

II. Traditional Content of Physical Education

Since the introduction of physical education in our colleges and secondary schools it has been customary to defend the process on the basis of services rendered. Invariably the results attained are individual-centric, that is to say, they pertain to the person who is taking physical education. These well-known results I may mention briefly.

(1) A Safety Valve. Rightly or wrongly, our ancestors did, and some of our contemporaries still consider the human species as the feeblest victim of temptations. Of course, physical temptations are more serious than the mental. Our civilization has created enough gadgets to seduce the adolescents from the paths of virtue and steep them in the mire of vice. Hence, in order to ward off personal degeneration, disintegration, and disorganization, it is considered advisable to exhort the passion-driven adolescents to use their surplus energy in honorable and desirable efforts. If you feel the temptation to vice, go and dig the soil, work out in the fields; but if you are lucky enough to be unemployed by fortune or by force of circumstances, take a walk in the woods -- if in the country -- or pace the pavements if in the city; soon you will push the vicious inclinations to the rear and thereby focus your attention once more on virtue and its attainment. But if these efforts fail, you may dominate vice by going to a gymnasium -- YMCA, YWCA, or college-- and ^wseat it out of your system. After much vigorous and aimless dissipation you will so starve the urge that you will no longer -- at least temporarily -- yield to the temptations of the body. This is what the character-building fakirs and the exponents of physical exercise have prescribed in the past. Such remedies still persist; they are ingenious escape mechanisms: escape