis player who took part in the London Olympic Games.

In his scientific research, treatment and sports training the professor prefers a holistic approach supported by achievements in various fields of science which also include philosophy and knowledge of the Far East. He has published 12 monographs and over 300 scientific papers and articles. His achievements are considered to be brave, unconventional and creative.

For 33 years Prof. Pasterniak has been the editor-in-chief of the annual "Didactics of Literature", which changed its name in 2010 to "Didactics of Literature and Contexts". For many years he has also been a member of the Scientific Board the "Ido Movement for Culture" and is the author of several original works published there [Pasterniak 2004, 2005, 2007]. Recently he has been awarded a medal celebrating 20 years of the Idokan Poland Association.



Photo Prof. Wojciech Pasterniak – next to him, on the right – W.J. Cynarski (Swinoujście, August 2012)

### The interview

**W.J. Cynarski** – How do you evaluate the preparation and achievements of Polish Olympic athletes at the London Olympic Games?

**W. Pasterniak** – I will not be original if I give you an ambivalent answer. In some respects positively or very positively, in many respects – negatively.

**W.J.C.** – In our conversation, if I may, I would like to concentrate on some shortcomings, errors and the possibility of eliminating them. So what are the most important shortcomings in training and organization that you observe, Professor?

**W.P.** – In my opinion the preparation of the Olympic athletes and the direct control of their participation was one-dimensional. It mainly concentrated on their physical and mental training, omitting the dimension which is important in both life and activity, the spiritual. In other words, only the conscience and physicality of the athletes were activated and there was very little done as far as their subconscious and superconscience were concerned.

**W.J.C.** – So how do you use and imagine the methods of sub- and superconscience training of an athlete, Professor?

**W.P.** – Mr. Editor and Professor, almost all researchers in these areas of human beings point to powerful, almost limitless energetic potential hiding in man. Some psychologist claim that our life

is directed to a greater degree by the subconscious than conscience. Releasing the energy of the subconscious at a given moment can lead to a positive sporting success. There are no commonly accepted rules though, or universal methods, It is an individual task based on a very thorough diagnosis of an athlete's weaknesses and strong point, their inner and outer space – their material, social and spiritual spheres. Two kinds of diagnosis are needed: an indirect diagnosis, which is mainly a long-term sum of observation and study of an athlete at the beginning of his/her career and direct diagnosis – just before the competition and during it. The direct diagnosis may lead to the almost immediate elimination of many physical, psychological, spiritual shortcomings and behaviour, appearing e.g. in the results of damaging pressure, excessive expectations and many other internal and external factors.

Referring to the match between Poland and Russia<sup>11</sup> some competitors experienced anxiety, impatience, a lack of self-confidence, will power and strength of spirit, mutual interference of communication and collaboration, no certainty of winning etc. All these negative phenomena can be eliminated with both well-known and unknown

<sup>11</sup> It is worth looking at the book by Gerrig and Zimbardo *Psychology and Life*, where the authors show that prayers and religious practice sometimes lead to a state of ecstasy, when participants drink poison, are bitten by poisonous snakes and do not experience any side effects [Gerrig, Zimbardo 2011].

methods. These methods include: observation, conversation, intuitive cognition, and the less known – radiesthesia, which is considered to be the best scientifically efficient way of diagnosis.

Among many authors I would like to refer to the introduction written by G. A. Nepokojczycki – Director General of the Scientific and Research Institute of Human Problems, and a member of the Russian Engineering Academy, to the monograph by Ludmila Grigiriewna Puczko entitled *Multidimensional medicine/Medycyna wielowymiarowa* [Nepokojczycki 2009; Puczko 2009]. He has written: "Undoubtedly, *Multidimensional medicine* by L. Puczko is a serious scientific book written in an extremely clear and understandable way" [Nepokojczycki 2009: 15].

Contrary to conventional medicine, it is presumed that the deepest causes of different diseases and indispositions, including those in sports, "are not in the physical body but in the in the energy frames and spiritual bodies, which contemporary medicine is not able to examine yet" [Nepokojczycki 2009: 15]. In simple words it refers to the aura surrounding the human body. The same author also writes: "It can be certainly said that the main rules of multidimensional medicine constitute one of the greatest discoveries of recent times" [Nepokojczycki 2009: 16].

