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In 1929, was sent to the Royal Academy of Physical Culture in Budapest for higher studies, where he stayed until 1931.

After his return to Athens, was named a professor at the Academy of Physical Education in Greece, and in 1938 was promoted to the position of Director at the National Academy of Greek Physical Education in Athens.

In 1950, became Director of the National Academy of Physical Education in Greece, the post which he held for 12 years. He retired with the title of doctor honoris causa.

During his long career devoted to physical culture and to sports in general, he was a coach in track and field and in swimming. He published several books on track and field, swimming, and sports. He was a member of the Greek Federation of track and field, and he was elected Secretary General of the International Federation of Track and Field Coaches.

For ten years he was a permanent professor of history and philosophy at the International Olympic Academy. In 1967 H. M. the King of Greece decorated him for services rendered to Greek sports.

PREPARATION

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It is quite impossible to compare the life of the Ancient Greeks with the ways and means of contemporary life or with the social mentality of today; for this reason, the subject "Preparation for the Olympic Games" shows peculiarities of its own if an attempt is made to investigate it through the long period of Greek antiquity.

It is well known that the prevailing education of young men in ancient times prepared them in a natural way to become strong, to have fortitude and endurance. Education aimed at serving the interests of the State, and this dictated the development of "kalos k'agathos" citizens. The "kalos k'agathos" was the beautiful and the balanced in body and soul. Moreover, he had to be in a position to read the laws and the poets in order to draw examples and be taught from the narrations of heroic events and the deeds of heroes. But, in order to become balanced, strong and beautiful, a youth was taught music and physical training. Formal intellectual education was left to the individual. The State was mainly concerned with the strength and, above all, the health of its citizens. Thus, it is certain that in the heyday of Greek civilisation, athletic exercise constituted the main part of a citizen's life and a basic element of boys' education.

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When we realise the depth and the extent of the different political and philosophical bases on which the education of the Greeks was built, it immediately becomes evident that there was no such thing as a special preparation of talented athletes for their participation in the Olympic or other sacred games. It also becomes evident that the handsome youths and men with the chiselled bodies who were crowned at Olympia were the results of a natural method of culture and development of an all too common type of human being. This must be attributed to the continuity and uniformity of the Greek way of thinking for almost fifteen centuries; a way of thinking developed, taught and supported as a common ideal, material as well as mental, by philosophers, poets, doctors, politicians, trainers and tutors of that period.



Gymnastic exercises, games and contests were known to all peoples, even the most primitive ones. As early as in the pre-Homeric period, it had been realised that those who exercised acquired certain physical advantages of practical use, such as a better handling of weapons and an increased superiority over their fellow men. It can thus be maintained that the care to improve the human being bodily and to increase his abilities through physical exercise and special physical training, was a purely Greek invention and institution and one of the principle characteristics of Greek civilisation long before the Homeric period, as has been proven by the excavations of the pre-Mycenean and Minoan settlements.

Already in the Homeric period - the educational ideal - the beginning and end of every educational system had been crystallised in these words: *"thought and activity, the right way of thinking and acting"*. The purpose of education is put by Homer in the mouth of Achilles' tutor, the old Phoenix who, at a certain point, relates that Achilles' father had sent the boy to him to look after and see to it that *"he learned how to narrate the myths, but also how to do deeds"*.

During that period it was believed that there is no greater glory for a man than feats he could achieve with his own hands and legs. This is said by Alkinoos, the King of the Phaeacians, to Ulysses when he invites him to take part in the games organised in his honour: *"because there is no greater glory for a man, whoever he may be, than what he can achieve with his own hands and legs"*.

The beautiful and imposing posture - this combination of health, beauty, stature, strength and nimbleness of body as it was understood by Aristotle, graceful, good-looking but strong too which is the most perfect expression of male beauty - is mentioned as the particular characteristic of all the heroes who are depicted as gifted with all virtues: valour, the impetus and force necessary for warfare, but also with reason which goes hand-in-hand with and expresses true bravery.

