

A path to the compassionate leadership in the context of Olympism

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Abstract

When compassionate leadership and Olympism meet; the athlete's path to personal and professional excellence becomes filled with interpersonal challenges. In order for the athlete to revisit the foundations of the Olympic values, he will have to go through three levels of leadership in order to incorporate them in a harmonious way. However, the path to a sporting life that consists in promoting performance only and in distinguishing oneself from others leads to a dead end: even more excellence produces loneliness and consists in no longer recognizing oneself in the recognition of others. How will the evolutions of leadership from passionate leadership, to compassionate leadership and then to the leading from behind allow the athlete to aim for excellence and succeed without losing his entourage?

Keywords

Compassionate leadership, passionate leadership, leadership from behind, Olympism, Education.

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The depth of my understanding about what is required to excel has changed over the years. When I first started working in the performance enhancement field, I thought that the path to excellence was to work, work, work; to shut out the rest of my life; and to live only for the dream. I was wrong! You do have to work extremely hard but you don't have to shut out the rest of your life and you don't have to live only for the future. You can achieve the highest levels of personal excellence through a high-quality focus and still have a balanced, happy life in the here and now. The path to personal and professional excellence is the self-directed focused path with heart” (Orlick, 2008, p. 312).

Introduction

No one can mention Olympic and Paralympic Games without talking about the fundamental component of it: the athlete, a person that is proficient in sports. As basic and easily understandable as this definition might be, its actual meaning can be understood beyond the words themselves. On one hand, the individual in question stands out from the crowd not only because of his sports abilities, but also because of his way of thinking his body and feeling his mind. On the other hand, behind the word proficient, when referring it to his discipline, lies a wall engraved in personal virtues like skilled, expert, accomplished, capable, excellent and brilliant.

However, in a world where cultural norms are changing more and more each day, “the success of yesterday means nothing for today” (Bach, 2014). According to Bach, an athlete who accepts to change is able to become a leader of change, not the object of change. This statement means that if “Sport has the power to change the world, it has the power to unite people in a way that little else does” (Mandela, 2000). As an athlete, you can inspire others to change, only if you are ready to change yourself. But how can we lead this change in sport? Whenever you initiate change, you have to answer three questions: why? What? And How?

In this paper, we will be focusing on the how. How do we recognize a person that is valuable in the Olympic system? Knowing that the Olympic values of Olympism are excellence, respect, friendship, dialogue, diversity, non-discrimination, tolerance, fair-play, solidarity, development and peace, this question is part of an unprecedented report that assimilates, in the same dynamic, the

conquest of a fragmented personal identity and the access to a cultural identity that ensures a positive recognition of a person to his performance. The logic that allows the identification of successful and unsuccessful people portrays a myth: that of the competitive spirit that seduces a person by sharing with him the sphere of the winner. This spirit also speaks and frightens by making him share that of the defeated. He speaks to him and shakes him when he measures the capacities of everyone in irrefutable rankings born from the confrontation with others. Whoever succeeds, thus accepts to play the game of reaching perfection, which consists of climbing on a pedestal that is always temporary.

The engagement in a sport activity is a process that allows an athlete to register, often since childhood, in a safe and caring environment, after having lived through critical moments in life. The security and care encountered at the heart of sporting cultures favors the rise of a sporting excellence not yet recognized by the athlete. This growth appears during multiple attempts to get attached to new significant figures associated with sports cultures and in attempts to detach from other figures deemed less significant. This fight between wrenching and attachment will culminate in the athlete in an attempt to bring it into conformity with the requirements of the sports cultures that were, until now, foreign to him. This need for conformity favors a partial identity construction; a submission to the social desirability and a tendency to build relationships with others essentially oriented towards the logics of sports competition. A human being in the sports world then develops from within the limits assigned by sports cultures. An enclosed environment thus allows an athlete to feel free, even if this freedom is limited.

However, a practice guided by a passionate obedience to sports competition is not enough in itself to develop a consistent maturity and identity. In sports cultures, it seems normal to ask an athlete to exceed his physical limits, to understand that his body is a transitional object that combines the past and the future while becoming a place and a moment of transitions to other living perspectives. In the following part, we suggest three stages that allow an athlete to revisit the foundations of the Olympic values through three levels of leadership that in order for him to incorporate them in harmonious ways.

