



PANATHLON INTERNATIONAL

LUDIS IUNGIT

edited by

Aldo Aledda, Maurizio Monego

The Primacy of Ethics. Also in Sports?

papers by

**Lamartine DaCosta, Giuseppe Mari,
William J. Morgan, Yves Vanden Auweele**



FrancoAngeli

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**The Primacy of Ethics.
Also in Sports?**

**Proceedings of the XVII Congress of Panathlon International
Stresa, 14-15 May 2010**

papers by

**Lamartine DaCosta, Giuseppe Mari,
William J. Morgan, Yves Vanden Auweele**

preface by

Antonio Spallino

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**María Emilia Alvarez, Eliane Borter,
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Welcome speech by the International President

by Enrico Prandi*

I wish to remind all panathletes and all readers of the proceedings related to the XVII Congress of Panathlon International, held in the wonderful backdrop of Stresa, a gem on Lake Maggiore, that all congresses are resulting from a cultural work dedicated to clubs and always based on the active contribution of local clubs that provide for all the logistics.

In this case, on behalf of all our members, I feel the duty to thank the Motarone Club, its President Alfonso De Giorgis and all the friends of the Organising Committee, wisely chaired by our member Giuseppina Malinverni Azolina.

In the course of two days' work, this Congress focused on and summarised the characteristic features of our activities of the last few years: Ethics as the core of the sports project.

Sport faces new educational responsibilities and must clearly react to all ethical conflicts. Panathlon International, as always, not only warns us in advance on the problems, but also provides answers.

During the Congress different aspects have been examined in depth, the importance of the International Observatory, that is being implemented, has been highlighted, and different ideas on this issue have been discussed.

Highly significant papers have been delivered that will lead us to new thoughts and actions in the near future. Besides papers by our Members Aldo Aledda and Yves Vanden Auweele of the Scientific-Cultural Commission, expertly chaired by Maurizio Monego, prestigious speakers have also contributed with their important testimonies, therefore enriching our knowledge and culture in sports ethics.

I refer to the paper by Professor William John Morgan, from the Southern

* Panathlon International President.

California University, on the impact of money in the world of sport; but also to the paper by Professor Lamartine DaCosta, from the Gama Filho University, Rio de Janeiro, on the adjustment of the sport organising structure in relation to responsibility; and finally to the paper by Professor Giuseppe Mari, from the Catholic University in Milan, on “moderation” identified in the ability to harmonise one’s power according to a hierarchy of values.

The “Final Resolutions” drawn up by PI Scientific-Cultural Commission, resulting from the experience and discussion that has emerged from its members’ discussion and summary, based on the delivered papers, provide a document from which Clubs may draw the guidelines for their cultural activity of the next two years. As always these resolution do not nullify previous ones but update priorities and provide cues for increasingly informed and topical actions.

I hope that those who were not present in Stresa may find from the pages of these Proceedings the inspiration and enthusiasm needed to carry out their mission within their local communities.

Preface

by Antonio Spallino*

Congress after congress Panathlon International has examined the world-wide context in which it is operating, by offering a contribution through its identity.

This is not an easy task.

Almost three years ago the “Final Resolution” of the International Congress held in Antwerp (22-24 November 2007) - explicitly starting from the “*Charter for the Rights of the Child in Sport*” (the so-called “*Ghent Declaration*”, dated 24 September 2004) - fixed the protocol of the principles we ask families, managers, instructors to observe – the “educators” as De Coubertin called them, and today this is a topical word-

The “Charter” intends “*to pursue the establishment of sport cultural and moral values*” – therefore opposing the trend towards mercantilistic interests and ideological processes -. All Sports clubs, sports federations, “sponsors”, university professors of sport pedagogy, history and philosophy, are asked to endorse such values.

A book was dedicated to this ethical and educational “pillar” of P.I. commitment, edited by several authors in 2008 in English and Italian (Franco Angeli Editore, Milan) and disseminated both in the European and Central-South American areas. English, Belgian, French, Swiss, Italian, Brazilian, Argentinian scholars and experts contributed to this book and even outlined, as in the “case” of the city of Sorocaba (Brazil), the prospect of an “*educational-town*”.