It should be noted at this point that the most recent archaeological investigations have proven that the Homeric Civilisation is the end and not the beginning of the historical period. The Homeric period had been preceded by the Mycenaean and this again by the Minoan and pre-Minoan period. Consequently, the contests of Homeric times, which clearly show the system of education applied by the Greeks in conscious knowledge of its influence on the culture and development of a healthy, vigorous and mentally sound human being, have their origin at a much earlier stage of history. Still, it is only during the Homeric period that these contests became the beginning of great progress and development of games and purposeful exercise.

The beneficial influence of physical exercise on health, bodily beauty, strength, as well as on the brave and manly attitudes of a youth and all the other virtues of human character were duly appreciated by philosophers, doctors, magistrates and legislators in all Greek city-states. The physical exercise aimed at a special training of men in order to prepare them to participate in games was a necessary consequence of the games as such. The games had become a custom, and they were held either in honour of the gods and heroes or in order to celebrate an important event or even to honour the memory of a famous dead. When the games were established as a true Greek institution, on the occasion of which

people gathered from all parts of the country, physical training was recognised as one of the principal methods of educating young men; numerous gymnasia and palaestrae, public and private ones, were founded and they became the meeting places of youths and men alike. It was there that learned men and elder citizens held their debates.

As soon as the Greeks realised that by means of the games they simultaneously succeeded in creating mass gatherings and that during these they could promote the people's sense of religion as well as the conscience of their common origin, further that the masses liked to watch contests as such and, last but not least, that the competitors became physically and mentally better men, they saw in the games a means of cultivating and improving the race and they established contests (not only for men but also for boys and adolescents). Contests for girls were not favoured by the Greeks. In some cities games for virgins were held in three age groups in honour of Hera of Olympia, but it seems that these too were not duly appreciated and were abolished in due course.

The tributes paid to a victor did not aim at increasing the fame of the city he happened to come from, but at increasing the masses' interest in games and at attracting people to the gymnasia and the palaestrae. Solon says this to Anacharsis: *"and we compel them to train and tire their bodies not only for the sake of the games and of winning prizes - because very few of them achieve such high performances as to obtain them - but because we expect that a much greater good will ensue for the city-state and for themselves"*. What must be stressed here, therefore, is that the Greeks knew only too well that the real benefit from the games was not to be sought in the few victors and that the immense effort was not undertaken merely in order to award big prizes to the few athletes who had excelled; those few were shown as examples worth following, so that young men were prompted and induced to exercise their bodies.

Later, when philosophers, writers of tragedies and poets became famous through their works, formal intellectual education became an inseparable part of the compulsory education of young men. Aristotle maintains: *"the legislator's first and foremost task is to see to it that the city's men grow strong and choose the best means so as to enable them to lead an excellent life"*. By applying this common and uniform education, the support of the citizen's health and the promotion of their bodily strength should constitute the primary duty of the city-state: *"right from the start the legislator must see to it that the bodies of young men become excellent"*.

Aristotle further defines the content of education as follows: *"the elements of education are about four: reading and writing, gymnastics, music and some add painting as a fourth element"*.

As all ancient Greek scholars, Aristotle too believed that education should have an exclusively educational and aesthetic purpose and should not aim at athletic extremes, because these destroy and harm the body's harmony and symmetry, as well as its good shape and posture. Nor did he approve of the Spartan system of education because this, he said, on one hand avoided athletic exaggerations, but on the other, the excessively severe discipline imposed on the young people required an almost inhuman degree of training. Aristotle maintained that, until they became adolescents, young boys should do easier exercises and avoid special diets and heavy training so as not to prevent the body from developing in a natural way. An indisputable proof of this theory, continues Aristotle, is the fact that among Olympic champions those who won a prize as youths and later as men will be found to be two or three at the most. This is to be attributed to the fact that, by training too hard at an early age, they lost their strength. In his *Politics* he writes: *"Physical education is the science which examines which kind of training is beneficial to most, and if possible, to all men, since the main purpose of education is to train the many and not only those gifted and talented by nature"*.

