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ABOUT GYMNOSOPHY

Point of view

Keywords

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Abstract

The gymnosophy philosophy as a way to substantiate gymnastics; gymnastics and gymnosophy's etymological explanation; the gymnosophy, considered "the wisdom of the naked" becomes, at some point, the philosopher's way of health and thereby gymnastics becomes practical way of obtaining health , nudity as a means of verifying the execution of exercise; gymnastics supplemented diet since antiquity; spirituality is found in bodily perfection of the gods of antiquity" "to pray for a sound mind in a healthy body"; legislating in antiquity, to gymnastics, to maintain health; physical activity, characteristic of contemporary, induces disease; sport, as a healthway, acute need of every man.

Philosophy: the art of science and the science of arts. Gymnastics, considered to be a type of art, had to be scientifically structured. And this was not for the sake of theory, but out of necessity. In time, the awareness of the philosophy of gymnastics gained a name: gymnosphy.

According to „Dic ionar neogrec – român” (by Anti a et al, 2007):
- " μ - , - . adj. naked, stripped (-a), nude (-A) "
- " , subst. wisdom "
- " - , - adj. 2. urban (A), / / - μ urban population "

Generally, in Ancient Greece, due to a typical lifestyle, the people who used to administer the citadels (the aristocracy and the military leaders) predominantly became obese, being called „The Fat” by the ordinary people. This is why the wise people of those times (doctors, philosophers and writers) solved the problem, by conceiving a method meant to manage overweight and obesity among the aristocracy: a healthy lifestyle. So, according to „About Pythagora and Pythagoreans”, in *NOTE* (p. 181): „According to several historical sources, Ikkos is mentioned together with Herodicos. Therefore, Lucian, in *How the history should be written* and in *Ael., Var. hist. XI, 3.* was well known as an inventor of a type of medical massage called *iatralyptica* (cf. *Phis., Nat. hist. 29. Aristotel Rhet. A5, 136 1 b 5*). He allegedly settled a symmetrical relation between the efforts made by the human body and the food it receives. (Timpanaro Cardini). The doctrine of such pioneers of sportive and medical gymnastics (Ikkos and Herodicos) is inspired by the Alcmaeonid theories. Subsequently they were criticized on account that they forced the sick to keep heavy diets in order to lose weight.”

Everything started by using sports. Initially, this measure was exclusive to the Hellenic aristocracy. Gradually, these measures were extended to all the inhabitants of the citadel. Why? Because they led to impressive results. And, thus, these measures turned into law.

Subsequently, serving the same purpose, other therapeutical methods, such as massage, diets and medicinal plants were added to sports. So, according to Plato („Theaitetos”): „Socrate: Well, isn't it true that the body condition is damaged by the lack of physical exercises and activity, and well taken care in most of the cases by gymnastics and physical exercises?”.

I suppose that one of the reasons why these sport exercises were practiced nakedly, is the control factor: nudity gives the possibility to notice (as simply and directly as possible) whether the "citizen" obeys this law or not: a healthy lifestyle (healthy food and physical exercises).

According to „Sacred Anthems”, Pitagora stated: “We are suggested to take up physical

exercises, because they prevent weight gain, caused by extremely abundant meals, and prepare our body to receive healthy food again, because exercises and food form a cycle that renews itself. Practicing these exercises makes food be useful, and the habit of eating healthy food makes the practice of exercises be harmonious”.

The development of this concept has led to the introduction, besides the legal constraint to take up exercises, of the reward: competition and its prizes (laurels, fame, cash awards).

And, thus, the gymnastics notion was born (naked inhabitants of the citadel). And gymnastics meant any form of physical exercises practice that would bring health to the inhabitants, in the best shape for any competition, no matter what kind of sports it may have included: fighting, running, javelin throwing. So according to Plato (*Protagoras*): „Others, too, as I found out, allegedly gave to this craft the shape of gymnastics, as Ikkos of Tarent did and also Herodicos of Seymbria, the one that nowadays stands above everybody.”