- The first level allows a person to integrate into a sports culture by acquiring the standards, values and symbols of the cult of excellence: the hetero-centered leadership.
- A second path of conversion allows a person to experience cultural changes not as deficits but as opportunities for bio-psycho-social developments within the sport system and also outside of it: the hopeful leadership.
- The third path of truth allows a person to feel the virtues of a creativity which is at the service of an opening towards memories of the body which testify to a history in movement where a self-alienation is replaced by a self-compassion: the compassionate Leadership.

In each of these three levels of leadership, the presence of three dimensions that characterize a proactive leader (innovator, implementer and pacifier), will allow us to reveal that a sports organization needs constant infusion of new ideas (Rodrigues, 1997).

Sports, Education and Olympism: A freely consented leadership that is modeled in the heart of Olympism

In order for a person to get to a level where he could compete in the Olympic Games, he should enroll in an educational program; but not any educational program. As a matter of fact, physical education or what we know as sports is one of the best educations a person can have. What is meant by that, is that the athlete should not only focus on the discipline as is, but he should benefit from the whole education because sports will not only help you grow but also it definitely changes you, as you acquire important life skills just by being there, practicing your discipline.

One of those life skills is teamwork that involves delegation of tasks and helps motivate participants to do their part, another one is communication used to recognize and appreciate the great work of the team. Also, strategic development and organizational skills give opportunities for participants to come up with a game plan and strategies to win. Moreover, sports can also give participants self-discipline and understanding on an individual level. This will teach players that they need to practice and face challenges but that they are also an important contribution to the team (Tanner, 2015). Athletes are roles models, people to look up to. They are

individuals with great qualities like commitment, dedication, hard work and essentially leadership. Leadership is not a position or a title, it is action and example. It is a way of thinking, a way of acting and most importantly a way of communicating. Leaders are those who always empower others. How can we know all that? All we have to do is watch their actions: we will see respect and excellence, commitment and fighters, friendship and goodwill. We will see real leaders: the ones that do not create followers but the ones that create more leaders. Leader allows a person to get immersed in an authentic world and understand that an athlete lives everyday by the concepts he believes in. Authentic athletes believe also that by making small changes in their communities their efforts will add up to make a big difference. So when he thinks of himself as an authentic athlete, it will guarantee the opportunity to change the way we walk, the way we think and the way we feel. Walking, thinking and feeling allow each decision to become an action, which is close to the discovering of a true successful leadership.

Exclusive excellence within the Olympism: an elite logic that reassures an equal cultural system

«What must be said finally and remembered tirelessly is that beyond the means that are necessarily always relative, there are values in which we absolutely believe. Man sets goals, creates techniques to reach them, and transcends them. This is why without giving up nothing, without excluding anything, we must present within sporting practice, man as a condition of all conditions and, therefore, as a value.» (Jeu, 1987, p.179).

The path to a sporting life that consists in promoting performance only and in distinguishing oneself from others leads to a dead end: even more excellence produces loneliness and consists in no longer recognizing oneself in the recognition of others. The fatigue of not being yourself, in the eyes of others, then highlights the cost of the search for excellence: that of living on ephemeral social identity constantly challenged. An ever-increasing logic causes confusion when the pursuit of excellence seems to be inaccessible and causes a refusal to commit Recognition of frailty is therefore to be considered as a step that allows an athlete to feel the Life that is in him and to allow himself to isolate himself from an environment that no longer meets, temporarily, his vital needs.

Between these two poles, an Olympic educational space is constantly being built and reconstructed and helps the athlete to coexist with complex vital experiences which are expressed simultaneously on the cultural register and on the register of interiority. For a bodily experience to become an opportunity for transformation, the athlete must still feel that what makes him deficient compared to a norm which no longer belongs to him is perceived as a potential and feels protected within a structure of mutual trust. Then the recognition of oneself as a place conducive to acting on one's behalf becomes possible. The bodily experience is, therefore, essentially part of a theatrical game that stages it with a culture that accepts with confidence to dramatize its emotional relationships. A dialogic choreography can thus be established between personal psychological needs and educational cultural needs of an athlete. Now is the right time for an athlete to accept asking himself about the meaning of the verb "Succeed" and to agree to recognize that living is a moment of existence that is worth living.