Four hundred years later, Plutarch writes: *"They send them to teachers to learn reading and writing, music and to train in the palaestra"*. Plato says that this was the education dictated by the laws: *"Don't you know that the laws in force dictate to your father to educate you in music and physical education?"*

Plato, however, believes that the principal purpose of education should be the life-long training and preparation of citizens for the greatest of contests, the struggle for the defence of one's country, and not the breeding of professional athletes, be they boxers or pankratiasts. In his *State*, he writes that since women are almost similar to men in bodily construction, they too should be prepared in the same way for war and life, because nothing better can be achieved for the city-state than the preparation of its men and women to become excellent citizens, and this will be achieved when they train in music and physical exercises. Plato rejects the specialised, intensive and exclusive athletic training, because he regards it *"as the cause of sleepiness and as having uncertain influence on health"*, in other words as inappropriate for the normal life of a man and the useful life of a citizen. The athletes training especially for games, he says, sleep all their life long and adds *"don't you see that if they deviate even a little bit from their social diet, these athletes become seriously ill?"*

Not all city-states of Ancient Greece applied the same educational systems and methods. However, the basis of education was the same everywhere and everywhere it aimed at one and the same thing: at the development of "kaloi k'agathoi" citizens. However, the conception of kalos k'agathos differed from state to state according to the surroundings, nature and the attitude of the different Greek races.

The greatest educational differences existed between the two strongest races, the Dorians and the Ionians. The other city-states adhered to one of these two systems.

The Dorians were trained to endure hardships, were inflexible, rough warriors and ate plainly. The Ionians, on the contrary, were mild, refined, with a flexible body and mind, with philosophical views on life. Typical examples of the two races were Sparta and Athens.

The Athenian philosophy of life is best expressed by Plato when he defines the purposes of Athenian education: *"the most important thing is health, the second is the symmetrical development or harmony and the third the strength of the body both in the foot race as well as in the other contests"*. The Spartans on the contrary believed that the foremost and only important thing was vigour and endurance of hardships.

So the life of the Ancient Greeks developed on these theories and it can be easily maintained that the life of citizens took place mainly in the gymnasium and the palaestra. These pivots of Ancient Greek life were not only visited by the young for purposes of training, but also by men and elders. When they did not train or exercise, they gathered in the nearby colonnades and alleys to listen to the teachings of philosophers and enjoy the discussions and intellectual arguments of the sophists.

In his State, Plato mentions that even old men exercised. When Socrates and his friends were invited to dinner by Kallias, *"some exercised and massaged themselves with sweet oil, and some took a bath and departed for the dinner"*.

Visiting the gymnasium was not only regarded as a necessary activity, but also as a noble occupation. We find this in Aeschines, an Athenian orator and opponent of Demosthenes: *"He did not have bad friends because he spent his time in the gymnasium"*.

Some later authors supported the view that the contests of Ancient Greeks aimed at preparing warriors for battle. It is easy to reject this opinion. When Pausanias wanted to give some explanation for the introduction into the Olympic Games of the hoplitodromos, i.e. a race for

competitors in full battle order, he said, not without some hesitation, *"in my opinion, it is in order to train for warfare"*.

This is the very reason why Plato had proposed the introduction of special contests, long races and archers' 100 stadia long (about 20 kilometres), cross-country races as well as duels. Euripides finally, makes fun of athletes in Autolykos: *"And what does it matter if you are a wrestler, or quick in running, if you throw the discus far, or if you break your opponent's jaws with your strong fists? How does one fight an enemy, with a discus on one's hands? There you need a strong shield in your hand and none is so foolish as to stand face to face with the enemy without arms"*.

The Spartans, on the contrary, required from trainers a complete knowledge of the art of warfare, because they regarded athletic contests as a preparation for war. And Plutarch says about the Spartans: *"All this, in my opinion, is an imitation of war manoeuvres."*

But Plutarch, Lucian, Pausanias and Philostratos are later authors and the time they lived is a much later period than the heyday of ancient sports.

A little later still, the Romans, who, as everybody knows, lived and thought only of war, will accuse the Greeks that by engaging excessively in athletic contests they neglected military training and became slaves.

"Without becoming aware of it they neglected the use of arms, and instead of military exercise and riding they got to like contests and they preferred to be called flexible, excelling in the palaestra, and good-looking."

