

Weit- oder Dreisprung des Phayllos?

Zu den erstaunlichen Nachrichten des Altertums gehört die Überlieferung, daß Phayllos aus Kroton einen Sprung von 55 Delphischen Fuß = 16,31 m erzielt habe. Diese Behauptung ist oft erörtert worden, unter anderem auch in dem reichen, mit der olympischen Siegermedaille 1928 preisgekrönten Buche von Mezö, Geschichte der Olympischen Spiele, im Zusammenhang mit den beiden anderen Leistungen des Altertums, die man zahlenmäßig kennt: dem Diskuswurf desselben Phayllos aus Kroton (28,17 m) und dem anderen Weitsprung, dem des Chionis (01.29 = 664 v. Chr.) über 52 Olympische Fuß = 16,66 m. Es gab über die Sprünge zwei Ansichten, die Nachrichten seien falsch oder es handele sich um einen Dreisprung. Gegen die letztere sprach das Fehlen jeder Erwähnung oder Schilderung dieser ungewöhnlichen und etwas künstlichen Technik, zudem der Sprung mit wenig Ausnahmen (z. B. Eleusis) nicht für sich ausgekämpft wurde, sondern im Rahmen des Fünfkampfes stand. Die Frage wird im Oktoberheft 1938 des „American Journal of Philology“ von Walter Woodburn Hyde behandelt. Wir besitzen vom gleichen Verfasser das Werk über die Olympischen Siegersäulen, „Olympic Victor Monuments and Greek Art“, Carnegie Institution, Washington 1921. Er ist als einer der besten Kenner des Sports der Antike und Lehrer an der Universität von Pennsylvania berufen, die Frage zu beantworten. Er begründet zunächst, warum diese Nachrichten zuverlässig seien und bestätigt mit allen Fachleuten, daß ein reiner Weitsprung von dieser Leistung nicht in Frage kommen kann. Es bleibt also nur der Dreisprung übrig. Hyde bringt aber das fehlende Glied des Beweises bei. Er verweist auf ein Wort des Paphlagonischen Philosophen Themistius, der im 4. Jahrhundert nach Chr. in Konstantinopel lebte. Themistius wollte die Lehre des Aristoteles „von der ununterbrochenen Bewegung“ erklären und verwendete als Gegenbeispiel Rennpferde und Springer. Der reine Weitsprung ist nun aber vom Absprung bis zum Niedersprung eine ununterbrochene Bewegung, der Galopp der Pferde ist jedoch durch die einzelnen Galoppsprünge unterbrochen. Wenn also für Themistius der Weitsprung in dieselbe Reihe gehört wie die Galoppsprünge, so kann man daraus nur folgern, daß er auch aus mehreren Schritten bestand. Nur mit einem Dreisprung wären also nach Hyde die genannten Weitsprungleistungen genügend erklärt und diese Form festgesetzter Sprünge einmal als jedermann verständliches Gleichnis verwandt.

The Broad or Multiple Jump of Phayllus?

Amongst the many reports of astounding achievements that have come down to us from ancient times is that of Phayllus of Croton, who is said to have jumped a distance of 55 feet. This assertion has often been discussed by scholars, amongst them Mezö in his "History of the Olympic Games", which was awarded an Olympic medal in 1928. The achievement is associated with the two other performances of ancient times which have been recorded in numbers: the discus throw of 95 feet by the same athlete and the broad jump of 52 feet made by Chionis of Sparta in 664 B.C.

Concerning these remarkable accomplishments, there are two opinions. Either the records are rejected as false or the jumps in question are interpreted as multiple jumps. The latter assumption is to a certain extent contradicted by the fact that any mention or description of this unusual and somewhat artificial technique is lacking, since jumping, except in a few isolated cases (e. g. Eleusis), was not performed as an individual exercise but in connection with the pentathlon.

The question has again been dealt with by Walter Woodburn Hyde in the October number, 1938, of the "American Journal of Philology". We possess Mr. Hyde's outstanding work "Olympic Victor Monuments and Greek Art", Carnegie Institution, Washington, 1921. As an eminent authority on ancient sport and

a professor in the University of Pennsylvania be is well equipped to answer this question, After substantiating his contention that the records are accurate, he confirms the conviction of all experts, that a broad jump of this distance would have been impossible, the only alternative explanation being a triple jump. Supplying the hitherto lacking evidence in support of this belief, Hyde cites the words of the Paphlagonian philosopher Themistius, who lived in Constantinople during the fourth century A. D. In an attempt to explain Aristotle's idea of continuous movement, Themistius refers to the race horse and the jumper as examples of contrast in motion. the broad jump from the take-off until the moment when the jumper comes to rest is an unbroken movement while the galloping of a horse is not continuous but is broken by each leap. If Themistius regarded the broad jump as a performance similar to the galloping of a horse, it may only be concluded that this consisted of several consecutive leaps. Hyde thus contends that the aforementioned distance could have been achieved only by a triple jump, and his parallel example sheds considerable light on this problem.

“Gymnastischer Dreiklang”

A treatise, “Gymnastic Triad”, has just appeared in German as the second Olympic Special Publication. It is a comparison between the ancient, Asiatic and modern systems of physial culture and is obtainable from Wilhelm Limpert-Verlag, Berlin SW 68, at the price of RM. 1.75. The following short excerpt has been taken from this work and translated into English.

We thus perceive in the Asiatic physical culture an entirely different world, one that does not include the striving for certain goals, the hearty comradeship in competition and the exactitude of records; one, however, that is not without high demands on the individual and a clearly recognizable gymnastic achievement ideal: the association of the entire intellectual, spiritual and physical strength and all the habits of the individual with the divine laws. Opposite the Greek and the Asiatic forms of physical culture, both of which are inseparably bound up with cult worship, stands the modern European system, which is entirely free of religious characteristics. Christianity declined Greek gymnastics merely because of their religious associations, even though during the Hellenistic Age these were merely outward signs reminiscent of the Greek period of enlightenment. . . .

This state of affairs did not change until the modern era was well advanced. Physical culture, as we understand it today, is the merging of four distinct currents, the English, which is predominantly sport, the German, confined largely to gymnastics, the Swedish, with its emphasis on hygienic gymnastics, and the rhythmic gymnastics originating from multiple sources. The aims might be defined somewhat as follows: sport: achievement and competition; gymnastics: suppleness and civic capability; hygienic gymnastics: health; rhythmic gymnastics : beauty and expressiveness. The characteristic field at the modern time, however, is that of sport. The others occupy auxiliary stations, standing in honourable confraternity as in the case of gymnastics, demanding an increasingly important place as a testing ground, which is true of hygienic gymnastics, or conquering to an increasing extent a separate field, as is indicated by the present developments in rhythmic gymnastics. It being thus true beyond all doubt that sport dominates the physical culture of the present day, let us examine the nature of modern sport. Sport, as we know, is play, i. e. joyous application of the human powers without any ulterior object or purpose in view. It is play, not in the lower, but in the higher sense. If it is to become sport, play must acquire an increased degree of fundamentality; it must be carried on according to a plan. The sporting significance in play is based on the striving for a possible superiority or championship. We are thus not concerned with pure, unrestrained play, but with play carried on with earnest endeavour; not with exclusive earnestness, however, but with a connecting link between play and earnestness.