In my opinion direct preparation for participation in competitions is very rarely used and is sometimes definitely inappropriate. The same can be said about indirect preparation as a result of which the athlete and his/her behaviour are unknown to the coach. The coach covers his/her incompetence and ignorance in this respect as to the need of preparation with anger, verbal abuse, screams and gestures etc. A certain well-known coach organized, erotic sessions, supposedly for relaxation of his team which can be considered somewhat funny, when the level of spiritual and psychical readiness is deciding about winning – and in the case of success in sport – is absolutely necessary.

**W.J.C.** – Could you say something more about spiritual preparation for participating in competitions?

**W.P.** – Certainly. We have to bear in mind that this kind of preparation has an indirect character and takes place first in the family, later at school, society, culture and finally in a sports club. It can have a double character: religious and secular. In an excellent book edited both by Prof. Kazimierz Obuchowski and Prof. Makary Stasiak [Obuchowski, Stasiak 2010] those two dimensions of spirituality are shown.

Spirituality cannot be defined, just like one cannot define God. However, we can get to know its numerous manifestation such as creativity, joy of life and good deeds, altruism, love of work and art. On the other hand, multiplying the potential of human spirituality is still, and probably will be, a great mystery. My long experience shows the huge power of a properly-chosen route for an individual, including music, paintings, books, as well as meditation, prayer, a state of existential joy, even at a sports practice and during a match. It may be reflected in a state of admiration for the beauty of life, art and one's own achievements. There is also a need for faith in and not just the possibility of achieving success. Let us remind ourselves of the words of the famous swimmer M. Phelps who said that the most important thing for him is music and believing in success. Believers say that spirituality is a gift of God.

Where secular "spirituality" is concerned it has the same qualities as the aforementioned ones, only the source is different- it results from your own work and inspiration. Spirituality is "contagious". Even one player on a team can pass it on other team-mates. Also the coach who explains his own lack of spirituality with a comment that "sport is a sport, there are victories and defeats", while obviously true can lead to doubt and is the enemy of success.

**W.J.C.** – One more question to finish with, how can you analyze and measure the effectiveness of the methods of sport training you have described?

**W.P.** – There is only one way: the success of athletes like I was able to achieve in the case of Ł. Czapla – three-time world champion in shooting at a running target [*cf.* Pasterniak 2007] and many other cases. Even in the Bible we read: "By their fruits ye shall know them". I will also add the mechanism of healing and sports success is difficult to grasp in a rational way, thanks to the aforementioned spirituality or other phenomena unknown to science. They can be grasped with the help of intuition, clairvoyance and other human cognitive abilities, of which science knows very little<sup>22</sup>.

**W.J.C.** – I repeat – what is the role players have to take in training themselves?

**W.P.** – Much bigger than that of a coach. The athlete should constantly try to get to know him/herself, try to understand the reasons of failures and success. He/she should also practice every day (!) on his/her own, but that is another issue for discussion.

<sup>2</sup> Prof. Pasterniak mentioned also the works of Dr Loe, Ken Wilber and Laurence Freeman [Wilber 1998; Loe 1999; Freeman 2006].



I would like to thank you for the opportunity to express my views although in a general and brief way.

W.J.C. – I would like to thank you as well, Professor.

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## Niektóre przyczyny niepowodzeń startów olimpijskich. Wywiad z profesorem zw. dr. hab. Wojciechem Pasternikiem, kierownikiem Zakładu Filozofii Edukacji Łużyckiej Wyższej Szkoły Humanistycznej w Żarach

**Słowa kluczowe:** sport, medycyna wielowymiarowa, trening duchowy

### Streszczenie

Zgodnie z przekonaniem prof. W. Pasternika istotną przyczyną niepowodzeń startów olimpijskich polskich reprezentantów na igrzyskach w Londynie było pominięcie treningowe i organizacyjne doniosłej dla życia, działania i sportu sfery duchowej. Położenie głównego nacisku na sferę fizyczną i częściowo psychiczną z całkowitym niemal pominięciem sfery podświadomości oraz nadświadomości sportowców skutkowało brakiem pewności siebie, niezbędnej koncentracji, odporności na stres, osłabieniem energetycznej wydolności, woli walki, kreacji stanów lękowych, etc. W opinii prof. W. Pasternika szkolenie trenerów w zakresie przygotowania duchowego jest daleko niewystarczające. Wywiad zawiera diagnozę niepowodzeń polskich sportowców na Igrzyskach Olimpijskich w Londynie i przedstawia możliwe do zastosowania środki zaradcze.