The athletic contests and games may not have developed soldiers, but they brought forth strong and brave men; the success of the Roman conquest of Greece is due to other reasons including the fact that it occurred at a time when contests and exercise were at a decline. But this exceeds the limits of our present subject.

By an examination of the reasons which contributed to the fact that the Greek education was generally based on training in the gymnasium and the palaestra, we came to the conclusion that we should reject the view that the athletic contests of the Greeks aimed at preparing warriors.

From what has been said up to this point, it becomes evident that no special preparation of athletes took place either for the Olympic Games or for the other big sacred games. The athletic exercises were part of the Greek's life and a natural method of educating the young. However, a victory in Olympia, in the Pythian, Nemean or Isthmian games was

an event of immense importance for the individual and for the city-state he came from.

In order to attract people to training and games, the Greeks used the power of religion and tradition over men, also the power of legends and myths; thus people of all social strata had a vivid interest in games. The gods were the first athletes, the patrons and inventors of contests. Zeus, Kronos, Apollo, Mars, Hermes, all of them had participated in games. Heroes and half-gods were champions. Theseus, Hercules, Castor and Pollux, Peleus, Telamon and Pelops were champions too. The oracles protected the efforts of the organisers of games and the wise Pythia had often given oracles recommending the celebration of games.

For these reasons competitors came from all strata of society. The Olympic champion in boxing, Glaukos, was a farmer from Karystos. Polymnestor, the champion of the stadion contest for boys at the 46th Olympic games was a goat shepherd in Miletos. Amesinas from Varke, the wrestling victor at the 80th Olympiad, was a shepherd too. Eurybates from Argos, victor in the pentathlon, was a general. Eualkides from Eretria, the victor of games praised by the poet Simonides, was a general who fell in Ephesos during the battle against the Persians. Chelon Lacaedaemon, head of the colony of Kyrene, won the stadion race three times, at the 29th, 30th, and 31st Olympic Games. Orsippos, victor at the stadion race at the 15th Olympiad, was a general from Megara. During the contest he lost his belt and from that time the athletes competed naked. Fayllos from the city of Kroton in Lower Italy, victor of the pentathlon at the Pythian Games and famous for his 55 feet long jump, took part in the battle of Salamis with a ship of his own. Kylong, who very nearly became tyrant of Athens, Alexander, son of Amyntas, King of Macedonia, Plato, the greatest philosopher of all times, all of them were athletes.

The wreath of victory from Olympia, Delphi, from the Panathenean Games, from Nemea, the Isthmus, from Rhodes, was a precious possession and the greatest honour for all men, regardless of the social class they came from. For this reason the palaestrae and the gymnasia were full of athletes and athletic contests had become the main and basic institution for the culture and development and education of youth. Solon explains this in a typical way when talking to Anacharsis: *"If a man, Anacharsis, my friend, were to exclude from his life the loss of glory, what other good thing would remain? And who would be eager to achieve anything brilliant or great any longer?"*

Even the austere Pythagorians believed in the need to exercise. The sophist Porfyrios Malchos says about Pythagoras that: *"He induced them to compete, to participate in*

athletic contests without striving for victory, because they should be taught on the one hand to suffer the pains of training, on the other hand to avoid the pride of victory; because it has happened often that the athletes who won the victory and were crowned were not the noblest and purest in character."

In spite of this dictum of the Pythagorians, one of the most famous Olympic victors, Milon from the city of Kroton, was a pupil of Pythagoras.

Thus we see that famous men participated in the games, kings, rulers, scholars and that each of them appears to have not only a particular physical quality such as strength, endurance, speed, a talent in wrestling, a high performance as an archer or an agility in the handling of arms but also general physical advantages, such as beauty, stature, agility, grace.

Let us now examine some details in order to throw light on our subject from all angles. Up to this point we have encountered no instance of a state or a city extending efforts to prepare athletes for the sole purpose of sending them to Olympia to win prizes.

