



Historical Perspectives on Physical Activity & (Mental) Health

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'Greece, Olympia is the common homeland of the entire civilized world' Victor Hugo



- What role did exercise and physical education play in the lives and educational systems of the ancient Greek civilization?
- What were the beliefs of physicians and philosophers?
- How is exercise connected to health and mental well-being?
- What were their goals in pursuing the symmetry among their body, mind, and soul?
- What qualities should a gymnast (trainer/physical educator) possess to be considered suitable in the pursuit of health and well-being?
- Can we discern a message that applies to the modern world?



*Exercises consist of movements

"Movement is the characteristic feature of life" (Plato)

*Innate human instinct

*Applies to all living organisms

*Drives the pursuit of nourishment

*Nourishment for both body and spirit

*Fundamental and instinctive tendency

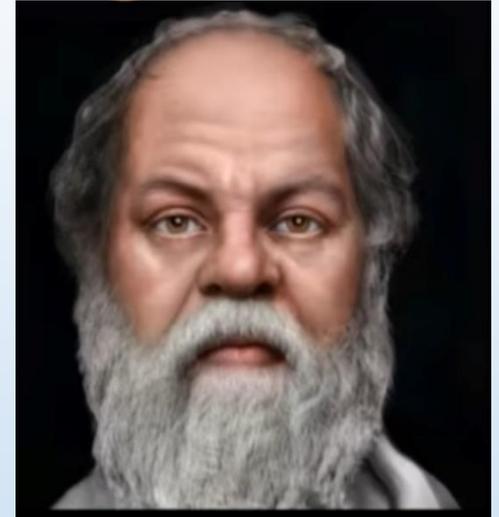


GENESIS OF SPORTS

- ***Orchesis** (dance) born from **movement, rhythm, and melody**
- *Dance essence: Sensation of rhythm

- ***Play** results from combining **movements with others**
- *Play's essence: Instinct for movement and interaction with others

- ***Competition and rivalry** introduce **excellence**
- *Excellence in physical, mental, and spiritual aspects
- ***Winners** emerge, leading to the **creation of sports**





GENESIS OF COMPETITION/CONTEST

*Measures introduced for common and equal conditions in the pursuit of victory

***Competition** evolved from sports with **organized control** for **excellence**

The cultures that consciously cultivated the previous conditions contributed

to the creation of

athletics

gymnastics

and (physical) education

PLATO (427-347 BC)



*Proper education: Body (gymnastics) and soul (music)

Gymnastics: exercises, orchesis, play, athletic competitions

Music: any occupation that cultivated the soul and the spirit

*Physical education linked to psycho-spiritual well-being

***Lifelong** physical exercise integral to overall education

*Symmetrical (**balanced-harmonious**) education: balanced physical and mental development: useful thinking and actions

*The body thrives with healthy habits and suffers from the detrimental, the soul too is influenced by justice and injustice

Plato & Hippocrates

a) gymnastics, preserves health and physical disposition: nutrition and rules

b) medicine, which operates therapeutically

Aim of education:

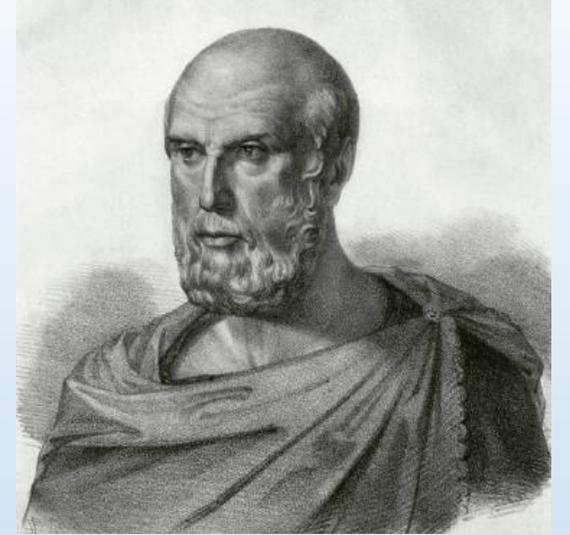
Symmetrical physical and mental development and perfection

- *Symmetric exercises preserve physical and mental well-being
- *Adorned soul: harmony between mental abilities and physical condition
- *Health and happiness: balanced care for both body and soul: including diet, rules, and exercise

“From a young age, they need to be trained in this (gymnastics), not to turn them into athletes, but to nurture their souls, ensuring their bodies are willing and ready servants”.

Plato

Hippocrates (460-377 BC) Hippocratic Physicians



- *Holistic healthcare model
- *Asclepieion (Kos): general treatment: physical exercise, massage, walks to restore health, well-being of the soul, and the inner peace of man
- *Health hinges on the equilibrium of diet and exercise
- *Exercise viewed as an art (=science) for health and fitness preservation
- *Emphasis on moderation in education, tailored to individual factors
- *Caution against excessive, exhausting exercise, and advocacy for a balanced exercise-relaxation cycle to prevent illness

Aristotle (384-323 BC)



- *The primary life goal is human happiness (eudaimonia), achieved through bodily harmony
- *Exercise and medicine are equal components of the art of health, securing bodily harmony and happiness
- *Moderation in both exercise and medicine, warning against excess and deficiency
- *Happiness: balanced middle path between extremes of action



Plutarch (46-120 AD)



- *Symmetric physical exercise for health and military readiness
- *Caution against exhausting or highly specialized exercises
- *Exercise: maintain body harmony and strength without hindering intellectual development, emphasizing the importance of balance in life

Galenus (130-200 AD)



- *Exercise = active movement with controlled respiration
- *Moderated exercise + balance without athlete-like dependency = **Health**
- *"Exercise with a Small Ball" maintains moderation and balance, warning against excessive exercise
- *Exercise = therapeutic to insomnia, anger, sorrow, excessive consumption

Philostratus (179-249 AD)

- *Ancestors' physical training, though primitive, didn't harm athletes' mental and physical health
- *Hygienic and therapeutic aspects of good physical condition
- * Endorsement to athletic life and competitions within reasonable limits



Gymnasts

*Hippocratic physicians believed a gymnast (trainer) should possess knowledge of anatomy, physiology, exercise types, and their athlete effects

*Galen expanded this by advocating knowledge in psychology and medical advancements for body development

*Philostratus stressed the importance of well-educated gymnasts with a profound understanding of their field

*The role of a gymnast was vital for proper exercise implementation and athlete well-being, requiring a multidisciplinary knowledge base





Conclusions



- *Movement is an instinctive state
- *Ancient Greece emphasized exercise and physical education for holistic development, including gymnastics and music education
- *Physical well-being was closely linked to mental and spiritual health, with moderated exercise promoting balance
- *Physicians and philosophers recognized exercise's therapeutic potential
- *Gymnasts were expected to possess broad knowledge
- *The timeless message from ancient Greece underscores the pursuit of symmetry (balance and harmony) in life
- *This holistic approach remains relevant, advocating for a balanced and healthy lifestyle in the modern world



Homer

One should excel in both works of the intellect (spirit) and the body.
Therefore, the individual should be in good condition/health as a whole.

Classical times

"kalos kagathos."

'Kalos': beautiful and harmonious in the body

(K) agathos: noble, developed, and courageous in the soul

Imperial period

"a healthy mind in a healthy body"

continued to provide the solution for human life



Thank you for your attention
and
for your presence here today!

