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## WHAT IS PARKOUR? BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Parkour is a set of principles combined with a way of moving within your environment and approaching obstacles of any kind be they physical or mental.

These principles include:

- Seeking to improve ourselves through the practice of Parkour
- Using what you have gained from Parkour to help others, be it with helping someone learn Parkour themselves or to use your skills in a practical situation
- Seek progression in ourselves and to promote it in others.

You then have the physical extension of Parkour which are as follows:

Move in such a way, with any movement, that will help you gain the most ground on someone/something as if escaping from someone/something or chasing toward someone/something. Also, wherever you go, you must be able to get back. If you go from A to B, you need to be able to get back from B to A. You don't need to do the same "move," but just get back". You do this by running on foot, crawling, jumps, climbing, and other methods of catching yourself, grabbing hold of things, and hanging from things, rolling and balancing. This doesn't have to be just in an urban environment, it can be done anywhere, on rocks, in the bush/forest etc.

It is not just they way you move that makes you a practitioner of Parkour, but the movement combined with the philosophy that defines it as Parkour.

## DETAILED DESCRIPTION

To understand what Parkour is it helps to understand where it came from.

Parkour: developed by David Belle while finding his own way in life. And in turn, there to assist those who choose to learn about it to find their own way in life as well.

To observe the physical component of Parkour you would see such things as: people running on foot, moving quadrupedally, jumping, climbing, and other methods of catching yourself, grabbing hold of things, and hanging from things, rolling and balancing. People moving in such a way, with any movement, that will help you gain the most ground on someone/something as if escaping from someone/something or chasing toward someone/something.

But Parkour is much more than a physical pursuit. The activities described above have been practiced since the beginning of time. It's the principles behind Parkour combined with the physical that defines it as something unique. Those principles include:

- Seeking to improve ourselves through the practice of Parkour
- Using what you have gained from Parkour to help others, be it with helping someone learn Parkour themselves or to use your skills to actually aid someone
- Seek progression in ourselves and to promote it in others.

And most importantly, to use Parkour as a tool to find our own way in life. To discover

within ourselves what it is we truly wish to achieve, and to achieve it.

The description above barely begins to scratch the surface of the full depth and breadth of Parkour. To gain a deeper understanding of it and all that it involves takes more effort than to watch a few videos and go and copy them.

### **History:**

The roots of Parkour go back over 100 years. It begins with Hebertism. Hebertism was created about 100 years ago by George Hebert.

George Hébert (1875-1957) exerted a major influence on the development of physical education in France. A former naval officer, he travelled throughout the world before World War 1 and was struck by the physical development and skill of indigenous peoples in Africa and elsewhere;

"Their bodies were splendid, flexible, nimble, skilful, enduring, resistant and yet they had no other tutor in Gymnastics but their lives in Nature." - G. Hébert

In 1902, Hébert was stationed in the town of St. Pierre in Martinique when the town fell victim to a catastrophic volcanic eruption. Hébert heroically co-ordinated the escape and rescue of some seven hundred people from this disaster. This experience had a profound effect on him, and reinforced his belief that athletic skill must be combined with courage and altruism. He eventually developed this ethos into his motto, "Etre fort pour être utile" - "To be strong, to be useful."

Returning to France, Hebert became a physical education tutor at the College of Rheims, where he began to define the principles of his own system of physical education and to create apparatus and exercises to teach his "Natural Method". As well as the "natural" training regimens he observed in Africa, he was inspired by classical representations of the human body in Graeco-Roman statuary and by the ideals of the ancient Greek gymnasia.

Hebert's system rejected the sclerosis of remedial gymnastics and of the popular Swedish Method of physical culture, which seemed to him unable to develop the human body harmoniously and especially unable to prepare his students with the "moral requirements" of life.

In the same way, Hebert believed, by concentrating on competition and performance, competitive sport diverted physical education both from its physiological ends and its ability to foster sound moral values.

"The final goal of physical education is to make strong beings. In the purely physical sense, the Natural Method promotes the qualities of organic resistance, muscularity and speed, towards being able to walk, run, jump, move quadrupedally, to climb, to walk in balance, to throw, lift, defend yourself and to swim."

In the "virile" or energetic sense, the system consists in having sufficient energy, willpower, courage, coolness, and fermeté ("firmness").

In the moral sense, education, by elevating the emotions, directs or maintains the moral fibre in a useful and beneficial way.

The true Natural Method, in its broadest sense, must be considered as the result of these three particular forces; it is a physical, virile and moral synthesis. It resides not only in the muscles and the breath, but above all in the "energy" which is used, the will which directs it and the feeling which guides it."

David Belle's father learnt and practiced Hebertism and when he spent time with his son, David, passed on what he knew about it to him. As David grew and learnt he adapted what he needed from Hebertism to create something unique to him, something that allowed him to pursue his own needs and goals.

And in turn it is passed on to us to act as an inspiration to help find our own goals and assist in pursuing them.

### **Mis-Conceptions and Mis-Information**

Due to the way that Parkour arrived on the international scene there are quite a few mis-conceptions and erroneous information that is spread.

Parkour and Freerunning – They are not the same thing, they are not interchangeable terms. They are quite different from each other in what their end results are. Practitioners of Parkour are called Traceurs, Freerunning practitioners are called Freerunners, the terms Freerunner and Traceur are not interchangeable terms.

Parkour shows – There is no such thing as doing a Parkour show. If you see any representation of Parkour purely for the sake of entertainment then it cannot be Parkour, simply because you are not following the principles of what Parkour is. You can take the movement from Parkour and use it to entertain, but the end result cannot ethically be called Parkour as it doesn't follow the principles of the sport.

Flips – Many people get confused when they see someone who calls themselves a Traceur doing flips and spins. Just because someone does these things does not mean it is Parkour, it just means that they train other aspects of movement as well as Parkour. If you are unsure simply ask yourself, if you were running for your life what would you do?

Its not just an Urban sport – Parkour is not just an "Urban sport". It was developed and practiced in the trees and forests of France just as much as in the cities. It is practiced to great effect in the natural environment that has been shaped by time and the elements, and can be rough and jagged as opposed to the smoothed and usually symmetrical man made urban environment

### **REFERENCES:**

>Some of the references are from articles that can no longer be found. They will be posted on this site at a later date.

- > [Kungfu magazine interview with David Belle](#)
- > [Write up of conversations with David Belle by Dan](#)
- > [Parkour.NET, David belle Biography](#)
- > [Article written on Hebertism](#)