In the course of recent years, an in-depth discussion was gradually enriched and expanded both in terms of contributions and topics.

* Antonio Spallino (Italy) was P.I. President in 1988-1996; P.I. Scientific-Cultural Commission Chairman in 1997-2008. He is currently Honorary Chairman of this Commission and P.I. Honorary Member.

This can be verified by running through the list of speakers, their “curricula” and the topics selected for the next International Congress to be held in Stresa (Italy, Lake Maggiore) on 14-15 May 2010. Some speakers are already well known within Panathlon cultural world: Aledda (I), Monego (I), Maes (B) Vanden Auweele (B) M.E. Alvarez (U), Bramante (BR), Eliane Borther (CH).

The contribution of academics, such as William J. Morgan (USA), Giuseppe Mari (I) and Lamartine DaCosta (BR), all internationally renowned authors, attest a remarkable “correspondence” between Panathlon ethical-sociological research and the sensitivity of the most accredited science. Furthermore, the participation of Professor William J. Morgan, from the Universities of Northern California (Los Angeles), could favour Panathlon cultural penetration into the North-American area. Please note that Professor Morgan, together with Klaus V. Meier and Angela Schneider published a first volume on *“Ethics in Sport”* in 1959 and in 2007 a second personal book, on the same topic.

Recently different types of “on field” experience were launched, consistent with our auspices: this was the case, for example, of Jim Parry, professor in English Universities, who in Antwerp had defined the *“ethical and technical excellence of the central social arenas for the development of good character”*.

Following the above, the XVII International Congress undoubtedly ranks among the most considered, documented and stimulating contributions to the development of intellectual meditation and real implementation of “good practice”. An urgent need for both types of contributions seems to emerge among the “healthy” part of the sports world.

Introduction

The supremacy of ethics in sport. A long winding road

by Aldo Aledda*

In the course of history, when the lowest instincts of human nature seem to prevail in man's behaviour, a call for a life-saver seems to invariably come from the bottom ranks of organisations, invoking more stable ethical principles, according to Kant's idea of "having to be". This happens not only during catastrophic events, as in the case of wars, where man's helplessness is directly experienced, but also when people no longer trust representatives of institutions or part of them. Today, when the economic crisis, with its impact on employment and Asia expected to overtake the Western continent, doubts have been raised on confidence in material wealth, intended as an unlimited historical process and fundamental reference in the life of each one of us. The current public government style where personal interest seems to prevail over general interest, a reduced trust in the political class was recorded. If there is an ethical problem in economics and a "moral issue" in politics, how is sport proceeding?

Let's start from a recent case. More precisely from the UEFA international match-fixing betting scandal, apparently involving in particular the Russian and Chinese Mafia¹, from which it was inferred that sport can be included among the activities to be closely observed from an ethical point of view, as was the case of American boxing for most of the 20th century, since it was closely entangled with the mafia and the crime world in New York and Las Vegas. But this is only one of the critical aspects as the sports world for some time has been challenged by ordinary justice for fraud, betting or simply for

* Member of Panathlon International Scientific and Cultural Commission.

¹ Declan, Hill (2007), *The Fix*, Grandi&Associati.

the virulence of some of its outbreaks that very often go beyond the normal risk implied in play activities. When focusing on criminal cases, there are well known US inquiries into college female students being sexually harassed mostly by athletes, not to mention homophobic attitudes². Sometimes deviance in sport with respect to basic values of social cohabitation results in economic offences, such as false accounting, featuring as protagonists big clubs or tax evasion among sport stars. There are also specific violations in international labour ethics, as in the case of sportsware companies exploiting child labour in third world countries. Historians have also extensively analysed ethical issues with political reflexes, that often involved large sectors of sports management – first of all the recurrent collusion of sports milieus with totalitarian regimes, also involving international sporting events and big facilities. We could continue endlessly.

We essentially ask ourselves two questions: why does ethical absence seem to be more alarming in sport than in other fields? Why so much emphasis on ethics? Can't we leave sport with its alternating lights and shades, among the heroic, ethical drive of some people and the indifference and cynicism of others? Are we equally intolerant for ethical impetus in other fields? Objections deserve great consideration and some answers.

