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Logical Discussion of Gymnastics

*By Takashi Morishita**

Introduction

In order to anticipate the attainment of the effect of gymnastics, it is important that their essential characteristics should be fully and properly understood in the first place and that they should be practised by the reasonable and rationalized way according to the order of such details as will allow such characteristics to be fully demonstrated.

This paper will logically discuss what gymnastics really are from an extensive angle from their meaning to their formative progress, theoretical setup and even their prescription, while referring to the relation between them and sportive activities where the former is often mixed up with the latter in the way of interpretation and methodology.

1. Meaning of gymnastics

Broad concept of gymnastics

In a word, the broad concept of gymnastics is directly related to the psychological interpretation intended for a distinction by the attitude of persons who practise them. In other words, it is an interpretation based on the free and purely teleological view that is never restricted or predominated by any forms, which can be considered to be in agreement with the positions taken by I. Kant, L. H. Gulick and J. Dewey in defining the distinction between the sportive activity and labor or work.

Sportive activity in any forms, or even activity form of labor can be what is considered fine gymnastics, depending on the attitude and way of carrying it out. Inversely, a gymnastic form may be transformed into labor, work and even sports. The attitude of viewing gymnastics teleologically and theoretically in this way is

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the way of interpreting them in the broad sense, and any narrow concept of gymnastics can be no such if not based on this way of interpretation.

Narrow concept of gymnastics

This position should be based on the physical setup, and gymnastics in the narrow sense is considered such as is executed in an athletic form so organized as to suit the artificial physical training.

Therefore, the gymnastics as interpreted in the narrow sense are conducted in the particular form of gymnastic exercise, which allow them to be clearly identified as such by the third party, as well as the person that actually practises them. At the same time, the aim and attitude of the person that actually carries the gymnastic exercise must totally agree with those in the case of the broad concept of gymnastics. In other words, due to the fact that gymnastics as interpreted in the narrow sense should be based on the principle of gymnastics as interpreted in the broad sense (gymnasticity), the former can be considered as part of the former.

Thus, success in actually demonstrating the gymnastics as interpreted in the narrow sense depends on whether or not they are based on the principle of the gymnastics in the broad sense, and every movement in the apparently gymnastic form is not always the gymnastics in real sense.

The basic purpose of what are real gymnastics is to attain the realization of their value in the light of the preservation of health, and the related methodical course must follow a form fully reasonable enough to attain the purpose. Gymnastics are not only a form but also a mind, which underlines the view that they can be interpreted in the narrow sense. Usually, the gymnastics as interpreted in the narrow sense are said to be the gymnastic exercise as a form, which actually does not mean a mindless form, but is a mere expression opposite to the word "gymnastics based on the broad concept of gymnastics".

Necessity of free interpretation

Building up a healthy body takes so various elements, including forms, functions, aim to preserve health and techniques, and cannot be accomplished any singular form is adhered to one-sidedly. Anything has its own suited way of usage, and it is necessary that this principle should be effectively utilized for the purpose.

Thus, gymnastic exercise must contain in itself rich contents best suited as part of the purpose for physical training from the free standpoint, narrow or broad, for free choice of demonstration.

2. Developmental progress in gymnastics

Gymnastics are the mental part of the system of physical motion, and can safely be described as a mental product by man, or "Techne with logos".

To sum up, the development of gymnastics from disposition to intention is at once the long course of progress in the evolution of mankind in the past. Considering predominance by mankind over other living things throughout the period of evolution, it can easily be guessed that endless refinement of gymnastics from primitiveness to advancement has been repeated ever since mankind was blessed with the capacity of free will. As self-denial by mankind was gradually established, with subjecthood becoming purer and purer, the human life that had been apt to be swayed by disposition and often failed to escape from elimination by the act of nature turned its eye to inside of it from outside. This led to the formation of the technique and principle for building a healthy body on the strength of control by reason and intelligence, notwithstanding the fact that negative behaviors against self-betterments were being fostered by the roots.

After this developmental course, the planned embodiment of the formative ideas concerning physical body came to be called gymnastics. Gymnastics were created just for it, where we can see the developmental progress in the gymnastics.

3. Theoretical setup of gymnastics

In the interpretation of gymnastics in the narrow sense in terms of form, the ability to effectively apply it to the practical guidance is the decisive factor for the success in the physical education. In view of this, this section of the paper will discuss the formative phase of the gymnastic setup for possible answer to the question of what is the essential point.

The gymnastic exercise must be set up in the manner that its essential characteristics can be fully demonstrated, based on which premise it may be said that the principal point in setting up the gymnastic exercise is to definitely grab its characteristics from the basic viewpoint of it as systematic part of the physical training.

- (1) Gymnastic must involve the motion of each and all body parts.
- (2) They must permit functional demonstration of local features.
- (3) They must permit demonstration of organic and total movement of the whole body.
- (4) They just help build up fundamentally physical strength in the balanced way.

- a) Flexibility
- b) Muscular power
- c) Harmony between nerve and muscle
- d) Training of organs, particularly heart.