Learn to win and learn to lose: Two facets to develop a sense of belonging to the Olympic community

More individuals who have gone through college and attended universities believe that belonging to the "right" fraternity or sorority would give you a brighter future. As a matter of fact, in a fraternity or a sorority, the members tend to understand how each and every one of them think and what they need to do in order to empower each other. They see things from each other's perspective to accommodate and provide the best environment for each other to progress and achieve big things. They show each other support and presence. Not only for when they win, but also and more importantly for when they lose, because it will take determination and motivation to get back up and compete again. Nothing is impossible because nobody knows what the future holds.

What becomes possible at the heart of the impossible is the ability of the athlete to combine new forms of relationships with a sporting "We": it is no longer enough for the athlete to belong to this community in unconditional ways but it is necessary for him to assert his originality within it. To assert its originality is the acceptance from the athlete of the emergence of an internal crisis. To think of a man in crisis is to think of him as a system living through successive moments of organization, disorganization

and reorganization. A new responsibility is then assigned to the athlete: that of finding in his own resources, a singularity to bring out from him what he projected in the social sports imagination. The subject will then, between resistance and letting go, become part of an identity conversion where it is no longer a question for him of conforming to standards that have become foreign to him. The athlete feels ready to speak up his truth. Through this process, telling the truth modifies the form of being of the subject who puts himself at the service of a new relationship with his body in the process of rehabilitation (Foucault, 2009).

This identity conversion is a posture that allows a person who has untied himself from a sports practice, to give himself the feeling of inventing his life by taking the initiative to make his life a story rather than an interruption of a life plan (Hooker, Masters, Park, 2018). The vividness of this life story, however, requires availability to decenter from a living “I” to let the athletic “Us” play the role of an emotional armor. For this, it’s engraving in a unique contextual space-time situation that is supported beyond the “I”. If the “I” remains a motor from a reflective perspective, an authentic power of corporeality favors the recognition of an immediate relational experience with oneself and with others. It is by abandoning the role of voluntary galley slayer (Swec, 1998), that the athlete opens his eyes to spaces and times of life that seemed forever confiscated. This situation to be lived serenely supposes subjects capable of being themselves on the path that they are rebuilding. New articulations between the “I” and the “We” therefore suppose that these subjects are able to recognize themselves within a sporting human community that welcomes them with their strengths but also with their vulnerabilities and their weaknesses (Honneth, 2008).

For this, it is necessary that these subjects are no longer perceived only as producers of sporting performances, but also as people who can best deal with their personal conflicts without alienating their potential creators (Brewer, Redmond, 2017). Their articulation of these two dimensions is an opportunity to reveal the contours of humanity within sports cultures. They are responsible for accepting that a form of motor creativity can become a path of personal achievement for an athlete and a path of cultural achievement for sports organizations interested in psychological environments conducive to the well-being of an athlete (Diener, Pressman, Hunter, Delgado-Chase 2017). All

this process written in the Hopeful leadership path, gives the athlete the opportunity to experience the work of letting go: accepting to understand that the incomprehensible is the engine of human creativity (McKenna, 2017). This is why the support of a person can become a source of shared well-being. Something like the support of otherness for the exercise of a freedom. It's this freedom that allows an athlete to feel in the Heart of his body three fundamental dimensions of what constitutes the interiority of his Sporting Being:

- An inspirational leadership of the heart creates enthusiastic followers who will allow themselves to become compassionate leaders.
- A strategic leadership of the head creates an effective original entity that allows an athlete to let himself put, at the service of the common good, a passion that he wishes to transmit around him.
- A supervisory leadership of the hands creates efficient performance.

This triad in the context of Olympism seems to be a marvelous incremental challenge where visionary and enabling are two facets of an authentic emancipatory education (Nicholls, 1994).

Emancipatory body education is essential to the vitality of an education in Olympism

«Corporeality know no limit: not only, as Bergson says, “it goes to the stars”, but according to Valéry, it unfolds in “the infinite aesthetic” of our power to feel.» (Bernard, 2002, p.534).

Understanding the human and cultural phenomena that emerge from moments of doubt is a great opportunity to allow an athlete to feel the effects of fully inhabiting his body, after having exceeded its limits. It is an opportunity for him to refuse the existence of a no man's land, where the human dimensions of the athlete are to be valued at the heart or sport's cultures. It is also an opportunity to identify what can allow an athlete to recognize these moments that provide feelings of fullness in and around sports arenas. When a feeling of fullness inhabits them, the athletic life of an athlete becomes the theater of a performance where two identities coexist: a cultural identity that exists through what it produces and a personal identity that exists in the heart of one's own body, where cognitive, emotional and relational skills are not yet

expressed because they are not yet recognized in sports arenas. It is then, up to him, to open up the new styles of life that consist in turning away sometimes from a path initially planned: the one where it was only possible to adapt or fail. However, a movement towards the future cannot be molded into the idea of keeping the same. This is excess on itself and transcendence of itself: precisely one cannot apprehend it in a close system.