Philostratos says the following: *"The Elians required the athletes to arrive in Olympia 30 days prior to the beginning of the games. There the Elians supervised their training and told them: 'proceed to the stadium and prove that you are men capable of winning a victory. If you have trained as much as is necessary for the Olympic Games and have not been lazy, or have indulged in evil deeds, proceed with courage. But those among you who have not trained well take your leave now'."*

However, it is well known that each athlete had trained adequately at home with his trainer. The Elians had no obligation to train them. It is much more probable that during these 30 days the Elians examined the athletes and selected the best one among them. Philostratos calls this training in Olympia 'proagon', i.e. preliminary games. Those who were not deemed good enough were excluded. According to Pausanias, sixteen runners at the most participated in the stadion race in four rows. How could these sixteen be selected without preliminary races? As regards other big games, we have no written testimonies as to preparations or preliminary games.

It thus becomes evident that the great tributes, the glory and fame of victory were the only incentives which induced the talented youths and men to undergo the great pains, deprivations and hardships of training and diet in order to win the crown of Olympia. Their city, of course participated in their happiness and pride as well as in their glory,

yet these honours never induced a city to make any special effort or take special measures for the preparation of its athletes.

Later, however, when the period of decline starts, we will see states and cities buy athletes and their victories, we will also see athletes dedicate their wreath to a king, a tyrant or a city; but this, once again, is a deviation from our subject.

In the heyday of athletic contests in Ancient Greece there was no special preparation of talented athletes for the games. Because, as we mentioned earlier, physical exercise was something natural for all citizens, of all ages and classes. Those who distinguished themselves from the masses reached the fields and tracks of the big games.

What is perhaps of greater importance and what has been already proved is that the training of ancient athletes was really intensive and arduous and lasted almost all day long.

From the severe criticism expressed by Hippocrates, Galen and other doctors and philosophers against the excesses of exercise and the lack of measure, we learn that the coaches and trainers knew a great many things about training and applied methods of intensive training similar to those applied today by the coaches of different states.

The coaches of ancient times were in a position to distinguish between the quantity and the quality of exercise. They knew details about the increase of muscular size, about the need to be obese for some contests, about the rhythm and intensity of exercises, about the speed or slowness in executing them, about the merits of continuous or interrupted training, about the influence of open air or the diminished performance in closed space. They further knew about the need for certain types of figure for certain contests. From the good colour and the greasiness of the athlete's skin they could judge about the successful result and the progress of training. They could see when the signs of exhaustion appeared in an athlete. They had a vast experience in prescribing diets to suit each contest. They knew about the excessive heat or coolness of the human body during training, about the slackening or hardening of muscles, local muscular fatigue and the ways of curing it, about that special exhaustion that comes not from training but from mental causes, such as melancholy, a bad mood, etc.

They had full knowledge of the different methods of massage and relaxation which they regarded as the last part of a well executed daily training; they also knew enough about respiratory exercises. They had clear views about the training that older men required and a sound knowledge of the cure of different diseases by exercise. They even went so far as to investigate the medical family history of athletes

to see if there were any hereditary diseases in the family. It is indeed admirable that, at a time when the real purpose of the respiratory functions of the body was unknown, not only doctors but also practical trainers attached due importance to special respiratory exercises, both because they contributed to the development and exercise of the thorax and because they helped the athlete to relax after training.

It is thanks to this kind of training that famous athletes developed in antiquity and thanks to the presence of these athletes in the stadia that the games were maintained as an institution for over a thousand years. As Lucian says all men trained *"not in order to develop their physical qualities but in order to be able to make proper use of the qualities with which they were endowed"*. This statement of Lucian expresses all the grandeur of the ancient athletic period. The devotion of the ancient Greeks to training is incompatible with our present way of thinking. Galen tells us that the intensive training of ancient athletes lasted all day long *"because it is necessary for athletes to train their bodies to endure the fatigue of contests which are excessively arduous and last all day long"*.

Nor did they spare their lives in order to win a victory: *"Do you see these athletes, how much they suffer and undergo training and exercising and at the end preferring to even die for the sake of athletic achievement?"*

In my opinion these are the reasons why no special preparation for the Olympic Games took place in antiquity; simply because it was superfluous, since the men and the youths of those times *did not train in order to develop their physical qualities, but in order to be able to make proper use of the qualities with which they had been gifted*.