The risk is basically due to the fact that all activities defined as sport, in contrast with man's other activities considered fundamental for society, seem to be characterised by a two-fold ethics. On the one hand sport must be subject, like all other man's activities, to general principles governing society as a whole; as we have seen, however, a whole series of different types of behaviour violate the ethical principles valid in all fields and, most of the time, also include cases subject to criminal sanctions. On the other hand, the sporting activity has its own autonomous ethics, the observance of which is generally based on in-house regulations³.

It should be clarified that the boundaries with the general ethical principles in sport, in the end are rather faded, so that even the distinction between the two domains does not generally go beyond a mere theoretical formulation. And this because between the two moments there is such an intense dialectics to almost fade out any difference, furthermore, those that are considered as typical values in sport, when examined in further detail, reveal a common derivation from other, more general values. The uncertainty of the borders is even greater if we consider that, thanks to this dynamics, even the ethical

² See the classic Messner, Michel A. - Sabo, Donald F. (1994), *Sex, Violence Power in Sports*, The Crossing Press CA and the most recent Atkinson, Michael-Young, Kevin (eds) (2008), *Deviance and Social Control in Sport*, Human Kinetics.

³ Morgan, W.J.-Meier, K.V.-Schneider A.J. (eds) (2001), *Ethics in Sport*, Human Kinetics.

processes that, due to social interaction are specifically formed in sport, in the long term tend to have an impact on the behaviour of society as a whole. On the one side, actually, sport receives values from the social context and, on the other, sends similar signs through a process of mutual conditioning. It is no novelty that we say, for example, that sport educates people.

Is it only from this undeniable social responsibility that derives the strong ethical expectation that characterises sport or are there more distant reasons?

For a better understanding of this relation, let us focus on sport intended as a long-lasting historical movement, according to Fernand Braudel's concept of history; therefore a structure gradually moving in time, and that in our case can be emblematically represented by the Olympic Movement, with deep roots into Greek history and that in the course of millenniums has occasionally resurfaced and today has emerged in all its substance and importance. Following the above remarks, we can better understand how we can promote ethics globally. When discussing universal values in sport, we can more easily assume that sporting activities, whatever their name may be, draw their ethical cogency from substantially metahistorical data, that help them stand out and favour their identification whenever they appear on the scene. The fact that sport is resulting from a process for which playful activities (play) – with its cultural value as it freely releases man's creativity - in a certain stage of its development meets competition, a typical component of mankind that encourages certain individuals, more than others to excel. As long as the two moments – competition and play – are balanced, the result yields culture. But when competition definitely prevails over play, a sort of regression stage is reached. And this occurs, in particular, at a time when the "sporting" game turns into an exclusive expression of man's aggressiveness, definitely losing its cultural connotation. Since culture is both creativity and freedom of choice, when such features cease to exist - resulting in a losing party having limited freedom – the whole activity loses its cultural aspect. This unbalance is mainly due to the fact that the party prevailing in competition is so committed in managing its superiority, that all cultural aspects are bound to disappear, due to a confrontation focused on dominating and controlling the opponent. Based on different arguments, Joan Huizinga concluded that modern sport was killing the play and its related culture⁴.

From this original condition we obtain the indissoluble link between sport and ethics, that for the very nature of the two moments, results in the supremacy of ethics. But from the latter we also infer the precariousness of

⁴ Huizinga, Johan (1949), *Homo Ludens*, Torino, Einaudi. See in particular the part concerning the competition and the war and final part about ludic culture in contemporary society.

the relation and the reasons for which it tends to loosen in the course of history.

The concrete case is represented by a historical dialect between play and competition, between aggressiveness and violence, and by the consequent origin of “modern” sport, that can contribute in better understanding this phenomenon.

As well known, the centuries prior to the origin of modern sport were characterised by rough forms of playful and competitive activities, that created some problems for authorities, sometimes prohibited due to turmoils. However, inventors of modern sport, convinced that in sports games educational potentials would have prevailed, started from the certainty that violence, innate in these events, could be sublimated, by channelling it in educational, religious and cultural institutions. This solution immediately gave sport its “strength” and “nobility” because, starting from its assumptions and regressive, potentially disruptive features of social coexistence; its “disorderly” practice was turned into an “orderly” activity, of high cultural and educational value.