This form of sincerity is a great opportunity to facilitate the ecological salvation that allows a full life to come to an athlete. This path is not a return to oneself but is part of a becoming oneself which is at the same time another becoming at the heart of the epicenter of a common good, where a momentum of life that is in Self and around Self. This is an opportunity to identify what can allow an athlete to recognize those moments that provide feelings of gratitude (Emmons, McCullough, 2004).

It is by opening up to other ways of doing things and by exporting to unfamiliar spaces that an athlete can position himself in a relation to different perspectives which become understandable to him. By taking this position, the athlete can perceive new existential horizons that open towards bodily memories: those, which contain the ferments of self-transformation (Le Breton, 2012), of self-determination (Ryan, Deci, 2017) and of self-compassion (Inwood, Ferrari, 2018). By immersing himself in an unknown land, the body of a person becomes this link that promotes the meeting of sensory habits and memories.

However, an adaptation to new sensations is to be built. Therefore, it is necessary for an injured person to be attached to life. To detach oneself from what was a passion is a superior form of attachment that merges with the opened: it is no longer expressed in terms of worlds, but in terms of universe, a universe which opens onto a plurality of worlds (Bergson, 1932). It is the feeling of immensity that begins to dawn, it is the pine needle which expands (Thoreau, 1982), it is the intimate immensity of the movements of the body (Bachelard, 1957), it is the temporary dissolution of sensory limits which broadens and deepens a feeling of existing (Saarinen, 2014). The time has come for an athlete to recognize that the passion that enables him to become a leader on the sports scene is an opportunity for him to see the compassionate dimensions of leadership as well as an opportunity for transpersonal and transcultural development that promotes access to the Universal stage.

From passionate leadership to compassionate leadership, from compassionate leadership to the leading from behind

What are the qualities of new kinds of leaders: passionate, compassionates, self-compassionates? For Aristotle there were three: ethos, pathos and logos. The ethos is his moral character and the source of his ability to convince others; the pathos is his ability to touch feelings and move people emotionally; the logos is his ability to give solid reasons for particular actions and therefore, to move people intellectually. (DeMarco, Donald, 1998). DeMarco asks himself, what has taken place in the modern world that has created the current absence of great leaders? Hannah Arendt describes how the old authority was lost in the modern world “the world has begun to shift, to change to transform itself with ever increasing rapidity from one shape to another... Everything at any moment became almost anything else. We are uprooted. Change is omnipresent and has separated us from anything stable and enduring, including a basis of authority from which a great leader could emerge” (Arendt, 1961, p.95). DeMarco states that Leadership involves association with people. Consequently, a leader must have a certain amount of such intangible qualities as zeal, fervor, charm and charisma. In the world of sports, a leader is understood to be a front-runner, one who puts some distance between himself and his competitors. Can this sport leader become one day the follower of his team? Of his athlete?

An authentic leader will lead people to some fulfilling destiny. But he must accept to lead them without separating himself from them. He must be uncommon enough to inspire an athlete to be efficient. At the same time, he must be common enough so that the common athlete can emulate him. The paradox of the uncommon-common man is also the paradox of the servant leader. From passionate leadership to compassionate leadership, from compassionate leadership to the leading from behind, the Olympic spirit is called upon its capacities to build the podium of porting temporalities: recognizing the legacy of the past, fully living in the present, anticipating hopefully the future.

The concept of “leading from behind” appeared over time with Linda Hill in 2010. According to her, she first levied it in Nelson Mandela’s autobiography Long Walk of Freedom. Considering leadership as a shepherding, it seems that it is better to lead from behind and to put others in front, especially when you celebrate victory when nice things occur. You take the front line when there

is danger. Jack Dunigan explains that Linda Hill's concept is that of collaborative effort within teams who take responsibility for projects and goals. Therefore the dynamics and principles of effective leadership are universal (Dunigan, 2015).