During the military campaign in India (326 BC), Alexander the Great (Macedon) discovered the gymnosophists. They seemed to achieve, through asceticism and relinquishment (including of clothes), a different kind of trophies: wisdom, health and even immortality (reaching the “innocent state” through meditation). So, according to Plutarh (*Parallel lives, Book 7, Part 6/7*): “Kalanos appears as a gymnosophist in the stories about Alexander the Great, a sort of a yogi who attended the great expedition in India. He had left some notes about asceticism – the oldest confirmation of the vegetarian prescriptions honored in Pythagoreanism”. This evidence (rendered by Strabo), as well as the next two (from Diogenes Laertes and AullusGellius), refer to the Pythagoreans’ food prescriptions code and interdictions, recently studied in Marcel Detienne’s fundamental contribution (*La Cuisine de Pythagoras, in ‘Archives de Sociologie des Religions’, no. 29, 1970, pg. 141-162*)”.

It goes without saying that the two components were bound to interconnect: the gymnastics schools (*palestre*) and the gymnosophist schools. Gymnastics could not be considered a pure art without being defined and accompanied by its philosophy.

This was the beginning.

The observation (empiricism) made the proof of the fair judgment: the gymnastics, along with an appropriate diet, is the cause and also the potency of health. According to Epictetus (*“The Handbook – Fragments” – p. 32*): “ 29...One needs to obey the rigors of the discipline, a special diet when it comes to food, abstinence from sweets, hard exercise at fixed hours, in hot weather as well as in cold weather, abstinence from cold water and

wine, when thirsty, all in all, leave yourself to the master in gymnastics and to the doctor". Let us not forget that in palestre there was a whole methodology of eating, as part of the training, that referred not only to the quantity and the quality of food, but also to the technique and the time of mastication and swallowing, the alimentation program, etc (according to Philo of Alexandria - "Allegorical Interpretation of Genesis" – p. 56): "98. He does not only urge people to eat: (), but he also adds 'what is to be eaten'(), that is to masticate very well the food, not like an ordinary man but like an athlete who feeds in order to get strength and vigor. Besides, the professors in palestre recommend the athletes not to swallow the food greedily, without masticating it, but to take time to chew it in order to get more strength. For instance, I don't eat the same way an athlete eats because I eat only in order to survive, whereas they eat in order to gain weight and become more vigorous; that is why one of the usual exercises in palestre was the mastication of food. This was what is supposed to mean: eat in order to survive."

The main argument was that gods, who were anthropomorphically represented, proved, among others, ideal physical qualities.

According to Juvenal ("Satirae X") synthesizes the conclusion of this spirit born in Antiquity : "orandum est ut sit mens sana in corpora sano", "Let's pray for a healthy mind in a healthy body." "A healthy mind in a healthy body", expression frequently used nowadays, renders a motionless, void collocation, a collocation without predicate which transmits the message of necessity. The expression brings into light an essential element: the spirituality, the relation with the divine, with the nature of gymnastics. Thus, we can have a thorough description of the way of the Hellenic Gymnosophy: physical exercises, diet, the argument for sports and the link between sports and spirituality. Thus, the Way of Gymnosophy becomes the Way to Health: of One and the Multiple, of the individual and of the society (including also the health of relations and interrelations).

What the philosophers in Antiquity developed, also from this point of view, applies nowadays. They enacted health through gymnastics. They gave us this art of philosophy, after having discovered it among gymnosophists.

In modern age, we find the philosophy of sports and the gymnosophy especially in the methodology of research with impressive results in improving the performance, the communication skills and the inter-human relations.

We live in a sedentary world, in a society that, depriving us of sports, the simplest and purest method of being healthy, makes the individual, the "citizen" prone to sickness.

In schools, pupils avoid physical education classes and parents encourage them to do so. Adults prefer taking a nap after work instead of doing any physical activity. For collectivity, sports have become a waste of time.

The philosopher asks the question: "Why?" He also teaches us how we can find out the answer. As long as we don't know and don't wish to answer the question: "Why should I do sports?" we won't be able to get out of this vicious circle. According to Plato („Theaitetos”), Socrates found the answer: „Socrates: Well, isn't it true that the body condition is damaged by the lack of physical exercises and activity, and well taken care in most of the cases by gymnastics and physical exercises?"

The ancient philosophers may still offer the answer: the law, in the first place, and afterwards the explanation. Because, always, one way or another, first open the door and, after that, enter.

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