Although even the “founding” fathers could not prevent sporting activities from being used in other directions, it was immediately understood that after all sport – already in its extra temporal dimension – is and was acquiring a neutral value as it includes both positive and negative values, as was shown, once again, by historical experience starting from the Roman gladiators’ games, passing through the degeneration of Medieval chivalry, and reaching the violence of premodern playful activities. This has also taught us another thing. In contrast with the opinion of those who support that sport per se is of ethical and educational value, in actual fact sport is only an empty container of values, showing an almost “chameleonic” nature with respect to that branch of society it impacts on. In fact, what is considered the ethical value of sport is no more than expectations of values by many individuals, basically educators. This is the main reason why sport, to be able to be alive and kicking, always needs to be supported by ethics. Because the term “sport” when abandoned to itself often risks to become something quite different from what many would like it to be.

Since we cannot hypothesize an automatism between sport and ethics, in what terms can we possibly foster ethics? The answer is that, even if we want to attribute to sport an abstract ethical value, as well as a universal value, ethics only acquires physiognomy and meaning in its social interaction and in its historical, concrete translation.

When trying to examine in depth this issue, we suggest to find an answer to a series of questions that are frequently raised when reasoning on sport: what are the reasons for an almost cyclical drift sport is subject to? In particu-

lar: why, in contrast with many other cultural activities, sport must always be “closely monitored” in terms of values?

By starting to reason from this last issue, we can observe that a certain diffidence for sport is undoubtedly due to its corporeity and this, in the first instance, creates difficulties in acknowledging sport’s cultural and spiritual nature. We then have the effects of the inevitable social “contamination” that sporting activities face due to their “expansive” nature. The fact that these sporting activities can promote extended community implies their connection with the political, economic, social environment, etc., therefore producing a set of values basically derived from cross-sections of our society and, for this very reason, not always ethically positive. Oftentimes, values prove to be so cumbersome (let us think today of “business” values) even those values that should characterise and qualify sporting activities – such as the sense of universal pacification and brotherhood – may become secondary and even prove to be ineffective. This occurs because sporting activities do not provide an environment in which you can develop antagonisms that are only managed from within. In a broader sense they represent a field where organisational, economic, financial and political interests converge and are in conflict. Such interests are in turn intertwined with social, racial, class or gender issues and at the same time match or clash with different generational sensitivity as increasingly happens nowadays. And this is the reason why general, ethical issues, resulting from this intertwining, in the end, cannot be easily separated from those that in the meanwhile have become constitutive and tend to characterise sport. Let us clarify this concept.

To the present day we spontaneously recognise that sport’s universal features are rather homogeneous, and their circulation is favoured by the fact that it is somehow seen as a lingua franca that can be accessed by everybody without requiring the mediation of specific cultural tools. However, we should not confuse the universality of the medium with that of the content, because even if sport operates as a lingua franca this doesn’t mean that the messages it conveys are necessarily global. It’s the first misunderstanding one easily runs into when we don’t consider the fact that the contents of the “universal” messages sport conveys have gone through such a rough and also often contradictory path that today are quite different from those originally proposed.

Let us start by considering one of these pillars, the so-called universal brotherhood, for which sport is politically validated, and also tries to go beyond wars and racial differences, etc. Its values results in practice from the inversion of a negative, elementary process according to which competitors, at the end of a race – during which in theory top enmity is produced -, should be induced to consider themselves as even closer “brothers”. This “remunerational” value appears to be metahistorically abstract, as confirmed by sport historical legacy, as apparently its origins date back to Greek gymnastics (it