Five main points explain the concept of leading from behind:

- **Leading from behind is** deliberate, not accidental: Effective leaders are not always hands on and predominant, but they are always there.
- **Leading from behind is** collaborative and cooperative: Leading from behind may mean exercising influence indirectly but it does mean exercising influence.
- **Leading from behind** works best in non-threatening, non-urgent conditions.
- **To lead from behind**, you need to build a strong community that is united by shared values and goals.
- **Leading from behind** often places leaders in a supporting role. Then, the goal is to enable team members to emerge as innovators and leaders themselves.

In a global leadership environment with other developing leaders, leading from behind can be an excellent way to unlock everyone's potential (Hawkins, 2016). While the concept of leadership is not fundamentally an Olympic value, it nevertheless allows all of the Olympic values to relate to one another and to be transmitted from generation to generation.

Conclusions

The implementation of an emancipatory body education within the Olympic system should be seen as an adventure, which reveals the links that are woven between several facets of the Olympic values. From the meeting of an expressive body and an upright body, a living body communication emerges, which allows a person to become a citizen of two worlds: a personal world and a cultural world. These then allow him to think in these forgotten dimensions of interiority and fragility: where the human being is realized, not only by what he produces, but by what he is more and by what it is not yet. So to accompany a person between these two worlds, the Olympism has three good reasons to bring its

commitment to life, sometimes by being sensitive to the sensitive and some other times by allowing yourself not to understand everything about the intelligibility of the body, which is devoted to the Olympic virtues.

- Reason 1: Foster the building of links that allows an athlete to incorporate Olympic values into his vision of the world.
- Reason 2: Allow an athlete to emancipate themselves and distance themselves from the Olympic values in order to reinterpret them.
- Reason 3: Allow an athlete to combine what is the most intimate with what is the most universal.

It is the simultaneous presence of these three reasons that allows an athlete to campaign for an ethics of fragility, so that the body of inexpressible regains its relational dimension and finds an expression in what comes to border the creativity of an athlete and the resilience of an Olympic organization. The dynamics that structure the Olympic values serve these athletes who depart from a standard of excellence and come closer to a unique identity consistency. The real power of the athlete then becomes that of feeling able to increase his power to act and his power to be oneself among others. However, the presence of athletes who rediscover the pleasure of feeling the inner dimensions of their body is not obvious. The Olympic organizations that welcome these athletes are not always ready to accept them. They nevertheless have the responsibility to accept that a form of pedagogical creation can become a path of personal achievement for an athlete and a path of organizational ecology for sport organizations that are interested in psychological environments conducive to well-being of a sportsman (Diener & al., 2017). Olympism is a part of the educational symphony and education within Olympism is an unfinished project (Martinkova, 2018). The leader is able to apply ideas into practice and is able to interpret the major principles of Olympism. The creation of a better society needs the cooperation of the full range of roles within the symphony of humankind. Olympism is an endless project. This is because an understanding of sport and education is always the result of social values in evolution and of psychological virtues in transformation. As unfinished symphony, Olympism is the gravity center of a double mutation: that of the development of an attitude of a composer that reinterprets constantly a piece that is not his and an attitude that allows him to propose new ways to apply it into an up-to-date practice. The polyphonic leader authorizes himself

to play an unpublished role and a worthwhile heritage for the future generations. It is in this perspective that the evolution of the relationships between sorority and fraternity becomes an element of understanding of what constitutes effective leadership that is not the exclusive domain of either gender (Appelbaum Audet, Miller, 2003). So foster gender equality means to accept that either gender can learn from the other about humanistic leadership. Then education leadership has a place to take in an Olympism education (Eacott, 2008). The hope is that the leadership process becomes an opportunity to better understand the managerial strategies that allow an athlete to reveal himself and to assert himself in the eyes of others. It is in the articulation of this revelation and this affirmation that the originality of a leader will be revealed, allowing himself to constantly rekindle the Olympic flame that animates an athlete in his heart and which allows to give breathe to those surrounding him.

«The clinic of globality stems from the ability to conceive as human at the heart of humanity, to become aware of its geographical, geopolitical situation, its historical positioning, its relationship to otherness in a planetary horizon; it highlights a willingness to watch and listen to the functioning of the global world within itself; it requires an availability to move, first ontologically. To decentralize: From self to self, From self to another, From the Other to Self.» (Derivois, 2017, p.22)

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