should be observed, however that, to consider it as such, we should go back in time so much that images could be too blurred). However, if we rapidly move on to modern times, we realise that this value was historically translated when, by paying homage to a social Darwinism in fashion, it was launched by sport “inventors” as a substantially Anglo-Saxon model, almost exclusively focused on the white race. What currently appears to us as a basic ambiguity of sport at that time, was due to the fact that, just like many other aims of Western colonialism, the idea was to homologate the spirits and cultures of subject peoples to the conquerors’ values. It is true that modern sport was created with a precise ethical imprint, but it is equally true that it immediately became a characteristic activity of western society, that uses sport for promoting a latent cultural imperialism. This aspect was not only typical of a colonial policy, but its supremacy, particularly for market reasons, involved, in an acculturation process, also the previous “pseudo-sporting” experience of the Old Continent, forming the richness of the European medieval fabric. Such experience too was distorted and incorporated into the emerging British sport. Besides the French Games that, even as a reflex of the partial gallicising process of British society in Medieval times, were widely Anglicized, from tennis to cricket, Italian “soccer” too – with its long tradition of widespread activities -, was literally deleted and replaced by similar practices, but governed by principles and nomenclature imported from Great Britain. This was a painful operation as shown by the fierce resistance opposed by the Middle-European gymnastic culture to the introduction of this new British “trend”. In fact the main feature in Anglo-Saxon sport was not so much of “inventing” sport disciplines, but rather to “re-invent” a tradition, according to Hobsbawm and Ranger’s famous definition⁵, in other words, to remake as new something that already existed and even re-export it to those areas where it originally came from, labelling it as British, an authentic old Anglo-Saxon practice (as paradoxically was the case of polo in Afghanistan)⁶.

This imperialist imposition, however, was immediately characterised by racial connotations, to the extent that newborn sport emphasised the supremacy of the white man and, in particular, of his “body” that, par excellence, became the athlete’s most “natural”, “ideal” and “universal” body, thanks also to the link with the Hellenic tradition widely corroborated by the important archaeological findings of that time. Let us think, with regard to this, to Norman Gardiner’s renowned thesis that dates Greek sportsmanship to the specific set-

⁵ Hobsbawm, Eric J. -Ranger, Terence (1983), *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge University Press.

⁶ Aledda, Aldo (2002), *Sport. Storia politico e sociale*, Roma, Società Stampa Sportiva.

tlement of a race coming from the north, with instrumentally similar features as to those of the Anglo-Saxon population⁷. Starting from this corporeity, modern sports disciplines and their regulations were created one after the other, and many traditional sports adapted to such corporeity. And not just this, but in line with the general concepts of the time, sport stood out as a sexist activity, more specifically, its approach and configuration were all aimed at emphasising man's characteristic physical performance, focusing in particular on brute force and relegating women to a marginal role as less performing from a physical point of view. But the "political" value, inside which was to converge the supreme feeling of brotherhood, that we are currently discussing, in other words, the democratic spirit, appears to be more inspired by concepts of parliamentary democracy, totally strange to the people British colonialism was addressing, peoples organised according to basically tribal, familistic and community systems.

Sport educational features were therefore linked to a whole series of procedures that became decisive for training the Anglo-Saxon youth and more in general the youth of the western world. Such features appear to derive from up-stream reference values defined by Rudyard Kipling's as "white man's burden". Key requirements such as the formation of the character, self-control, coping with fatigue and stress, etc., were and are to a large extent unknown to other world cultures characterised, on the contrary, by closed societies, authoritarian or gerontocratic government systems, therefore learning methods based on experience, more rigid separation between sexes, patriarchal families, different initiation rites for young people, etc. In conclusion also those values that seemed to be exclusive of sport, and that even today we consider to be global, in the end are mere products of a specific society, more precisely the western society in the incipient industrial era.

Only today, therefore, though with some reservation, after sport has been spreading all over the world and racial prejudice has been mitigated, the sporting message, in terms of universal brotherhood has (or better, we deem it has) become rather evident. But what is the price to be paid if, up to yesterday, the question could have been: ok we are all brothers and sisters, but to whom? To the ones or the others accordingly. It is therefore a relative concept of brotherhood, resulting from its historical connotations.

The conclusion of this first part of the paper is that, even though sport seems to have its original, universal features, when put into practice they are resulting from historicisation processes and the values it presents are never

⁷ Gardiner, Norman E. (1930), *Greek Athletic sports and festivals*, Oxford University Press.

exactly the same in each phase of their existence. However this historicisation does not necessarily imply the profession of a certain cultural relativism, but it only represents the actual, exhausting translation of the principles that aspire to be taken as universalising. This assumption is not always a regression in terms of values. In fact, in the specific case of the sense of brotherhood generated by sport, this on the contrary is a progress in this notion and hence in the increasing expansion sport is undergoing, constantly involving peoples and races, men and women of different social classes, that confer to it a more complete nature. So we should, once again, carefully distinguish between aspiration to universality of current sport values from their educational value that clashes with the course of history.

To understand how tormented is the application of these universal principles and, at the same time their tribute to history, we frequently observe that the universal nature of some of these principles, in certain historical periods, turned them into orders, resulting in a hard-line, ideological profession.

More emblematic than the mobility of sport ethical contents is the overturning of a whole hierarchy of values, once deemed indestructible, that resulted in the notion of amateurism, that should have been sports highest spiritual projection. In contrast, professionalism was deemed to convey essentially disvalues. For most of the 20th century sports competition outside the playing field developed in a lacerating way between supporters of “non-profit sport”, i.e. amateur sport, and, on the opposite side, supporters of “profit-bearing” sport, i.e. those who drew economic profits from sport. Moreover, the universality of this character was once more confirmed by the noble Greek tradition that no doubt would have been in favour of amateur sport.

Let us proceed with order. British sport was initially introduced as an activity basically reserved for a limited number of *sportsmen*, who, by belonging to an upper class, considered themselves as the real depositaries of sport values and also of the talent needed to practise it, so much so that they didn't even think they needed regular training to improve their performance. Emblematically, sociologist Erving Goffman, in his study on total institutions, mentioned the testimony of a former Queen's guard on the officers' physical training techniques, remarking the fact that officers were required to have a higher physical performance with respect to other recruits, as they had to conceal any type of difficulty to better highlight the fact that they belonged to an “upper caste”⁸; a caste, therefore, that had for its very nature met such requirements, to the point that this type of physical superiority was to emerge spontaneously without having to exercise to develop such skills. Similarly to

⁸ Goffman, Erving (1961), *Asylums*, New York, Random House.

what Max Weber established on the relation between its economic success and divine predestination, the successful equation in sport, linked to talent, was an inalienable element to the extent that its demonstration unequivocally marked the affiliation to a privileged class, expressed by displaying special physical skills implying that the need to train implicitly admitted not having the required talent. This explains why, when training concepts were initially introduced, real sportsmen objected to them. They were convinced to be the defenders of an ethics in sport based on the pre-eminence of play, and that if it were to be maintained as such, it had to continue being a spontaneous participation, free from any logic of training. The amateur idea - that constant training outside of the actual game could somehow be seen as deviance from the ideals of an activity that should be spontaneous and creative only in a certain, legitimating moment, that of the competition, intended as a “natural” expression - was therefore turning into specific ethics. Hence sport was seen as an activity only for an élite and this belief was confirmed till well beyond the first half of the past century (when non more than 3 - 6% of the population, according to recurrent statistics, appeared to be interested in practising a sport).

However, since the logic of acquiring sporting skills, regardless of any talent, gradually gained ground in the course of time following on from the professional activity, this ended up by widening the gap between traditional *amateurs* and “rough” professionals who, by diminishing the value of the “natural talent”, were accused of consequently altering most of the ethical system characterising sport. As I mentioned above, this was still believed for a very long time despite lower classes – more free from ethical and social biases with respect to upper classes (that in sport like in other fields easily resulted in prejudice) – showed day after day – with their achievements – that in order to be successful in sport mere talent was not sufficient, and that it was necessary to cultivate it. In the end the argument of the lower class prevailed; and further proving the mobility of its ethical concepts, the whole of the sporting world was converted to the idea that it was preferable to constantly practise sport, with adequate training. Conclusion: if going out on the field without at least some training today decidedly clashes with the idea of a sound, correct sport practice, in the past, however, this was the attitude preferred by the true sportsman.

Coubertin had already hinted in the last pages of his Olympic Memoirs that the contrast between amateurism and professionalism reflected in the sporting world the traditional 19th century antithesis between social classes, rather than a real clash between sport founding values⁹. Such principles (de-

⁹ Coubertin, Pierre de (1997), *Mémoires Olympiques*, Lausanne, Cio.